LABOR UNREST IN ARGENTINA, 1887–1907*

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This article will examine the development of labor unrest in Argentina between 1887 and 1907. Because official statistics were not compiled until after 1907, new data on strikes have been generated for the earlier period through a detailed reading of newspapers. These data provide information on the occupational and geographical distribution of strikes, their timing, and the kinds of demands made by strikers. The new data also provide helpful insights into the nature of labor organizations and the causes of labor unrest. Most important, these data indicate that changes in the organization of the workplace were a significant factor in altering the composition of demand for labor and in generating labor unrest. Finally, they show that the organization of the workplace also accounted for significant differences in the forms of action and organization adopted by various sectors of the labor force. Hence insofar as the position of different groups of workers in the labor market was itself shaped by the nature of the labor process and workplace relations, the transformation of these spheres constitutes an important analytical point of departure for explaining the central features of the emerging labor movement.

The first part of this article will review some of the mechanisms by which geographical mobility strengthened the bargaining power of labor in Argentina during the period under consideration. But the relative strength of workers across the labor force also differed significantly. To explain these differences, the second part of the article will focus on the impact of the organization of the workplace and the labor market on the forms of action and organization adopted by workers in manufacturing. Finally, some conclusions will be drawn about major features of the labor movement at the turn of the century.

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LABOR MOBILITY

Tight labor-market conditions during the last quarter of the nineteenth century in Argentina created a structural tendency toward full employment and hence provided labor with strong bargaining power. Thus, according to Laclau, "the growth observed during this period [between 1892 and 1904] in agriculture, industry and commerce occasioned scarcity of labor and a consequent increase in wages" (Laclau 1969, 39). In this situation, labor organizations found little reason to challenge the predominant model of development because periods of recession and falling wages were only momentary setbacks to the strong economic position of workers. Thus for the period as a whole, real wages tended to rise or at least remain stable except during temporary recessions. For example, recent research by Cortés Conde indicates that labor studies have overstated the extent of the decline in real wages experienced in the early 1890s and that the first and most crucial decline of real wages in Argentina occurred in 1887 (rather than 1890, as has been commonly believed).[1] This decline was readily observed in 1887 by a press correspondent writing for the *South American Journal*:

> In this new land there is a process in operation which is slowly—or maybe quickly—producing a revolution in the ideas of those men who, in all lands, have hitherto been esteemed as the working heads of the human community. They begin to feel sore. For more than two years back their wages have been going down, down! The rents of their houses and the prices of their clothing, etc., have been going up, up! Between two or three years ago those skilled workmen could save—aye, and did save—money sufficient to buy their own house and ground, and either to establish a family of "Argentinos" or return with a competence to their own country. *Ya no se puede señor.* It is now almost impossible.[2]

But as Cortés Conde has indicated, the overall trend during this period was for real wages to rise: "Allowing for important fluctuations which occurred over the 30 years, real wages increased over this period [from the 1880s through the 1910s]. Towards the end of the period, a worker could acquire a third more goods and services than his equivalent some three decades before" (Cortés Conde 1986, 340).

Not all workers in Argentina enjoyed strong bargaining power, however. Sugar and yerba mate plantations in northeast and northwest Argentina continued to rely heavily on coercive methods to subordinate their labor force, much of which was Indian. Nor did the violent subordination of Native Americans in Argentina end with the military campaigns of the late 1880s, continuing instead well into the twentieth century. In the early 1900s, the press still referred to Indians as "elements not yet reduced to *la vida del trabajo*" and frequently reported on military violence directed against these "elements."[3] Clearly, these sectors of the

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labor force faced poor working conditions and found it difficult to press effectively for improvements.

But in much of the country, the bargaining power of workers was strengthened by a high demand for wage labor in the countryside (particularly during harvests) and for skilled workers in major urban areas. To meet this labor demand, state agencies and capitalist entrepreneurs promoted overseas immigration, which was facilitated by falling costs of transportation worldwide: "The increasing number of steamships plying the Río de la Plata route and the resultant competition between lines sharply reduced the cost of third-class passage. Although Argentina was twice as far as the United States from European ports, by the 1890s the *golondrina* (migrant worker) needed to work only two weeks in Argentina to pay for his round-trip package" (Scobie 1971, 131).

But migration also allowed workers to defend themselves from unemployment or falling real wages by "voting with their feet" and leaving the region for the duration of these crises. Hence the first drastic decline in net immigration to Argentina occurred in conjunction with the crisis of the late 1880s and early 1890s. As noted by the press, "With the premium at its present figure, the Italian working classes here can no longer remit money home to bring out their relatives and friends as formerly; besides, their letters to the said friends are no longer of the milk-and-honey and land-of-promise tenor of former years. On the contrary, the working men in the cities can now barely live, much less talk of saving. This state of things is written to those at home, and they stay there till times mend."[4] Not only did immigration flows decline, but many workers either returned to Europe or moved to Uruguay or Brazil. In the midst of the crisis, one journalist commented, "It is fortunate for the working men of this country that they have the Banda Oriental [Uruguay] near at hand, where the wages given is not 'a mockery, a delusion, and a snare.' "[5] Only in 1892 did the press report on workers returning from Brazil after their flight from the crisis.[6] Similar declines in net immigration flows occurred during the late 1890s and early 1900s, although they were less pronounced than in the earlier crisis. In short, although recessions led to short-term unemployment, their effect was soon buffered by reductions in the net flow of immigrants.

Workers also responded to changes in employment conditions and wages by migrating back and forth between urban areas and the countryside. During the crisis of the 1890s, for example, "Some of the manpower already in the country moved to the rural sector where the area under cultivation continued to expand during the . . . crisis. This alleviated the problem of unemployment and prevented the crisis from becoming even more serious" (Cortés Conde 1986, 339). As a conse-

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quence, rural wages in the early 1890s failed to rise despite rapidly growing demand for labor (Williams 1920, 198). This relationship between urban and rural employment explains some pronounced differences between the crisis of the early 1890s and that of the late 1890s. During the first crisis, unemployment originated primarily in the urban areas, where wages fell rapidly, but labor demand in the countryside continued to grow. During the late 1890s, however, urban real wages remained relatively high and actually grew due to falling consumer prices while rural unemployment rose due to bad harvests. By late 1896 and throughout most of 1897, the lack of rural employment intensified job competition in urban areas. The press reported that "in the countryside, people without work are carrying out virtual assaults in asking for food."[7]

Cycles of employment, migration, and economic recession provide some clues to the overall conditions faced by workers at the time, but these cycles did not affect all sectors of the working class in the same manner. Recessions, for example, greatly affected the living standards of some workers (such as state employees) while others continued to fare well in the midst of widespread unemployment. The evolution of wages during the 1890 crisis provides a case in point: according to Buchanan (1897), some nominal wages grew as little as 11 percent between 1886 and 1896 while others rose as much as 150 percent. Taking into account the rising cost of living, some real wages rose by as much as 39 percent during this same period, while others declined by a similar amount. Moreover, some workers (such as those employed by the government) faced not only falling real wages but long delays receiving their wages.[8] Although these differences were crucial to the internal structure of the labor force, labor studies have often overlooked them in focusing on the evolution of average working-class conditions (such as average wages and unemployment). In order to better understand these differences, it is necessary to consider the uneven distribution of bargaining power across the labor force.

