Workers tried to form unions in the late 1800s, hoping to improve wages, hours, and working conditions. Business leaders were willing to deal with some trade unions but generally opposed industrial unions. Many strikes in this era led to violence, which hurt the image of unions and slowed their growth.

**Working in the United States**

**MAIN Idea** Low wages, long hours, and difficult working conditions caused resentment among workers and led to efforts to organize unions.

**HISTORY AND YOU** Have you ever felt that you were underpaid for an after-school job? Read about the conditions that made workers want to organize.

Life for workers in industrial America was difficult. Many workers had to perform dull, repetitive tasks in working conditions that were often unhealthy and dangerous. Workers breathed in lint, dust, and toxic fumes. Heavy machines lacking safety devices caused many injuries. Despite the difficult working conditions, industrialism led to a dramatic rise in the standard of living. The average worker’s wages rose by 50 percent between 1860 and 1890. Nonetheless, the uneven division of income between the wealthy and the working class caused resentment among workers. In 1900 the average industrial worker made 22¢ per hour and worked 59 hours per week.

**Deflation**, or a rise in the value of money, added to tensions between workers and employers. Between 1865 and 1897, 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. Workers, however, resented getting less money. Eventually, many concluded that they needed a union to bargain for them in order to get higher wages and better working conditions.

**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, shoemakers, printers, and many others. Craft workers received higher wages and had more control over how they organized their time. Common laborers had few skills and received lower wages.
In 1893 a recession hit the United States; by 1894, millions of workers were unemployed and over 750,000 were on strike. A former quarry foreman named Jacob Coxey organized unemployed workers and began a march on Washington to demand jobs on public works projects. The marchers were known as “Coxey’s Army.”

In the 1830s, as industrialization began to spread, craft workers began to form trade unions. By 1873 there were 32 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 often had to negotiate with trade unions because they represented workers whose skills they needed. However, employers generally viewed unions as conspiracies that interfered with property rights. Business leaders particularly opposed industrial unions, which united all workers in a particular industry.

Companies used several techniques to stop workers from forming unions. They required workers to take oaths or sign contracts promising not to join a union. They hired detectives to identify union organizers. Workers who tried to organize a union or strike were fired and placed on a blacklist—a list of “troublemakers”—so that no company would hire them.
When workers formed a union, companies used "lockouts" to break it. They locked workers out of the property and refused to pay them. If the union called a strike, employers would hire replacements, or strikebreakers.

**Political and Social Opposition** Efforts to break unions often succeeded because there were no laws giving workers the right to form unions or requiring owners to negotiate with them. Courts frequently ruled that strikes were "conspiracies in restraint of trade," for which labor leaders might be fined or jailed.

Unions also suffered from the perception that they were un-American. In the 1800s, the ideas of Karl Marx, called Marxism, became very influential in Europe. Marx argued that the basic force shaping capitalist society was the class struggle between workers and owners. He believed that workers would eventually revolt, seize control of the factories, and overthrow the government.

Marxists claimed that after the revolution the government would seize all private property and create a socialist society where wealth was evenly divided. Eventually, Marx thought, the state would disappear, leaving a communist society where classes did not exist.

While many labor supporters agreed with Marx, a few supported anarchism. Anarchists believe that society does not need any government. At the time, some believed that with only a few acts of violence they could ignite a revolution to topple the government. In the late 1800s, anarchists assassinated government officials and set off bombs all across Europe, hoping to trigger a revolution.

During the same period, tens of thousands of European immigrants headed to America. Anti-immigrant feelings were already strong in the United States and, as people began to associate immigrant workers with radical ideas, they became suspicious of unions. These fears, and concerns for law and order, often led officials to use the courts, the police, and even the army to crush strikes and break up unions.

**Reading Check** Identifying Why were some Americans suspicious of unions?

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**INFOGRAPHIC**

**Working in the United States, 1870–1900**

The status of the American economy played an important role in the development of unions. Although union membership rose dramatically by 1900, the willingness of people to join unions at any given time varied depending on how well the economy was doing.

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**The U.S. Economy, 1870–1900**

- **Business activity**
- **Wholesale prices**

*Source: The Great Republic.*
The Great Railroad Strike

The panic of 1873 was a severe recession that struck the American economy and forced many companies to cut wages. The economy had still not recovered when, in July 1877, the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad announced it was cutting wages for the third time. In Martinsburg, West Virginia, workers walked off the job and blocked the tracks.

