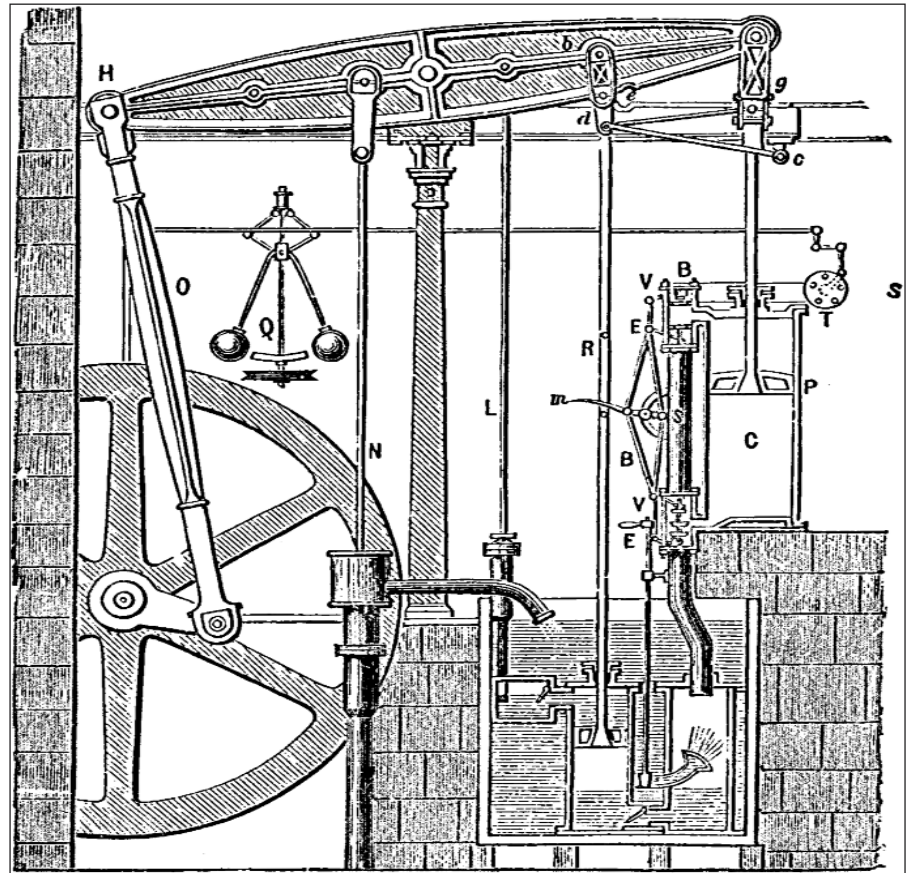


THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION – FROM FARM TO FACTORY

IN 1700, BRITAIN WAS LARGELY A RURAL COUNTRY WHERE MOST PEOPLE LIVED OFF THE LAND. LITTLE HAD CHANGED IN THE PREVIOUS 500 YEARS, AND INCOME PER PERSON WAS ESSENTIALLY FLAT. BUT BY 1850 THIS SMALL ISLAND NATION HAD BECOME THE “WORKSHOP OF THE WORLD.” PER PERSON INCOME WAS SOARING, AND BRITAIN WAS PRODUCING ABOUT TWO-THIRDS OF THE WORLD’S COAL AND MORE THAN HALF OF ITS IRON AND COTTON CLOTH. BUSINESSMEN WERE COMING FROM ALL OVER EUROPE TO FIND OUT HOW AND WHY THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION HAD TAKEN PLACE IN BRITAIN, WHY BRITAIN HAD A VIRTUAL MONOPOLY ON TEXTILES AND MACHINE TOOLS, AND HOW THEIR OWN COUNTRIES COULD MAKE THE SAME CHANGES AND BENEFIT FROM THE HUGE INCREASE IN WEALTH AND PROSPERITY THAT HAD SPREAD ACROSS THE BRITISH ISLES.

In 1700, most British people worked the land. Living in villages surrounded by huge open fields, they produced grain and small amounts of livestock that provided a modest living. Most villagers cultivated a few



A sketch of one of James Watt's steam engines. The letter C indicates the steam-cylinder.

strips of open field and supplemented their income by grazing cows, keeping fowl, and gathering fuel wood.

Wool was also an important source of income. Throughout Britain, peasants, farmers, and agricultural laborers worked on producing woolen cloth. The process required many steps: After sheep were sheared, the wool was sorted and cleaned and then combed to make yarn. The yarn was spun and woven. Women and children often did the sorting, cleaning and spinning; men did the combing and weaving — all in their own cottages.

Coal played an important part in life, especially after timber began to run out and charcoal (made from wood) was in short supply. Coal supplied heat to homes and fueled the furnaces that

INDUSTRIALIZATION AND LABOR

This edition of *Bill of Rights in Action* examines industrialization and labor issues. The first article looks at the Industrial Revolution, which turned Britain into the first industrial nation and continues today in the developing world. The second article examines the Pullman strike, an 1894 labor dispute that spread throughout the United States. The last article traces the history of U.S. labor unions and looks at where they stand today.

World History: The Industrial Revolution

U.S. History: The Pullman Strike and Boycott

U.S. History: American Labor Unions: Yesterday and Today

Guest writer Lucy Eisenberg, Esq., contributed the article on the Industrial Revolution. Our longtime contributor Carlton Martz wrote the other articles.

produced iron for tools. Coal was mostly mined in agricultural areas, where miners would also grow oats and other crops. At the bottom of the mine shaft, coal was moved by men who pulled wooden sledges or by ponies tended by boys. In some mines, the wives and daughters of miners carried coal in baskets. When water seeped into the coal shaft, it was carried to the surface in a series of pots hauled by men or donkeys, or occasionally pumped by waterwheels or windmills. When coal reached the surface, it was transported in bags slung over the backs of horses — or in wagons on bumpy roads to the nearest river or port. Thus in mining, as in textile production and farming, work was done with hand tools and power was supplied by human or animal muscle (or in some cases by wind or running water).

New Inventions

By 1750, the first Industrial Revolution had begun, and Britain was changing from an economy based on farming, manual labor, and draft animals to machine-based manufacturing. Two important breakthroughs occurred: the invention of the steam engine by James Watt and a series of inventions that revolutionized the textile industry. New and better ways of making iron were also being developed.

A. Watt's Steam Engine

To mine more coal, Britain's coal industry needed to sink deeper shafts. But that depended on finding a way to pump out underground water. In 1702, Thomas Newcomen designed a steam engine to power pumps in coal mines. But Newcomen's engine was inefficient and consumed large amounts of fuel. Fifty years later, a young Scotsman named James Watt began experimenting with steam and came up a new two-cylinder steam engine. It increased the efficiency of the steam engine by a factor of five and saved 75 percent on coal costs. Watt formed a partnership with the owner of an ironworks and acquired a patent on his design. By 1776, the Watt steam engine was installed and working in coal mines to pump water. For the first time in history, coal miners did

not have to rely on water, wind, or human or animal muscle for power.