LABOR UNREST

Throughout most of the nineteenth century, the ability of craftworkers to command high wages was built into the existing organization of the workplace: acquisition of skills continued to depend on a craft system that strengthened the bargaining power of workers by allowing them to regulate labor supplies. Such a craft system prevailed with little challenge until the 1880s: in a context of tight labor-market conditions, workers relied on informal craft organization and geographical mobility to press for higher wages or better working conditions or both.[9] But after the 1880s, the combined pressure of greater

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TABLE 1 Strikes in Argentina, 1887–1907

Year	*Port*	*Transport*	*Manufacturing*	*Construction*	*Commerce & Services*	*Other*	*N/A*	*Total*
1887	0	3	1	0	2	0	0	6
1888	1	8	10	0	1	3	1	24
1889	2	13	10	5	1	2	0	33
1890	2	2	9	1	0	4	0	18
1891	0	6	1	2	1	2	0	12
1892	2	0	4	1	1	2	0	10
1893	0	3	4	0	2	2	0	11
1894	1	2	8	3	1	2	0	17
1895	15	3	19	5	2	3	1	48
1896	8	38	73	11	9	1	0	140
1897	1	2	15	1	1	4	0	24
1898	3	1	1	0	0	1	0	6
1899	1	5	4	4	0	0	0	14
1900	15	3	16	4	0	3	0	41
1901	18	7	26	2	1	3	0	57
1902	15	18	54	6	1	12	0	106
1903	21	23	63	14	11	9	3	144
1904	21	40	181	28	27	21	4	322
1905	35	22	46	17	5	16	6	147
1906	33	43	94	15	18	15	3	221
1907	29	33	67	7	14	14	0	164
Total	223	275	706	126	98	119	18	1565
%	(14.2)	(17.6)	(45.1)	(8.1)	(6.3)	(7.6)	(1.2)	

competition in the labor market and changes in the workplace—two interconnected processes—led workers to adopt more permanent and formalized organizational structures. These structures were designed in part to ensure solidarity among non-craftworkers during strikes or when demands were being pressed on employers. At the same time, bargaining between capital and labor began to revolve around written agreements, and workers found it necessary to monitor and enforce these contracts through formal ongoing organizations. All these new bargaining arrangements, organizations, and forms of conflict (together with growing state mediation of capital-labor conflicts) gave shape to a new, formalized system of industrial relations.[10]

The growth and changing characteristics of the labor force were accompanied by the emergence and spread of strikes and other forms of labor unrest. The evolution and occupational distribution of strikes during the 1887–1907 period are represented in table 1. These data are intended to overcome problems with existing strike statistics.[11] The data in table 1 were compiled by recording all instances of labor unrest reported by the Argentine daily *La Prensa* between 1887 and 1907. These data are not intended as an exact count of every instance of labor unrest

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during the period under consideration. Rather, they offer a representative indicator of year-to-year trends and the composition of labor unrest in a period for which reliable data have so far been lacking. To assess the quality of the newspaper's reporting, the total strikes recorded in *La Prensa* were compared with those reported by the *Review of the River Plate* between 1887 and 1892, the *South American Journal* from 1887 to 1895, and the Socialist newspaper *La Vanguardia* from July 1894 to December 1900. Consistently, *La Prensa* provided more extensive coverage of labor unrest and recorded a greater number of strikes than any of the other three periodicals. Thus although no single newspaper can be expected to have recorded each and every instance of labor unrest, this comparison demonstrates that *La Prensa* data provide a representative sample of the overall composition and trends in strike activity. These new data include all press reports of actual events of labor unrest, such as strikes, walkouts, rallies, demonstrations, and general strikes. Excluded from these data were threatened or expected instances of labor unrest that were not eventually reported as actual events. This information was excluded because the press reported that a large proportion of threatened and expected events did not actually occur. All instances of labor unrest were recorded regardless of duration or size (as long as they involved more than a single worker).[12] This section will present in greater detail some of the conclusions that can be derived from this new set of data.

To begin with, a close relationship existed between strikes and seasonal fluctuations of labor demand in the countryside. Workers in urban areas were more likely to press their demands through strikes when crops were planted or harvested. These seasonal changes in employment opportunities affected wages and living conditions through their direct impact on the ability of workers to organize and press demands on employers. In the port, for example, strikes coincided with the agricultural season because the need to load ships increased the vulnerability of employers, a factor that workers used in pressing their demands. This approach was clearly acknowledged by one labor organizer interviewed by the press during a strike, who stated that the current effort of workers "responds to the opportunity presented to them by the growing progress of industry and commerce in the country; now that the arrival of railroads increases week by week, now that the movement in the ports is much greater than in previous years, and given that speculation is again becoming common—it is the propitious moment for those who sell their labor power to try to sell it at a higher price."[13]

Ten years later, newspapers were reporting that workers continued to press their demands during the peak of the agricultural season: "The organizers of . . . strikes choose the time of year in which they can produce greater economic disruptions. . . . By obstructing railroad traf-

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fic and shipments in all the ports during the period of harvests and exports, [they] produce an upheaval that is capable of increasing the degree of public calamities, with incalculable damage to producers, the railroad enterprises, export commerce, and therefore for the country."[14] Conversely, periods of slack agricultural production and bad harvests undermined the bargaining power of labor, particularly among railroad and port workers. In 1900, for example, *La Prensa* noted that a strike among port workers had been suspended because few ships were loading, a situation that left many workers willing to work for low wages.[15]

Hence waves of strikes generally coincided with rising rural wages and employment, while labor unrest tended to decline during the agricultural off-season. An inverse relationship existed between strike activity and economic recessions. Strikes declined precipitously during each period of recession or poor harvests, in the early 1890s, the late 1890s, and the mid-1910s. Because rural jobs acted as a safety net for unemployed urban workers, the combination of bad harvests and urban recessions dampened urban labor militancy the most. These periods not only undermined the ability of workers to press demands but provided employers with an opportunity to try to rescind previous concessions made to labor. Each time employment opportunities improved after a recession, strikes increased. Thus economic growth generally coincided with good agricultural harvests and was often characterized by significant outbursts of labor militancy. During these waves of labor militancy, employers sought to preempt strike activity by meeting the demands of their workers before the latter resorted to an actual strike. In other words, economic improvement provided a favorable context for all workers to press their demands.

Between 1887 and 1914, the geographical distribution of strikes shifted. For this period as a whole, 53 percent of all recorded strikes occurred in the city of Buenos Aires and surrounding suburbs, while 20 percent of these strikes occurred elsewhere in the province of Buenos Aires, 14 percent in the province of Santa Fe, and 11 percent in other provinces. Over time, then, strikes occurred in a number of cities other than Buenos Aires, the most important being Rosario (in the province of Santa Fe) and Bahia Blanca (in the province of Buenos Aires). In the early twentieth century, however, strikes became more frequent in smaller cities and towns within the province of Buenos Aires as well as in other provinces of Argentina.

Finally, for the 1887–1907 period as a whole, almost 60 percent of all recorded demands revolved around wage issues. Most were directed at gaining higher wages, although they also involved demands for more regular payment and the elimination of piecework as well as efforts to end fines and prevent wage reductions. The second most important set of demands (close to 40 percent) revolved around work

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schedules. During the strikes of 1896 and 1904 in particular, these demands were aimed at establishing an eight-hour working day. Strikes also involved other demands, including better working conditions, restriction of female and child labor, recognition of unions, solidarity with other workers,and opposition to layoffs and firings.

