

**We are pleased to announce joint winners for the 2021-22 Carwardine Prize, awarded to the outstanding student on the MSt course in US History: Keely Lawson and Caine Lewin Turner.**

**The Carwardine Prize was established by a donation from the William S. Broadbent Family, and the RAI is very grateful for this generous support. It is named in honour of Professor Richard J. Carwardine, FBA, Rhodes Professor Emeritus of American History at Oxford and Distinguished Fellow of the RAI.**

**Read more about Keely's research below and more about Caine's research [here](#).**

My thesis examined the impact of early New Deal legislation, specifically the National Industrial Recovery ACT of 1933 (NIRA), on union politics in the copper mining city of Butte, Montana, USA. More specifically, it isolated the Butte Strike of 1934 to examine the impact of Section 7(a) on the settlement. Section 7(a) afforded employees the interrelated right to organise in labour unions and bargain collectively through elected representatives.

Butte's historical trajectory provides insight into the key question: Did the NIRA succeed in bolstering the federal protection of the working-class and securing tangible advances? I argued that 7(a) galvanised one of the most prominent resurgences in union activity in US history, however, it failed to create the necessary enforcement mechanism to support the collective bargaining it prescribed. The Butte Strike exposes 7(a)'s fractures and reveals that its ambiguity and lack of a specific enforcement instrument opened the playing field for corporate exploitation. The Anaconda Copper Mining Company weaponised overlapping union jurisdictions and federal neutrality to pulverise 7(a)'s vague definitional framework. This tactic infringed on the miners' rights to bargain collectively through elected representatives, as stated in 7(a), and resulted in a more favourable settlement for the Company. Nonetheless, this dissertation concludes that the importance of 7(a) goes beyond its definitional framework. 7(a) marked a departure from decades of legal precedence that suppressed union organisation and instead legislated the federal government's support for the working class.

Despite the logistical failure of the National Labor Relations Board, the profound impact of this shift cannot be understated. The NIRA repositioned the federal government on the side of labour over capital and catalysed one of the most prominent workers' uprisings in US history, with Butte at its centre.