Labor force (reconstruction and civil war)

War, Civil War

Those who lived through theCivil WarandReconstructionperiod recognized that the nation had passed through perhaps the single most significant transformative period in its history. Technologyand Labor unions had a profound effect on Industrial workers in the nineteenth century. As technology advanced, it forced workers into monotonous positions that led them to form labor unions to fight for changes in their work. These factors opposed each other under a strained economy where employers didn't recognize worker's rights. The growth of technology and technological innovation made the rapid territorial expansion of American cities at first technologically feasible, and then socially and economically necessary.

The nation's cities grew because they became centers of industrialization which combined extensive urban construction and development with the consequent growing demand for factory workers. The nation's rural areas in this period entered an era of decline as sources of individual opportunity. Because of the growing cultural emphasis on cities as the place to make one's fortune, the nation on witnessed a large and growing population shift from rural to urban areas. The war had dramatically confirmed that it was possible to run large enterprises (e. g. , armies, transportation systems, manufacturing enterprises) on a national scale to fulfill national demand and thats why industrialization expanded. The growth ofimmigrationin this period was spurred, as were so many other social phenomena, by technology.

The development of ocean-going steamships and the rise of a great trans-oceanic trade pning the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans made it possible for tens of thousands of men, women, and children to seek a new life in America and, despite the lure of the large eastern cities, to spread out across the

continent to do so. Moreover, the rise of American industries and the growth of the railroad system created thousands of jobs (both in factories and in the construction trades) that offered powerful inducements to prospective immigrants seeking a new life. The massive European immigration that was one of the key facts of this period first inundated great cities such as New York, Boston, Philadelphia, and Chicago. But the growth of cities ran head-on into a long-standing American prejudice against urbanization as somehow European, corrupting, and dangerous to democracy. Just as labor's response to industrialization seemed threatening to prized American values of individualism, free enterprise, and social mobility, so, too, did urbanization seem to endanger the individual's ability to own his own home, the cherished doctrine of self-reliance, and the prospect of democratic government. But this anti-urban sentiment was only partly the latest outbreak of a venerable American intellectual tradition. It also was a direct response to the specific facts of American urban life, spread throughout the nation by the growing network of American newspapers and magazines.

Americans throughout the nation read of the overcrowding of slums, the ghastly sanitary conditions that beset most urban areas, and the growing corruption of urban political life. Americans' anti-urban sentiment was fed by prejudice against one of the principal reasons for urbanization. Although the idea of having a regular paying job was pleasing the conditions of industrial labor were often appalling, and at times life-threatening. Moreover, as the new industrial workers came to discover, they were unable to bargain over salary and working conditions weren't on equal footing with prospective employers. They soon came to discovered that they were just another

interchangeable part of a machine in the ever-growing industry. American workers realized that the individual worker was no match for the emerging economic world of large-scale corporate employers. They began to consider how to organize themselves to meet the challenge posed by the employers' increasing economic power by creating labor unions.

The first lawsuits over employee organizations took place before 1810, and the 1842 Massachusetts case of Commonwealth v. Hunt protected workers' right to organize labor unions against the old common-law doctrine that forbade conspiracies in restraint of trade. But, throughout the nineteenth century, workers' organizations found themselves besieged by hostile forces, by both employers and government (sometimes local, often state, and on occasion federal). The Age of Capital was an age of ruff edged battles between management and labor: the era of such great and terrible struggles as the " year of crisis" (1877), the Haymarket Riot of 1883, and the Homestead Steel Strike of 1892. Many labor leaders believed that organized labor would become a valuable nongovernmental response to the problem of corporate power, labor leaders hoped, the rise of an independent labor movement might induce government either to restrain the power of capitalist organizations (whether corporations or financial institutions) or to mediate between capital and labor. To some extent, their hopes were realized, as state and local governments experimented with legislation to protect the rights of workers (for example, state minimum-wage, maximum-hour, and working-conditions statutes) and the interests of consumers (for example, laws regulating railroad rates or the quality of manufactured products). But federal and state courts questioned the legitimacy and

desirability of such measures, and that of the organized labor movement numbering those types of legislation among itsgoals.

Many courts recognized such laws and programs as valid exercises of the state's police power. Power granted to state governments to protect thehealth, safety, welfare, and morals of their citizens. But courts often suspected these statutes as violations of the freedom of contract protected by Article I, section 9 of the United States Constitution and of the due process rights of persons (including business corporations) under the Fifth and Fourteenth Amendments to the Constitution. The late nineteenth century was one of the great ages of immigration in American history. This era of immigration differed from previous immigration booms in two key respects: scale and sources. In many ways, the change in sources of immigration was more important than the change in scale. By far the largest sources of immigrants in the period were the nations of central, eastern, and southern Europe.

These immigrants were refugees from economic privation and political and religious persecution in the ailing empires of Austria-Hungary and Russia and the new, fragile nations of Italy and Germany. The floods of immigrants that poured into the nation's largest cities (usually the seaports, such as New York, and rail centers, such as Chicago) swamped the cities' resources of housing and employment. In response to growing alarm at urban immigrants' living and working conditions, social reformers began to organize public and private relief programs and to pursue attempts to establish legal standards for housing and working conditions. These scattered reform efforts were

among the seeds of a much larger, more comprehensive series of reform movements that soon came to dominate American life. Immigrants at the time were seen as competition, as they took a large portion of the work force. During strikes they would give Americans a harsher time in accomplishing their purpose. Employers were prone to replace American workers by hiring immigrants, in return this option benefited the employers in the long run.

Employers were able to exploit immigrants because of their economically challenged needs. This was at large the worst half of having a large population of immigrants because employers were able to replace you within seconds,. There would be three willing immigrants formed in line ready to work with all conditions that American workers were opposed to. Although immigration was one of the prime forces that shaped the American people, Americans always have been ambivalent about the virtues and advantages of immigration. Those who already have roots here have often resented those who sought to join them. In part, this was simply an expression of the fear that newcomers might not only outstrip those who were already here in achievement but even exclude them from the fruits of economic and social success. In part, anti-immigrant feeling is (and has been) closely linked to religious, ethnic, or racial prejudice.

In few periods of American history were these prejudices as evident as in the late nineteenth century. One way in which these prejudices found expression was the belief that the " new immigrants," coming as they did from despotic monarchies, were incapable of understanding democracy, living by it, or

taking part in it. What caused change was technological advances that ultimately impacted two major factors that changed the lives of American industrial workers between 1865-1900.