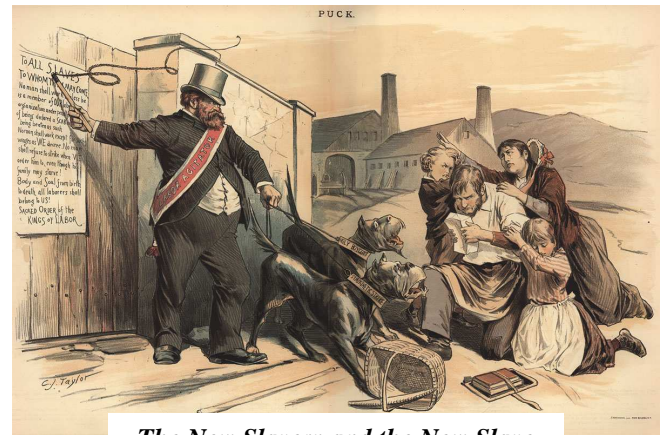


Labor and Labor Unions

The existence of trade unions in America goes back as far as the early colonial days. There have been unions or guilds of craftsmen that date back to the Pilgrims landing on Plymouth Rock. Workingmen took an active role during the Revolution. In the early days of the Republic printers, cabinetmakers, carpenters went on strike for better working conditions. With the growing industrialization in America and workers' realization of the strength of employers, the need for unions increased. While many early unions proved to be ineffective, during the Gilded Age, unions found their strength.



The New Slavery and the New Slave Driver

Goals & Tactics of Management & Labor:

Management

- Owners or controllers of production

Goals: Achieve the greatest profits possible by increasing production through the most efficient use of materials and labor.

Tactics:

- THE “YELLOW DOG” CONTRACT (A worker’s agreement not to join a union during the period of his or her employment)
- THE BLACKLIST (A list circulated among employers of workers reputed to hold opinions or engage in actions contrary to the employers’ interests)
- THE INJUNCTION (A court order whereby one is required to do or refrain from doing a specified act; to restrain unions from actions harmful to employers)
- THE OPEN SHOP (An establishment in which employment is not determined by union membership or non-membership)
- COMPANY POLICE or COMPANY SPIES (Especially Pinkerton Detectives)
- USE OF STRIKEBREAKERS (“SCABS”) (Used to fill the jobs of strikers)

Labor

- workers, either skilled or unskilled, generally “blue collar”

Goals:

Primary goals:

- higher wages
- shorter hours (8-hour day)
- safe and sanitary working conditions

Secondary goals:

- establishment of federal and various state bureaus of labor
- abolish child labor
- abolish of contract labor (laborers imported by an employer from a foreign nation)
- collective bargaining (negotiation of contract terms between an employer or group of employers on one side and a union or number of unions on the other)
- compulsory arbitration of management-labor disputes
- worker compensation laws (insurance for pay that a worker may recover from an employer in the case of a job-related accident.)

Tactics:

- THE STRIKE (refuse to work)
- PICKETING (call attention to workers plight by walking in front of business usually with signs illustrating the nature of the problem)
- THE BOYCOTT (engaging in a concerted refusal to have anything to do with the products of services of an employer – and attempting to convince consumers to do the same – in order to force acceptance of certain conditions desired by a union)
- THE CLOSED SHOP (An establishment in which the employer by agreement hires and retains in employment only union members in good standing.)

Labor Unions:

National Labor Union (1866)



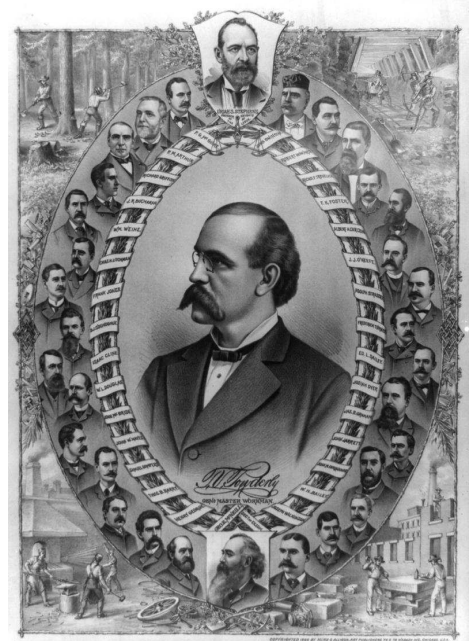
- First attempt to organize labor in America
- Founded by William Sylvius
- A federation – organization of local unions for skilled craftsmen
- Goals – to eliminate monopoly in industry, establish federal department of labor, abolish contract labor, arbitrate labor conflicts, 8-hour workday in factories
- Sponsors a 3rd political party – National Labor Reform Party; ran a candidate for president in 1872 but had a poor showing; Casualty of Panic of 1873 and the ensuing depression; 1877 Railroad strike → President Hayes issues an injunction and sends in Federal troops to halt strike; all of these play a role in the decline of this union