B. From Wool to Cotton

While the steam engine was being developed, big changes were underway in manufacturing textiles. Prior to 1750, most cloth produced in Britain was made with wool, shorn from the backs of sheep who grazed on country farms. Individual artisans processed the wool, spinning and weaving it in their own homes. No cotton grew in Britain, and most of the cotton cloth used in clothing was imported from India.

Then within 50 years, a series of inventions transformed the textile industry. The invention in 1733 of a "flying shuttle" made weaving much faster, and cotton thread was in short supply. Then a "carding" machine was invented in 1748. It converted raw cotton buds into a continuous coil of cotton fiber. The carding machine was improved by Richard Arkwright, who became known as the "Father of the Industrial Revolution." In the mid-1760s another invention, called the "spinning jenny," allowed a single operator to spin dozens of threads at once. Arkwright then invented another method of spinning — the water frame. It used water to power a machine that produced an even stronger thread than the spinning jenny. By 1780, a cotton "mule" had been invented that combined the best points of the spinning jenny and the water frame. Cotton mills were built — powered by running water — and the process of preparing cotton for spinning was mechanized. In a short time, with Arkwright's spinning roller, a new industry was created based solely on cotton.

Between 1750 and 1800, the value of cotton goods exported from Britain increased more than a 100 fold — from almost 50,000 to more than 5 million English pounds. Cotton had overtaken wool in Britain's textile industry.

C. Making More, and Better, Iron

Britain had good supplies of iron ore and had been producing iron for centuries. But the furnaces used to produce iron were fueled with wood, and by 1700, many forests had been

cut down and timber was in short supply. One solution came in 1709 when Abraham Darby set up a coal foundry that used coke (which comes from coal) instead of charcoal to smelt iron ore into pig iron. Darby's technique made iron smelting more profitable, but it could only produce pig iron that was not as strong as wrought iron.

Forged in blast furnaces, wrought iron was used for important tools such as plows and hoes. In 1750, Britain was still importing wrought iron from Sweden. Two new inventions in the next 50 years transformed the industry. One used the Watts steam-engine instead of water-wheels to blow the blast furnace. The second was a new process for "puddling" and rolling that removed impurities caused by using coke and made bars of the native pig iron at least as good as Swedish iron. The puddling process was patented in 1783 and 1784.

By 1805, the output of British pig iron had more than quadrupled. The average blast furnace produced almost 1,500 tons, almost doubling previous output. Iron foundries were springing up all over England and Wales.

A Transportation System

By 1800, Britain had abundant fuel from coal, steam engines powered many machines, and foundries made high-quality pig iron that could be used to make tools. But a transportation system also was essential for the Industrial Revolution.

In 1700, English roads were the worst in Europe. But by mid-century, hundreds of new and better roads were being built by "Turnpike Trusts," which gave private groups the authority to build roads and charge tolls to recover their costs. Even good roads, however, could not carry coal and other bulky and weighty goods required by factories. Britain solved the transportation problem by building hundreds of miles of new canals linked to navigable rivers, which in turn accessed seaside ports.

In 1761 the Duke of Bridgewater financed a canal that brought coal from his mines to the up-and-coming town

of Manchester. A huge commercial success, the canal halved the cost of transporting coal and raw cotton.

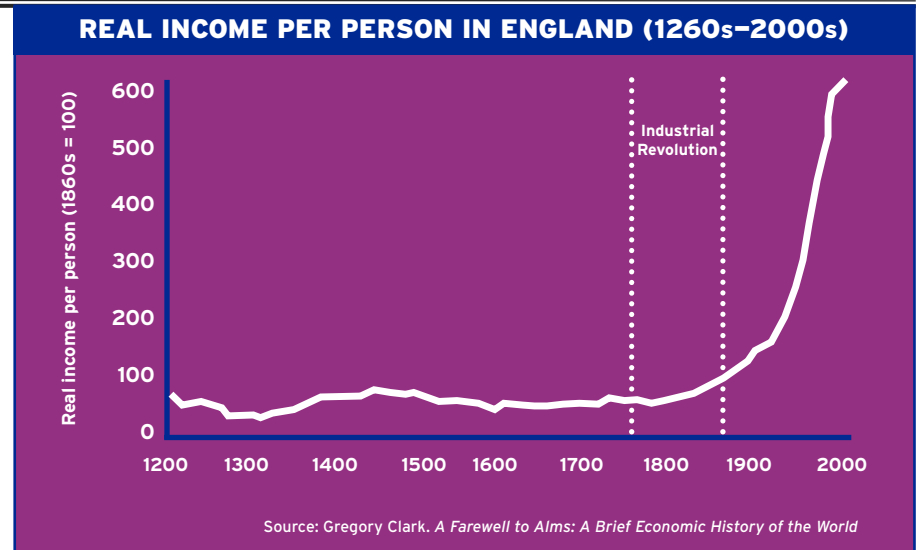
Fifty years later, the development of railroads revolutionized transportation again. In 1804, Samuel Homfrey financed a steam-powered locomotive that could haul 10 tons of iron from the ironworks. Less than 20 years later, the Stockton and Darlington Railroad was carrying both coal and passengers over a nine-mile stretch in one hour. And by 1830 a two-track railroad was built to provide cheap transportation for raw materials and finished goods — as well as passengers — between the port of Liverpool and the booming city of Manchester.

An Industrial World

By 1800, Manchester had become Britain's leading industrial city. A hundred years earlier, Manchester was only a small town, with a population of approximately 10,000. Then, in 1783, Richard Arkwright built a steam-powered cotton mill in Manchester, and within in a few years, new mills with steam-driven machinery dotted the area. By the turn of the century, the cotton industry had exploded. In just 20 years — between 1780 and 1800 — imports of raw cotton increased from 6 million to 56 million pounds per year. Cotton mills sprouted up everywhere as did warehouses to store cotton and finished products. In 1806, the city center housed just over 1,000 warehouses, and 15 years later, this number had almost doubled. By 1821, the city contained 32 factories with 5,722 steam-powered weaving looms. Manchester was called the “warehouse city” and later became known as “Cottonopolis” and the world's first center of mass production.

People came from all over the world to see the new industrial world. Much of what they saw was ugly, because England had not figured out how to manage its growing population in cities (urbanization).

Manchester's population grew from 25,000 in 1772 to 455,000 in 1851. Heavy soot from burning coal



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blocked sunlight and blackened the city, as it did in other factory cities. Other problems arose — a lack of police protection, clean water, sewers, garbage disposal, and housing. Families lived in single rooms, and ragged children roamed the filthy streets. The factories paid reasonable wages for unskilled workers, but not enough to support a whole family. The workday was long, and the work was tedious. Many factories hired children as young as 6 years old. In 1835, Alexis de Tocqueville, a French political writer and historian, went to Manchester, which he called “the palace of industry.” He found a city with 30 or 40 huge six-story factories, where the “noise of furnaces (and) the whistle of steam fill the air;” where “300,000 human beings are ceaselessly at work” and where a few are wealthy and many are poor. Summing up, de Tocqueville wrote:

From the foul drain the greatest stream of human industry flows out to fertilize the whole world. From this filthy sewer pure gold flows, Here humanity attains its most complete development and its most brutish; here civilization works its miracles and civilized man is turned almost into a savage.

