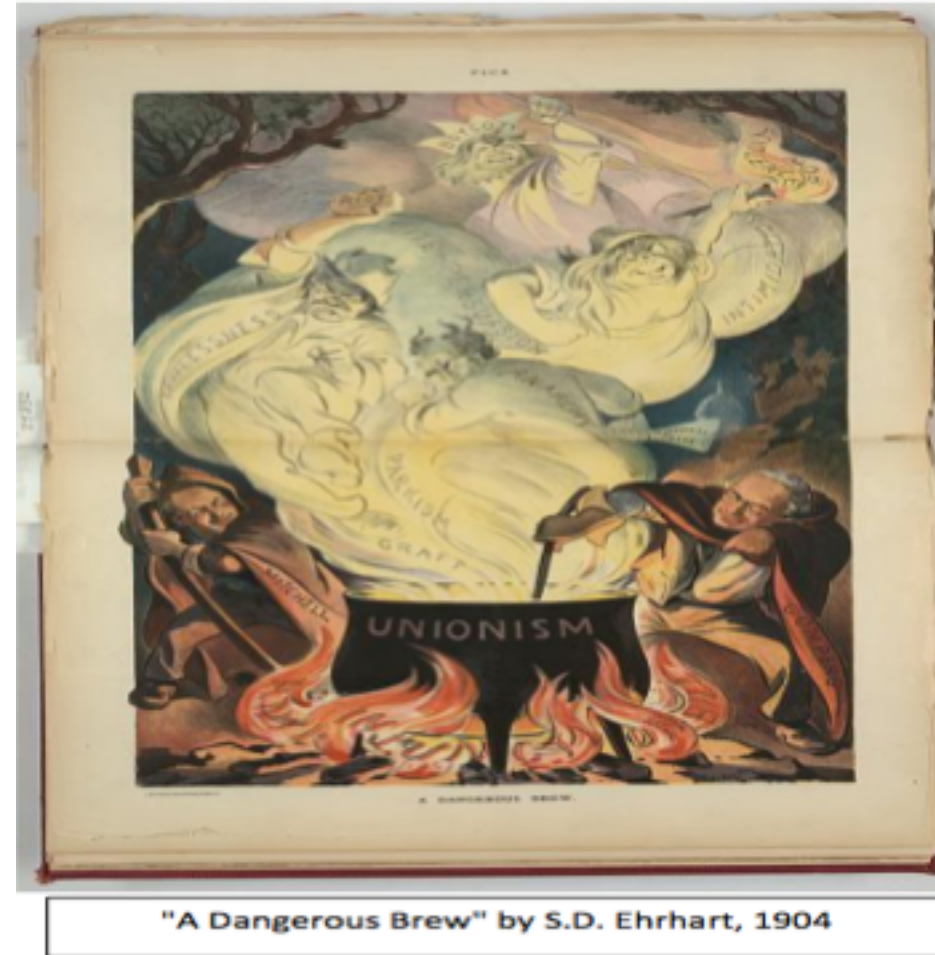


SSUSH11: EXAMINE CONNECTIONS BETWEEN THE RISE OF BIG BUSINESS, THE GROWTH OF LABOR UNIONS, AND TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATIONS.



"A Dangerous Brew" by S.D. Ehrhart, 1904

ELEMENT E: Discuss the origins, growth, influence, and tactics of labor unions including the American Federation of Labor.

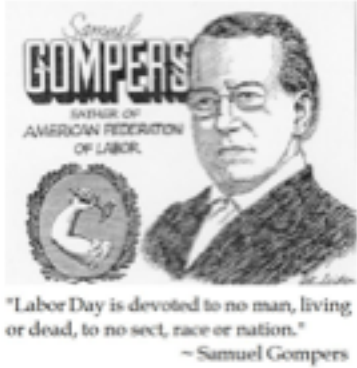
Origin, Growth, Influence & Labor Unions' Tactics



- ❑ Unskilled laborers were subject to low wages, long workdays, no vacations, and unsafe workplaces.
- ❑ Because individual workers had little power to change the way an employer ran a business, workers banded together in labor unions to demand better pay and working conditions.
 - There was strength in numbers. Over time, labor unions grew significantly and influenced business operation.
 - Union strategies included strikes, protest, and political influence.
- ❑ The American Federation of Labor is an example of one of the early labor unions in the United States that wielded significant power.
- ❑ Originally, labor unions were organized for either skilled or unskilled workers. Each group had its own union.
 - The unions relied on collective bargaining to obtain their demands.
 - However, when employers refused to bargain, unions used direct action (i.e., labor strikes) to obtain concessions.
 - The earliest national labor union to use these methods was the Knights of Labor, which was founded in 1869. Members of the union were both skilled and unskilled workers. While initially effective, the union lost influence and power after the organization failed to win concession in the Missouri Pacific Railroad Strike and suffered distrust from the Haymarket Affair in 1886. Furthermore, skilled workers were reluctant to support lower paid unskilled workers when the latter went out on strike.

American Federation of Labor

- ❑ Samuel Gompers, a Jewish immigrant from England who came to the United States in 1863, was a cigar maker by trade.
- ❑ In 1886, he helped create the American Federation of Labor, often referred to as the AFL.



- He was president of the union from 1886-1924. His union accepted only skilled workers.
 - The AFL was also designed in such a way that workers were organized by craft rather than by geography, which had been the method used by the Knights of Labor.
- Gompers did not see capitalism as the enemy, as had radical members of the Knights of Labor.
 - He also urged union members to work with owners for higher pay and better working conditions.
- The American Federation of Labor was not trying to reform the universal economic system; rather it promoted practical goals that would impact the daily lives of individual workers.
- Even though Gompers supported negotiation between workers and owners, he was not above using work stoppages (labor strikes) to obtain what was desired.
 - Gompers' tactics proved to be very effective until the Great Depression.
- The AFL was successful due to its sheer numbers - over one million members by 1901 and four million members at its height of power.

- ❑ The development of labor unions of the United States, including the AFL and others, brought more awareness to the growing division between business management and workers.
- ❑ The conflict between the two groups sometimes turned violent, as was the case at the Haymarket protest and the Homestead Steel Factory strike. The labor unions did bring about a much greater awareness of the need for better unity between all employee levels in a business.