As word spread, railroad workers across the country walked off the job. The strike eventually involved 80,000 railroad workers and affected two-thirds of the nation’s railways. Angry strikers smashed equipment, tore up tracks, and blocked rail service in New York, Baltimore, Pittsburgh, St. Louis, and Chicago. The governors of several states called out their militias. In many places, gun battles erupted between the militia and the strikers.

Declaring a state of “insurrection,” President Hayes sent federal troops to Martinsburg, Baltimore, Pittsburgh, and elsewhere. It took 12 bloody days for police, state militias, and
federal troops to restore order. By the time the strike collapsed, more than 100 people lay dead, and over $10 million in railroad property had been destroyed. The violence of this strike alarmed many Americans and pointed to the need for more peaceful means to settle labor disputes.

**The Knights of Labor**

The *Knights of Labor*, founded in 1869, took a different approach to labor issues. Its leader, Terence Powderly, opposed strikes, preferring to use boycotts to pressure employers. The Knights of Labor also supported *arbitration*, a process in which a third party helps workers and employers reach an agreement. The Knights called for an eight-hour workday and supported equal pay for women, the abolition of child labor, and the creation of worker-owned factories. Unlike many organizations of the era, the Knights welcomed women and African Americans as members.

**Early Successes** In the early 1880s, the Knights began to use strikes and were initially successful. After they convinced one of Jay Gould’s railroads to reverse wage cuts in 1885, membership in the union soared. In less than one year, the Knights grew from 100,000 to 700,000 members. Then, in the spring of 1886, an event known as the Haymarket Riot undermined the Knights’ reputation.

**The Haymarket Riot** In 1886 supporters of the eight-hour workday called for a nationwide strike on May 1st. On that date, strikes took place in many cities. In Chicago, the local Knights of Labor led a march of 80,000 people through the center of the city on that date. Over the next few days, nearly 70,000 workers went on strike across the city.

On May 3, police intervened to stop a fight on the picket line at the McCormick Harvesting Machine Company. The incident turned violent and police fired on the strikers, killing four. Afterward, a local anarchist group organized a meeting in Chicago’s Haymarket Square to protest the shooting of the strikers.

On the evening of May 4, about 3,000 people gathered to hear the speeches. As the meeting began to break up, the police moved in to keep order. Someone threw a bomb, killing one officer and wounding six others. The police opened fire, and workers shot back. About 100 people, including nearly 70 police officers, were injured.

The police arrested eight people for the bombing. Seven were German immigrants and advocates of anarchism. The incident horrified people across the country. Although the evidence was weak, all eight men were convicted, and four were executed.

Critics long opposed to the union movement pointed to the Haymarket riot to claim that unions were dominated by dangerous radicals. One of the men arrested was a member of the Knights of Labor. This association hurt the Knights’ reputation and, coupled with lost strikes, led to a steady decline in membership and influence.

**The Homestead Strike**

In the summer of 1892, another labor dispute led to bloodshed. A steel mill owned by Andrew Carnegie in Homestead, Pennsylvania, was managed by an anti-union business partner, Henry Clay Frick. The mill’s employees belonged to the Amalgamated Association of Iron, Steel, and Tin Workers, the largest craft union in the country. When the union’s contract was about to expire, Frick proposed to cut wages by 20 percent. He then locked employees out of the plant and arranged for the Pinkerton Detective Agency to bring in replacement workers.

When the Pinkertons and strikebreakers approached the plant on barges, the strikers refused to let them land. Gunfire followed. After 14 hours, several Pinkertons and strikers were dead, and dozens more were injured. The governor of Pennsylvania then ordered the militia to take control and protect the replacement workers. After four months, the strike collapsed.