Mollie Maguires (1875)

- Irish anthracite-coal miners in Pennsylvania; had been members of fraternal organization – Ancient Order of Hibernians
- Used violent tactics to protest employers’ denial of right to unionize – intimidation, arson, etc.
- Infiltrated by Pinkerton Agents and convicted of some murders in coalfield in PA
- Members hanged and group destroyed (1877)
- Became martyrs for labor movement and symbol of violence for conservatives

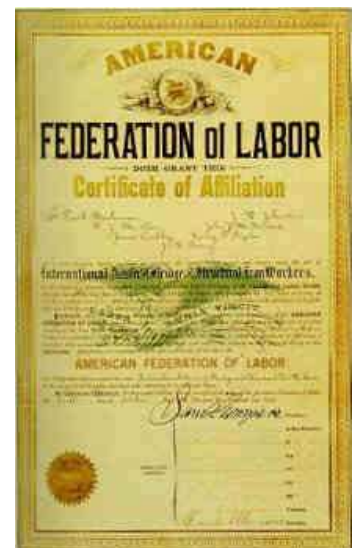
Knights of Labor (1869)

- Founded by Uriah P. Stephens as a secret society (The Noble and Holy Order of the Knights of Labor)
- Expanded and more noteworthy under leadership of Terrence Powderly
- Open to all workingmen – skilled, unskilled, blacks, women – “one big union”
- Broad economic and social reform – end to child labor, 8-hour workday, public ownership of utilities, income and inheritance tax, codes for safety and health; aimed to get rid of capitalism by creating worker owned business based on the idea of cooperatives (workers owning factories)
- Used mass meetings, strikes, boycotts
- Demise caused by Haymarket Square Riot in Chicago (scapegoat)



American Federation of Labor (AFL – 1886)

- Significant Leader – Samuel Gompers
- An association of self-governing national unions of skilled workers only
- Focused on “**bread and butter**” issues (basic issues of workers to have a better life) – better wages and hours (8-hour work day was ultimate goal), improved working conditions – “here and now” not “pie in the sky”
- Conservative compared to other unions (probably why more successful) and worked with the system, stayed out of politics
- Used strikes, boycotts and walk-outs; collective bargaining
- Against socialism
- Problem – did not represent unskilled labor or women or blacks and worked to restrict immigrant labor (because they saw immigrants as competition with Native born Americans for jobs)
- Will achieve the greatest success of these early labor unions and is still around today! By restricting its membership to those with similar interests, the members had skills that made them hard to replace in strikes; they chose to work for realizable goals, and worked within the capitalist system.



Industrial Workers of the World (IWW – 1905)

- Radical and revolutionary type of union
- Leader – William “Big Bill” Haywood
- All workers were eligible
- Goals – together with militant socialists, they worked to oppose conservative policies in the labor movement and ultimately overthrow the capitalist system and replace it with socialism
- Nicknamed the “Wobblies” due to their propensity to going out on strike = “wobbly workers”
- Their tactics of mass strikes and sabotage and the fact that they were quite radical helped lead to their demise
- Never any real numbers – hostility to WWI and the Red Scare of 1918-1919 put it out of business



