

History notes

Noble Unions

- National labor union
- Noble order of the knights of labor
- Federation of organized trades and labor unions of the US

National Labor union

- Organized in Baltimore, Maryland in August **1886** it lasts 6 years
- NLU combined skilled with unskilled workers and farmers (peak membership of 600,000)
- **Goals** – social reform – successful in getting an 8-hour day for federal employees
- The 1870s depression plus a lack of a good central organization led to its demise.

Noble Order of the knights of labor

- Led by **Uriah S Stephens**, the Knights of labor took up the torch when the NLU folded in 1872
- All- inclusive except for liquor dealers, professional gamblers, lawyers, bankers and stockbrokers
- Because of the panic of 1873, railroad made wage cuts in 1877, where the effects of depression came from
- Workers protested the 10% pay cut, demanding better working conditions
- Strike involved the largest number of workers in the 19th century, making the idea of popular of a national union
- A 700% membership increase followed

Knight of labor goals

- 8 hour work day
- Health and safety legislation
- Equal pay for equal work (against sexism and racism)
- Taking away child labor
- Govern. Own of telegraphs, telephones and railroads
- 1878 Terence Powderly became grand master

Federation of organized trades and labor unions of the US

- Samuel Gompers and Adolph Strasser desired a exclusive union of skilled workers rather than a all exclusive union which included unskilled workers
- 1886 Gompers established an organization composed of small unions of skilled craftsmen not of individual workers as members
- He was president until his death in 1924
- Federation didn't use old rituals of secret societies
- Federation goals focused on economic issues only, improving benefits better wages and hours, closed shop, workman's compensation, outlaw injunctions
- Reorganized into the American federation of labor in 1886 it survived the panic of 1893 and remained a viable union when the labor movement grew strong again in 1930s
- 1900—500,000 identified themselves as AF of L members

Notable union events of the Gilded age

- Haymarket square riot- Chicago 1886
- Homestead strike—July 1892
- Pullman Strike - 1894

Haymarket square riot 1886

- May 1 – Powderly called Knights to participate in a one day strike for 8 hour day ----40,000 to 60,000 participated
- May 3 – six strikers were killed at the McCormick Reaper Manufacturing company, after police fired into the crowd of strikers
- May 4- 1400 participated at Haymarket Square, called by anarchist August Spies
- Knights of labor socialist union and international anarchist protested the use of police force at McCormick
- At 10 p.m 180 police arrived to disperse the crowd a bomb killed 7 and wounded at least 60
- It was assumed anarchist threw the bomb and raids were conducted on groups, including trade union leaders

The trial

- Judge Joseph E Gary presided over the trial 8 defendants
- Some anarchists were charged with “conspiring to kill” no evidence linked specific persons to the incident
- Prosecution focused on their radical beliefs and use of violence to achieve goals
- This political trial resulted in 7 convection (the 8th defendant committed suicide
- 4 were put to death 2 life in prison 1-15 years

- Court found that it is not necessary to plan a murder for member of a conspiracy to be murderers

Aftermath

- As a result, an anti-radical and anti-union feeling swept the American public mind
- Those advocating political changes were linked in the public mind with those who advocated economic changes
- Knights of labor, having participated with anarchists at Haymarket square were irreparably damaged

Gains of the Knights of Labor

- New sense of power and unity came among rank and file workers
- Influenced passage of legislation beneficial to worker
- Kept the concept of industrial unionism alive until unionism resurfaced in the 1930s

Knights Successes

- Creation of the Bureau of labor standards pressure on congress for the Chinese exclusion
- 1884, 9000 successfully struck Jay Gould's Missouri- Pacific railroad
- By 1890 had dwindled to only 100,00 members because of internal divisions, increased competition among the leadership and loss successful strikes
- Peaked in the spring of 1886 with over million members

Homestead Strike

- 5,00 steelworkers struck Andrew Carnegies steel plant near Pittsburg Pennsylvania
- Battle erupted between the strikers and 300 pinkerton men hired by plant manager Henry Clay Frick
- Seven guards were killed
- 9 July- 7,000 state troopers were sent in by governor pattison
- 15 July the steel mill was reopened by strikebreakers
- By Nov 14 Frick had broken the 24,000 member Amalgamated Association of iron and steel workers and the strike ended

Pullman Strike

- George Pullman's Pullman Palace Car co established a model town for workers near Chicago which promoted a clean, health atmosphere Pullman had a public image as benevolent paternalistic industrial captain