**The Pullman Strike**

Under the leadership of Eugene V. Debs, railroad employees organized the American Railway Union (ARU) in 1893. As an industrial union, the ARU tried to organize all employees of the railroad industry. Among the workers the union organized were the employees of the Pullman Palace Car Company. The owner, George Pullman, had built a company town, Pullman, just outside of Chicago and required
### Comparing Major Strikes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Homestead Strike, 1892</th>
<th>Pullman Strike, 1894</th>
<th>Lawrence Textile Strike, 1912</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Conditions</strong></td>
<td>Seeking to break the union, the Carnegie Steel Company rejects wage increase and proposes a 20% wage cut</td>
<td>Deep wage cuts without cuts in rent and food prices at company housing and company stores</td>
<td>Very low wages; high mortality among workers (many workers are young girls); extreme poverty among workers; strike begins after new wage cuts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Union</strong></td>
<td>Amalgamated Association of Iron, Steel, and Tin Workers</td>
<td>American Railway Union</td>
<td>International Workers of the World (IWW); strikers mostly female, immigrant textile workers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tactics</strong></td>
<td>Workers: Surround factory with pickets and armed workers to keep it shut down and keep strikebreakers out. Employer: Locks workers out of the plant; hires PinkERTONS to break strike.</td>
<td>Workers: Refuse to handle any railcars built by Pullman; railroads are tied up nationwide. Employer: Locks workers out of factory.</td>
<td>Workers: Picketing; union provides food and money to strikers; gains support by touring child workers around country. Employer: Uses fire hoses on picketing workers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Role of Government</strong></td>
<td>State government sends in militia to end violence between strikers and PinkERTONS.</td>
<td>Federal government gets court injunction to end strike because it interferes with shipment of U.S. mail; federal troops end strike.</td>
<td>Local police and state and local militia make mass arrests, attack picketers; after attack on women and children, strike is publicized; Congress and President Taft investigate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Outcome</strong></td>
<td>Company hires strikebreakers; strike collapses after anarchist tries to kill plant manager.</td>
<td>ARU leaders are jailed; strike ends unsuccessfully; ARU membership declines.</td>
<td>Employers give in, grant workers’ demands.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Analyzing VISUALS

1. **Contrasting** How does the Lawrence Textile Strike differ from the others?
2. **Analyzing Visuals** In which instance do federal troops break the strike, and on what grounds?

---

his workers to live there and to buy goods from company stores. In 1893 the Pullman Company laid off workers and slashed wages. The wage cuts made it difficult for workers to pay their rent and the high prices at the company stores. After the company refused to discuss workers’ grievances, a strike began on May 11, 1894. To show support for the Pullman strikers, other ARU members across the United States refused to handle Pullman cars.

This boycott tied up the railroads and threatened to paralyze the economy. Determined to break the strike, railroad managers arranged for U.S. mail cars to be attached to the Pullman cars. If the strikers refused to handle the Pullman cars, they would be interfering with the U.S. mail, a violation of federal law. President Grover Cleveland then sent in troops, claiming it was his responsibility to keep the mail running. Then a federal court issued an injunction, or formal court order, directing the union to halt the boycott. Debs went to jail for violating the injunction, but both the strike at Pullman and the ARU strike collapsed. In the case *In re Debs* (1895), the Supreme Court upheld the right to issue such an injunction. This gave business a powerful tool for dealing with labor unrest.

**Reading Check** **Summarizing** Why was it difficult for unions to succeed in the 1800s?
New Unions Emerge

**MAIN Idea** The AFL fought for skilled workers; new unions tried to organize unskilled workers.

**HISTORY AND YOU** Do you know anyone who belongs to a union? Read on to learn about the different types of unions and how they tried to help their members.

Although workers often shared the same complaints about wage rates and working hours, unions took very different approaches to how they tried to improve workers’ lives. Trade unions remained the most common type of labor organization. Of course, most workers were unskilled and unrepresented by trade unions. Thus, new types of unions emerged that tried to reach out to those workers and had different ideas about how to help them.

The Rise of the AFL

The American Federation of Labor (AFL) was the dominant union of the late 1800s. In 1886 leaders of several national trade unions came together to create the AFL. From its beginning, the AFL focused on promoting the interests of skilled workers.

**Samuel Gompers** was the first president of the AFL, a position he held until 1924 (with the exception of one year). While other unions became involved in politics, Gompers tried to steer away from controversy and stay focused on “pure and simple” unionism. That is, he thought it best that the AFL stay focused on “bread and butter” issues—wages, working hours, and working conditions. He was willing to use the strike but preferred to negotiate.

The AFL had three main goals. First, it tried to convince companies to recognize unions and to agree to collective bargaining. Second, it pushed for closed shops, meaning that companies could only hire union members. Third, it promoted an eight-hour workday.

The AFL grew slowly, but by 1900 it was the biggest union in the country, with over 500,000 members. Still, at that time, the AFL represented less than 15 percent of all nonfarm workers. Most AFL members were white men, because the unions discriminated against African Americans, and only a few would admit women.

The IWW

In 1905 a group of labor radicals, many of them socialists, created the Industrial
Workers of the World (IWW). Nicknamed “the Wobblies,” the IWW wanted to organize all workers according to industry, without making distinctions between skilled and unskilled workers. The IWW endorsed using strikes and believed “The working class and the employing class have nothing in common.”