But not all sectors of the labor force moved simultaneously or at equal speed toward new institutional arrangements. Thus the specific forms of action and organization adopted by labor varied among different groups of workers. This variation can be explained by the intensity of the changes undergone by the organization of the workplace and the labor market and by the interaction between these two spheres, which varied a great deal across different sectors of the labor force. To the extent that strikes indicated transition toward new forms of labor action and organization, strike data can be used to highlight noteworthy differences among different sectors of the labor force.

How prone were workers in different occupational categories to engage in strike activity? Precise measurement is difficult because of the absence of data. Table 1 provides an initial description of the overall distribution of strikes but does not control for the size and distribution of the labor force, as does table 2. In the second table, the relative strike intensity of different manufacturing sectors has been calculated by dividing the total number of strikes registered between 1887 and 1907 by the number of workers employed in each sector in the mid-1890s. This calculation provides an estimate of the relative intensity of strikes among different occupational categories.

As suggested by table 2, after controlling for the size of the labor force, the port had by far the greatest relative intensity of strikes. It was followed by manufacturing, which tallied the highest absolute number of strikes for the period as a whole. Labor studies in Argentina have generally portrayed transportation as the most militant sector of the labor force, but the data in table 2 suggest that the relative intensity of strikes in this sector was lower than in either manufacturing or port activities. The same applies to construction, where the intensity of strike activity was considerably lower than in other occupational categories. Finally, the intensity of strikes in commerce and services was negligible when compared with other categories. Although a fair amount of historical research has been conducted on the forms of action and organization adopted by some sectors of the labor force such as railroad workers, fewer studies have been made of labor unrest in manufacturing.[16] For this reason, the remainder of this section will consider the major changes affecting the organization of the workplace and the labor market in manufacturing as well as the impact of these changes on the forms of action and organization adopted by manufacturing workers.[17]

During the 1880s, new methods of production were introduced

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TABLE 2 Intensity of Strikes by Occupational Category, 1887–1907

Occupation	*Labor Force*	*Strikes*	*Relative Strike Intensity*
Commerce and Services	708,000	98	.013
Construction	38,530	126	.327
Transportation	63,000	275	.436
Manufacturing	136,481	706	.517
Ports	12,000	223	1.858

Note: The sources of strike data are discussed earlier in this section. Early census data do not always provide the appropriate occupational breakdown of the labor force. The figures for construction, manufacturing, transportation, and commerce and services have been derived from Dorfman (1970, 206–7). Arriving at an estimate of the total number of workers employed at the ports is more difficult. Falcón estimates a total of 18,000 port workers employed in 1907 (1986, 89); a plausible, but conservative, estimate is that the work force grew by 50 percent between 1895 and 1907. The work force in 1895 was probably even lower than my estimate, which would mean that it was even more "strike-prone" than indicated by table 2.

in manufacturing that facilitated the predominance of large enterprises. Although the average number of workers employed in most manufacturing enterprises in the late nineteenth century remained small, much variation could be found, ranging from small shops employing one or two workers to large factories employing hundreds. For example, by 1904 the Unión Industrial Argentina (UIA) represented 300 enterprises employing 30,000 workers—an average of 100 workers per manufacturing establishment. By 1910 the UIA represented 1,047 establishments employing 150,000 workers—an average of 143 workers per establishment (Dorfman 1970, 131–32).

These trends were analyzed in 1898 by Adrián Patroni, who argued that industrial concentration was a major cause of the wave of strikes in 1895–96. According to Patroni, mechanization had increased the productivity of craftworkers in some areas of manufacturing (such as shop carpenters) while in other areas it had allowed employers to replace craftworkers with unskilled workers (as with leather workers, hatmakers, marble workers, and mechanics). Hence mechanization had allowed large enterprises to lower their costs of production. This trend not only resulted in falling wages but also increased competitive pressures on small shops through falling prices. Facing growing price competition, owners of small shops were forced to intensify their own exploitation of workers by such means as introducing piecework (for carpenters) and lowering wages (for leather workers). Patroni's interpretation points to a key line of investigation into the emergence of a labor movement in the 1880s and 1890s: namely, the ways in which innovations in the labor process and in authority relations within the workplace affected different groups of manufacturing workers.

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Some of these innovations were technological in nature. For example, electricity was being installed in many manufacturing establishments throughout the 1880s and 1890s and was used by employers to lengthen the working day, a move that generated protests from workers. In the late 1880s, German carpenters in Buenos Aires protested that "electric light has been introduced into many workshops with the view of making us work extra hours, and reducing us to the same wretched conditions as operatives in European factories."[18] Installation of electricity was nonetheless a drawn-out process. In 1895 port workers complained that the installation of electricity was forcing them to work day and night, but as late as the mid-1900s, workers at the port protested layoffs following the installation of electric loading belts by a major export company.[19]

Other changes involved authority relations within the workplace. As factories grew in size, authority in production was no longer exercised solely through customary arrangements between craftworkers and their direct employers but was codified into company rules and enforced by foremen. These changes undermined craft control over the labor process, generating resistance on the part of skilled workers. In the mid-1890s, for instance, workers at a machine shop struck to protest the disruptive impact of new foremen who "destroyed the democratic and kind regime [of the workshop], replacing it with autocracy, disrespectful arrogance, policies of whim and animosity, that are wounding little by little the self-respect and dignity of all."[20]

Finally, all these innovations also brought changes in the organization of the labor market. These changes included adoption of direct employment and control by management in factories, transformation of small craft shops into sweatshops engaged in external subcontracting, and factory employment of a growing number of unskilled workers. The impact of these changes on strikes, however, varied greatly in different areas of manufacturing.

Metal shops and foundries were a key area of strike activity. Workers in urban machine shops grew from 4,900 in 1869 to 28,000 by 1895 and to 78,800 by 1914 (Ortiz 1971, 115; Dorfman 1970, 207). Some of these foundries were relatively large: in the early 1890s, a single foundry employing 250 workers produced twelve tons of cast iron a day. By the mid-1890s, frequent references were being made to various factories employing more than one hundred workers and to one foundry employing five hundred workers.[21] Workers at foundries and metal shops at the turn of the century retained a high degree of control over access to the trade, however. Acquisition of skills was organized through formal apprenticeships, and employment at the shops was restricted through craft arrangements that excluded child and female labor. The success of labor organizations among workers in the metal

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TABLE 3 Distribution of Strikes in Argentine Manufacturing, 1887–1907

Occupation	*Number of Strikes*	*Percentage of Strikes*
Metalworkers	126	17.8
Woodworkers	65	9.2
Food and beverage workers	66	9.3
Leather workers	23	3.3
Alpargatas workers	14	2.0
Hatmakers	10	1.4
Tailors and seamstresses	31	4.4
Textile workers	34	4.8
Shoe workers	31	4.4
Cigarettemakers	29	4.1
Bakers	106	15.0
Carriagemakers	20	2.8
Printers	24	3.4
Other	127	18.0
Total	706	99.9

trade suggests that their bargaining power was strengthened through the enforcement of craft controls over both employment and the organization of the workplace.

The organization of the metal industry reveals similarities to that of wood shops. Overall, carpenters grew from 14,000 in 1869 to 28,000 in 1895 and 53,000 by 1914, while carpenters in manufacturing enterprises grew from 3,000 in 1869 to 10,000 by 1887 (Ortiz 1971, 115; Dorfman 1970, 207).[22] According to the 1887 Buenos Aires census, "Until a few years ago, most of the furniture sold [in Buenos Aires] was introduced from France, Germany, England, and Austria; but today most of it [is produced] in national factories."[23] Work at the wood shops still required considerable skill, and carpenters generally continued to own their own tools. This situation permitted early formation of tight craft organizations, although their bargaining power was not as strong as that of metal workers. Piecework was far more common in the wood shops than in the metal trade, and smaller shops made it more difficult for workers to organize. In 1920 the *Almanaque del Trabajo* suggested that most strikes among woodworkers prior to 1904 ended in failure (Renoldi 1920).

