

HISTORY 4800

The War Against the High Cost of Living

How a Community of Polish-American Women
Fought to Better their Lives

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“If the workers don’t win the strike they’ll never win a thing from any other class of society again,”¹ exclaimed a short Polish woman, no older than thirty, with dark hair and sharp voice,² “We’re going to picket thoroughly all meat markets in Hamtramck...we’ll show the packers we mean business!”³ Cheers erupted among the 1,000 Hamtramck housewives, their husbands, and children who had marched in the parade of protesters down Joseph Campau Avenue all the way to Hamtramck City Hall in August of 1935.⁴ The Polish housewives held signs high stating “Strike Against High Meat Prices DON’T BUY” and “Strike for 20% cut in Meat Prices.”⁵ Their husbands “vigorously” chanted “United Poles against the high price of meat!”⁶ Who was this short woman who led this army of housewives and raised so much fervor over the price of meat?

Her name was Mary Zuk, a Polish-American housewife trying to survive during the Great Depression. Her then-husband Stanley Zuk lost his job in 1929⁷ and, like a majority of Detroit Polish-American families, they were living off welfare⁸. Mary Zuk had to insure her two children⁹ could eat and her family would survive, so the movement for the improvement of living was born. “We are going to keep fighting until we knock out these politicians. Working people don’t want to eat bones...we working people are the ones who can make him [President Roosevelt] and Congress raise our living standards... when we get through with meat, we’ll start on gas and electricity and the sales tax,”¹⁰ stated Zuk at a mass rally of 5,000 people during the

¹ “Meat Dealers Reduce Prices,” *Detroit News*, August 2, 1935.

² “Mrs. Zuk Achieves Fame,” *Detroit News*, August 11, 1935.

³ “Meat Dealers Reduce Prices,” *Detroit News*, August 2, 1935.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ “Parading Women Force Meat Markets to Close,” *Detroit News*, July 27, 1935.

⁶ “Meat Dealers Reduce Prices,” *Detroit News*, August 2, 1935.

⁷ “Zuk Demands Recount; \$5 Alimony, Says Judge”, *Detroit News*, May 23, 1937.

⁸ The sources used in this paper were unclear as to whether this welfare originated at the local, state, or federal level.

⁹ Associated Press, “Buyers Trampled by Meat Strikers,” *New York Times*, July 28, 1935.

¹⁰ Greg Kowalski, *Hamtramck: The Driven City* (Great Britain: Arcadia Publishing, 2002), 61.

Meat Strike. Zuk had big goals and rallied a whole community together with the same values. The Polish-American women of Detroit wanted a better way to afford quality food, a way to protect their family, and impact their community. Zuk's personality emulates what the "army" of housewives will be throughout this underappreciated strike: militaristic, strong, vocal, determined, courageous, organized, fiery, and stubborn. As Mary Zuk later foreshadows, "If we don't get what we want watch out."¹¹

In the 1930s Detroit was one of the largest industrial cities in the nation. As a hub of industry (mainly auto manufacturing), Detroit became a very diverse city with a variety of ethnic communities.¹² The largest ethnic group was Poles with a population of 300,000 out of 1,568,662 people living in Detroit,¹³ making Polish-Americans almost 20% of the Detroit population. The Depression hit the working class communities of Polish-Americans the hardest because they were one of the most active groups in the labor force. The effects of the Depression turned them into a "community driven to extremity."¹⁴ Being evicted from homes in Detroit and Hamtramck was a common occurrence to the Polish-Americans and in Detroit they were "one of the largest

¹¹ "Stores Closed in Hamtramck," *Detroit News*, July 27, 1935.

¹² A good resource on the history of Detroit in general is Arthur M. Woodford, *This is Detroit 1701-2001* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2001). Woodford creates a general history/pictorial history of Detroit with sections in the founding, industries, immigration, race, the decline of the City, etc. For specifically Detroit labor history: Steven Babson, *Working Detroit: Making of a Union Town* (New York: Adama Books, 1984). Babson argues that the working class life molded Detroit's history. He tells the story of the working class and explains how workers defined themselves and their interests based on the changing workplace.

¹³ Jane Dobjia, "Women on Strike: Polish Solidarity in Detroit," *Monthly Detroit* (1982), 61.

¹⁴ Thad Radzilowski, "Class, Ethnicity, and Community: The Polish Americans of Detroit and the Organization of the CIO," Southwest State University: Minnesota, 4. Other good secondary readings on Hamtramck and the Polish communities in Detroit include Greg Kowalski, *Hamtramck: The Driven City* (Great Britain: Arcadia Publishing, 2002); Arthur Evan Woods, *Hamtramck: A Sociological Study of a Polish-American Community* (New Haven: College and University Press, 1955); Frank Renkiewicz, "Polish American Workers 1880-1980," in *Pastor of the Poles: Polish American Essays Presented to Right Reverend Monsignor John P. Wodarski* (New Britain: Central Connecticut State College, 1982); Joseph A. Wyrwal, *The Polish Experience in Detroit* (Detroit: Endurance Press, 1992); and Paul Wrobel, *Our Way: Family, Parish, and Neighborhood in a Polish-American Community* (London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1979).

groups on welfare public assistance”¹⁵ (such as Mary Zuk’s husband). The Depression “attacked two of the most important pillars of Polish American working class life: a secure job and homestead.”¹⁶ It is no surprise that through this moment of great hardship Polish-American women of Detroit rose up together in order to improve their lives.

It’s Up to the Women is the title of Eleanor Roosevelt’s guidebook (published in 1933) for women during this time of crisis. Roosevelt believed that “the women have a big part to play if we are coming through it successfully.”¹⁷ Though she catered mostly to the women with wealthier backgrounds, Roosevelt was right in the fact that “women know that life must go on and that the needs of life must be met and it is their courage and their determination which...have pulled us through worse crises.”¹⁸ American women were critical in holding their families together during the Depression and it gave women the opportunity to begin “new patterns of behavior that might not have happened otherwise.”¹⁹

Polish-American women had always taken a leading role in their communities. Polish wives in Detroit and other communities were entirely in charge of the household economy. As the husband worked and made the income the wives controlled the budgeting and finances.²⁰ The women’s careful management “enabled breadwinners to survive long weeks without pay,”²¹ which would become very important through the long periods of unemployment during the

¹⁵ Ibid., 4-5.

¹⁶ Ibid., 5.

¹⁷ Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt, *It’s Up to the Women* (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Company, 1933), vii.

¹⁸ Ibid., ix.

¹⁹ Susan Ware, *Holding Their Own: American Women in the 1930s* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1982), 17.

²⁰ Frank Renkiewicz, “Polish American Workers 1880-1980,” in *Pastor of the Poles: Polish American Essays*, ed. Stanislaus A. Blejwas et al. (New Britain: Central Connecticut State College, 1982), 118-119.

