

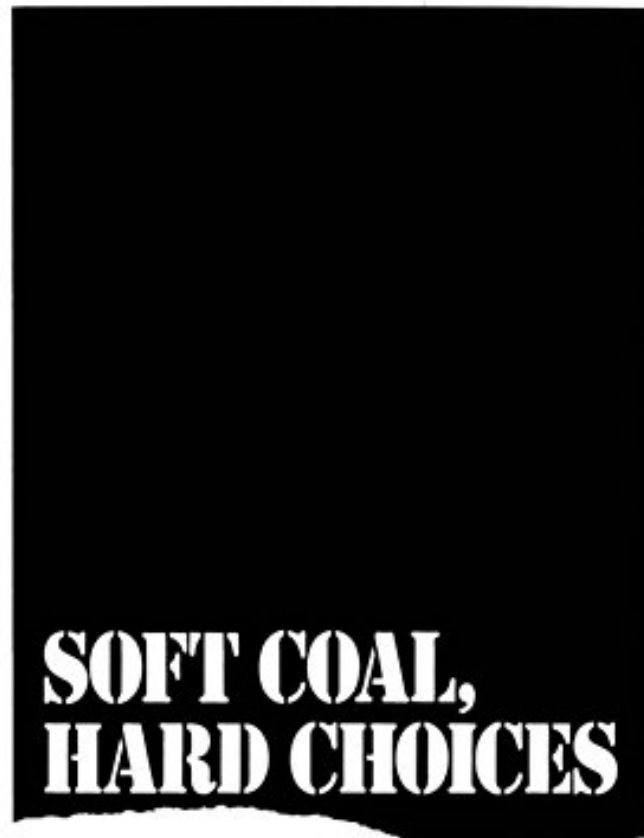
(Free and download) Soft Coal, Hard Choices: The Economic Welfare of Bituminous Coal Miners, 1890-1930

Soft Coal, Hard Choices: The Economic Welfare of Bituminous Coal Miners, 1890-1930

Price V. Fishback

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*The Economic Welfare of
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Price V. Fishback : Soft Coal, Hard Choices: The Economic Welfare of Bituminous Coal Miners, 1890-1930
before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Soft Coal, Hard

Choices: The Economic Welfare of Bituminous Coal Miners, 1890-1930:

While most studies of labor in the coal industry focus on the struggle to organize unions, this work offers a more diverse and quantitative examination of the labor market. It regards the economic lives of the bituminous coal miners in the early twentieth century. Fishback's analytic framework encompasses competition among employers for labor, the legal environment, institutional development in response to transactions costs as well as the impact of labor unions on the coal industry. Utilizing economic theory and statistics, Fishback reveals the models hidden in the descriptions of events, and then tests their internal consistency as well as the hypotheses they generate.

"A stimulating and lucid reassessment of a major area of US labor history....This is an excellent example of historical economics."--Business History
"A fascinating piece of iconoclasm. Fishback brings to bear an impressive range of evidence and argument....This cliometric investigation is one that anyone interested in labor economics, labor relations, or the coal industry should read."--Industrial and Labor Relations
"An excellent quantitative history of an important subject, effectively combining economic theory and empirical analysis. An important source for researchers, it should also provide a valuable case study for teachers of economic history or the economics of organizations."--Journal of Economic Literature
"Students of labor relations in the turn-of-the-century coal industry will find *Soft Coal, Hard Choices* an invaluable reference. But it deserves to be read more broadly, for it provides a compelling demonstration of the value of the economists' analytical tools for understanding labor history."--Journal of Economic History
"Price Fishback insists that economic organizations of all kinds, including even coal mining and company towns, can and should be examined in a disciplined way. His fascinating treatment breathes new life into these issues and will be of interest to students of labor and economic organization alike."--Oliver E. Williamson, University of California, Berkeley
From the Back Cover
Did miners really owe their souls to the company store? Did they receive lower pay than in other jobs, despite the constant danger they faced? Was the quality of life in mining towns uniformly dismal? *Soft Coal, Hard Choices* answers these and other questions. The book contradicts many myths using evidence ranging from company records to oral histories to statistics collected by state and federal governments. While most studies of labor in the coal industry focus on union struggles, Fishback discloses the beneficial impact of competition among employers for labor. He further examines the impact of legal environment and the development of institutions like company towns. Careful analysis using economic theory and statistics reveals numerous insights about the welfare of coal miners in the early 1900s. Unions helped miners obtain higher wages, but so did competition among employers. Employers were unable to exploit local and housing monopolies because the miners had the option of moving from town to town. Workers choosing between mining and other jobs faced a hard choice between similar alternatives. High hourly earnings and freedom from close supervision in mining helped compensate miners for accepting more risk of accidents and layoffs. The combination of narrative and analysis in *Soft Coal, Hard Choices* will interest historians, economists, and the general reader alike.
About the Author
Price V. Fishback is at University of Arizona.