The introduction of the sewing machine symbolized the reorganization of textile production in the late nineteenth century. When the first sewing machine was brought to Buenos Aires in 1853, it generated fears of unemployment among seamstresses: "It became necessary to calm them, for the newspapers to become extensively concerned with the problem, explaining to them that the sewing machine would allevi-

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ate the tiring tasks of the modistas rather than harm them" (Guerrero 1944, 31).[24] The production of ready-made clothing grew considerably during the 1880s. As indicated by the 1887 Buenos Aires census, "Twenty years ago not a single shirt was made in Buenos Aires; today there are 89 factories producing 80 per cent of those demanded by local inhabitants, and 50 per cent of what is used by the entire Republic."[25] But the sewing machine also facilitated the spread of garment sweatshops in Buenos Aires (Sofer 1982, 102). By the late 1880s, the production of ready-made clothing with new techniques of production allowed garment employers to undermine craft controls over employment and the organization of the workplace. Both sweatshop owners and external contractors increasingly moved toward employing workers who had no craft tradition, with the result being that "the garment industry became the employer of women, children, semiskilled workers, and unemployed intellectuals with no skills at all" (Sofer 1982, 100). In some cases, large commercial enterprises contracted directly with independent external workers, who were paid lower wages than the craftworkers they replaced. But this trend did not guarantee the predominance of large garment factories. In the mid-1890s, *La Vanguardia* argued that tailors were "spread out by themselves or in small groups because the production of clothing has not yet fallen into the hands of big business."[26] Yet the nature of these small shops had been transformed. They were no longer independent but had become integrated as sweatshops into a subdivision of tasks organized through external subcontracting by large enterprises and contractors (Sofer 1982, 100).

Following the introduction of new techniques of production, large employers claimed that the nature of the work had become thoroughly transformed, requiring qualitatively new types of workers—that is, unskilled workers, most of whom were women and minors. Hence in both reorganized sweatshops and large enterprises, the use of new techniques of production was accompanied by the incorporation of new labor supplies and intensified competition between craftworkers—the male tailors—and the new unskilled female and juvenile workers. Accurate data on the late nineteenth century is scarce, but the census of Buenos Aires in 1911 indicated that more than fifty-two thousand workers were employed in textile and garment production. As indicated in table 4, most of these workers were women. Other evidence confirms the predominance of women in producing ready-made clothing. For example, a 1907 study of sixty garment enterprises showed a total labor force of eleven thousand workers, over 99 percent of which were women. Most of these workers were employed by large enterprises: 48 percent of the labor force was employed by a single firm, and the ten largest firms together employed 86 percent of the total work force.[27]

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TABLE 4 Gender of Workers in Textile and Clothing in Buenos Aires according to the 1911 Census

Occupation	*Number of Workers*	*Number of Women*	*Percentage of Women*
Seamstresses	16,316	16,316	100.0
Dressmakers	16,086	16,086	100.0
Tailors	10,358	715	6.9
Weavers	1,929	1,395	72.3
Corsetmakers	1,049	1,049	100.0
Pantmakers	901	901	100.0
Coatmakers	692	692	100.0
Laundresses	572	556	97.2
Shirtmakers	560	467	83.4
Ribbonmakers	216	216	100.0
Tiemakers	189	173	91.5
Capmakers	166	94	56.6
Glovemakers	141	101	71.6
Total	49,175	38,761	78.8

Source: "Poblaciốn obrera de la República Argentina," *Boletín del Departamento de Trabajo* 16 (31 Mar. 1911):24–27.

Working conditions in the garment industry directly affected the ability of workers to exert demands on employers. Sixty-nine percent of the garment workers in the 1907 study worked at home, not in factories. This arrangement was typical of the organization of ready-made clothing production in both the larger enterprises and smaller shops. The geographical dispersion and lack of constant daily interaction of garment workers made it particularly difficult for them to organize. These characteristics also intensified pressures on female wages in garment production because factory wages were considerably higher than wages paid for work at home.[28]

Women also predominated in factory textile production.[29] One exception was the large Prat weaving factory, one of the few enterprises employing mostly male workers. The press, however, found this situation worthy of comment: "In contrast with the custom of many factories, where the looms are run by women, here men are in charge of this work due to the great difficulty in finding women workers. Nevertheless, the work of women would be preferable, according to the director of the factory, not only because it is generally less costly but also because of the greater care with which women attend to a job that requires not strength but patience."[30]

Indeed, most workers in mechanized textile factories at the turn

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of the century were women and children.[31] A 1910 study of thirty-four weaving and spinning factories by the Argentine labor department reported more than seven thousand workers employed in these industrial establishments, of which 56.4 percent were adult women, at least 14 percent were girls under sixteen, and only 29 percent were men. A labor department inspector reported that the proportion of minors was probably even higher: "I can state, without exaggeration, that the number [of minors] that should be registered can be increased by 30 percent because I have observed that employers frequently hide the truth when providing this information."[32] According to this study, wages for men were generally 33 percent to 100 percent higher than those for women.

Jobs in textile and garment manufacturing were eventually defined as "skilled" or "unskilled" according to whether they were performed by adult males, women, or children; thus reconstruction of a hierarchy of job positions involved reconstructing a gender hierarchy. "Unskilled" labor was defined not by technical considerations but by wage differentials, stability of employment, and authority relations within the production process. Women's traditional textile and clothing production in the household did not lack the technical knowledge and manual dexterity traditionally claimed by "skilled" labor, yet the skills women exercised in household production went unrecognized. With few exceptions, women were excluded from craft positions and the organizations that represented craftworkers. As women were incorporated into urban enterprises, they were designated as "unskilled" labor and given low-paying subordinate positions within the labor structure that were particularly vulnerable to layoffs.

Because creating "unskilled" job positions within the production process was designed to undermine customary craft controls over the workplace and the labor market, this approach necessarily entailed incorporating a new strata of labor. The displacement of craftworkers by unskilled workers developed hand in hand with the increase in the number and proportion of women in the textile and garment industries. In this sense, gender differentiation became an essential part of the changes in the organization of the workplace and in the labor market characterizing the period around the turn of the century.

