

# APUSH LABOR UNION REVIEW

## **Purpose of Organized Labor**

- Workers unite within a trade, industry, or workforce to achieve common goals
- Union leadership negotiates on behalf of union worker members with owners/managers
- Common goals include: higher wages, benefits, improved working conditions
- Tactics of Labor Unions
  - o Collective bargaining – uniting as a group to arbitrate with owners/managers over demands
  - o Political action and efficacy – informed union members of government officials and policies affecting labor
  - o Picketing – assemble in front of workplaces to protest ownership
  - o Strikes – organized walkouts until demands met
  - o Boycotts – cease buying particular goods/services
  - o Slowdowns – deliberately slow down production and efficiency until demands met
- Tactics of Owners/Managers Against Unions
  - o Public relations – use public media to promote ownership and denounce unions, sometimes as socialist, anarchist, or un-American
  - o Lockouts – shut down workplace therefore not paying workers
  - o Scabs – replacement workers
  - o Blacklists – publicized lists of union members to prevent hiring
  - o Yellow-dog contracts – workers offered employment if they do not join unions
  - o Government authorities/private security – call upon police force to break up strikes as threats to public interest and owner safety
  - o Court injunctions – use of court system to force employees back to work or face criminal/civil penalties

## **Early 19<sup>th</sup> Century**

- local and state trade unions developed in response to the industrialization during the First Industrial Revolution
- Mechanics' Trade Union Association (1927)
  - o First labor union to include different trades
- labor unions began using strikes to demand higher wages
- Lowell System in textiles considered labor organization
- *Commonwealth v. Hunt* (1842)
  - o Massachusetts Supreme Court ruled labor unions are legal organizations and had the right to strike

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## Gilded Age and Rise of National Labor Unions (1860s-1900)

- Second Industrial Revolution resulted in economic expansion and developments of industries
- Owners thrived with monopolies, cheap labor, limited regulation leading to the robberbarons
- In response to cheap wages, poor working conditions, and unfair business practices, labor unions began organizing on a national level
- National Labor Union (NLU) (1866)
  - o One of the first major national labor organizations
  - o Favored arbitration over strikes
  - o Platform
    - 8-hour workday, higher wages, monetary reform, and cooperatives
    - Secured 8-hour workday for federal employees
  - o Offered membership to women, blacks, unskilled workers
- Great Railroad Strike of 1877
  - o Railroad companies cut wages in response to Panic of 1873
  - o Railroad workers strike against Baltimore and Ohio Railroads leading to strikes across the northeast
  - o Strikes become violent and deadly and federal troops are called in for the first time to police a labor dispute
  - o Leads to negative public reaction to unions
- Knights of Labor (1869)
  - o Founded in 1869 under leadership of Terence Powderly, but became “public” in 1881
  - o Platform
    - Higher wages, cooperatives, anti-trusts, child labor laws
    - Arbitration, education, and cooperation as a means of meeting demands
    - Members included blacks, women, skilled, unskilled, and immigrants except Asians
      - Endorsed Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882
    - Developed communal services and events to promote solidarity and organization
    - Early strike successes against railroads, miners, and other manufacturers
- Haymarket Riot (May 4, 1888)
  - o May Day celebration and 8-hour workday strike in Chicago led to police killing 4 people
  - o Bomb thrown in crowd on Commemoration of May Day killings where police officers were killed
    - Led to a police riot
  - o blame placed on anarchists and Knights of Labor and other unions mislabeled as anarchists
    - led to negative public reaction to unions and lost membership and strength of the Knights of Labor
- American Federation of Labor (AFL) (1886)
  - o Formed in lieu of failing Knights of Labor and negative perception of unions after the Haymarket Riot under Samuel Gompers
  - o Platform
    - Established like a federation granting autonomy to the various craft/trade organizations linked to the AFL
    - Focused on practical and realistic goals centered on workers rather than including social-based reforms
    - Higher wages, shorter working hours, improved working conditions
    - Limited involvement with political associations or parties
  - o consisted mostly of skilled workers in various trades
    - generally excluded unskilled workers, women, blacks, immigrants
- Homestead Strike (1892)
  - o Amalgamated Association of Iron and Steel Workers (AA) attempted to collectively bargain with Andrew Carnegie and Henry Clay Frick
    - Negotiations fell through over wage cuts and Frick instigated a lockout of the steelworkers
    - Other unions launched strikes to support the locked out steelworkers in Homestead
    - Frick hired Pinkerton detectives to enforce lockout and are met with violence by strikers
  - o Ownership weakens strikes with injunctions and criminal prosecutions
  - o Leads to weakening of labor unions
- Pullman Strike (1894)
  - o Pullman car workers instigated a strike in response to wage cuts
    - Led to a boycott by Eugene V. Debs on all Pullman cars (railroads)
  - o Pullman owners used Sherman Anti-Trust Act to file federal injunction against union strikers
    - Debs continued strike and federal troops sent in leading to violence and arrests
    - *In re Debs*, Supreme Court found injunction constitutional
- By 1900, only 3% of the nation’s workforce belonged to a union or labor organization