²¹ Ibid., 121.

Depression. Polish-American women were respected in the organizations they were involved in²² and often influenced the men in their lives; such as inspiring ideas of resistance in their heads.²³ These women often had to take on jobs along with their household duties to make up for the loss of income (and one of the biggest industries for Polish women in Detroit was the cigar factories).²⁴ It was only natural that the Polish-American housewives began to strike as they managed the budgets and knew when the prices of necessities were too much for her family to be able to live.

The story of women actively striking and joining the political sphere in the early 20th century has had a history before the events of the Detroit Meat Strike and cigar strikes. The famous shirtwaist uprisings of 1909-1915 in New York were one of the first female-run strikes. The women in these strikes showed militancy and a quick amount of growth in a short period of time.²⁵ During the Depression housewives strikes occurred in New York then spread to other

²² John J. Bukowczyk, *Polish Americans and Their History: Community Culture and Politics* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1996), 74-75.

²³ Frank Renkiewicz, "Polish American Workers 1880-1980," in *Pastor of the Poles: Polish American Essays*, ed Stanislaus A Blejwas et al. (New Britain: Central Connecticut State College, 1982), 121.

²⁴ Patricia A. Cooper, *Once a Cigar Maker: Men, Women and Work Culture in American Cigar Factories 1900-1919* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1987), 238-239.

²⁵ Annelise Orleck, *Common Sense and a Little Fire: Women and Working-Class Politics in the United States 1900-1965* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 53-57. More good examples regarding the historiography of women's involvement in the labor movement include Philip S. Foner, *Women and the American Labor Movement* (New York: The Free Press, 1979); Nancy F. Gabin, *Feminism in the Labor Movement: Women and the United Auto Workers, 1935-1975* (London: Cornell University Press, 1990); Nan Enstad, *Ladies of Labor, Girls of Adventure: Working Women, Popular Culture, and Labor Politics at the Turn of the Twentieth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999); and Patricia A. Cooper, *Once a Cigar Maker: Men, Women, and Work Culture in American Cigar Factories* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1987). Gabin discusses women's relationship to and their experience of unionism using the UAW as her illustrating example. She mainly focuses on how women have always been a part of the auto labor force, but faced the troubles of segregated jobs from the male workers, the stigma of a "girls job", and having to force their way into the unionization movement and overcome discrimination. Foner focuses on the position of women workers during the Depression in a larger context. Foner does hone in on women's important involvement in the Detroit auto strikes along with the Flint strikes which may have been possible inspiration for the Polish-American cigar strikes in 1937. Enstad observes the contradictions female workers experienced as they were discriminated and excluded from "powerful cultural categories." Cooper explores the social division of the sexes in the cigar industries and the different cultures between the two sexes. She also illustrates the difficult conditions for women in these factories such as sexual harassment, unfair pay, unfair hours, health hazards, etc.

parts of the nation (just as the shirtwaist strike did) and all demanded a “better quality of life”.²⁶ Housewives were a very large interest group in America and were ready to “be awakened politically.”²⁷ The Detroit Meat Strike of 1935 was probably inspired by a larger strike started by Clara Shavelson and Rose Nelson in New York. In June they picketed their local butcher shops hoping to lower the prices of meat.²⁸ Mary Zuk herself stated that “housewives in New York, Chicago, and St. Louis had forced down the price of meat...by striking and boycotting” showing that she was influenced by this larger movement.²⁹ Even cigar strikes have had a small history in Detroit. June 29, 1916 450 Polish-American women walked out of the cigar factory and demanded wage increases; just as their 1930s counterparts were to do themselves.³⁰

The Detroit Meat Strike of 1935 and the cigar sit downs of 1937 have rarely been written about solely on their own nor have these stories been placed in the context of women’s history as this paper will do. The historiography of this topic can only be found in small sections of larger works regarding bigger topics. These include histories on Polish-Americans in Detroit or in the overall history of labor. John J Buckowczyk’s collection of essays, titled *Polish Americans and their History: Community, Culture, Politics*, contains an essay by Thad Radzilowski (“Family, Women, and Gender”) that argues the immigrant family helped to transform the traditional culture of the Polish countryside into an American urban ethnicity.³¹ There is great overall information on the role of women and their leadership of the family in order to transform the culture of the community. Most importantly, Radzilowski presents a brief account on Mary Zuk,

²⁶ Ibid., 219.

²⁷ Ibid., 226.

²⁸ Ibid., 235

²⁹ “Stores Closed in Hamtramck,” *Detroit News*, July 27, 1935.

³⁰ Patricia A. Cooper, *Once a Cigar Maker: Men, Women and Work Culture in American Cigar Factories 1900-1919* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1987), 259.

³¹ John J. Bukowczyk, *Polish Americans and their History: Community, Culture, and Politics* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1996).

the Meat Strike, and the cigar sit downs in Detroit. He argues that these strikes paved careers for Zuk and many other women who later emerged as leaders in the struggles for unionization. He also believes that the men/husbands/brothers of the Polish-American communities were inspired by the militancy of the female cigar strikers. To Radzilowski, most of the success of the union movement in Detroit is due to the courage and perseverance of these women. This paper will not go as far to say that the success of the union movement was due to these Polish women, but will agree that they were great inspirations to the community and did inspire a want to have a public life/career for many of these women.

Only one scholarly article solely concentrates on the Meat Strike. Georg Schrode wrote “Mary Zuk and the Detroit Meat Strike of 1935” in *Polish American Studies*. Schrode provides a summary of the events of the meat strike and asks questions regarding the Polish-American community in general. He argues that the Meat Strike illustrates the conflicts within the Polish-American community that result in a struggle between middle class leadership and Polish-American labor leaders for control over the working class in their community. He cites Mary Zuk as a new labor leader that challenged Detroit’s Polonia’s political leadership for control over the working class. He reveals the tensions during the meat strike between the housewives, the butchers/packers, and the local/federal government.³² Schrode takes a more political approach to looking at these events while this paper will concentrate more on gender. It will celebrate the accomplishments and strides that these women took to enter into a public life.³³

³² Georg Schrode, “Mary Zuk and the Detroit Meat Strike 1935,” *Polish American Studies* 432 (1986): 5-39.

³³ Regarding the cigar strikes, Jane Dobija’s article “Women on Strike: Polish Solidarity in Detroit” in *Monthly Detroit* magazine (published in 1982) was a very valuable source. Mainly it was a summary of the events, but includes many significant interviews from the cigar workers themselves about their working conditions and how the sit downs were inspired and began.