Does this conclusion contradict Guy's assertion that women in Argentina were marginalized from factory production?[33] Not necessarily, because it may well be that women and children were displaced or kept away from many factory jobs after the late 1880s. In fact, women were already being marginalized from jobs as diverse as shearing and cigarette-making, and they faced various forms of institutional discrimination as well. For example, the Argentine Comisión General de Inmigración announced in 1897 that "single women, with no family" would not be accorded the usual benefits received by other immigrants,

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such as temporary housing. A few days later, the press complained that as a result of the measure, many recently arrived single women were forced to wander around the city looking for some form of shelter.[34] The point is, however, that gender divisions were reconstructed through a hierarchy of job positions and protective legislation, partly promoted by craftworkers themselves to limit competition for manufacturing jobs. In this respect, protective legislation sought by labor organizations after the turn of the century played a key role by restricting women's access to factory jobs. José Panettieri noted that following congressional approval of a bill restricting the women's workday, large commercial houses producing garments closed their shops and moved toward contracting out piecework (Panettieri 1984, 71). In this sense, the strong presence of women in textile factories at the turn of the century was part of a broader process of transition in manufacturing that culminated in many areas of production with women becoming gradually marginalized from the factory floor.[35]

In the shoe industry, a few large factories mechanized some stages of production after the 1880s and engaged in direct employment and control of workers.[36] Employers argued that mechanization was necessary to avoid severe labor shortages. Thus when asked by the press how many workers he employed, the owner of a shoe factory replied: "Currently we can't give you precise numbers. We have such a shortage of hands that we manufacturers fight over personnel to the extent of having variations of 100 to 180 workers every fortnight. . . . Because a great number of them work at home, we have two inspectors who do nothing else but keep watch over them so that they will speed their work and to make sure that no one else takes the workers away from us. What happens to us is also happening to all or most of the factories. . . . In less than six months, we've had to raise salaries over 25 percent."[37] But like the outcome in garment production, large factories did not become the norm. By the mid-1890s, most shoe workers were still employed at home on a piece-rate basis or in sweatshops. As late as 1910, an estimated two-thirds of the work force in shoe production worked outside industrial establishments. Finally, even within the factories, much work continued to be carried out on a piece-rate basis (Panettieri 1984, 68).[38]

As in garment production, external subcontracting in shoe production played a crucial role in that its growing importance led to a transformation in the nature of small-scale shops. In the 1890s, these small shops grew in size by specializing in specific tasks such as cutting soles, for which they subcontracted to factories. Thus female homeworkers in the shoe industry were eventually employed primarily to finish shoe uppers (Guy 1981, 88). Workers in sweatshops began earning higher wages than average homeworkers. But in the process, the

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nature of homework in the shoe industry began to change: the home had been the main site of production and sale of shoes in earlier decades, but by the 1890s, homework involved very specific tasks within shoe production and had been subordinated to large enterprises.

Similar changes affected the manufacture of *alpargatas*, an inexpensive kind of shoewear made of canvas uppers and roped soles. According to the 1887 Buenos Aires census, a total of 61 small *alpargaterías* employed 459 workers (an average of 7.5 workers each), while a single large factory employed 530 workers.[39] In 1907 a study of thirty-two enterprises conducted by the labor department showed that thirty-one shops were employing 493 workers (an average of 16 workers each), while the labor force employed by the same large factory had tripled to 1,561 workers.[40] Within the smaller shops, the labor force consisted largely of the owner, family members, and a few employed craftworkers.[41] The proportion of women employed in the large factory was considerably greater than in the smaller shops. In 1887, for example, 85 percent of the workers employed in the large factory were women, while female participation had dropped to 58 percent in the smaller shops.[42] By 1907 women and children composed 71 percent of the labor force in the large alpargatas factory, but their rate of employment in the smaller shops had declined to 22 percent.[43]

In the production of textiles, garments, and shoes, the 1880s and 1890s constituted a period of transition. Direct employment of unskilled workers in mechanized factories combined unevenly with the craft relations prevailing—albeit with growing difficulties—in the small shops. Facing the erosion of their craft system, craftworkers attempted to improve their bargaining position by creating formal craft organizations to regulate entry into the new jobs. These organizational efforts were facilitated by a double objective among the skilled factory workers and craftsmen of increasing wages and tariffs while controlling access to factory positions by the unskilled. From the 1890s on, these objectives were increasingly implemented through written agreements with employers rather than through informal rules. Continued enforcement of these agreements required adopting more permanent and stable forms of organization by labor. In overall terms, the success of these organizational efforts allowed for a smoother transition between the craft system prevailing prior to the late 1880s and the factory system prevailing around the turn of the century.

Skilled artisans working in either their homes or small shops generally underwent an initial process of organization before officially declaring a strike. Because of the artisans' isolation, organizations were necessary to ensure solidarity among a majority of workers for any given set of demands. At the same time, these demands were not generally directed toward a single employer but toward a broad range of

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large and small employers. Achieving any set of demands thus required a long process of negotiation that included drawing up a list of grievances, providing opportunities for amenable employers to endorse the list of demands, organizing selective strikes of those employers who failed to sign the agreement, sending workers to amenable employers, and so forth. For example, journeymen tailors struck in 1889, but this action had been preceded by the slow constitution of a common organization.[44] Eight thousand shoemakers struck in 1892, but they had begun organizing a potential strike as early as 1888.[45] A similar pattern of organization was followed by barbers, bakers, barrel makers, and similar categories of craftworkers. These craft organizations were composed primarily of male workers and generally sought to exclude women, children, and other unskilled workers from the labor force. Political allegiances tended to be stronger among these craft organizations than among unskilled workers.

Craftworkers were displaced most rapidly in some foodstuff industries (like pasta manufacture), cigarette-making, and the hat and alpargata industries. Here mechanization proceeded rapidly on a large scale. These factories undermined male craftworkers on two fronts: they employed primarily women and children and undermined independent workers through price competition. In marble-cutting, a machine was introduced that "in a [short] while did the work that . . . a good craftsman could complete with much difficulty in a day."[46] In the hatmaking industry, large factories also displaced small shops and employed mostly women. Workers struck in 1900, demanding that children be replaced by adult male workers, but although this demand was apparently met by employers, the workers struck again two months later complaining that they were now being paid children's wages.[47] In cigarette-making, when the Fábrica Nacional de Tabacos was established in 1889, its owners introduced twelve new Bousak machines imported from the United States. Each machine, attended by one woman with the help of two children, could produce one hundred and twenty thousand cigarettes in a ten-hour day.[48] In a few years, cigarette factories had displaced small independent producers. The press reported that "the machines on the one hand and the competition of women on the other have partially displaced craftsmen in cigarette factories."[49] Finally, a similar process took place in many foodstuffs factories: in 1896 journeymen in pasta factories struck to prevent owners from employing young men and women at lower wages.[50] Craftworkers in all these industries found their job positions being redefined through the introduction of new technologies and the breakdown of skills. Craftworkers struck frequently throughout the 1890s, generally seeking to exclude unskilled workers from the labor force, but the available data on strikes suggests that most of these actions ended in defeat.

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Meanwhile, the nature of capital-labor conflicts in large, mechanized enterprises was also undergoing a major change. Strikes and organizations were shaped less by craft traditions (as in the case of shoeworkers) but revolved increasingly around new opportunities offered by the large concentration of workers in a single enterprise. Workers associated readily in large groups, which made it easier to enforce adherence to strikes. Generally, a small commission of workers would bring up either an oral or written list of demands, and if these were turned down by management, a majority of workers would walk off their jobs. Very often, foremen represented workers in pressing demands on management. In fact, adherence to strikes was often reinforced by existing lines of authority within the shops, which explains why strikes were frequently organized to demand the reinstatement of popular foremen. After the onset of a strike in these large enterprises, workers established more representative and permanent forms of organization in order to engage in negotiations with management. These organizations often developed from the original commissions formed by workers, although the transition was often slow or easily disrupted.

But even within these factories, the "skilled" and the "unskilled" workers organized themselves differently. Skilled positions were either more difficult to replace at will by employers or involved a measure of worker authority within the workplace or both. As a result, these workers could often bargain with management from a relatively strong position. Unskilled workers, in contrast, were subject to greater competitive pressures from other workers who were willing to work for lower wages. Hence unskilled workers had to push harder to create organizations strong enough to press their grievances effectively. This situation clearly applied to female manufacturing workers, most of whom had been newly incorporated into the labor force as unskilled workers. In terms of capacity to organize and to press their grievances successfully, no significant differences existed between male and female unskilled workers in manufacturing.