The IWW believed all workers should be organized into “One Big Union.” In particular, the IWW tried to organize the unskilled workers who were ignored by most unions.

In 1912 the IWW led a successful strike of textile workers in Lawrence, Massachusetts. After textile companies cut wages, 25,000 workers went on strike. During the strike, the children of strikers were sent out of town—in case things became violent. The companies reversed the wage cuts after ten weeks. The Lawrence strike was the IWW’s greatest victory. Most IWW strikes failed.

The IWW never gained a large membership, but its radical philosophy and controversial strikes led many to condemn the organization as subversive.

**Working Women**

After the Civil War, the number of women wage earners began to increase. By 1900 women made up more than 18 percent of the labor force. The type of jobs women did outside the home reflected society’s ideas about what constituted “women’s work.” About one-third of women wage earners worked as domestic servants. Another third worked as teachers, nurses, and sales clerks. The remaining third were industrial workers. Many worked in the garment industry and food-processing plants.

Regardless of the job, women were paid less than men even when they performed the same jobs. It was assumed that a woman had a man helping to support her, and that a man needed higher wages to support a family. Most unions excluded women.

One of the most famous labor leaders of the era was Mary Harris Jones, also known as “Mother Jones.” An Irish immigrant, Jones began as a labor organizer for the Knights of Labor, then helped to organize mine workers. Her persuasiveness as a public speaker made her a very successful organizer, leading John D. Rockefeller to label her “the most dangerous woman in America.”

In 1900 Jewish and Italian immigrants who worked in the clothing business in New York City founded the International Ladies’ Garment Workers Union. The membership, composed mostly of female workers, expanded rapidly in a few years. In 1909 a strike of 20,000 garment workers won union recognition in the industry and better wages and benefits for employees.

In 1903 Mary Kenney O’Sullivan and Leonora O’Reilly decided to establish a separate union for women. With the help of Jane Addams and Lillian Wald, they established the Women’s Trade Union League (WTUL), the first national association dedicated to promoting women’s labor issues. The WTUL pushed for an eight-hour workday, the creation of a minimum wage, an end to evening work for women, and the abolition of child labor.

**Reading Check** Comparing How were female industrial workers treated differently from male workers in the late 1800s?
Causes of Industrialization

- Abundant natural resources
- Cheap immigrant labor force
- High tariffs reduce the import of foreign goods
- National transportation and communication networks

Causes of the Growth of Big Business

- Little or no government intervention
- Development of pools, trusts, holding companies, and monopolies
- Small businesses could not compete with economies of scale of larger businesses
- Practices of some big businesses sometimes limited competition

Effects on the Workplace

- Rural migration and immigration created large, concentrated workforce
- Low wages, long hours, and dangerous working conditions were common in large-scale industries
- First large unions formed but had little bargaining power against larger companies

Workers fill molds with molten steel at a foundry in 1905. Working conditions of the era led to many industrial accidents and contributed to the rise of unions.
Reviewing Vocabulary

Directions: Choose the word or words that best completes the sentence.

1. _______ are formed by a legal agreement in which one person manages another person's property.
   A Trusts
   B Pools
   C Corporations
   D Monopolies

2. _______ united all craft workers and common laborers in a particular industry.
   A Closed shops
   B Trade unions
   C Industrial unions
   D Blacklists

3. Costs a company has to pay, such as loans, mortgages, and taxes, whether or not it is operating, are called
   A investment funds.
   B economies of scale.
   C fixed costs.
   D operating costs.

4. Supporters of ______ believe that the government should not interfere in the economy other than to protect private property rights.
   A high tariffs
   B laissez-faire
   C industrial regulations
   D high taxes for private individuals

Reviewing Main Ideas

Directions: Choose the best answers to the following questions.

Section 1 (pp. 182–187)

5. What factors contributed to industrialization?
   A lack of natural resources
   B free enterprise system
   C limited workforce
   D deteriorating railroad system

6. Laissez-faire relies on
   A the government to regulate wages and prices.
   B high taxes and government debt to fund businesses.
   C high tariffs on foreign goods.
   D supply and demand to regulate wages and prices.

Section 2 (pp. 188–193)

7. How did the federal government aid railroad construction in the 1850s and 1860s?
   A advertised overseas to attract immigrants to help build tracks
   B used tax dollars to fund many railroad projects
   C passed laws to legalize railroad monopolies
   D granted public lands to railroads to sell to raise funds

8. The Pacific Railway Act provided for the construction of a railway
   A by offering right-of-way land grants to railroad companies.
   B along the Pacific coast from California north to Canada.
   C by the Union Pacific Railroad company.
   D by the Central Pacific Railroad company.
Section 3 (pp. 194–199)

9. Corporations are organizations that
   A. receive federal funding.
   B. sell stock to the public.
   C. have a monopoly on a product or service.
   D. earn profits for their workers.