The Detroit Meat Strike of 1935 and the cigar strikes of 1937 have not had the attention that other strikes of the Depression have had in history, but they are no less important. This paper will reveal how the militaristic and organized tendencies of the Detroit Polish-American women led them to break the norms of femininity and gain a public role fighting for what they believed in; this included lowering the high cost of living and creating better workplace conditions. These strikes influence future events because, just like the Meat Strike was able to influence the Polish cigar workers, the women of the cigar industry were able to influence a variety of other industries throughout Detroit to fight for better workplace conditions and contribute to the overall unionization movement as a whole. The points that will be discussed include how the Depression caused women to take a more public stand, the tactics themselves, obstacles that were faced (including issues of outsiders perceiving the female sex, their politics, and their intelligence), and the influence the women had locally and nationally.

During the Depression the inner militancy that was instilled in these women from their first immigrant generation ancestors began to reveal itself in the desperate situation of making sure their families survived.³⁴ “My husband has been out of work for three years; I have two children and I know what hard times mean,”³⁵ Mary Zuk expressed how she was one of these Polish-American housewives who suddenly felt themselves without a husband’s income and were struggling on welfare. For Detroit’s Polonia it was getting to the point where it was affecting the overall health of the family; this was something that the housewife needed to keep under control.³⁶ Catherine Murda, a future meat strike leader, expresses how the only “meat we

³⁴ John J. Bukowczyk, *Polish Americans and their History: Community, Culture, and Politics* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1996), 77.

³⁵ “Group United in Meat Tieup,” *Detroit News*, August 6, 1935.

³⁶ John J. Bukowczyk, *Polish Americans and their History: Community, Culture, and Politics* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1996), 66.

can afford to buy is not fit for human beings to eat.”³⁷ The Depression caused a lack of income for the housewives to buy meat and food for their families, but also affected the quality that they could afford. For their family’s protection and health this was a call to action for these militant women. Mary Zuk explains to the *Detroit News* that she “organized the strike when she began to notice how deeply meat bills cut into the food budget of her family”³⁸ showing a motive for these women to leave the sphere of the home and into the public to fight against the high cost of living and “keep[ing] the family diet at a healthy level.”³⁹ When the survival of their family is up in the air the Polish-American women will fight to the death creating one of the strongest Meat Strikes in the country. “We will keep on until we get what we want,” Zuk had said confidently, “we will attack meat prices and public utility prices, too. We must be given a chance to live decently on what money we have.”⁴⁰ The Depression was one of the dire motives for these women to form their strong and forceful army pushing them into a political/economic fight where their ultimate goal was to extend from just meat prices to a fight against all types of consumer goods that contributed to the high cost of living.

The housewife “army” was not a farfetched reality in 1935 Detroit. The characteristics to describe an army would be disciplined, organized, forceful, and united. On July 28, 1935 “500 militant housewives” marched down the meat markets in Hamtramck and “hammered down the volume of retail meat sales...to less than 5 percent of normal”⁴¹ revealing that on the first day of this strike the women were so united they can force down the price already. The housewives’ plan of action is clear and becomes a trend throughout the length of the strike. The plan is a 20 percent reduction in the price of meat; “we are going to give them until Friday to cut their prices

³⁷ “Council Hears Meat Protest,” *Detroit News*, July 31, 1935.

³⁸ “Visions Spread of Meat Strike,” *Detroit News*, July 28, 1935.

³⁹ “Council Hears Meat Protest,” *Detroit News*, July 31, 1935.

⁴⁰ “Meat Prices Rise in Spite of Strike,” *Detroit Free Press*, August 9, 1935.

⁴¹ “Visions Spread of Meat Strike,” *Detroit News*, July 28, 1935.

to the retailer...If they don't we'll start picketing again Friday and keep it up" stated leader Mary Zuk.⁴² The women are continuously forceful in their demands to the meat packers and continually issued deadlines like this with threats of continuing the strike, and in this case they meant it. In another example the housewives gave the packers six days to lower the prices or the strikes will resume.⁴³ Within two days (of this six day deadline) Hamtramck butchers cut prices (though the women will continue to protest).⁴⁴ This shows that the women of the strike are in control of the situation and it demonstrates their refusal to back down from a challenge. They are forceful like an army should be and disciplined by all following and keeping with the same plan. They will keep the strike going as long as they need it.⁴⁵

Mary Zuk and the women of the housewife army found themselves in a position of power in the public arena which differs from the standard of femininity at the time. These women are in total control of sales at the butcher shops in Hamtramck and eventually Detroit. The unity of the women causes the butchers of Hamtramck to actually close their shops due to the lack of business. "If the housewives don't want to buy meat there is no use in our remaining open," explained one of the butchers affected and all shops prepared to remain closed for almost two weeks as long as the boycott was still active. In fact, the butchers did not buy new stock of meat because their sales are affected so much.⁴⁶ All of this was due to the practically 100 percent dedication to the cause by the housewives. The control and ability to unite and force the butchers to have to close shop reveals how these women are controlling the economy of their local communities. If these housewives had kept to their private sphere they would not have obtained this powerful position. Due to the "army's" forceful way of breaking into the public eye and their

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ "Council Hears Meat Protest," *Detroit News*, July 31, 1935

⁴⁴ "Meat Dealers Reduce Prices," *Detroit News*, August 2, 1935.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ "Butchers Quit in Hamtramck," *Detroit News*, August 3, 1935.

control over the meat economy they can obtain sympathy and respect for their movement. The Hamtramck City Council began to take the time to listen to their delegation's protest⁴⁷ and as the strike goes on women gained more respect to be able to take their grievances to the state and federal levels.⁴⁸

The strong community and the success of the "army" of housewives caused great growth in the numbers of participants as the strike continued. Starting with 500 strictly Hamtramck housewives on July 28⁴⁹ to 2,000 on July 31⁵⁰ and then 7,000 by August 20⁵¹, the movement has proven it attracted many other female followers creating a bigger impact on the city of Detroit. Not only did the strike grow in the number of the housewives, but it grew from just the Polish communities to others such as Wyandotte and Lincoln Park.⁵² By having such a strong presence and success in fighting for a 20 percent reduction of meat, the Polish women of Hamtramck successfully inspired women from other communities to leave their homes, take a militant stance, and fight against the high cost of living.

An army of 7,000 housewives striking in the city of Detroit would be intimidating. Additionally, by including women of different backgrounds from all around the city the women proved that this movement was bigger than just one community. The housewives of Detroit were all in agreement, the price of meat was too high. Not only does the strike expand in numbers, but also in the ideas of the fight. By August 23 Mary Zuk "visioned the movement in Detroit and Chicago against high meat prices as the beginning of a strong movement for price and wage regulation;" the women's goals changed from just wanting to lower meat prices to wanting to

⁴⁷ "Council Hears Meat Protest," *Detroit News*, July 31, 1935.

