

SECTION 4 Unions

1 FOCUS

Section Overview

This section focuses on the formation of labor unions during the late 1800s.

BELLRINGER
Skillbuilder Activity

Project transparency and have students answer the question.

Available as a blackline master.

Daily Focus Skills Transparency 9–4

Answers to Graphic: 1877: Great Railroad Strike involves 80,000 workers in 11 states, government troops break up strike, millions of dollars in damage and more than 100 people killed; 1886: Haymarket Riot kills 11 people and greatly weakens the Knights of Labor; 1894: Pullman Strike against railroads nearly paralyzes economy, federal troops force an end to strike, and the ARU collapses

Guide to Reading

Answers to Graphic: 1877: Great Railroad Strike involves 80,000 workers in 11 states, government troops break up strike, millions of dollars in damage and more than 100 people killed; 1886: Haymarket Riot kills 11 people and greatly weakens the Knights of Labor; 1894: Pullman Strike against railroads nearly paralyzes economy, federal troops force an end to strike, and the ARU collapses

Preteaching Vocabulary

Have students skim this section to glean the meaning or significance of each of the Key Terms and Names.

Guide to Reading

Main Idea

In an attempt to improve their working conditions, industrial workers came together to form unions in the late 1800s.

Key Terms and Names

deflation, trade union, industrial union, blacklist, lockout, Marxism, Knights of Labor, arbitration, closed shop

Reading Strategy

Sequencing As you read about the increase of American labor unions in the late 1800s, complete a time line similar to the one below by filling in the incidents of labor unrest discussed and the results of each incident.



Reading Objectives

- Describe industrial working conditions in the United States in the late 1800s.
- List the barriers to labor union growth.

Section Theme

Individual Action People like Samuel Gompers and Mother Jones strove to balance the power of corporations with the needs of workers.

Preview of Events



An American Story

On September 6, 1869, hundreds of miners' wives and children heard the repeated shrill blasts of the Avondale Mine's whistle, which signaled an accident. The families ran to the mine's entry and beheld a terrifying sight: hot smoke billowing from the mine shaft. The owners of the Avondale Coal Mine in Luzerne County, Pennsylvania, had not built a second entrance. Without an escape route, the 179 miners trapped below soon died. Songs to commemorate the disaster later gave voice to the silenced victims:

“And as their souls ascended
To God who gave them breath
They plead against the company
Whose greed had caused their death”

Following the deaths at Avondale, John Siney, an Irish immigrant and union leader, urged his fellow miners to unionize:

“Men, if you must die with your boots on, die for your families, your homes, your country, but do not longer consent to die like rats in a trap. . . .”

—quoted in *Labor's Untold Story*

Working in the United States

Life for workers in industrial America was difficult. As machines replaced skilled labor, work became monotonous. Workers had to perform highly specific, repetitive tasks and could take little pride in their work. In addition, working conditions were

unhealthy and dangerous. Workers breathed in dust, and toxic fumes. Heavy machines lacking safety devices caused a high number of injuries.

Despite the difficult working conditions, industrialism brought about a dramatic rise in the standard of living. While only a few entrepreneurs became rich, real wages earned by the average worker rose about 50 percent between 1860 and 1890.

Despite the rise in the standard of living, the uneven division of income between the wealthy and the working class caused resentment among workers. In 1900 the average industrial worker made approximately 22¢ per hour and worked an average of 59 hours per week.

At the same time, an economic phenomenon of the late 1800s made relations between workers and employers even more difficult. Between 1865 and 1897, the United States experienced **deflation**, or a rise in the value of money. Throughout the late 1800s, deflation caused prices to fall, which increased the buying power of workers' wages. Although companies cut wages regularly in the late 1800s, prices fell even faster, so that wages were actually still going up in buying power. Most workers, however, believed that the companies wanted to pay them less money for the same work, and it made them angry. Eventually, many workers decided that the only way to improve their working conditions was to organize unions.

Reading Check

Describing What aspects of industrial life caused frustration for workers in the late 1800s?