Why England?

By 1850, Great Britain was known as the “workshop of the world.” A small country in size and population,

it was producing about two-thirds of the world's coal and more than half of its iron and cloth. And while government representatives and businessmen from throughout Europe were touring Britain's industrial centers and sending home reports, the rest of Europe was still far slower than the British in industrializing.

Many explanations account for why the Industrial Revolution first took place in Great Britain. One factor that gave Britain an advantage over Europe was size. Most European countries were larger than Britain, their populations were more spread out, and their terrain was more rugged. Thus, their transportation costs for fuel and raw materials were higher.

Another factor was natural resources. Britain's ample supply of coal and iron ore helped power its industrial growth.

Britain also had good access to the sea. In Britain, no part of the country is more than 70 miles from the ocean, and many navigable rivers run through the country. The rivers and streams not only facilitated transportation, but also helped power the early cotton mills before the advent of steam engines.

Britain could also furnish the capital needed to build the new inventions that gave rise to a machine-based economy. The Bank of England, founded in 1694, provided ready access to lenders and borrowers. ▶

England also had a stable legal system, including a patent system that helped protect and propel new inventions. Inventors could patent their inventions, and others who used their inventions had to pay for the privilege. Inventors like Arkwright and Watt earned money from their patented inventions, and the details of how their inventions worked were well-known and stimulated further inventions. In countries without a patent system, the only way to protect an invention was to keep it secret.

As a world power, Britain also enjoyed a world market for the goods it produced — as well as overseas sources of raw materials including cotton. In 1750, Britain’s colonial possessions reached from North America and Canada to Australia and India and Africa. Trade with the colonies provided profit that could be invested in new inventions and new cities. As one historian put it, “the commercial frontier of Britain lay overseas.” In the century from 1700 to 1800, sales to the West Indies and mainland colonies grew from 10 percent of British domestic exports to almost 60 percent. Britain, which used to import cotton cloth from India, was now exporting it to India — along with other products. In 1800, Britain had merchants ready to sell goods around the world. Its huge mercantile shipping force and a navy controlled the seas. As production soared, so did Britain’s exports to its colonies.

Industrialization Continues

The transition from an agricultural economy, where farmers and villagers set their own routines, to the machine-driven routine of 12-hour shifts in huge factories, did not come easily to many British workers. Skilled textile artisans, put out of work by automated looms, began violent protests in 1811, burning mills and destroying factory machinery. The protestors, called Luddites, became so violent that the British army had to be called into action. But gradually the Industrial Revolution brought the common man more comfortable living conditions, better nutrition, and longer life.

In 1851 Queen Victoria and her husband, Prince Albert, hosted the great Crystal Palace Exhibition to display the wonders of manufacturing and industry. Six million visitors came from around the world to see the products of industrialization. England showed off hundreds of its great inventions: a huge hydraulic press, a printing machine, an adding machine, textile machines, and every kind of steam engine. Other European countries beginning to enter the industrial age sent exhibits, as did America which displayed a sophisticated new plow and a fast-firing revolver. The German iron and steel maker Krupp startled viewers with a two-ton block of cast steel.

Prince Albert saw the Great Exhibition as evidence of “a period of most wonderful transition, which tends rapidly to accomplish that great end to which indeed all history points — the realization of the unity of mankind.” And indeed, at different times, and at different speeds, most of the world has industrialized.

The most recent example is China, whose rapid industrialization has amazed the world. Like British cities during the Industrial Revolution, many Chinese cities now suffer from pollution and rapid urbanization. But the wealth of China has grown tremendously.

Other parts of the developing world — countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America — are still on the road to industrialization.

FOR DISCUSSION AND WRITING

1. What was the Industrial Revolution? How is it relevant to today’s world?
2. Which invention do you think contributed the most to the Industrial Revolution? Why?
3. Why do you think the Industrial Revolution first took place in Britain?



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ACTIVITY

Agricultural Revolution vs. Industrial Revolution

The Industrial Revolution is frequently compared to another significant revolution in human history, the Agricultural Revolution (or Neolithic Revolution), which began around 10,000 B.C. Before the Agricultural Revolution, humans lived in small groups, hunted wild animals, and gathered food from plants growing in the wild. The invention of agriculture meant that people could grow their own food and stay in one place. People domesticated animals, and as food supplies grew, so did the population. The Agricultural Revolution led to towns, cities, and civilization. Society grew more complex. New classes arose — craftsmen, warriors, priests, leaders. New problems also arose, especially those associated with cities, e.g., disease and crime.

In this activity, students will decide which had the most positive effect on humans, the Agricultural Revolution or the Industrial Revolution.

1. Form small groups. During the activity, students should refer to the article and use information they have previously learned.
2. Each group should discuss and answer the following questions about both the Agricultural Revolution and the Industrial Revolution:
 - a. What were its benefits?
 - b. What problems did it cause?
 - c. How would human history be different if it had not occurred?
3. Then each group should discuss and decide which revolution had the most positive effect on humans.
4. Groups report back to the class, giving reasons for their decisions and discussing them with the class.



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During the 1894 Pullman strike, members of the Illinois National Guard kept strikers away from the Arcade Building in Pullman, Chicago.

THE PULLMAN STRIKE AND BOYCOTT

IN 1894, RAILROAD CAR MANUFACTURER GEORGE PULLMAN REFUSED TO NEGOTIATE WITH HIS FACTORY WORKERS, WHO THEN CALLED A STRIKE. SOON THE CONFLICT TURNED INTO A TEST OF STRENGTH BETWEEN THE RAILROAD INDUSTRY AND THE STILL-EVOLVING AMERICAN LABOR MOVEMENT.

Following the Civil War and the growth of industries, conflicts often arose between industrial workers and their employers. The big industrialists fought against labor unions because they could potentially organize industry-wide strikes.

One of the biggest conflicts was the Pullman strike and boycott of 1894. Federal courts were the deciding factor in this “clash of labor and capital,” as it was phrased at the time.

Pullman and His Model Town

Born in 1831, George Pullman only finished fourth grade. He eventually took over his father’s business of moving and tearing down homes and other buildings. In 1859, he went to Chicago where he invested in a number of enterprises. In 1867, he opened his own business, the Pullman Palace Car Co., which manufactured and leased railroad sleeping cars.

By 1879, Pullman’s company was earning about \$1 million a year. He soon expanded to make and sell other specialized railroad cars.

Pullman’s main railroad car factory was located on the southern edge of Chicago. In 1881, he established an entire town for his workers. Named Pullman, the town included well-built brick homes and other buildings. The workers were not allowed to buy their homes, but paid rent deducted from their paychecks. Officially, the workers did not have to live in Pullman. But many believed they had to do so to protect their jobs.