⁴⁸ "Wallace Warned by Meat Strikers," *New York Times*, August 20, 1935.

⁴⁹ "Visions Spread of Meat Strike," *Detroit News*, July 28, 1935.

⁵⁰ "Council Hears Meat Protest," *Detroit News*, July 31, 1935.

⁵¹ "Wallace Warned by Meat Strikers," *New York Times*, August 20, 1935.

⁵² "Meat off Detroit Housewives' Menus," *Literary Digest*, August 17, 1935.

continue a public life. They want to make this movement larger regarding the high cost of living and even wages for the working women they know (foretelling the future cigar strikes of 1937). This strike continues for four consecutive weekends⁵³ leading to national attention as delegations of housewives traveled to Washington and Chicago to entreat their position.⁵⁴

The tactics of the Polish-American women in the Detroit Meat Strike tended to be more violent and “unfeminine.” The first article *The Detroit News* publishes begins with discussing how “Amazons” have “beat and badgered luckless husbands...grabbed packages of meat from them, threw the meat into the gutters.” Allegedly, the housewives are to have said, “You aren’t afraid of a few women are you?”⁵⁵ Though the attacks specifically on husbands/males may have been slightly falsified, the fact that the militant Polish women were violent was reported repeatedly. On July 28 the *News* reported that the picketing “was accompanied by minor disorders, mostly of the hair-pulling and face slapping variety” and meat was knocked from customers hands and trampled on by the “Amazonian army.”⁵⁶ Women were even arrested for the violence they showed. On August 3 three were arrested for attempting to destroy a stock of meat by pouring kerosene over it.⁵⁷ Others were arrested for, allegedly, trying to pull a package of meat from an 80 year old while hitting him with a sign, taking meat from children, and attempting to take meat from a fellow woman.⁵⁸ At one point, Catherine Mudra, stated that “if milder means are not effective the women will block the passage of trucks in and out of packing plants...” showing how far these Polish housewives will go. ⁵⁹ Their tactics were to the point that

⁵³ “Detroit Meat Men Sue,” *New York Times*, August 17, 1935.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ “Stores Close in Hamtramck,” *Detroit News*, July 27, 1935.

⁵⁶ “Visions Spread of Meat Strike,” *Detroit News*, July 28, 1935.

⁵⁷ *Detroit Free Press*, August 3, 1935.

⁵⁸ *Detroit News*, August 13, 1935

⁵⁹ *Detroit Free Press*, August 9, 1935.

it made the butchers fear the women with a suggestion that the National Guard should make an appearance.⁶⁰

Violence in strikes and causing fear in those one is fighting against is very militaristic and not the traditional norms for this period. These Polish housewives did not care how they appeared to the outside; they would literally fight to lower the high cost of living. Fighting and violence, even today, are seen as more masculine traits rather than coming from the innocent housewife who was supposed to be softer and embody the traits of a sweet mother. The newspapers cover this violence extravagantly (and possibly exaggerate it) because it was unusual for this behavior to come from women.

Militancy for the Polish women and the community was something that had been instilled in them from the generations of Polish-American immigrants before them.⁶¹ It seemed to be the trend that only the Polish sections of the housewife strike seemed to be the most violent portions, so the militancy in the Polish culture must have had an impact. Comparing the Polish sections to the predominantly white middle class sections of Lincoln Park the differences in strategies are clear. The Lincoln Park women felt that picketing was too violent⁶² and their leader, Myrtle Hoogland, stated that “picketing and violent methods should be abandoned.” She continues to say that “I think picketing is bad psychology and reacts against the object of the strike...” and the women of Lincoln Park instead had signed pledges to not buy meat until the 20 percent reduction. According to the *New York Times*, their response was almost 100 percent with no

⁶⁰ “General Meat Tieup Feared,” *Detroit News*, August 5, 1935.

⁶¹ John J. Bukowczyk, *Polish Americans and their History: Community, Culture, Politics* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1996), 77.

⁶² “Meat Protest Here Spreads,” *Detroit News*, July 29, 1935.

meat being sold.⁶³ The two ethnic groups performed the strike with different tactics, but both came up with the same type of results.

Despite the strength of the movement there were obstacles that the women had to face from outsiders that wanted to undermine the strike movement and looked down upon them because they were women. Outsiders from the Polish communities underestimated the knowledge of the women regarding the meat market, federal taxes, and prices. In the August 4 edition of the *Detroit News* an article is published titled “Meat Packer Asks Fairness of Consumers.” In this article the meat packers state “they [the housewives] should analyze the situation carefully and be fair in their comments and actions”⁶⁴ displaying their belief that the women did not understand the situation. Even worse this condescension regarding the housewives education on the issues of the strike turns into an attack on their sex. “It is hard to explain meat prices to housewives...but we are going to try to get a Government *man*...to give an official explanation” states the director of the National Association of Retail Meat Dealers.⁶⁵ This same “Government man” is repeated in the *New York Times* adding “housewives are naturally upset over high prices.”⁶⁶ This is implying to the readers of these newspapers that, being women, the housewives need a man to explain the actual situation, which suggests the belief that the demands and strikes of the housewives are ridiculous.

Other masculine verses feminine issues arise throughout the strike and in the newspapers. As mentioned earlier, the rhetoric regarding “luckless husbands”, “pickets attack men,” and “husbands cudged”⁶⁷ show the newspapers trying to highlight how wrong the women are as

⁶³ “Consumers Widen Boycott in Detroit,” *New York Times*, August 11, 1935.

⁶⁴ “Meat Packers Ask Fairness of Consumers,” *Detroit News*, August 4, 1935.

⁶⁵ “General Meat Tieup Feared,” *Detroit News*, August 5, 1935.

⁶⁶ “Detroit Butchers Want Aid of AAA,” *New York Times*, August 5, 1935.

⁶⁷ *Detroit News*, July 28-29, 1935.

they are attacking men (Even the *New York Times* headlines “Men are Chief Victims.”⁶⁸). This highlights the “wrongness” of this role reversal where women are being violent to men. More than likely this “targeting” of men is exaggerated for this purpose in the newspapers. Even later on when Mary Zuk and her delegation go to Washington and confront Henry Wallace, the Secretary of Agriculture, he did not reply to the women’s demands but “left the question unanswered and disappeared down the corridor before the surprised group had realized that he had left.”⁶⁹ Secretary Wallace rudely ignored the women and just pushed them aside. Would this have been the case had this been a group of men?