Finally, a few sectors of the labor force experienced little change in their basic organization and remained organized primarily under a craft system. Such was the case of jewelers (as analyzed by Eugene Sofer), as well as watchmakers, confectioners, custom tailors, and similar groups. The bargaining position of workers in these craft professions remained strong and faced little challenge from any incipient process of mechanization or concentration. Given the nature of the transition, these organizations often failed to separate capitalist entrepreneurs, independent craft producers, and wageworkers. For example, only in 1897 did the jewelers' organization adopt a new clause excluding employers of more than one worker or two apprentices.[51]

Organizational trends in manufacturing differed somewhat from

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those in the railroads and the port. In the latter, cyclical periods of unemployment combined with long-term labor shortages to produce virtual explosions of labor unrest. During periods of economic recession, employers sought to withdraw the concessions made to labor during peak periods of activity. Conversely, peak export months gave workers strong bargaining power, which was used by labor organizations both to regain the ground they had lost previously and to press for new demands. Workers were well aware of their improved bargaining position during the peak of the export season. As indicated by one port striker in early 1904, "We shall see who can resist more; whether it will be us . . . or them . . . in these times when hands are scarce, and there are no men to move the machines, carry the produce, load and unload wagons, and transport products."[52]

In contrast, railroad workers experienced more stable employment, although unskilled workers employed at the various stations and shops faced more unemployment than skilled workers, particularly those employed on the line.[53] In the railroads, early establishment and strict enforcement of direct employment and control were structured into formal hierarchies in the workplace and in wage scales (Williams 1920, 199). For management, these hierarchies ensured a strict chain of command while providing an internal labor market. For labor organizations, they provided a basic structure around which to build formal channels of promotion, grievance procedures, and similar matters. These hierarchies, together with differences in employment patterns, divided workers according to skill. Skilled operatives on the line, like locomotive drivers, formed individual organizations that separated them from unskilled workers as well as from skilled body mechanics and yard operatives. Solidarity among locomotive drivers and other railroad workers was rare, their relations being often actually antagonistic. For example, the mechanics struck in 1896 and requested that machinists and drivers join the strike in solidarity, a request the drivers turned down. A year later, when the machinists and drivers went on strike over the arrest of a fellow driver who had been involved in an accident, the press reported that yard mechanics were ready to replace the machinists and drivers, having been in training for that purpose for a year.[54]

Despite the differences noted, important similarities can be found in the way that the characteristics of the organization of production facilitated labor organization at the railroads and the ports. To begin with, both the railroads and the ports were strategically important to commercial agriculture and foreign commerce in providing workers with strong bargaining power, particularly at harvest time. Furthermore, both railroads and the ports concentrated a large number of workers within the workplace and surrounding communities, an ar-

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rangement that facilitated common labor actions. Foremen at railroad shops and the ports played key roles in organizing trade unions and coordinating strikes. Control over employment and access to the trade gave foremen a powerful mechanism for enforcing solidarity among workers during labor conflicts. Communication between railroad and port workers in different locations was facilitated by the physical organization of exports. This pattern made it easier to coordinate labor conflicts, and strikes in the railroads and the ports often spread rapidly throughout the country. Finally, port and railroad workers often sought state mediation in strikes, while employers called on public authorities to intervene forcefully to end strikes or labor unrest. Repression was used in several instances when public authorities characterized strikes in the railroads and the ports as a threat to national interests. Over the long term, however, public authorities and employers sought to establish formal channels of communication with labor organizations. Hence the strategic economic position of railroad and port workers often allowed them to push successfully for demands that were unlikely to be won by other workers.

CONCLUSION

The 1880s and 1890s represented a period of transition for labor in Argentina. Before the late 1880s, formal labor organizations and strikes were rare. The bargaining power of workers derived primarily from endemic labor shortages, the ability to migrate, and craft control over access to skills. Few enterprises employed workers in large numbers, and little state intervention regulated organization of the workplace. After the late 1880s, however, strikes, labor organizations, and formal contracts between workers and employers became regular features of capital-labor relations. Moreover, state authorities began to intervene actively in labor matters. In other words, labor was not alone in adopting formal bargaining arrangements and new methods of action—employers were also joining corporate organizations in order to forge common resistance to the demands of strikers and to pressure the state into adopting a more active role in repressing labor militants. New state policies instituted after the early 1900s represented not only a response to the pressures of these corporate organizations but a more active role for the state in labor-capital relations as a whole.

Labor adopted new forms of action and organization in response to the combined and uneven pressures generated by growing competition in the labor market and far-reaching transformations of the workplace. Both sets of processes were closely related: changes in the organization of production undermined craft control over access to skills and allowed employers to bypass the informal craft organizations that

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had previously regulated employment and workplace organization. Together, these processes of change constituted a virtual revolution in the social and technical organization of production. Skilled and unskilled workers responded to these changes by adopting formal organizations and seeking to enforce a measure of bargaining power through strikes and other forms of labor unrest.

But not all sectors of the labor force were equally successful in adopting these new forms of action and organization because a process of internal differentiation was inherent in the new arrangements. For example, male craftworkers in foodstuff, hat, and cigarette factories struck frequently throughout the late 1880s and 1890s, often to protest their replacement by children and the reduction of their wages, but until at least the mid-1890s, their real wages fell a great deal. At the other end of the spectrum, stevedores and skilled railroad workers were able to capitalize on their new working conditions to press their demands effectively, and their real wages rose considerably between the mid-1880s and mid-1890s. The most successful trade unions at the turn of the century sought to regulate competition among the labor force through practices associated elsewhere with craft unionism—by restricting employment to union members and excluding women and children from the labor force. For this reason, unskilled workers were generally less successful in using strikes as an effective weapon and relied much more on migration as a means of achieving higher wages. This pattern suggests that the development of segmentation within the labor force was not primarily an outcome of employer's strategies but resulted from processes of competition among different sectors of the labor force.

The decades before and after the turn of the century constituted a period of transition. Old traditions interacted with new forms of action, with the slow emergence of new organizations resulting out of trial-and-error actions and confrontations with employers. Throughout the 1890s and 1900s, workers learned that "striking" provided effective leverage for pressing demands on employers but that this new form of action required new forms of negotiation and organization. Hence all workers increasingly resorted to formal organization and strikes as bargaining mechanisms. Over the years, waves of strikes grew larger as they involved an increasing number of enterprises and extended outside the boundaries of Buenos Aires to other provincial cities and towns. Strikes among railroad and port workers and among skilled workers in manufacturing were particularly important in touching off these waves of strikes: the gains made by workers in these sectors set the pace of demands and wage standards for a wide range of occupations. Thus when any of these sectors of the labor force achieved concessions from their employers, other workers would demand commen-

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surate gains. In this sense, the epicenter of labor unrest during this initial period centered around workers at the ports and skilled workers in manufacturing and transportation.

