

Aim: What actions could workers have taken to improve their conditions during the late 19th century?

Friday 12/13: Exam: The Gilded Age & Immigration

Problems Faced by Workers

- Long hours
- Child labor
- Low wages
- No job security
- Unsafe working conditions
- Poor/unhealthy working conditions

What government can do?

- Pass laws- child labor, minimum wage, safety

Why as individuals would workers not have much power?

What workers can do

- **Organize unions** - Organization of workers that seeks to improve conditions, wages, etc. through the collective bargaining process
- **Collective bargaining** – negotiating with employers as a group rather than as individuals
- **Create political parties** – have people run for office
- **lobbying** – trying to influence legislators who are favorable to your interests (talk to them, give them campaign contributions)
- **Raise awareness**

Organized Labor



Types of Unions

- **Trade (Crafts union)** – skilled workers all performing the same job (eg. electricians, plumbers, carpenters)
- **Industrial Union** – workers in same industry performing different jobs. Usually semi-skilled and unskilled workers. (eg. United Auto Workers)

Weapons of Unions

- Strike – refusal to work
- Picketing – parade outside workplace
- Boycott – refusal to patronize strikebound company
- Publicity – appeal for public support (newspaper, radio, television)



Bread and Butter Issues

- issues which are important to most people, because they affect them personally.

Obstacles Facing Unions

- 1. Tactics and power of Owners and Management (eg. – Homestead)**
 - Lockout - work stoppage or denial of employment
 - Replacement workers
 - Pinkertons -a private security force
 - Blacklisting - denying people employment (union, political, Whistle blowing history)
 - Yellow-dog contract - worker agrees not to remain in or join a union.
- 2. Public opinion was often against workers (eg. Haymarket Incident)**
 - Believed unions were influenced by “radical” ideas like socialism, anarchy, and communism
- 3. Government – often sided with management (RR Strike of 1877; Pullman Strike)**
- 4. Changing nature of workplace – Mechanization decreased need for skilled workers. Unskilled workers easier to replace**

Homestead Strike (1892) – Carnegie Steel

- Wages of steelworkers cut

Action of Labor Union?

- Calls for a strike

Action of Industry?

- Police force called the “Pinkertons” brought in to break up the strike

Action of Government?

- Troops & local militia sent in to calm the situation

Effect?

- Carnegie successfully broke up the attempt to organize a union
- *No labor unions in steel industry until the 1920's.*
- Wages dropped & hours extended



Town of Pullman



Pullman Strike (RR Strike) 1893 Chicago

- Wages of employees cut without a decrease in living costs in the company town

Action of Labor Union?

- Eugene V. Debs & the American Railway Union (ARU)
- Nationwide strike, halting railroad traffic

Actions of Industry?

- Argued that the labor union was destroying free trade

Actions of Government?

- President Grover Cleveland sent in federal troops; Eugene V. Debs is arrested

Effect?

- Use of court system and military to limit power of labor unions



Sherman Anti-Trust Act

Benjamin Harrison 23 President 1889-1893

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DSN0uUNLOW>
- Designed to combat the monopolies that were eliminating competition in American business.
- 1st time the federal government stepped in to limit business.
- Often used against labor unions



Government – often sided with management

- **Eg. – Pullman Strike**
 - President sent in troops to move trains
 - Court Case – **In Re Debs** – upheld injunction (court order) requiring workers to return to the job. Said government had responsibility to insure interstate commerce occur.