Another obstacle the women had to face was the constant accusation of their strike being involved with and started by the Communist Party. Associations between housewives and the Communist party had happened before, such as the case of 1933 and those of the New York Meat strike led by Clara Shavelson.⁷⁰ The Polish workers in the Detroit auto factories often had socialist leanings themselves⁷¹ and Mary Zuk was most likely sympathetic to the Communist cause. To the Polish communities Communism was not such a big issue because many of them had those leftist sympathies. In fact, when Mary Zuk ran for re-election for Hamtramck City Council she lost not because she was determined to be a Communist, but because she had got a divorce from her husband.⁷² To outsiders of the community the threat of the Communist party calling the shots with this strike was a bad stigma. The pushing of the Communist rumors by the newspapers was “part of a ruse on the part of the butchers and meat packers to frighten timid

⁶⁸ “Buyers Trampled by Meat Strikers,” *New York Times*, July 28, 1935.

⁶⁹ “Wallace Warned by Meat Strikers,” *New York Times*, August 20, 1935.

⁷⁰ Annelise Orleck, *Common Sense and a Little Fire* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 234-236.

⁷¹ Frank Renkiewicz, “Polish American Workers 1880-1980,” in *Pastor of the Poles: Polish American Essays Presented to Right Reverend Monsignor John P. Wodarski* (New Britain, 1982), 129.

⁷² Greg Kowalski, *Hamtramck the Driven City* (Great Britain: Arcadia Publishing, 2002), 62.

people and split the ranks.”⁷³ This showed how strong their movement was because others wanted to undermine them with these rumors.

The Meat Strike housewives were able to overcome and mostly ignore these obstacles in order to fight for what they believed in. The housewives and the delegation sent to Washington D.C. to confront Secretary Wallace and President Roosevelt. The written petition given to the federal government shows exactly how educated the women were about their strike. The text of the petition is as follows:

The meat strike in Detroit...is a result of widespread discontent with the high cost of living...Upon visiting the local representatives of the big packers we were told that the Government was responsible for the high prices and not the packers...we say that both the Government and the packers are responsible. The Government, on the one hand, destroyed millions of head of cattle, introduced the processing tax and refused to aid the farmers during the drought, compelling them to sell their cattle for practically nothing. The money raised through the processing tax, and which was supposed to help the farmers, was gobbled by the bankers, loaners, and mortgage holders. The packers, on the other hand encouraged by the Government policies, boosted the prices sky high. The increase in profits for the last year is classic evidence...we see an increase of...a million dollars...Because we can no longer endure the high cost of living we demand the following: An immediate investigation of the packers, to be held in Detroit and ended in two weeks. The prosecution of the packers for profiteering...[and] a 20 per cent reduction on all meats.⁷⁴

This petition showed that the housewives knew that the large meat packer companies and the federal government was to blame for the high prices of meat and not the local butchers like the newspapers were constantly accusing them of thinking. The women understood this and came up with their own conclusions. They were bringing to the nation’s attention a new conversation regarding the possible corruptness of industries like the meat industry. The specific demands within the petition show that the women of Detroit have a goal and will stick to it no matter what. Now they demand more than just the 20 percent reduction of prices; they demand for an

⁷³ “Women Plan Fight on All High Prices,” *New York Times*, August 4, 1935.

⁷⁴ “Meat Protest Taken to U.S.,” *Detroit News*, August 19, 1935.

investigation of the packers for raising the already high cost of living. The women revealed how forceful and strong they were by threatening that they would not leave the premises of the Capitol until they spoke and gave this petition to Secretary Wallace.

The housewives were able to ignore the attacks towards their sex as they continued to break gender norms. In fact, the housewife army used these “norms” to their advantage at times. Three women were arrested as a result of violent methods used in the strike (this time it was attempting to pour kerosene on a butcher’s stock of meat).⁷⁵ A crowd of fellow Polish housewives and the rest of the community formed at the police station and commenced a “wild day of rioting” in order to free these women.⁷⁶ The crowd pleaded “the cause of the children of the imprisoned women, alone at home,”⁷⁷ which played on the “normal” housewife role that the women of the strike were supposed to play. By playing with the “proper” norms the Polish community was able to free their housewives to get back on the battlefield and strike another day. In fact, once Mrs. Hattie Krewik (mother of five) was freed the crowds demanded “Speech! Speech!”⁷⁸ She proceeded to give a riveting speech in Polish regarding how mistreated she was at the meat packing plant.⁷⁹ This gave fuel to the fire of the strike. In this case, the women overcame the obstacle of sexist remarks by using them to their advantage of freeing fellow female strikers.

Mary Zuk and other leaders of the Meat Strike showed their fiery spirit in response to the accusations of Communist involvement in the strike. Zuk fires back comments such as, “What if there are Reds in the picketing lines! They have to eat just the same as anyone else. In this strike

⁷⁵ “Demands Bring Release of Pickets”, *Detroit Free Press*, August 3, 1935.

⁷⁶ “Butchers Quit Hamtramck,” *Detroit News*, August 3, 1935.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ “Demands Bring Release of Pickets,” *Detroit Free Press*, August 3, 1935.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

we are interested in one thing and that is lowering meat prices.”⁸⁰ Zuk wants to show that this strike is not about politics, but about just trying to be able to live through the Depression. “If a woman wants to help us we don’t ask her what form of government she believes in”⁸¹ which reinforces how open the strike is to a variety of people because they want a change to the high cost of living. “I’m getting tired of being called a Communist simply because I am willing to fight for a right to live. So are the other women...I’m not suggesting we overthrow the Government as Reds might, but I’m simply trying to get lower prices,” Zuk continues.⁸² The women, like Mary Zuk, were always ready to fight back against the obstacles that were placed in front of them.

The Meat Strike of 1935, though it did not find the success that the women had wanted, paved the way for other strikes by women in the Polish community. In the early 20th century Detroit was one of the leading cigar manufacturers in the country and drew primarily “on the labor of Polish women.”⁸³ Working in a cigar factory was often tradition for Polish women of the working class communities in Detroit, often starting as young as 14 like Mrs. Eva Briskey.⁸⁴ Her eldest daughter followed in her footsteps as well.⁸⁵ During the Depression it was even more important for women to be earning wages in order to feed their families with husbands facing massive unemployment.⁸⁶

The cigar sit downs of 1937 by these Polish-American women began due to bad conditions in the factories, terrible wages, and threats of sexual harassment. The hours were long,

⁸⁰ “Groups Unite in Meat Tieup,” *Detroit News*, August 6, 1935.

⁸¹ “Mrs. Zuk Achieves Fame,” *Detroit News*, August 11, 1935.

⁸² “Groups Unite in Meat Tieup,” *Detroit News*, August 6, 1935.

⁸³ Patricia A. Cooper, *Once a Cigar Maker* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1987), 190-191.