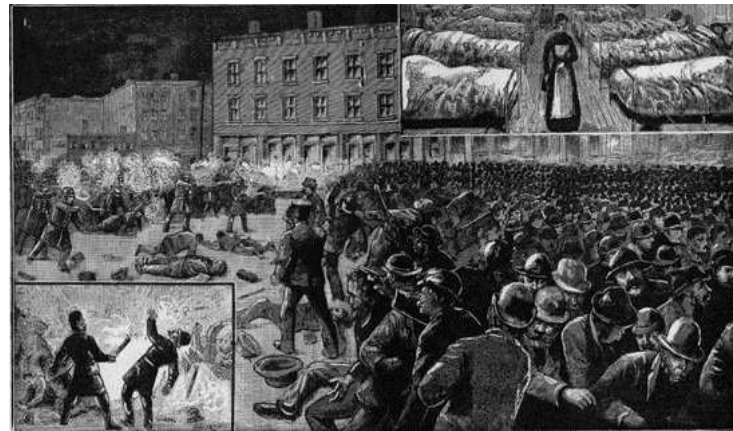
Labor Issues:

Railroad strikes of the 1870s (Especially the Railroad Strike of 1877 [The National Labor Union])

- The B & O Railroad (Baltimore & Ohio) workers walked off their jobs because of a wage decrease.
- Riots, destruction of property, & bloodshed ensued.
- President Rutherford B. Hayes issued an injunction to end the strike and Federal troops were sent in.

Haymarket Square Riot (1886) [Knights of Labor]

- Chicago’s Haymarket Square, workers striking at McCormick Harvester Company -- protest alleged brutality by authorities during May Day strikes
- Unknown anarchist throws a bomb into the crowd killing police officers, civilians and injuring many people
- The bomb was attributed to an anarchist, but then the Knights of Labor got blamed for incident – will lead to groups demise



Homestead Strike (1892)

- Carnegie Steel plant in Homestead, PA (close to Pittsburgh)
- Amalgamated Association of Iron, Steel, and Tin Workers went on strike to protest 20% pay cuts
- Workers surrounded the factory to not let in “scab” employees
- Henry Frick and Carnegie called in the Pinkerton Detectives to protect the “scabs”
- Armed strikers fired on the Pinkertons and kill many detectives – President Benjamin Harrison issues an injunction and state militia had to be called in
- Workers were indicted on 167 counts of murder, rioting, conspiracy (jury eventually found them innocent)
- Union effectively broken – proved a strong employer could break a union if used mercenary force and had protection of government and courts



Image of Homestead Strike by Frederic Remington

Pullman Strike (1894)

- Pullman Palace Car Company built company town outside of Chicago
- To keep profits up the company cut employee wages by 1/3 but kept rent prices the same and let many workers go
- American Railway Union (led by Eugene V. Debs) organized a strike
- Paralyzed railway traffic from Chicago to the Pacific Coast (interfering with delivery of US mail)
- strikers found in violation of the Sherman Anti-trust Act, seen as “a conspiracy in restraint of trade”
- Attorney General, Richard Olney sent in federal troops over Gov. John P. Altgeld’s objections

- President Cleveland: “If it takes an entire army and navy to deliver a post card in Chicago, that card will be delivered.” – issues an “injunction” that makes striking an illegal activity
- Debs refuses to comply and is sentenced to 6 months in prison – while in jail he reads about socialism and comes out a major opponent of capitalism
- First effective use of an “injunction” against a union

Other Important Items:

- *Commonwealth v. Hunt* (1842) – upholds Massachusetts law supporting a union’s right to organize
- An 8-hour day for Federal employees in public works projects; all Federal employees will get the 8-hour day by 1892 (1868)
- Immigration of Chinese laborers suspended (1882)
- *In re Debs* (1895) – Court sustains Cleveland’s injunction and use of troops in Pullman Strike
- *Holden v. Hardy* (1898) – Utah law established maximum hours for miners
- *Lochner v. New York* (1905) – Supreme Court overturns a NY law limiting bakers to a 60 hour week
- Hours of Service Act (1907) – Congress, in the interest of public safety, limit the number of consecutive hours that railroad employees could work.
- *Muller v. Oregon* (1908) – Oregon law setting maximum work-day hours for women
- Public Opinion toward Labor – People understand the grievances of long hours, low wages, and unsafe working conditions, but suspicious overall – used violence & seemed to condemn the American system of government, especially the concept of laissez faire economics
- Judicial Restrictions on Labor – **Sherman Anti-trust Act (1890)** – a law designed to stop corporations from monopolistic practices was used to turn against unions → unions seen as “combinations” (monopolies)