Pullman was a substantial “company town” with a Protestant church, public school, theater, hotel, library,

indoor shopping arcade, and park. It had a piped water supply, sewer system, gas works, and garbage collection service. The renters paid for these services and housing repairs. Generally, rents were higher than in surrounding communities.

Pullman envisioned his town as a place where his workers would be isolated from crime, poverty, labor unions, and drunkenness. No saloons were allowed in the town. He believed his town would become a model of living for American workers. By 1890, about 12,000 workers and their families lived in Pullman.

Critics of the town, however, pointed out that Pullman had no elected town government since everything was run by the company. Jane Addams, a famous Chicago reformer, wrote that George Pullman could never accept the idea that his workers were not children but adults capable of running their own lives.

Like many employers in the 1890s, Pullman rejected the concept of unions representing and negotiating for workers (collective bargaining). He insisted that wages, working

conditions, and employee grievances (complaints) were private matters between him and each employee.

Debs and His American Railway Union

Eugene Debs, the son of immigrant parents who owned a grocery store, was born in 1855. He left school at 14 to work as a railroad laborer. He worked his way up to becoming a locomotive fireman at 16.

Later, Debs became an organizer for railroad engineer and fireman unions called brotherhoods. He called for “calm reasoning” rather than violent strikes, which had often ended badly for the brotherhoods in the past.

Like most unions of the time, the railroad brotherhoods included only white skilled workers. Debs, however, came to believe that the brotherhoods would be much stronger if they recruited white unskilled workers as well.

Getting nowhere with the brotherhoods, Debs broke with them in 1893 and formed the American Railway Union (ARU). The ARU was open to all railroad employees regardless of trade or level of skill, but still barred racial minorities like black Pullman sleeper car porters. Many workers joined the ARU, including some secretly from Pullman’s Chicago railroad car works.

In the spring of 1894, the ARU called a strike against the Great Northern Railroad, forcing the owner to accept an arbitration settlement favorable to the union. (In an arbitration, a neutral decision-maker investigates the claims of workers and their employer and then decides the terms for settling the dispute.) This success boosted ARU membership even more to 150,000, much larger than any of the old railroad brotherhoods.

The Pullman Strike

The U.S. had entered a deep economic depression in 1893. As the demand for railroad cars dropped, Pullman laid off thousands of workers and cut the wages of those who remained by an average of 25 percent.

Pullman tried to avoid more layoffs by having workers do factory repairs and improvements.

Pullman, however, did not lower the rents or costs of services in his model town even though he paid his workers less. He also avoided cutting his and his managers’ salaries, and he continued to pay dividends to his company’s stockholders. As the finances of many model town families became desperate, Chicago charities sent them aid.

In early May 1894, workers formed a grievance committee to meet with Pullman to ask him to restore the old wage rates. He replied that raising wages would soon force him to close his business. He offered to open his account books to prove this. The committee then asked for their housing rents to be reduced, but Pullman refused.

The committee then met and voted to strike unless the fired workers were rehired. The company refused, and a big majority of the workers walked out. . .

Despite promises not to punish anyone on the grievance committee, the company fired three suspected ARU members after the meeting with Pullman. The committee then met and voted to strike unless the fired workers were rehired. The company refused, and a big majority of the workers walked out of the Pullman car works on May 11. Pullman took the strike as a personal insult and closed his factories.

Eugene Debs rushed to support the Pullman strikers. An exciting speaker, he addressed the strikers, calling George Pullman “a rich plunderer.” Debs, however, cautioned against any violence or destruction of company property.

Privately, Debs was reluctant to involve his one-year-old American Railway Union. He feared the strike could easily fail because of the depressed economy with many unemployed workers whom Pullman could hire to replace the strikers.

The Pullman Boycott

A month after the Pullman strike began, the ARU held its scheduled national convention of railroad workers in Chicago. Striking Pullman workers made emotional pleas to the delegates for active support.

The ARU convention sent some of its Pullman delegates to the company to request arbitration. But company officials refused to arbitrate or negotiate with the union. Pullman later made a statement explaining why he refused arbitration:

Can I, as a business man, knowing the truth of the facts which I have stated, bind myself that I will, in any contingency, open and operate the Pullman car shops at whatever loss, if it should happen to be the opinion of some third party that I should do so?

The company’s rejection of arbitration pushed Debs to strongly back the Pullman strike out of solidarity with the striking ARU members. The ARU convention delegates then voted to instruct its members not to handle any Pullman railroad cars. This was a “secondary boycott,” which happens when a union takes an action against a company in sympathy with its employees who have gone on strike. The ARU did not declare a strike against the railroads, and union members were expected to do their jobs except for moving Pullman cars or trains pulling them.

ARU members, working for many railroads, enthusiastically joined the

boycott. But the widespread support among railroad workers who were not ARU members surprised even Debs. The boycott may have revealed their deep resentment against pay cuts, poor working conditions, and abusive treatment throughout the railroad industry.

Before long, unrest among the railroad workers went far beyond the boycott. When a worker refused to move a Pullman car, the railroad fired him. Often, the rest of his crew quit their jobs in protest.

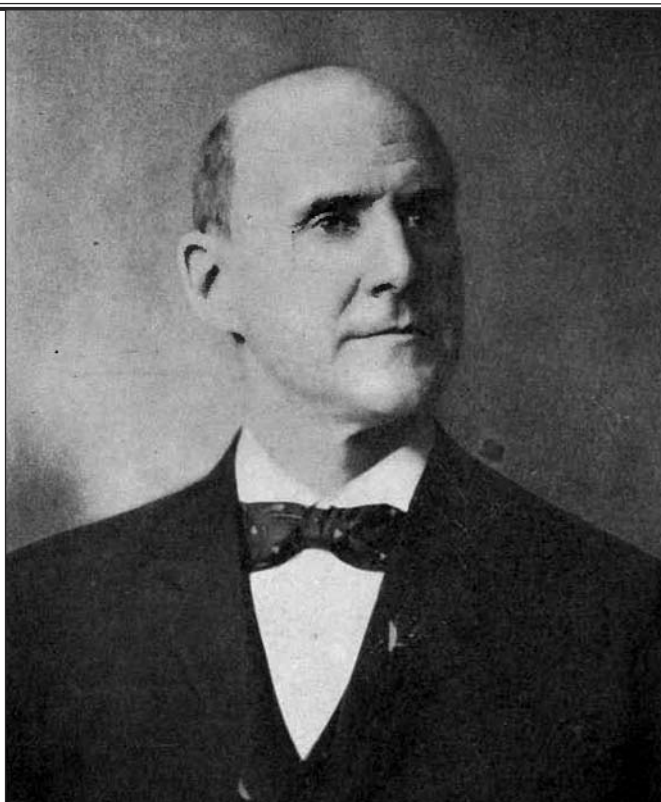
These protests multiplied and crippled numerous railroads. Many trains, including those with U.S. mail cars, stopped operating. Debs said his union members were willing to move the trains, just not those with Pullman cars.