10. In the late 1800s, which of the following helped business leaders eliminate competition?
    A. strikes
    B. labor unions
    C. closed shops
    D. monopolies

Section 4 (pp. 200–207)

11. Labor unions were formed to
    A. protect factory owners and improve workers’ wages.
    B. improve workers’ wages and make factories safer.
    C. make factories safer and prevent lockouts.
    D. prevent lockouts and fight deflation.

12. Which of the following events reduced membership in the Knights of Labor?
    A. the Pullman Strike
    B. the panic of 1873
    C. the Haymarket Riot
    D. the Great Railroad Strike of 1877

13. In the last half of the 1800s, which development led to the other three?
    A. expansion of the middle class
    B. growth of industrialization
    C. formation of trusts
    D. creation of labor unions

Critical Thinking

Directions: Choose the best answers to the following questions.

14. The slogan "Eight hours for work, eight hours for sleep, eight hours for what we will" was used in the late 1800s to promote a major goal of
    A. farmers.
    B. politicians.
    C. industrialists.
    D. organized labor.

Base your answers to questions 15 and 16 on the chart below and your knowledge of Chapter 5.

Steel Production, 1865–1895

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Steel Production (millions)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1865</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1870</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1875</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1880</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1885</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1890</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1895</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Historical Statistics of the United States.

15. Between what years did steel production increase the most?
    A. 1865–1870
    B. 1885–1890
    C. 1890–1895
    D. 1895–1900

16. How did increased steel production contribute to American industrialization?
    A. decreased the number of jobs available for workers
    B. discouraged the consolidation of industry
    C. improved transportation methods such as railroads
    D. encouraged immigration by providing a safe work environment

Need Extra Help?

If You Missed Questions ... 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16
Go to Page ... 194 197–199 200–202 204 200–204 200–207 194–199 196–197
17. Which of the following statements about labor unions in the late 1800s is accurate?

A. Strikes by labor unions usually gained public support.
B. Labor union activities were frequently opposed by the government.
C. Demands by labor unions were usually met.
D. Arbitration was commonly used to end labor unrest.

18. The “new immigrants” to the United States between 1890 and 1915 came primarily from

A. southern and eastern Europe.
B. northern and western Europe.
C. East Asia.
D. Latin America.

Analyze the cartoon and answer the question that follows. Base your answer on the cartoon and on your knowledge of Chapter 5.

Source: Bernhard Gillam, Puck, February 7, 1883

19. What does this cartoon say about Gould and Vanderbilt?

A. They are giving money to the hard-working laborers.
B. They are getting rich at the expense of others’ back-breaking work.
C. The ship is slowly crumbling like their empires.
D. The workers are determined to overthrow them.

Document-Based Questions

Directions: Analyze the document and answer the short-answer questions that follow the document.

In the following excerpt from History of the Standard Oil Company, Ida Tarbell warns of the effects of Rockefeller’s business practices on the nation’s morality. Read the excerpt and answer the questions that follow:

“Very often people who admit the facts, who are willing to see that Mr. Rockefeller has employed force and fraud to secure his ends, justify him by declaring, ‘It’s business.’ That is, ‘It’s business’ has come to be a legitimate excuse for hard dealing, sly tricks, special privileges. It is a common enough thing to hear men arguing that the ordinary laws of morality do not apply in business.

As for the ethical side, there is no cure but in an increasing scorn of unfair play . . . When the businessman who fights to secure special privileges, to crowd his competitor off the track by other than fair competitive methods, receives the same summary disdainful ostracism by his fellows that the doctor or lawyer who is ‘unprofessional,’ . . . we shall have gone a long way toward making commerce a fit pursuit for our young men.”

—from History of the Standard Oil Company

20. According to Tarbell, what practices had Rockefeller used to establish Standard Oil Company?
21. In what way did Tarbell believe the attitudes of the American people contributed to Rockefeller’s business practices?

Extended Response

22. Identify labor unions formed during the late 1800s and early 1900s. Discuss the different views, goals, and activities of each organization. How were these organizations similar to or different from each other? What roles did unions and union members play in industrialization? Write an expository essay that supports your position with relevant facts and details.

History Online

For additional test practice, use Self-Check Quizzes—Chapter 5 at glencoe.com.