The new forms of action and organization adopted by labor were also shaped by the opportunities and constraints that workers encountered in the political arena. For example, some opportunities existed for political reform that labor organizations could use to regulate the length of the working day, the introduction of legal holidays, and the employment of women and children. Yet there were also limits to the opportunities for political reform, such as restrictions on labor militancy and electoral participation and the use of repression in response to labor unrest. Labor organizations confronted these political circumstances in different ways, which led to the development of alternative and often conflicting political tendencies. But between the Anarchist political discourse aimed against repression and the Socialist discourse revolving around reform there existed a large space occupied by most labor organizations. In other words, strikes, periodic confrontations between labor and capital, and individual trade unions occurred largely outside the boundaries of political organizations.[55]

Many of the institutional arrangements established among labor, capital, and the state during this transitional period continued to prevail for decades to come. Formal labor organizations became increasingly dominant within the labor movement as a whole. Trade unions grew in size, started to negotiate an increasing number of issues, and began to employ full-time personnel to handle administrative and day-to-day affairs. Strikes became a regular mechanism used by labor to press demands on employers, and formal contracts between labor and capital became the norm in many industries. Finally, the state continued to establish new institutional channels for mediation and intervention in labor conflicts that involved the combined use of repression and co-optation. All these features combined in a formal set of arrangements established among labor, capital, and the state that increasingly dominated the decades immediately following the turn of the century in Argentina.

NOTES

1. Cortés Conde's (1976) detailed wage study relies on more complete and homogeneous sources of data than the previous rough estimates by authors like Panettieri (1967, 60), Scobie (1974, 266), and Spalding (1970, 41), most of whom relied on the wage data collected by Buchanan (1897) and Patroni (1898). Cortés Conde suggests that real wages may have performed better than expected during the 1890 crisis, partly because the rising premium on gold gave workers a specific measure of the depreciation of their wages, which they could use to press demands for higher wages (Cortés Conde 1976, 15). But workers could just as easily have referred earlier to the rising price of foodstuffs to support their demands for wage increases. In

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reality, workers may have done better during the 1890 crisis due to the organizing capacity gained in previous years.

2. *South American Journal*, 23 Aug. 1887, p. 431.
3. As an example of this violence, the press reported that a police chief and fourteen soldiers in Chaco attacked one hundred *matacos* in retaliation for the reported rape of a white woman. The group of matacos (which included men, women, and children) were tied to horses in groups of ten and dragged by their feet to the river, where their heads were cut off and thrown into the water. See *La Prensa*, 21 Nov. 1903, p. 6.
4. *South American Journal*, 15 Mar. 1890, p. 343.
5. *South American Journal*, 31 May 1890, p. 688.
6. *La Prensa*, 14 July 1892, p. 6.
7. See *La Prensa*, 31 Dec. 1896, p. 3; 9 Jan. 1897, p. 4; 19 July 1897, p. 4; and 12 Aug. 1897, p. 4.
8. During the crisis in the late 1890s, for example, *La Prensa* noted in regard to these wage delays: "The clamor is general and sustained. The military, sailors, teachers, policemen, unskilled workers at the customs house, retired people, those on pensions, and workers dependant on national, provincial, and municipal coffers have all been sending us their complaints on a daily basis, asking us to be the spokesmen for their most pressing needs." See *La Prensa*, 15 July 1897, p. 4.
9. Appropriately, Bialet Massé noted in the early 1900s, "In Córdoba there is no spirit of association, from neither above nor below, and few strikes are carried out as in other places; but [workers] do exercise the Creole strike: they go somewhere else without excusing themselves" (Bialet Massé 1968, 227). The distinction between formal and unformalized organizations is made by Price (1980).
10. Space constraints prohibit expanding here on patterns of state intervention during the period under consideration. I have discussed this issue at length in the first chapter of my dissertation (Korzeniewicz 1988) and in Korzeniewicz (n.d.).
11. Because official statistics on strikes began to be compiled by Argentina's Departmento Nacional de Trabajo only after 1907, labor studies have relied primarily on secondary sources to assess the evolution of strikes in turn-of-the-century Argentina. For example, the strike statistics presented by Panettieri (1967, 114) and Rotondaro (1971, 39) were derived from Oddone's 1940 data (1975, 80–81). Munck (1984) primarily used Godio's data (1973), but Godio himself relied on narrative accounts by Marotta (1975) and Casaretto (1946). These various sources often contradict each other, and the lack of actual strike data has made it difficult to assess which source is the most accurate. Although the difficulty is partly due to the late starting point of official government statistics on strikes, the ultimate problem is that the key secondary sources quoted by most other authors (Oddone 1975 and Marotta 1975) failed to indicate how they constructed their strike data. My data collecting was facilitated by methodological conclusions reached previously in a number of studies of strikes and labor unrest, including Cronin (1979), Price (1980), Tilly (1981), and Shorter and Tilly (1974).
12. Press reports on strikes were often limited to recounting the kind of workers involved, the location of the event, and the date of occurrence. Less frequently, press reports also included information on the demands raised by workers in these instances. Only sometimes did press reports cover the nature of these strikes, including the manner in which they were organized, the role of Socialists and Anarchists, the mechanisms of mediation, relations among different groups of workers, and the outcome of the event. This kind of coverage provides rich and detailed insights into the organization of the workplace and the labor market and the development of institutional arrangements among labor, capital, and the state. Some of these data are presented throughout the article. A more extensive treatment of them can be found in my dissertation (Korzeniewicz 1988).
13. *La Prensa*, 11 Dec. 1895, p. 5.
14. *La Prensa*, 21 Sept. 1905, p. 7.
15. *La Prensa*, 9 Aug. 1900, p. 4.
16. On railroad workers, for example, see Baliño (1920) and the excellent research by

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Goldberg (1979) and Thompson (1984). Some discussion of workers at the port can be found in Falcón (1984, 1986). On the labor force in general, see Bialet Massé (1968), Bunge (1922), Godio (1973), Iparraguirre and Pianetto (1967), Pianetto (1984), Sábato (1985), and Salvatore (1986), which focuses on the provinces of the interior. Some aspects of change in the organization of the manufacturing labor force have been discussed by Bourdé (1974), Dorfman (1970), Guy (1981), Munck (1984), Patroni (1898), Renoldi (1920), and in the outstanding work by Sofer (1982). Mutual-aid societies have been examined by Baily (1969, 1982).