The General Managers Association represented 24 railroads with terminals in Chicago. Fearing the unionization of the entire railroad industry, it met to plan a strategy to stop the boycott and crush the railway union. The association rejected arbitration and began recruiting thousands of unemployed workers to replace the ARU boycotters. It then ordered Pullman cars attached to mail cars in order to blame the union for any interruption in transporting mail.

By the end of June, violence began to erupt as Debs lost control of an estimated 250,000 strikers and boycotters in 27 states. Mobs attacked railroad company property. Local police clashed with rioters. Trains were blocked and derailed. In the chaos, hoodlums looted and vandalized railroad property. Before they were over, the Pullman strike and boycott claimed at least 40 lives. Debs tried to urge calm, but many of those causing the trouble were not members of his union.

The General Managers Association appealed to President Grover Cleveland to send U.S. troops to Chicago to stop the mob violence. In early July, Cleveland ordered about 2,000 federal troops to Chicago and 14,000 more to other areas of the country where train traffic had been

Eugene V. Debs (1855-1926) led the American Railway Union and served six months in jail for violating a court order during the Pullman strike. Later, he ran for president five times.



Univ. of MN Law Library, Clarence Darrow Digital Collection

disrupted. Cleveland based his action on the grounds that he had a constitutional duty to protect interstate commerce and the movement of U.S. mail.

The Injunction

A few days before federal troops entered Chicago, the railroad companies pressured friends in the Cleveland administration to take legal action against Debs and his union. Cleveland's attorney general, Richard Olney, agreed and decided it would be better to go after the union leaders than the strikers and boycotters. Cleveland later described the American Railway Union headquarters in Chicago as the "birthplace of the disturbance."

Attorney General Olney requested two federal court judges in Chicago, both with deeply anti-labor views, to write an injunction (court order) directed at Debs and the other ARU leaders. The injunction prohibited Debs and the other union leaders from "obstructing" certain railroads, the mail, and trains in interstate commerce.

The injunction also ordered Debs and the others to cease "sending out

any letters, messages, or communications directing . . . any persons whatsoever to interfere with the [railroads]." In its most controversial part, the injunction prohibited "persuading any of the [railroad] employees . . . to fail or refuse to perform the duties of their employment." In effect, the injunction seemed to outlaw any writings or speech that called for workers to quit their railroad jobs in sympathy with the Pullman strikers.

On July 4, two days after the injunction was served on Debs and several other union leaders, federal troops entered Chicago. Shortly afterward, thousands of rioters, some of them ARU members, tipped over and burned about 700 railroad cars. General Nelson Miles, commander of the U.S. troops, reported that "the injunction of the United States court is openly defied."

A few days later, lawyers for the U.S. government and the railroads requested the federal court to cite Debs and other leaders of the ARU for contempt of court because they had violated the court's injunction. Debs and other ARU leaders were arrested and remained in jail when, ▶

as a form of protest, they refused to post bail.

The federal troops quickly stopped the violence in Chicago and elsewhere. The railroads, backed by the federal court and U.S. troops, turned down an offer by Debs to call off the boycott if ARU members could get their old jobs back. With the ARU leaders in jail, the Pullman strike and boycott collapsed.

Debs on Trial

In September, Debs faced a civil trial before William Woods, one of the judges who had written the injunction. Debs and the other union leaders were charged with contempt of court for violating it.

Helping with the defense was Clarence Darrow, a young idealistic lawyer who had been working for one of the railroads. The main evidence against Debs consisted of hundreds of telegrams he had sent to local union leaders, urging them to continue the Pullman strike and boycott. Darrow pointed out that Debs had not called for any violence or unlawful acts against the railroads or government.

Judge Woods found all the ARU leaders in contempt of the injunction by conspiring to encourage the strike and boycott, “knowing that violence and wrong will be the probable outcome.” The judge sentenced Debs to six months in jail and the others to three months. Debs appealed the contempt of court verdict to the U.S. Supreme Court.

Before the Supreme Court

By the early 1890s, some judges were beginning to issue injunctions to stop strikes and secondary boycotts. They relied on their “equity powers” to address issues not clearly defined in the law. The judges decided that strikes and other labor actions were a “public nuisance” like a factory polluting a river. The Supreme Court, however, had never ruled whether such labor injunctions were constitutional.

Attorney General Olney argued before the Supreme Court that the

federal court in this case had the constitutional authority to issue an injunction under its equity powers. Darrow argued that the injunction was unconstitutional because it went too far, virtually declaring the right to strike illegal. He said this left the workers “helpless as the prey of the great and strong.”

In May 1895, the Supreme Court unanimously decided the case in favor of the government. The court focused on the equity powers of federal judges. The justices ruled that federal courts had the constitutional authority to issue injunctions in labor conflicts to protect the public interest, which included the flow of interstate commerce and movement of the mail.

Debs and the other leaders had claimed that they did not commit any crimes, urge violence, or interfere with interstate commerce and the mail. The court disagreed and stated that “the defendants were engaged in such obstructions.”

The Aftermath

The collapse of the Pullman strike and boycott along with the Supreme Court legal defeat was a disaster for the union movement. Debs put the blame squarely on the federal courts and the labor injunction. This became a strong weapon for the railroads and other corporations to break strikes until the 1930s when Congress passed laws favorable to unions.

George Pullman died three years after the strike that still bears his name. His model town was later absorbed by Chicago. Many of the buildings still exist and are part of the Pullman State Historic Site.

Eugene Debs disbanded his American Railway Union and went on to become the nation’s most famous socialist leader. He ran for president five times and got almost 1 million votes in 1920 while he was in prison for opposing U.S. entry into World War I.

FOR DISCUSSION AND WRITING

1. Was George Pullman’s model town for his workers a good or a bad idea? Why?
2. Do you think the Pullman workers’ strike and the American Railway Union’s secondary boycott were both justified? Why?
3. Do you think the federal court injunction was necessary or did it go too far? Why?

For Further Reading

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ACTIVITY

Arbitration?

During the Pullman strike and boycott, the strikers requested arbitration of the dispute, but the Pullman company refused to arbitrate. In this activity, students will role play spokespersons for each side and create statements defending their position.

1. Form small groups.
2. Assign each group either spokesperson for Pullman or for the strikers.
3. Each group should:
 - a. Discuss reasons supporting its position.
 - b. Think of reasons supporting the other side.
 - c. Create a one-minute persuasive presentation for its position. The presentation should include reasons for supporting its position and should also address what the other side might argue.
4. The groups should present, alternating spokespersons for each side.

AMERICAN LABOR UNIONS: YESTERDAY AND TODAY

Wikimedia Commons



Members of the Knights of Labor, one of the first national unions, protest in Chicago, demanding an eight-hour day, an end to child labor, and equal pay for men and women.