Early Unions

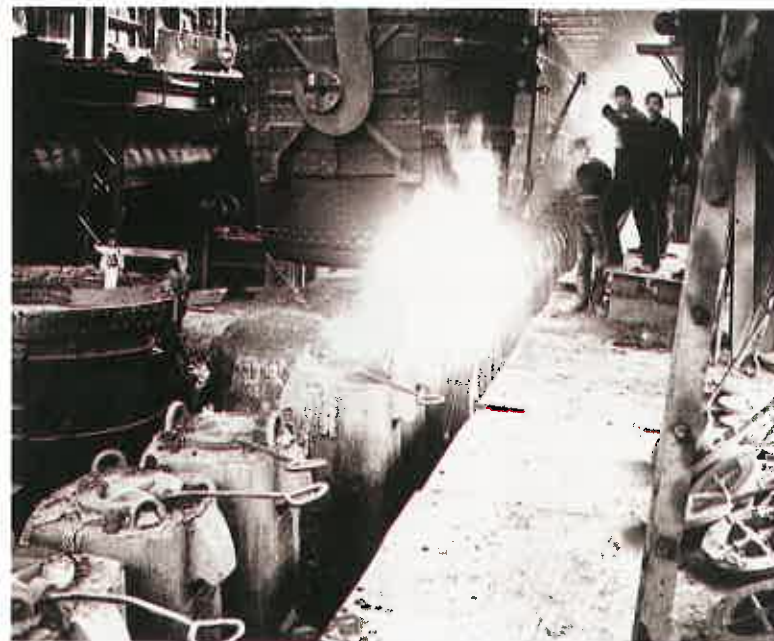
There were two basic types of industrial workers in the United States in the 1800s—craft workers and common laborers. Craft workers had special skills and training. They included machinists, iron molders, stonemasons, glassblowers, shoemakers, printers, carpenters, and many others. Craft workers generally received higher wages and

had more control over how they organized their time on the shop floor. Common laborers had few skills and received lower wages.

In the 1830s, as industrialism began to spread, craft workers began to form **trade unions**—unions limited to people with specific skills. By the early 1870s, there were over 30 national trade unions in the United States. Among the largest and most successful were the Iron Molders' International Union, the International Typographical Union, and the Knights of St. Crispin—the shoemakers' union.

Industry Opposes Unions Employers were often forced to recognize and negotiate with trade unions because they represented workers whose skills they needed. However, employers generally regarded unions as illegitimate conspiracies that interfered with their property rights. Owners of large corporations particularly opposed **industrial unions**, which united all craft workers and common laborers in a particular industry.

Companies used several techniques to prevent unions from forming. They required workers to take



Picturing History

Unsafe Working Conditions Workers in the late 1800s often faced unsafe working conditions. Many began to join labor unions in an attempt to improve these conditions. **What unsafe conditions does this photograph of a steel mill show?**

2 TEACH

Daily Lecture and Discussion Notes 9–4

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Daily Lecture and Discussion Notes
Chapter 9, Section 4

Did You Know? During the Pullman strike in July 1894, railroad workers in Chicago went on strike in sympathy with the employees of the Pullman Palace Car Company. Among the incidents of the strike, workers burned 607 freight cars in the Chicago railroad yards. The Governor of Illinois, John Peter Altgeld, was a friend of labor unions and refused to call out the militia to stop the strike. Over the objections of Governor Altgeld, President Grover Cleveland and his attorney general ordered 23,000 troops to the Chicago area to end the Pullman strike.

1. Working in the United States, pages 326–327

Analyzing Information Read the following quote by George Pullman: “Last year [1892], I made only 4.5 percent profit and this year it will be less than 4 percent. I am entitled to make more money than that. My workers will have to take a pay cut.” **Ask: Was Pullman justified in asking his workers to take a cut in pay and, if so, why?** Discuss why present-day companies ask employees to take pay cuts. 11

Picturing History

Answer: Workers are dangerously close to molten steel.
Ask: What problems resulted from unsafe working conditions? (injuries, deaths, and illnesses)

Reading Check

Answer: working conditions, low pay, highly specific and repetitive tasks

SECTION RESOURCES

Reproducible Masters

- Reproducible Lesson Plan 9–4
- Daily Lecture and Discussion Notes 9–4
- Guided Reading Activity 9–4
- Section Quiz 9–4
- Reading Essentials and Study Guide 9–4
- Performance Assessment Activities and Rubrics

Transparencies

- Daily Focus Skills Transparency 9–4

Multimedia

- Interactive Tutor Self-Assessment CD-ROM
- ExamView® Pro Testmaker CD-ROM
- Presentation Plus! CD-ROM
- TeacherWorks™ CD-ROM
- Audio Program

COOPERATIVE LEARNING ACTIVITY

Organizing a Union Organize students into two groups. Designate one group as the employers and have them decide what they would tell their employees to keep them from joining a union. Ask the other group to be union organizers, and have them decide what they would tell workers about the advantages of joining a union. Have each group develop a list of talking points. Have several members of each group present their arguments to the class. Discuss the long-range economic and social effects of labor unions. 12
Use the rubric for a cooperative group management plan on pages 71–72 in the **Performance Assessment Activities and Rubrics.**