⁸⁴ “Pa’s Place Is in the Home When Ma Stages Sit-Down,” *Detroit News*, February 19, 1937.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Jane Dobija, “Women on Strike: Polish Solidarity in Detroit,” *Monthly Detroit* (1982): 62.

the factories were terribly hot (“You couldn’t open the windows because you’d dry up your stock of tobacco”⁸⁷), and the women were compensated only for the amount of cigars they had made in a day. “Sometimes you really needed to go to the lavatory bad, but you sat there because you were going to lose two or three cigars,” stated an ex-cigar worker⁸⁸ showing how the women could not even take breaks in order to make the wages they wanted. The women made horrible wages: “Some of the girls make only from \$12 to \$18 a week...rollers who make from \$6 to \$11 per thousand cigars, and bunch breakers who make...\$3 to \$4.80 a thousand.”⁸⁹ Sexual harassment by the male foremen had always been an issue even earlier in the century.⁹⁰ “If the foremen wanted a date with you, you had to go sister, or you’d be fired the next day,” stated one of the former cigar strikers⁹¹ showing some of the struggles the female workers faced with their male coworkers. The real spark to begin the biggest sit down so far in history⁹² was on January 7, 1937 with the firing of 27 Polish-American women at the Bernard Schwartz Company just for presenting their demands for better working conditions to the management.⁹³

The cigar strike of 1937 held many similar characteristics to the meat strike two years before in regards to their tactics. The strong and organized army of Polish women was back in action as they physically took control of various cigar factories and shut them down (just like the meat strikers actually shut down the local butchers). In a short amount of time “the women had organized a general work stoppage in the cigar industry to force employers to respond to their demands” and the women stubbornly remained in these factories for 66 days, sleeping and

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ “Women Start 2 Sit-Downs,” *Detroit News*, February 18, 1937.

⁹⁰ Patricia A. Cooper, *Once a Cigar Maker* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1987).

⁹¹ Jane Dobija, “Women on Strike: Polish Solidarity in Detroit,” *Monthly Detroit* (1982): 62.

⁹² “Cigar Plan Strike Ends,” *Detroit News*, April 23, 1937.

⁹³ Margaret Collingwood Nowak, *Two Who Were There* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1989), 29.

cooking their own meals at the factories.⁹⁴ *The Detroit News* poked fun at the fact that “normal” gender roles were switched, calling back to the some of the gender obstacles the meat strikers had to face, with the headline “Pa’s Place Is in the Home When Ma Stages Sit-Down” with a humorous picture displaying a Polish husband cooking at the stove with his six children surrounding him.⁹⁵ Many Polish husbands had to take on these household duties because this was how important this strike was to their wives and daughters; and the Polish men were happy to do it despite being made fun of in the newspapers. The article ends with a quote from the mother and daughter of the family: “We’re going to stick it out until the strike is over...the folks at home will get along all right, and Papa is back of us.”⁹⁶ This shows the unity of the family and the importance of this cause. The women will give up their “expected” duties to fight for better wages and working conditions for themselves.

The Polish women had a plan of action and specific demands for the cigar employers like the women of the meat strike had for the packers and federal government. Though it varied depending on the factory most of the strikers wanted a 10-15 percent pay increase, a five day week and an eight hour day.⁹⁷ They were successful enough in petitioning these demands that their own union was formed, Cigar Workers Local No. 24, and found the success that eluded the women of the meat strike two years before.⁹⁸

The overall stubbornness and violent tactics of the cigar sit downs are reminiscent of the Meat Strike. It takes great stamina to hold down and control multiple factories for 66 days as these women did. This shows the women’s dedication and refusal to back down from what they

⁹⁴ Jane Dobija, “Women on Strike: Polish Solidarity in Detroit,” *Monthly Detroit* (1982): 62-63.

⁹⁵ “Pa’s Place Is in the Home When Ma Stages Sit-Down,” *Detroit News*, February 19, 1937.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ *Detroit News* and *New York Times*, 1937.

⁹⁸ Margaret Collingwood Nowak, *Two Who Were There* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1989), 40-41.

believed in and wanted. A specific event that shows the great stubbornness and determination of the Polish strikers was when they went to Stanley Nowak, a great Polish sympathizer and important figure in auto unionization, to ask for his help in their strike. Nowak, being requested by many different groups for assistance, was reluctant to help the women right away, but changed his mind once they began their own sit down in his office.⁹⁹ “What is it, Nowak?” stated one of the strike leaders, Helen Nowak (no relation), in Polish, “Are the Ternstedt women more important than we are? *They* are not on strike. *We* are. And we need you.”¹⁰⁰ They proceeded to stage a sit down in his office and stated they would not leave without him. “You think we’re kidding?” stated another Polish woman, “We mean it!” after the threats that they would sit down in Nowak’s office were not taken seriously.¹⁰¹ Another instance revealing the stubbornness and dedication of these women was when a delegation took a trip to Lansing in order to speak to Governor Frank Murphy about their demands. They slept on the floor “in the gallery around the balcony of the capitol building...the guards did not disturb them, perhaps realizing that they were very determined women.” Murphy did not even show up to speak with the women, but that still did not stop them from reaching him in the end.¹⁰² The determination and stubbornness this army of Polish women workers displayed is impressive.

Violent tactics, as used by the meat strike housewives, were also reported to have been used. Again, the idea appears that the Polish traditions in the communities have instilled militaristic values and tendencies just as discussed before with Mary Zuk and the housewives of 1935. There were reports of “a few tussles” occurring on “stairways when some of the

⁹⁹ Ibid., 30.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 29-31.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid., 39-40.

employees sought to leave”¹⁰³One headline reads “Protection of Factory Demanded” where it describes one of the cigar company’s letters to the police. The company states that “it will sue the City for any damage to property of injury to persons which may result from the sit down strike...the City should have provided police protection.”¹⁰⁴This confirms that there was probably some violence or that the factories remembered the Polish Meat Strike where the butchers wanted to call the National Guard as protection from the Polish women. The violent tactics in the cigar strike recall the meat strike, but also show that the women are not afraid to break the standard of femininity.

The cigar strikes also influenced women (and men) in other industries to organize for better wages and conditions. 1937 was the year of sit-down strikes in Detroit and many happened shortly after the Polish cigar workers began their strike. The workers in industries that followed in the Polish women’s footsteps included bakeries, auto, frame and carving, stamping, food production, department stores, Polish women in the laundry industry, and the all-female Woolworth’s strike.¹⁰⁵The fervor and excitement of sit downs were spreading from the Flint auto strikes and the Polish women of the cigar strikes. The Woolworth girls physically took over their store and kicked out all the customers in order to get their demands for a pay raise heard, showing similar strategies to the cigar workers.¹⁰⁶

The presence of the cigar strikes in a national newspaper, like the *New York Times*, shows that there was national attention to the movements of these women and with this attention these women were able to influence others around the nation.¹⁰⁷This ability to influence those across

¹⁰³ “The Girls, Bless ‘em, Strike, Too,” *Detroit News*, February 18, 1937.