17. The forms of action and organization adopted by workers in railroads and the ports, as well as those among other sectors of the labor force, are discussed in greater detail in my dissertation (Korzeniewicz 1988).
18. *South American Journal*, 26 Nov. 1887, p. 665.
19. See two articles in *La Prensa*: 27 Aug. 1895, p. 6; and 22 July 1907, p. 6.
20. *La Prensa*, 23 June 1896, p. 7.
21. *La Prensa*, 1 Mar. 1891, p. 6; and 23 June 1896, p. 7.
22. See Pueblo de Buenos Aires, *Censo general de población, edificación, comercio e industrias de la ciudad de Buenos Aires, capital federal de la República Argentina* (Buenos Aires: Compañía Sudamericana de Billetes de Banco, 1889), 16–19, 44–47.
23. Ibid., 223.
24. The evolution of importing sewing machines is difficult to ascertain, but the *South American Journal* noted in the late 1880s that 19,083 sewing machines had been imported in 1886, 24,440 in 1887, and 25,027 in 1888. Most of these machines were imported from Germany (63 percent in 1886, 68 percent in 1887, and 62 percent in 1888); the second major source of sewing machines at the time was the United States (22 percent in 1886, 20 percent in 1887, and 19 percent in 1888). See *South American Journal*, 28 Dec. 1889, p. 814. According to the Buenos Aires Census, 20,008 sewing machines imported in 1887 were sold by fourteen enterprises for $304,738. See Pueblo de Buenos Aires, *Censo general*, 168, 223.
25. Pueblo de Buenos Aires, *Censo general*, 321.
26. *La Vanguardia*, 30 May 1896, p. 3.
27. "Condiciones del trabajo en la ciudad de Buenos Aires," *Boletín del Departamento Nacional de Trabajo* 3 (31 Dec. 1907):323–24.
28. See "Trabajo de la mujer a domicilio," *Boletín del Departamento Nacional de Trabajo* 19 (31 Dec. 1911):788–96. It is difficult to find reliable data on wage differentials. The *Anuario Estadístico del Trabajo* published in 1914 by the Departmento Nacional de Trabajo included two sets of data on wages, one on wages of female factory workers and another on average wages for female homeworkers over the age of sixteen. The data on factory wages was based on an extremely small sample of the working population, but they indicate wages for seamstresses to have been $2.23 per day in the factory and $1.13 for homeworkers, while *modistas* at the factory earned $2.98 as opposed to $1.65 at home. See *Anuario Estadístico del Trabajo* for 1914, 142–43, 194–95.
29. The San Martín factory, which produced socks and shirts, employed mostly women. See *La Prensa*, 3 Apr. 1893, p. 5. The Dell'Acqua weaving factory employed mostly women on some looms, a combination of men and women on others, and men on a third section of looms. Three-quarters of the factory's total work force were women, however. See *La Prensa*, 24 Jan. 1895, p. 5; and *La Prensa*, 19 Mar. 1895, p. 4. The undergarment weaving factory of Baibieni y Antonini employed 300 women out of a total work force of 350. See *La Prensa*, 4 Sept. 1894, p. 6. Women also operated looms in the small weaving shop of Soumet and Rivas. See *La Prensa*, 27 July 1889, p. 5.
30. *La Prensa*, 25 June 1890, p. 6.
31. One important exception was the Intendencia de Marina, which in the late 1890s moved in order to produce its own uniforms in a large shop employing 150 workers and 3 supervisors, all male. *La Prensa* opposed the establishment of such a shop, arguing that it was a mistake to employ men in a "class of work that is suitable for women, who have no other profession that allows them to make a living." See *La Prensa*, 23 Feb. 1899, p. 3. On this subject, see also *La Prensa*, 19 Feb. 1899, p. 5. The presence of women in factories was not limited to textile production. For example, the census published by the Unión Industrial Argentina in 1889 noted that 800 out of

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1,250 workers at the Compañia General de Fósforos were women. Most workers were women at the Fábrica de Bolsas La Primitiva; 300 out of 320 workers were women at the Gran Fábrica de Alpargatas; and 60 out of 140 workers were women at the Fábrica de Sombreros La Actualidad (Dorfman 1970, 122–27). At the Fábrica Nacional de Tabaco, the 150 cigar rollers were men, but 120 packers and the 12 workers handling the cigarette machines were women and children. See *La Prensa*, 24 Dec. 1889, p. 6. Early in 1904, city authorities in Buenos Aires released a study of 622 factories employing more than 6 workers, which showed that women and children composed more than 32 percent of a total labor force of 32,492 workers. See *La Prensa*, 12 Jan. 1904, p. 8. In 1907, according to a study of 43 factories carried out by the Departmento Nacional de Trabajo, 60 percent of the work force manufacturing cigarettes were women and children. See "Condiciones del trabajo en la ciudad de Buenos Aires," *Boletín Departamento Nacional de Trabajo* 3 (31 Dec. 1907):343. According to the 1914 census, women and children accounted for 63 percent of the national labor force in textiles, 61 percent of workers in cigarette production, and 32 percent of the work force in clothing. Overall, women accounted for 14 percent of the total manufacturing labor force. See Argentine Republic, *Tercer censo nacional (levantado el 1º de junio de 1914* (Buenos Aires: Talleres Gráficos de L. J. Rosso, 1917), 7:320, 395–403.

32. See "Cumplimiento de la ley 5291 en las fábricas de tejidos e hilanderías," *Boletín del Departamento Nacional de Trabajo* 12 (31 Mar. 1910):206.
33. "Women . . . had no contact with machinery other than sewing machines, and even those were often operated by men. Furthermore, many never saw the inside of a factory, as they worked at home and were paid by the piece" (Guy 1981, 77).
34. *La Prensa*, 13 Mar. 1897, p. 6.
35. For a review of protective legislation, see Guy (1981, 80–84), Isuani (1985), and Panettieri (1984). As indicated in Korzeniewicz (n.d.), protective legislation was a central demand of Socialists and Anarchists as well as most craft organizations and labor federations.
36. By 1894 one industrial establishment, the Fábrica Nacional de Calzados, had already mechanized and was producing shoes, boots, suitcases, and industrial leather belts and employed close to 1,000 men, women, and children. See *La Prensa*, 5 Mar. 1894, p. 5. Overall, the proportion of women and children was smaller among factory workers in the shoe industry: of 3,125 workers employed in shoe factories in 1910, 2,156 were men, 352 were women, and 257 were children (Panettieri 1984, 68).
37. *La Prensa* also claimed at the time that manufacturers were responding to these labor shortages by introducing labor-saving technology. See *La Prensa*, 19 Sept. 1892, pp. 3–4.
38. In the late 1880s, the shoe industry consisted of about 700 employers and around 3,000 workers; by the early 1900s, however, only 4,500 out of 14,500 shoe workers were employed in factories and large enterprises. See *La Prensa*, 24 Aug. 1901, p. 5.
39. Pueblo de Buenos Aires, *Censo general*, 16–19, 44–47.
40. "Condiciones del trabajo en la ciudad de Buenos Aires," *Boletín del Departamento Nacional de Trabajo* 3 (31 Dec. 1907):335.
41. Pueblo de Buenos Aires, *Censo general*, 335.
42. Ibid., 16–19; 44–47; 316–17.
43. "Condiciones del trabajo en la ciudad de Buenos Aires," *Boletín del Departamento Nacional de Trabajo* 3 (31 Dec. 1907):335.
44. *La Prensa*, 21 Apr. 1889, p. 8.
45. See *La Prensa*: 4 Dec. 1888, p. 6; 11 Dec. 1888, p. 4; and 16 Dec. 1888, p. 5.
46. *La Prensa*, 13 July 1888, p. 5.
47. *La Prensa*, 17 May 1900, p. 6.
48. *La Prensa*, 24 Dec. 1889, p. 6.
49. *La Prensa*, 12 Sept. 1901, p. 3.
50. *La Prensa*, 29 Jan. 1896. p. 6.
51. *La Prensa*, 11 Jan. 1897, p. 6.
52. *La Prensa*, 7 Jan. 1904, p. 6.
53. As noted for a different case during the same period, "there were limits to the

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number of men that could be cut before services were severely curtailed. High fixed costs and debts prevented railway managers from instituting substantial short-term operations during business slumps. A railroad, in this respect, was not a textile mill. A modicum of service had to be maintained, which meant that a core work force had to be steadily employed" (Licht 1983, 167).

54. *La Prensa*, 29 Dec. 1897, p. 5.
55. Socialist and Anarchist discourses appear to have been strongest at the level of the national federations. In effect, citywide federations were more open to political activity, but as noted, they accounted for a relatively small proportion of labor militancy evident at the time. Some have argued that the federations were the key mechanism of bargaining due to the weakness of individual trade unions (Rotondaro 1971), but my data suggest that this hypothesis is unlikely to prove accurate. Thompson (1984) has reached a similar conclusion, and even Oved (1978) acknowledges that the Anarchists had little influence within the labor movement until at least the 1900s. The various political tendencies that developed within the labor movement are examined in greater detail in my dissertation (Korzeniewicz 1988) and in Korzeniewicz (n.d.).

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