

# 13 TRACE THE EVOLUTION OF THE LABOR MOVEMENT AND ITS OBJECTIVES DURING THE 19<sup>TH</sup> AND EARLY 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURIES.

Why were labor unions necessary?

The Change from the cottage industry, (supplies brought to the home and work being performed by the family at home) to the factory system, (laborers going to a central place to produce products), gave rise to a need for unions to bargain/negotiate for better pay, conditions and treatment.

1. Low pay for long hours.
2. Women and children work machines that require minimal strength and no skill. (lowers wages and effects male labor)
3. Required workers to conform to the speed of the machines.
4. conditions ie. Lighting, cleanliness, safety, sanitation often sub par.
5. Injuries on the job, no workmans compensation.

LABOR MOVEMENT OF THE 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

**-Workingmens Party 1830**

felt the key to solving problems was in politics/group collective bargaining. Dealing with factory managers now.

Jackson Presidency and rekindled democracy gave impetus to this group. the major parties recognized political benefits/consequences of this group. Worked for the 10 hour day.

Success limited due to;

1. unions small, local and inexperienced
2. lacked the financial resources.
3. could not deal effectively with immigrants (lower wages)
4. lost members who became disillusioned to frontier opportunities,
5. received hostile treatment from the courts who refused recognition.
6. a predominantly agricultural society had no sympathy for city workers.
7. Panic of 1837 was a coffin nail financially.

### **-National Labor Union (NLU) 1866**

emergence of the post Civil War corporations made workers realize the necessity for organization.

founded by William Sylvus

formed to represent the interests of all labor skilled/unskilled and farmer.  
they too decided that the political arena was the forum for their fight.  
worked for; 8 hr day, reform in currency, restrictions on immigration and  
the creation of a federal labor dept.

Commonwealth vs. Hunt 1842 Massachusetts Supreme Court set the  
precedent of considering unions a legal entities and not unlawful conspiracies.  
Great Railway Strike 1877-turned to violence to get the attention of railroads.  
Declined due to gov't. siding with management over labor, and embracing.  
both skilled and unskilled labor

### **-Knights of Labor 1869**

started as a secret society of garment workers.

Terrence Powderly their most successful leader 1880's.

membership on an individual basis rather than grouped by job description.

welcomed all workers; skilled, unskilled and women \*.

worked for; 8 hour day, child labor laws, equal pay for sexes, creation of  
a federal labor dept., gov't ownership of railroads, income tax.

problems: clashes between skilled and unskilled groups.

seen by the public as un-American after Haymarket Incident 1886  
socialist label destroyed the union.

### **-American Federation of Labor (AFL) 1886**

first modern labor union

led by Samuel Gompers

learned from the past mistakes, embraced only skilled labor.

shunned political crusades and sought "Bread and Butter Unionism"

gave up on long term goals, reform and idealism.

concentrated on; short term/ realism.

shorter hours, better pay, each skill considered separate, safe shop,  
push for more immigration restrictions.

supported Pres. Wilson and WWI involvement (jobs)

capable of shutting down an entire industry in the USA.

1920 4 million members

1955 11 million members

### **-International workers of the world (IWW) 1905**

led by "Big" Bill Haywood  
broke off from AFL –primarily mine workers.  
revolutionary union opposed to labor abuses of capitalism. (Gilded Age)  
socialist in persuasion, violence a frequent tactic.  
branded as un-American by American corp.(uncapitalist)- leader deported

### **-Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) 1938**

led by John L. Lewis  
perfected the "sit-down" strike  
centered primarily in the auto, textile and steel industry  
took advantage of pro-union New Deal legislation (Wagner Act)  
1955 broke with and later rejoined the AFL after dispute settled.

By the late 1920's and an end to the socialist scare, unions were becoming a more accepted part of American life. Labors support and goodwill during WWI helped this. Strikes however, were plentiful after WWI and gov't used a new weapon called an "Injunction" to get the courts to send workers back to their jobs if the strike endangered public safety. i.e. Boston Police in the 1920's/Coolidge.

The AFL-CIO continued to grow and seek short term / realistic goals which in general enhanced the quality of life for the American worker.

### **Union methods of persuasion**

Peaceful: collective bargaining, mediation, arbitration.

Aggressive: Strike, sitdown, boycott, publicity.

Management weapons: strike breakers (Pinkertons), lockout, Injunction, publicity.