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Retrospection & Respect: The 1913-1914
Mining/Labor Strike Symposium of 2014

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Apr 12th, 9:30 AM - 9:50 AM

Father Dietz, the Catholic Church and the 1913 Michigan Copper Strike

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“Father Dietz, the Catholic Church and the 1913 Michigan Copper Strike”

Labor Historian Marc Karson has singled out “labor priest” Peter E. Dietz as one of the strongest proponents for the active implementation of the Catholic Church’s 1890’s labor encyclical *Rerum Novarum* in the daily practice of American Catholics. Biographer Sister Mary Harrita Fox pointed out that in his work, Dietz “was particularly concerned over the role of the church in the copper strike in Upper Michigan.” This “particular concern” should be noted since the 1913 strike was one of the only disputes where Dietz went out of his way to visit and become actively involved. Why the keen interest?

This presentation will review the impetus for the huge effort which brought Peter E. Dietz to the Copper Country and solely to that dispute alone, the resulting visit and report that he made concerning the strike, the important role he believed this visit and stance in the Copper Strike had in the future of the Church’s relationship to the US labor movement. The presentation will look at both what Dietz thought would occur as a result of his 1913 trip to the Keweenaw and what actually happened in this pivotal pre-World War One era event. The paper will put Father Peter E. Dietz and the Catholic Church into the larger frame of how religion has been viewed within the history of the Strike.