AMERICAN LABOR UNIONS HAVE HAD A ROCKY HISTORY. THEY STRUGGLED DURING THE 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURIES, GAINED LEGAL PROTECTIONS FROM NEW DEAL LEGISLATION IN THE 1930S, AND REACHED THEIR PEAK IN POWER AND MEMBERSHIP DURING THE 1950S. SINCE THE 1970S, HOWEVER, UNION MEMBERSHIP HAS STEADILY DECLINED WITH THE EXCEPTION OF GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEE UNIONS.

In the 1820s as the Industrial Revolution began to take hold in the U.S., employers had great power over workers. Employers, for example, could cut wages at will, place workers at unsafe machinery, and make them work long hours. The workers' only option was to either obey their bosses or quit and hope to find other factory jobs.

To improve their situation, groups of skilled factory workers began to form local labor unions. These unions were usually organized by skilled craft such as shoemaking.

Unions attempted to use their strength in numbers to fight for better wages and working conditions. If an

employer refused to meet their demands, union members commonly went on strike.

Employers resisted unions. They insisted that wages and other terms of employment were private contracts between themselves and individual workers. Employers claimed unions were illegal because they violated their rights of property and contract.

Union membership typically shrank during depressions when jobs were scarce. But once prosperity returned and labor was scarce, unions almost always rebounded, stronger than before. This cycle of union ups, downs, and rebounds held for more than 100 years.

In the 1860s, skilled workers began to form national unions. The Knights of Labor, founded in 1869, was the first national union to try to organize both skilled and unskilled workers in all industries. The Knights called for an eight-hour day, abolition of child labor, and equal pay for men and women.

The Knights disliked strikes and called for a third party to settle labor disputes between employers and their workers. As strikes multiplied

during the 1880s, however, leaders of the Knights lost control of their members who went on strike anyway. Many strikes failed, membership fell, and the Knights collapsed by 1900.

The American Federation of Labor (AFL), established in 1886, organized only skilled craft workers like bakers and carpenters. Led by Samuel Gompers of the cigar makers union, the AFL was not a centralized union like the Knights of Labor. Instead, the AFL formed a federation of largely self-governing national unions.

Up to this point, most unions had relied mainly on strikes to try to force employers to give in to worker demands. Employers fought back by hiring armed guards and by replacing strikers with non-union workers.

By the 1890s, some unions such as the United Mine Workers were using a new method, called the collective bargaining contract. A union would promise not to strike for a set period if the employer agreed to wages and other terms acceptable to the workers. When the contract expired, the union and employer could negotiate a new one and thus maintain labor peace.

At the turn of the 20th century, another union growth spurt occurred. In 1904, union membership reached a new high of 2 million members, about 12 percent of non-farm industrial workers.

Most employers, however, still refused to recognize unions or to participate in collective bargaining. Moreover, the mainstream union movement represented by the AFL ignored unskilled factory workers whose numbers were growing much faster than the traditional union membership of skilled craftsmen.

New Deal Labor Laws

During World War I, the government encouraged collective bargaining agreements to prevent strikes. Union membership increased to 16 percent of the industrial workforce. But after the war, the sudden drop in government spending led to mass layoffs and union growth stalled. ▶

In an exception to the normal cycle of union ups and downs, membership fell when prosperity returned in the 1920s. With wages on the rise, many workers believed they did not need a union to bargain for them. Some employers offered health clinics, pensions, and other benefits to deter workers from joining unions.

In addition, most employers still rejected collective bargaining with labor unions. Instead, some employers established “company unions” to set wages, resolve grievances (worker complaints), and approve working conditions without much worker participation.

The law favored employers over workers. Courts often issued injunctions (court orders) that declared strikes illegal, and police and state militias then broke them up. In 1921, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that minimum wage laws were unconstitutional since they violated the liberty of contract between a worker and his employer.

When the Great Depression hit in the early 1930s, employers cut wages, businesses failed, huge numbers of workers lost their jobs, and union membership dropped. After Franklin D. Roosevelt was elected president in 1932, his New Deal Democrat-controlled Congress passed new laws supporting workers and unions.

The most important one was the National Labor Relations Act (Wagner Act) of 1935. It gave workers the right “to form, join, or assist labor organizations, to bargain collectively through representatives of their own choosing.” This guaranteed workers a “voice” in improving their wages and working conditions. The law did not cover farm workers, supervisors, management, or public employees.

Under this law, the National Labor Relations Board banned company unions, prohibited employer interference with the right of workers to join a union, and guaranteed peaceful picketing by strikers. The law enabled employees to sign a card authorizing a particular union to represent them. If a majority of workers signed, the employer could immediately recognize the union as

the exclusive bargaining representative for the workers.

As an alternative, the employer could petition the National Labor Relations Board to conduct a secret worker election to confirm the union as the exclusive bargaining representative. The employer then had to negotiate with the authorized union, which represented all the workers in a workplace. The resulting collective bargaining contract had to be ratified by the union members and the company’s government board of directors.

In 1938, Congress passed the Fair Labor Standards Act. This established the first federal minimum wage at 25 cents an hour. It also set the maximum regular work week at 44 hours and abolished child labor for those under 16 in industries engaged in interstate commerce.

At first, many employers resisted the new labor laws, claiming they violated their constitutional rights. But in 1937, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the National Labor Relations Act was constitutional under the commerce clause. The court also found constitutional the Fair Labor Standards Act and the right of workers to strike and peacefully picket.

Unions at Their Peak

The traditional AFL skilled craft unions had long ignored unskilled workers. John L. Lewis of the AFL’s United Mine Workers led an effort to unionize steel, rubber, auto, and other unskilled workers. This caused a split within the AFL that ultimately resulted in Lewis’ helping to form a new separate union federation, the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) in the 1930s. Membership in the mainly manufacturing CIO unions soon rivaled that of the AFL craft unions.

General Motors (GM), the world’s largest industrial corporation, had resisted recognizing any union representation of its auto workers. In 1937, the CIO and its United Auto Workers (UAW) union supported a “sit-down strike” against GM. Workers occupied a GM factory and refused to work. The strike spread, closing down all

GM production. The giant auto company finally agreed to recognize the UAW as the exclusive bargaining agent for all GM workers.

The stunning UAW victory quickly led to the unionization of the entire auto industry and inspired similar efforts in many other industries. Union membership exploded and continued to increase during World War II.

In 1950, the UAW negotiated a five-year collective bargaining agreement with the auto industry. Known as the “Treaty of Detroit,” the agreement included wage bonuses for increased worker output, adjustments for cost of living inflation, paid vacations, health insurance, and “defined contribution pensions” that guaranteed payouts to retired workers until they died.

The Treaty of Detroit set a national standard for labor contracts in many other unionized industries. Even companies not unionized adopted some of the union-won benefits to keep their workers happy.

