

schools in every county. They marched in red shirts and bandannas that conjured up the mine wars of a hundred years ago. The point was to remember the name of old struggles and to insist on pay and dignity for the work of social reproduction—the work of helping the human world to go on being. Our economy undervalues that work like it undervalues the natural world.

Some of the teachers in the West Virginia high school where I spent three years were splendid. More were at least diligent. But most of them reinforced the narrow yet intensely felt class divides of a small, fairly poor, and mostly white place. As a child of back-to-the-landers, lacking money and local respectability but also bookish and overarticulate, I didn't fit the local class grid, which made me acutely aware of it. I spent the ninth and tenth grades watching bright kids from poor families get punished for small infractions, slighted when they did well, and looked at askance until they made a real mistake (weed, a pocketknife pulled out in a lunch-hour scuffle) and the hammer came down. I saw these kids as bright and curious, like the often weird hippie children I'd grown up around (like me), so I saw their class not as a fact, but as something that people did to them again

and again until it became real. And I saw that the people doing it to them thought nothing was happening, that the poor kids' character was just playing out the way you would, regrettably, expect it to do.

Some of those teachers sucked up blatantly to the middle-class kids. That's what happens in a place where adults are known by the status they had in high school. Class solidarity is real, and the easiest proof is in people defending their middle-class status by kicking downward, to make sure no one thinks they belong down there. So it was especially moving to me in 2018 to see teachers put down their "professional" status and stand up as people who work.

Social sustenance and ecological sustenance could become two connected ways of making peace with other people and with the living world. The teachers' strike was a reminder that making peace can start in a struggle for power. Some teachers even called for a reckoning with the coal industry. They said the companies should pay more in taxes for the wealth they take out of the state, to pay for the teaching and upbringing of people who will be living there when the coal and gas are gone. That fight over coal, the carbon capital of the industrial age, is a microcosm of the coming fights over who owns and profits from

the finer, cleaner capital of mechanized production and digital platforms. The stakes are a lot alike from the coalfields to Silicon Valley. Much like a hundred years ago, a place many people think of as backward may be a frontier of the next labor movement—a movement for honoring the work of teaching, caregiving, even the work of the earth.

It is essential to this version of reconciliation that there really is something to fight over. You often hear that things aren't zero-sum. Some things aren't, but the excise tax on coal and the state's budget for teachers' pay—well, those things pretty much are. The cost of war and the cost of health care are connected in this way in each year's federal budget. The wage rate and the profit rate are connected. The land is the most concrete instance. One thing happens to Bears Ears or another, but not both: you cannot have wilderness and mining in the same place. And global ecological limits—the land writ large—are a big reason why growing our way out of these conflicts isn't enough.

What doesn't need to be zero-sum is the creation of new kinds of solidarity, new ways to feel that your good life is part of my good life, and an injury to you is an injury to me. The teachers' strike was also about

that: the teachers lined up with bus drivers and janitors and coal miners, dropped a little bit of being middle class—which means a lot in a place full of hard and scary poverty—to join themselves to more people.

North Carolina has a divided state government rather than a deep-red one, a strong sanctuary movement, and a progressive community that's constantly engaged and cross-racial and mixes religious congregations with secular people, partly because people there have remembered that, 125 years ago, there was a similar movement—for both civil rights in the former plantation counties down east and monopoly busting for the small farmers in the Piedmont. It held power in the state for several years before an elite-led and militarized racist reaction threw it out, suppressed the black vote, and instituted Jim Crow. The work against the new voter suppression, for a statewide living wage, and for defending the immigrants in your community are all grounded partly in thinking that in that narrowly horizoned place—with its segregated willow oaks and ten-lane highways cutting through pine flats and afternoon thunderstorms that sweep west from the Blue Ridge and almost reliably drown your

sweltering rallies at the state capitol—in that place solidarity is also heritage, if you can take hold of it.

So I come back to the land and the thought that it holds people both together and apart. Its materiality, the way it is as real as dirt, is a reminder that it *is* something to struggle over, that nicer words and symbols don't heal its hurts, even if ugly words and symbols can inflame them. But it is also deeply imagined, invested with many different actual and possible ways of living together. The idea that it belongs originally and essentially to everyone, that it is a commonwealth, is a horizon to bend the struggles toward.

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