¹⁰⁴ “Protection of Factory Demanded,” *Detroit News*, February 27, 1937.

¹⁰⁵ “5 Factories Held Here,” *Detroit News*, February 19, 1935.

¹⁰⁶ “Girls Dig in For Long Stay,” *Detroit News*, 28, 1937.

¹⁰⁷ *New York Times*, February-March 1937.

the nation had already happened with Mary Zuk during the Meat Strike as “letters from all parts of the country [poured] into the Detroit post office addressed simply to “Mrs. Zuk, Detroit.””¹⁰⁸Zuk even received an interview from a Kansas City newspaper wishing to discuss the farmer’s questions and support for her.¹⁰⁹ “The cigar workers had been part of the upsurge of women that year to claim for themselves the gains being made by men”¹¹⁰ showing that these women (even more so than the case of the housewives) wanted to break gender limitations and earn the equivalent wages they believed they deserved and have the chance to unionize just like their male counterparts.

Mary Zuk used her political experience from the Meat Strike of 1935 to place herself in a public sphere career, breaking the barrier of the restricted private sphere. She became the first woman elected to Hamtramck City Council in 1936.¹¹¹ She started her involvement in the meat strike because she “felt it was my duty as a mother” and knew she had to do something to keep her family alive during the Depression. By 1936, Zuk was making \$3,500 a year on city council and became the main breadwinner for her family who would not have to be on welfare assistance any longer. Zuk used this strike in order to boost her political career like Clara Lemich, Rose Schneiderman, and Pauline Newman, of the shirtwaist strikes, before her.¹¹² She overcame the gender barriers to enter public life and changed the way women were to be viewed during this strike. Zuk is the shining example of how far the Meat Strike changed her life, but even the average Polish-American housewife showed the world that women have demands and are to be taken seriously.

¹⁰⁸ “Mrs. Zuk Achieves Fame,” *Detroit News*, August 11, 1935.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Margaret Collingwood Nowak, *Two Who Were There* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1989), 40-41.

¹¹¹ “Hamtramck Vote,” *Detroit News*, April 7, 1936.

¹¹² Annelise Orleck, *Common Sense and a Little Fire: Women and Working-Class Politics in the United States 1900-1965* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1995).

The Depression proved that housewives were an important interest group that was often ignored by the local, state, and governmental officials. The Polish-American housewife in Detroit was facing a lack of income, having to be on welfare, and poor health for her own family. She knew it was her duty as a responsible mother and head of the homestead to “go to war” to protect her family and be able to provide a good budget so they could eat well.

The housewives found themselves in a new position of power in public life as their disciplined army began to see the results of their more violent tactics as the local butcher shops closed and prices began to fall. They could affect the economy of their town and begin a conversation nationally about corruption in the meat packing industry and unfair pricing. They began earning respect enough to be taken seriously and be remembered though their strike did not accomplish all of their objectives. The Polish-American housewives faced obstacles and condescending treatment from outsiders and the newspapers throughout their battles to challenge the high cost of living. To overcome this, the housewives took every challenge in stride which was a change from the more subdued role of a housewife. Not only did the housewives have their own inner strength to face the challenges they also had the backing of the Detroit Polish community.

The Detroit cigar factory strikes of 1937 showed another example of Polish-American women taking the lead to improve their lives. Like the Meat Strike before them these women also show militant roots, solid organization and a strong, stubborn spirit. By holding the factories and becoming, at the time, the longest strike in history the women showed the strength and commitment their army had to getting the higher wages and better conditions they deserved. They believed that unionization and having a good paycheck was not just for men. Through this

they inspired many other women workers in the city of Detroit to go out into the public sphere and fight for what they deserved.

Despite the national attention these women received during the 1930s, their stories have been buried over time. The inspiring accounts of the Meat Strike of 1935 and the cigar factory strikes of 1937 reveals a strong army of Polish-American women who fought for better conditions for themselves and their families. The Depression gave the women a chance to be a part of political/economic activism and allowed them to break the standard “norms” of femininity. The women in both strikes were able to gain respect and inspire others. Now that these strikes are being brought to public attention again, can they still be an inspiration for the women of today?

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Badaczewski, Dennis. *Poles in Michigan*. East Lansing: Michigan University Press, 2002.

Bukowczyk, John J, et al. "Metropolitan Detroit Polish Americans: A Statistical Profile." *Polish American Studies* Vol 48, No 1 (1991): 23-62.

Bukowczyk, John J. *Polish Americans and Their History: Community, Culture, and Politics*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1996.

John J. Bukowczyk created a collection of essays regarding Polish American's history in America that illustrate a variety of different issues. In "Family, Women, and Gender: The Polish Experience," Thaddeus C. Radzilowski argues that the immigrant family helped to transform the traditional culture of the countryside back in Poland into an American urban ethnicity. Radzilowski gives a brief account of the Detroit meat and cigar strikes in the 1930s. He argues briefly that the Polish men were inspired by the militancy of their women. I gain great information on how Polish-American women had to take more of a public role because of the Depression and how hard life was for the Polish working class family.

Cooper, Patricia A. *Once a Cigar Maker: Men, Women, and Work Culture in American Cigar Factories, 1900-1919*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1987.

Patricia A. Cooper writes a history of the cigar industry in American from 1900-1919 while specifically focusing on gender interaction in the work culture. She finds the workplace in the cigar industry to be a patriarchal system and that there is a significant divide between the cultures of male and female workers. Cooper focuses on the cigar industries in Detroit and Pennsylvania. This book gives me context regarding the beginnings of the cigar industry and what the work life was like. It revealed how large the cigar industry really was in Detroit. It gave me general information regarding the terrible working conditions the workers had to face.

Dillard, Angela D. *Faith in the City: Preaching Radical Social Change in Detroit*. Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 2007.

Dobija, Jane. "Women on Strike: Polish Solidarity in Detroit." *Monthly Detroit* (1982): 60-63.

Jane Dobija writes this article to specifically talk about the story of the Polish-American women in the 1937 Detroit cigar sit-down. She provides a great summary of the events of the strike and provides valuable interviews with former strikers who worked in these factories. These are very important because most of these women are probably not around anymore to give an oral interview. I want to use the quotes from the women who were actually there. I think they are very valuable to show the reality of the conditions in the cigar factories.

Enstad, Nan. *Ladies of Labor, Girls of Adventure: Working Women, Popular Culture, and Labor Politics at the Turn of the Twentieth Century*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1999.

Foner, Philip S. *Women and the American Labor Movement*. New York: The Free Press, 1979.