During the 1950s, with little competition from countries still recovering from World War II, the U.S. economy expanded rapidly. Sales surged at home, and exports to foreign countries grew. Company profits soared, worker earnings doubled, and union membership reached its all-time peak of 18 million, 35 percent of the non-agricultural labor force. Collective bargaining and fewer strikes became the norm. American union workers enjoyed their highest standard of living in U.S. history, which became their pathway into the middle class.

The Long Decline of Unions

After 1960, the growth in union membership stalled and then began a long decline. Even when prosperity returned after the deep recession of the early 1980s, unions continued to rapidly lose members.

What happened to cause such a reversal in the strength of labor unions?

One factor was the Taft-Hartley Act. Passed by a Republican-controlled

Congress in 1947, it permitted employers to try to persuade workers not to vote for union representation. The law also prohibited unions from demanding that employers only hire union members (closed shop).

In many cases, a union that the majority of workers had elected to represent them required newly hired employees to join the union or pay it a fee for its collective bargaining services (union shop). But the Taft-Hartley Act allowed states to ban union shops with so-called “right to work” laws. Passed in 23 states, mainly in the South and West, these laws weakened union recruitment.

By the 1970s, the postwar era of U.S. domination of the world economy had ended. U.S. companies like automakers and steel producers increasingly faced a much more competitive global market. In another shift, largely non-unionized sales, engineering, finance, and other white-collar service jobs increased while the heavily unionized blue-collar manufacturing jobs disappeared.

Employers responded to the new global competition by seeking cheaper non-union labor at home and in foreign countries. Businesses also adopted robotics and other kinds of technology that replaced many routine assembly-line jobs. During a 30-year period following 1973, manufacturing jobs, many of them unionized, dropped by 70 percent. Today, American manufacturing is still strong, but it requires fewer workers who often must have more technical training.

The unions themselves tend to blame their decline on employers who fired workers who were union organizers. Unions also charge that companies commonly stall union organizing elections with appeals and other obstructions.

On the other hand, the AFL and CIO, which merged in 1955, were slow to react to the changes in the U.S. economy. For example, they failed to organize fast-growing groups of service employees like office workers who historically have been reluctant to join unions.

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In August 2012, protesting members of Service Employees International Union marched through San Francisco's financial district demanding better pay and working conditions.

To the public, unions seemed more interested in demanding a guaranteed job and excessive pensions for their existing members whether or not companies could afford these things. A Gallup Poll revealed in 2009 that for the first time public support for unions dropped below 50 percent.

Total union membership declined from 20 percent of the total labor force in 1983 to 12 percent in 2011, about what it was 100 years ago.

Public Employee Unions

One major exception to the long decline in union membership is the unionization of government employees. Union membership has grown for police, firefighters, teachers, social workers, and other government workers.

In 1962, President John F. Kennedy issued an executive order granting federal employees the right to join unions and bargain collectively but not to strike. Soon most states and many cities adopted these rights for at least some public employees.

As traditional blue-collar union membership fell in the private economy, the number of unionized public employees surged. In 2009, they became the majority of all U.S. union members. Today, 37 percent of public

employees in the nation are unionized compared to 6.9 percent of workers in the private economy. The largest single union in the U.S. today is the National Educational Association. This independent teachers' union is not a member of the AFL-CIO.

The Great Recession caused some public criticism of public employee unions. Almost 90 percent of American workers do not belong to any union, and many of them believed public employee unions had negotiated bloated benefits for their members while taxpayers struggled economically.

In 2011, Wisconsin passed a law that repealed certain collective bargaining rights for most of its public employee unions. Governor Scott Walker defended the law as necessary to protect local governments and school boards from union demands for pensions and other benefits. Walker said, “We can no longer live in a society where the public employees are the haves and the taxpayers are the have nots.”

The Wisconsin law provoked mass demonstrations by union members, court appeals, and an unsuccessful effort to recall Governor Walker. The controversy added to a growing national debate over whether public employees should have the same rights as other workers in the private economy to join a union, bargain collectively, and strike.

The Case Against Public Employee Unions

Government employee unions in the public sector differ from unions in the private sector. Private sector unions negotiate with companies that try to keep labor costs down and profits up. Public sector unions negotiate with elected bodies like city councils whose budgets are funded by taxpayers. Critics of public sector unions charge that they help elect the government officials who negotiate and approve the union members' wages and benefits. Politicians pay back the unions by agreeing to higher wages, numerous paid holidays, early retirement, and health care plans. Most expensive are the defined benefit pensions that guarantee retirement ▶

checks for life, something most American workers do not enjoy. Critics argue that over time, governments cannot fund these benefits without higher taxes or going into debt.

Public employee unions are not needed, say the critics, because the workers are already protected by state and federal civil service laws. If public employee unions are permitted, collective bargaining should be limited to wages only and not to pensions and other benefits that threaten to bankrupt the government.

At the very least, public employee unions should be prohibited from striking since the taxpaying public is harmed. Of course, public employees still would have the right of petition to city councils and other government bodies.

The Case for Public Employee Unions

Public sector workers are often charged with being overpaid, but nearly half of them have college degrees versus only a quarter of private sector workers. Also, public workers earn about 10 percent less than private workers with the same education level. Public worker benefits tend to be higher than in the private sector, but total compensation of wages and benefits is lower when similar private and public sector jobs are compared.

Supporters of public employee unions say that teachers, police, firefighters, and other public servants are being wrongly blamed for crippling pension funds and causing government budget deficits. The real culprits, they argue, are the banks and Wall Street investment firms whose actions during the housing boom brought on the Great Recession.

Only a small percentage of public workers have unreasonably high pensions needing reform. Most public employees contribute to their retirement and receive pensions less than \$25,000 per year on average. In addition, many public employees do not qualify for Social Security.

Supporters of public employee unions argue that they deserve the same rights in collective bargaining as private workers. The only possible

exception would be to deny the right to strike to particular workers (e.g., police and fire fighters) whose strikes would endanger the public.

The Future of Unions

As unions have weakened, wages for most American workers have stalled. The median weekly wage of union members remains higher than that of non-union workers.

If the union movement is going to rebound again, it must reach beyond its traditional skilled and blue collar industrial members. New targets for unionization include unorganized low-paid service workers like janitors, office employees like clerks, white-collar professionals like engineers, and government employees. One union that has attempted to organize service workers is the Service Employees International Union. It is the fastest growing union in America.

Unions want Congress to pass a law that would make it easier to organize workers by allowing them to simply sign a card authorizing union representation (“card check”). Employers strongly oppose this since it would do away with their right to demand a secret vote among workers to see whether they want a union.

Meanwhile, the well-paid blue-collar union assembly-line jobs that many young people once stepped into right after high school are not

growing. By 2020, 65 percent of all jobs will require some education beyond high school. If unions want to make a comeback, they will have to organize a more educated labor force.

FOR DISCUSSION AND WRITING

1. What are labor unions? What do they do?
2. How did union collective bargaining from the 1950s until the early 1970s benefit even non-union workers?
3. What do you think has been the main cause of the sharp decline in union membership since the 1970s? Why?
4. Do you support or oppose the “card check” method of union recognition by employees at a work site? Why or why not?
5. What are public employee unions? How are they different from other unions?