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- **Progressive Era (1900-1920)**
- Coal Strike of 1902
  - o United Mine Workers hold a strike against anthracite mine owners in Pennsylvania
  - o President Theodore Roosevelt brokers a compromise between workers and owners for higher wages, shorter hours for the sake of public interest
  - o Despite worker gains, the union was not considered a bargaining agent
- Woman's Trade Union League (1903)
  - o AFL-linked labor union support organization made of working-class and middle-class women
  - o Provided social education and relief support for working-class women and supported strikes and pickets
- Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) (1905)
  - o aka the Wobblies
  - o William "Big Bill" Haywood was a strong and direct leader
  - o First such labor organization of industrial unionism, meaning workers of all skills and of all trades within an industry as opposed to craft unionism which limited union membership to a particular trade/craft within an industry and/or social class
  - o Included socialists, anarchists, radicals which general public and government considered threatening
  - o Direct action included conventional strikes, sit-down strikes, boycotts, sabotage, slowdowns, work to rule, violence by some radical members
  - o Membership granted to blacks, women, and immigrants
- Triangle Shirtwaist Fire (1911)
  - o Fire at factory in New York City kills 146 women leading to call for working conditions reform
- Massachusetts minimum wage law (1912)
  - o Establishes first minimum wage law in the nation
- Department of Labor (1913)
  - o Cabinet-level federal executive department concerned with labor relations
- Ludlow Massacre (1914)
  - o Colorado National Guard open fire on strikers killing men, women, and children
- Clayton Anti-Trust Act (1914)
  - o Protects labor unions from Sherman Anti-Trust Act
- Keating-Owen Act/Child Labor Act (1916)
  - o Prohibited sale of goods manufactured by children through interstate commerce
  - o Ruled unconstitutional in *Hammer v. Dagenhart*
- Adamson Act (1916)
  - o Establishes 8-hour workday for railroad workers and overtime compensation
- National War Labor Board during World War I
  - o Arbitrated labor disputes to facilitate economic production during war and avoid strikes and other labor disturbances
  - o Almost doubled membership for unions given pro-labor decisions
- Strikes of 1919
  - o Production of wartime economy dramatically shifted to peacetime economy reducing economic expansion leading to cuts in profits, wages, and employment
  - o Effects of war and panic led to massive national distrust of unions, especially in the midst of the First Red Scare
  - o Massive and violent strikes occurred throughout nation among police officers, telephone operators, steel workers, and coal miners
  - o Federal government and American press and public denounced unions and violence related to strikes fueling mass hysteria of possible revolution
  - o Led to a more pro-business mentality and reduced support and membership of unions

### Unions Decrease in 1920s

- By the numbers
  - o In 1919, 4 million workers launched 3,600 strikes
  - o By 1920, 289,000 workers launched 900 strikes
- Despite increased production and economic expansion, unions suffered loss of membership
- Companies and owners used open shop by hiring non-union workers and practicing welfare capitalism by offering employees benefits and higher wages to prevent development of unions and strikes
- American Plan
  - o Companies promoted image of unions as un-American, socialist, anarchist, radical amidst a culture of nativism and rugged individualism

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## New Deal, World War II, and Unions (1930s-1945)