Gabin, Nancy F. *Feminism in the Labor Movement: Women and the United Auto Workers, 1935-1975*. London: Cornell University Press, 1990.

Grevatt, Martha. "Immigrant Women Beat Cigar Company Bosses." Accessed September 10, 2015. http://www.workers.org/2010/us/immigrant_women_0325/.

Jensen, Cecil Wendt. *Images of America: Detroit's Polonia*. Great Britain: Arcadia Publishing, 2005.

Kowalski, Greg. *Hamtramck: The Driven City*. Great Britain: Arcadia Publishing, 2002.

Orleck, Annelise. *Common Sense and a Little Fire: Women and Working-Class Politics in the United States, 1900-1965*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1995.

Annelise Orleck tells the story of four women (Rose Schneiderman, Pauline Newman, Fannia Cohn, and Clara Shavelson) in order to show that women can create sophisticated and sustained political work and not just "spontaneous protest." Orleck tells the story of the shirtwaist factory strikes in New York City. She discusses the leading women's political careers later on. This book gives me great context of other female run strikes that the Detroit women would probably have heard of and emulated. This book showed that it was not new for housewives to come together and strike for something they needed on the home front. The first meat strikes began with housewives in New York and spread through the nation.

Radzilowski, Thad. "Class, Ethnicity and Community: The Polish Americans of Detroit and the Organization of the CIO." Minnesota: Southwest State University.

Radzilowski, Thad. "Interplay of Class and Ethnicity in Polish-American Radicalism." Presented at Social Science History Association Meeting, Baltimore, Maryland, November 4-7, 1993.

Renkiewicz, Frank. "Polish American Workers 1880-1980." In *Pastor of the Poles: Polish American Essays Presented to Right Reverend Monsignor John P. Wodarski*, edited by Stanislaus A. Blejwas and Mieczyslaw B. Biskupski, 116-136. New Britain: Central Connecticut State College, 1982.

Frank Renkiewicz essay "Polish American Workers 1880-1980" makes connections between the Polish-American family culture and American industry. He discusses how strikes by the Polish-Americans were family, as well as individual, actions. Renkiewicz even highlights the significance of the female members to the Polish family. The women would often take the lead in demonstrations and sustaining resistance. Renkiewicz also highlights the importance of discipline in the 1930s in the Polish communities of America. This essay showed me how significant the role of the Polish-American woman was in her community.

Schrode, Georg. "Mary Zuk and the Detroit Meat Strike 1935." *Polish American Studies* Vol. 43 No 2 (1986): 5-39.

Georg Schorde, in the article "Mary Zuk and the Detroit Meat Strike 1935," argues that conflicts in the Polish Community resulted in a struggle between middle class leadership and Polish-American labor leaders for control over the Polish working class. Schrode uses the Detroit Meat Strike of 1935 to illustrate this argument. This article gives a good summary of the events of the Meat Strike and the parties involved. This article gives me a third point of view of the

strike from the local and federal government level. This is one of the few sources I have that the author solely focuses their whole argument on the strike I am researching.

Ware, Susan. *Holding Their Own: American Women in the 1930s*. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1982.

Wood, Arthur Evans. *Hamtramck: A Sociological Study of A Polish-American Community*. New Haven: College and University Press, 1955.

Woodford, Arthur M. *This is Detroit: 1700-2001*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2001.

Wrobel, Paul. *Our Way: Family, Parish, and Neighborhood in a Polish-American Community*. London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1979.

Wytrwal, Joseph A. *America's Polish Heritage: A Social History of the Poles in America*. Detroit: Endurance Press, 1961.

Wytrwal, Joseph A. *Behold! The Polish-Americans*. Detroit: Endurance Press, 1977.

Wytrwal, Joseph A. *The Polish Experience in Detroit*. Detroit: Endurance Press, 1992.

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The *New York Times* is one of the most well-read national newspapers in America. The articles I have found from 1935-37 illustrate many of the things that the Detroit newspapers have been saying, but tell the event from the national perspective. I am using these articles to show that both these strikes became national news and would have been read by readers across the country. This shows potential for influencing other women and strikes in the country.

Detroit News. 1935-1937. From Detroit Public Library. Microfilm, (Accessed September 19, 2015).

The Detroit News is one of the most popular Detroit local newspapers. During the 1930s this would have been the biggest medium that the people of Detroit would receive their city and national news. *The Detroit News* closely followed the events of the Meat Strike in 1935 and some of the events of the cigar strikes in 1937. Besides a summary of events these newspaper articles offer quotations from the parties involved. Newspapers are the primary sources that the majority of my project will be based on. These articles give me a lot of information on the different sides of the strike and a lot on how the women were viewed by the outside (a patriarchal society).

Detroit Free Press. 1935. From Detroit Public Library. Microfilm, (Accessed September 19, 2015).

Detroit Times. 1935-1937. From Detroit Public Library. Microfilm, (Accessed September 19, 2015).

Christian Science Monitor. "High Meat Price Strike Hits Full Dinner Pails." July 29, 1935. ILLIAD. Scan, (Accessed September 21, 2015).

Marshall Evening Chronicle. "Strikes End in Five Detroit Cigar Plants." Marshall. April 23, 1937. Newspaper Archive. PDF, (Accessed September 25, 2015).

Evening News. "Six Strikes in Detroit Ended but 12 Persist." Sault Ste Marie. February 24, 1937. Newspaper Archive. PDF, (Accessed September 25, 2015).

Evening Independent. "Have a Sit Down," Detroiters Invited Friends." Massillon. April 9, 1937. Newspaper Archive. PDF, (Accessed September 25, 2015).

Nowak, Margaret Collingwood. *Two Who Were There: A Biography of Stanley Nowak*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1989.

Margaret Nowak was the wife of Stanley Nowak. Stanley Nowak was an influential figure for the Detroit Polish community during the 1930s. He is most well-known for his involvement in the auto strikes and unionization of the UAW. This is a memoir written by his wife about Stanley and her own involvement in strikes and unionization during the 1930s. I am focusing on the first chapter of this memoir titled "Women on the March." Margaret Nowak gives her account of the events of the Polish cigar strike and her husband's involvement with the women of the strike. This memoir is one of the only first-hand accounts I have of the cigar strike itself.

Roosevelt, Eleanor. *It's Up to The Women*. New York: Frederick A. Stokes Company, 1933.

Literary Digest. "Meat Off Detroit Housewives' Menus." New York. August 17, 1935. ILLIAD. PDF, (Accessed October 13, 2015).

This article from *Literary Digest* also shows another national viewpoint of the strike. This article is unique from the others because it contains a cartoon made of the housewives. This cartoon shows what some outsiders thought of the housewives and illustrates a parody of their violent tactics. The women had enough influence and gained enough national news to have a cartoon drawn of them parodying the events.