For Further Reading

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ACTIVITY

Public Employee Unions?

Form small groups to discuss and choose one of the following policies on public employee unions. Each group will then defend its choice before the class with information and evidence from the article.

- A. Unions and collective bargaining for public employees should be abolished.
- B. Public employee unions should only be able to bargain collectively on wages.
- C. Public employee unions should be able to bargain collectively on wages, hours, working conditions, grievances, pensions, and other benefits, but should not have the right to strike.
- D. Public employee unions should have all the collective bargaining rights in C and also have the right to strike except when the safety of the public is endangered.
- E. Public employee unions should have the right to bargain collectively on any matter of employment and also have the unrestricted right to strike.
- F. Students may develop their own policy for public employee unions.

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Standards Addressed

Industrial Revolution

National High School World History Standard 33: Understands the causes and consequences of the agricultural and industrial revolutions from 1700 to 1850. (7) Understands how and why industrialization developed differently in Britain than it did on the continent.

California History/Social Science Standard 10.3: Students analyze the effects of the Industrial Revolution in England, France, Germany, Japan, and the United States. (1) Analyze why England was the first country to industrialize. (2) Examine how scientific and technological changes and new forms of energy brought about massive social, economic, and cultural change (e.g., the inventions and discoveries of James Watt . . .).

Common Core Standard SL.11-12.1: Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions . . . with diverse partners on grades 11-12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

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National High School U.S. History Standard 18: Understands the rise of the American labor movement and how political issues reflected social and economic changes. (2) Understands labor issues of the late 19th century

California History/Social Science Standard 8.12: Students analyze the transformation of the American economy and the changing social and political conditions in the United States in response to the Industrial Revolution. (6) . . . [E]xamine the labor movement, including its leaders (e.g., Samuel Gompers), its demand for collective bargaining, and its strikes and protests over labor conditions.

California History/Social Science Standard 11.2: Students analyze the relationship among the rise of industrialization, large-scale rural-to-urban migration, and massive immigration from Southern and Eastern Europe. (5) Discuss . . . the economic and political policies of industrial leaders.

Common Core Standard SL.11-12.4: Present information, findings, and supporting evidence, conveying a clear and distinct perspective, such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning, alternative or opposing perspectives are addressed, and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and a range of formal and informal tasks.

Labor Unions

National High School U.S. History Standard 18: Understands the rise of the American labor movement and how political issues reflected social and economic changes. (2) Understands the issues of the late 19th century

National High School U.S. History Standard 24: Understands how the New Deal addressed the Great Depression (3) Understands how the New Deal influenced labor and employment

National High School U.S. History Standard 26: Understands the economic boom and social transformation of post-World War II United States.

National High School U.S. History Standard 30: Understands developments in . . . domestic politics between the Nixon and Clinton presidencies. (4) Understands the major economic issues from the Reagan through the Clinton presidencies (e.g., why labor unions declined in recent decades . . .).

National High School U.S. History Standard 31: Understands economic, social, and cultural developments in the contemporary United States. (1) Understands how changes in the national and global economy have influenced the workplace

California History/Social Science Standard 11.6: Students analyze . . . how the New Deal fundamentally changed the role of the federal government. (4) Analyze . . . New Deal economic policies and the expanded role of the federal government . . . since the 1930s (e.g., . . . National Labor Relations Board . . .). (5) Trace . . . organized labor, from the creation of the American Federation of Labor and the Congress of Industrial Organizations to current issues of a postindustrial, multinational economy. . . .

California History/Social Science Standard 12e.4: Students analyze the elements of the U.S. labor market in a global setting. (1) Understand the operations of the labor market, including the circumstances surrounding the establishment of principal American labor unions, procedures that unions use to gain benefits for their members

Common Core Standard SL.11-12.4: Present information, findings, and supporting evidence, conveying a clear and distinct perspective, such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning, alternative or opposing perspectives are addressed, and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and a range of formal and informal tasks.

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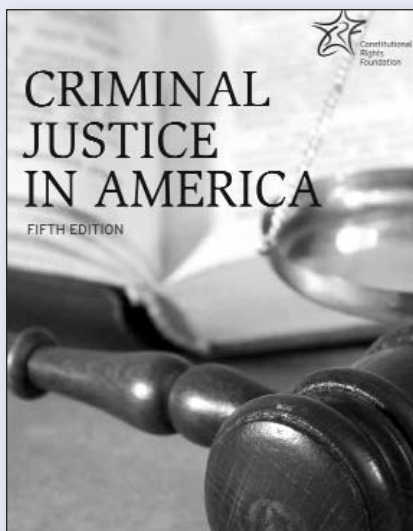
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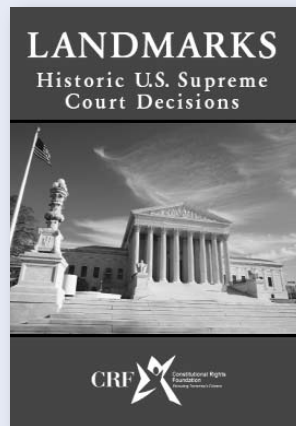
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Palko v. Connecticut (1937)
Brown v. Board of Education (1954)
Mapp v. Ohio (1961)
Gideon v. Wainwright (1963)
Miranda v. Arizona (1966)
U.S. v. Nixon (1974)
Regents of UC v. Bakke (1978)
Texas v. Johnson (1989)
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Constitutional Rights Foundation Names Marshall Croddy President

Following a rigorous search, the Constitutional Rights Foundation has named Marshall Croddy to be its president. Croddy is a longtime CRF executive and nationally recognized civic education leader.

“Our search uncovered a number of outstanding candidates but in the end the leadership answer was Marshall. He has played a vital role at CRF for many years. His breadth of knowledge and wealth of experience in both civic education and CRF programs and partners make him the ideal person to drive this organization forward,” said T. Warren Jackson, the current chair of CRF’s Board of Directors and DirecTV’s senior vice president, associate general counsel, and chief ethics officer.

Croddy has served as vice president at CRF for the last four years and prior to that was director of programs. Among his significant accomplishments was the creation of the Civic Action Project (CAP), a national model for online delivery of civics curriculum, and the creation of Active Citizenship Today (ACT), a framework for student civic participation, adopted as part of several states’ social studies standards.

Croddy has designed, edited, and supervised the publication of hundreds of nationally recognized online and print resources. His oversight of the CRF website design and content resulted in over 1.5 million visitors per year and a rating as a top web resource for teachers and students by the *Los Angeles Times* and *Finding Dulcinea, Librarian of the Internet*. In addition to his program and marketing responsibilities, Croddy has been responsible for creating several new funding initiatives for the organization.

He has received a number of honors, including the first Roy Erickson Civic Leadership Award from the California Council for the Social Studies and the Isidore Starr Award for Excellence in Law-Related Education from the American Bar Association.



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