- Norris-La Guardia Act (1932)
  - o Prohibited companies from using yellow-dog contracts and injunctions against nonviolent strikes
- President Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal programs established federal-based projects to increase employment across the nation
  - o Public Works Administration (PWA) provided funds for states and local governments to build public work projects
  - o Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) employed young men to work on federal lands, especially agricultural projects
  - o Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) as a government corporation to develop regional infrastructure
  - o National Industrial Recovery Act (NIRA) and National Recovery Act (NRA) established codes for wages, profits, hours of work, and prices and allowed workers to unionize and collective bargaining
    - Declared unconstitutional by *Schechter v. United States*
  - o Civil Works Administration (CWA) employed for construction projects
  - o Works Progress Administration (WPA) launched a massive federal works project across the nation
- Wagner Act/National Labor Relations Act (1935)
  - o Guaranteed the right to join unions, the right to collective bargaining, and prohibited unfair business practices against unions such as blacklists, company unions, discrimination
- Social Security Act (1935)
  - o Federal insurance program designed to collect income from owners and employees for a trust fund to provide financial assistance for elderly over 65, unemployment compensation, disabled, and dependents
- Fair Labor Standards Act (1938)
  - o Established a federal minimum wage, maximum 40 hour workweek, overtime at time and a half, child labor laws for under 16 years old
- Fair Employment Practices Committee (1941)
  - o Assist minorities to gain employment in industries
- New Deal and Depression legislation paved the way for a massive growth in unions and pro-labor movements
  - o Union member in 1930 was less than 3 million and rose to over 10 million by 1941
- Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) (1935)
  - o Industrial unions combined to form the CIO to provide union membership and benefits for all employees, including unskilled and minorities
  - o Under leadership of John L. Lewis
  - o Became a chief rival of the AFL
- Strikes
  - o Some companies attempted to bypass new labor laws leading to sit-down strikes and violent strikes
  - o General Motors and U.S. Steel recognized union strength after strikes
- World War II Effects
  - o Office of Price Administration (OPA)
    - Froze prices and wages to prevent inflation and economic contraction amidst massive economic production and expansion
  - o unions agreed to avoid strikes in respect to war effort
  - o Smith-Connally Anti-Strike Act (1943) allowed federal government to nationalize an industry if threatened with strikes during the war

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## Post-World War II (1945-Present)

- Truman and Postwar Strikes
  - o Massive strikes after the war in demand for wage increases threatened national security
    - Truman seized mines and used federal troops to operate mines
  - o *Youngstown Sheet & Tube Co. v. Sawyer* (1952)
    - Ruled President Truman's seizure of steel production facilities in an attempt to break a strike was unconstitutional
- Taft-Hartley Act (1947)
  - o Developed under a pro-business and anti-union Republican Congress
  - o Outlawed closed shops which forced workers to join unions before being hired
  - o Permit states to pass "right to work" laws prohibiting workers forced to join unions after being hired
  - o Prohibited secondary boycotts in support of initial strikes
  - o Authorized president for 80-day cooling off period before a general strike is called
- AFL-CIO Merger (1955)
  - o Combined the success of AFL's membership with white-collar workers and the expansion of industrial unions of the CIO
  - o Membership for minorities and socialists/radicals became limited amidst Second Red Scare and conservative society
- Teamsters Union
  - o Expelled from AFL-CIO for corruption and alleged links to radicalism
- Landrum-Griffin Act (1959)
  - o Designed to prevent corruption and promote democratic processes
  - o Union elections must be held every 3-5 years
  - o A bill of rights for union members
  - o File financial reports for public and government review
  - o Prohibited picketing by one union if another union recognized
  - o Secondary boycotts strictly prohibited
- United Farm Workers (UFW) and Cesar Chavez (1960s-1970s)
  - o Exploitation of migrants on farms led to boycotts
  - o In 1975, collective bargaining rights recognized for farm workers
- Reagan and Unions (1980s)
  - o PATCO (air traffic controllers union) launched a strike for double wages, bonuses, early retirement, and reduced work hours
  - o Reagan fired most of the controllers and were replaced with backups and military controllers
  - o PATCO dissolved and indicated general decline of private sector union membership and strength
- Decline in Private Sector Unions
  - o United Auto Workers (UAW) by the numbers
    - 1.6 million members in 1970
    - 1.4 million in 1980
    - 952,000 in 1990
    - 623,000 in 2004
- Increase in Public Sector Unions
  - o Public services and teachers unions gained political support on the local and state levels
  - o Secured significant wage increases, benefits, and job security