

CHAPTER 6 Section 4 (pages 262–269)

Workers of the Nation Unite

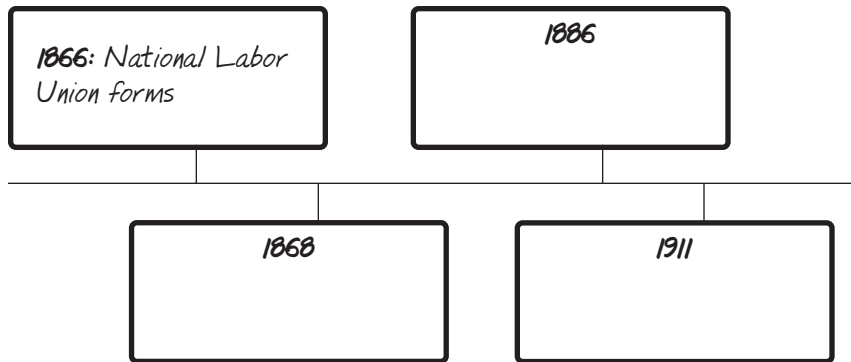
BEFORE YOU READ

In the last section, you read about the growth of big business in America.

In this section, you will read about how workers united to improve conditions in the nation's growing industries.

AS YOU READ

Use the time line below to take notes of the major events in labor activism between 1866 and 1911.



TERMS AND NAMES

Samuel Gompers Union leader

American Federation of Labor (AFL) Name of union led by Gompers

collective bargaining Negotiations between groups

Eugene V. Debs Leader of the American Railway Union

socialism System based on government control of business and property

Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) Union of radicals and socialists

scab replacement worker

Mary Harris "Mother" Jones A leader of the mine workers union

Workers Are Exploited; Labor Unions Emerge

(pages 262–264)

What did unions want?

Workers in the nation's industries led a rough life. They labored long hours in dangerous conditions for low pay.

Workers had no choice but to put up with the horrible conditions. Incomes were so low that all family members had to work. This included women and children. Many children worked from dawn to dusk. This left no time or energy for school. Many child laborers suffered from hunger and exhaustion.

To improve their conditions, workers began to form labor unions. A labor union is a group of employees working together. Things that workers wanted included safer working conditions and higher wages. The National Labor Union formed

in 1866. It was made up of about 300 local unions in 13 states. This union persuaded the government to adopt an eight-hour workday in government offices. The National Labor Union formed its own political party—the Labor Reform Party. The party ran its own candidate in the 1872 presidential election.

The Knights of Labor formed in 1868. It was another large union. This union was open to all workers, regardless of race, *gender*, or type of skill. The Knights of Labor pushed for an eight-hour day in numerous industries. It also demanded equal pay for women.

1. Name two things unions wanted.

Union Movements Diverge; Strikes Turn Violent (pages 264–268)

Why did some unions support socialism?

As the union movement spread, two major types of unions emerged. In 1886, trade and craft unions formed the **American Federation of Labor (AFL)**. It was led by **Samuel Gompers**. This union focused on **collective bargaining**, or group negotiations, to reach agreements between workers and employers. Another union leader, **Eugene V. Debs**, formed the American Railway Union (ARU). This union was opened to both skilled and unskilled laborers.

Debs and other labor leaders believed that the problems workers faced were due in part to the American economic system. They believed that the idea of private ownership and free competition made the rich richer and the poor poorer. These labor leaders turned to **socialism**. Socialism is an economic and political system based on government control of business and property. It also calls for distributing wealth equally among everyone. In 1905, a radical group of union members and socialists in the West organized the **Industrial Workers of the World (IWW)**, or the Wobblies. This union welcomed women and African Americans.

In order to improve their conditions, workers often went on strike. A strike occurs when laborers refuse to work.

In May 1886, about 1,200 people gathered in Chicago's Haymarket Square. They had come to protest the killing of a striker by police the day before. The meeting turned into a riotous battle between police and workers. As a result of the Haymarket violence, the public began to turn against the labor movement.

However, this did not stop workers from striking. In 1892, workers shut down the Carnegie Steel Plant in Pennsylvania. A battle followed that left several people dead. The owners hired **scabs**, or replacement workers, to keep the plant open. Eventually the strikers had to give in.

In 1894, a strike at the Pullman railcar company resulted in *bloodshed*. Federal troops restored order. Many of the workers lost their jobs.

2. For what reason did socialism appeal to some unions?

Women in the Labor Movement (pages 268–269)

What role did women play?

Women were barred from many unions. However, they helped in the fight to improve labor conditions. **Mary Harris “Mother” Jones** helped organize mine workers. Pauline Newman helped organize clothing workers.

In 1911, a fire broke out in the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory—a clothing factory in New York City. Almost 150 women workers died, in part because they had been locked inside. The public was outraged. As a result, New York passed several labor reform laws.

3. Name two women labor organizers and the unions they helped lead.

Government Pressure on Unions (page 269)

How did big business battle the unions?

Despite some gains, union members faced growing opposition from industrialists and the federal government. Business leaders took a number of steps to prevent workers from organizing. They banned union meetings or fired union workers.

Business leaders also got help from the federal government. When workers went on strike, employers would claim that the strike hurt interstate trade. As a result, the government would force the workers to return to their jobs.

4. Name at least two ways big business tried to break up unions.

Answer Key

Chapter 6: A New Industrial Age (pages 244–271)

Section 4: Workers of the Nation

