

Example of essay on afl survival change to win federation

[Literature](#), [Russian Literature](#)



Labor unions in the U. S

There are two main reasons why the American Federation of Labor (AFL) succeeded while other unions such as International Workers of the World (IWW) and the Knight of Labor (KOL) failed. First, the AFL had an added benefit as the union was less radical than the other unions that failed. Secondly, the AFL was able to cover more skilled laborers than the other counterparts. Dissimilar to the other Unions, AFL concentrated on improving the working environment for their members by advocating higher wages, shorter work time and better working relationships (Peterson, 24). The union did not concentrate on the unskilled workers and this was favored by the economy growth due to mass-production industries such as rubber, utilities, chemicals and automobiles. As a result, there was a high demand for the skilled labor in this era, hence increasing demand for the labor union. AFL, however, identified this opportunity and took advantage of the situation. The reason IWW and KOL faded out of the labor market was because they failed to impress the public opinion. Contrary to the AFL, the two unions failed to penetrate into the entire capitalist system. The other reason public opinion did not favor them happened because they were associated with negative public perception for adverse incidents such as Haymarket tragedy. Following such incidents, the public could not sympathize with the two unions. As a result, the unions failed due to lack of substantial support from the public and the laborers as well.

The economic situation in United States during that period contributed to the fall of the IWW and KOL unions. The power of the labor unions depended on the laborers that were less replaceable (Peterson, 54). However, the two

failing unions focused on the unskilled laborers that were highly replaceable. At this time, in 1880s, the supply for the unskilled workers was very high in the United States. Therefore, the two firm rushes to take the advantage of the massive number of the unskilled laborers as their members. However, those workers were highly replaceable because they could easily engage into strikes. As a result of the strike, the workers could go further to damage some of the properties. The property owners would get aggressive to incite the public to withdraw support from the base unions. Dissimilar, the AFL utilized the skilled laborers who could not be replaced easily. Consequently, the AFL was able to force the laborers to engage into peaceful negotiation in turn built the AFL reputation.

Through the leadership of Gompers, the AFL was in a position to avoid the radical left, and engaged in constructive changes through the appropriate channels. The union avoided the strikes whenever possible, and this contributed to favorable support from the conservative businessmen. Hence, the leadership of Gompers was more effective than that of the other unions and this made AFL a powerful and robust union in the United States (Peterson, 22).

Some of the labor unions such as Knight of Labor failed because they could not incorporate strategic policies in their management. For instance, the KOL rejected proposal that required historical separation of the labor-reforms and the trade-unions. As a result, the international body was alarmed to strengthen unions such as AFL that would undertake such proposal. Therefore, the AFL emerged as one of the strongest and corporative unions in the labor market, and this led to its success.

Change to Win

Change to Win is a labor movement that was formed in 2005 after the division of ALF-CIO. The federation represents American workers. It unceasingly strives to guarantee that workers obtain good working and living conditions. Its original members were people who felt exploited or misused by the corresponding employers. The federation is a grouping of 7 unions representing approximately 6 million laborers from various industries within the U. S. In 2007, the federation had a budget of \$750 million and 75% of the budget was devoted to organizing new members to join the union (Randy, 03). Notably, its goal is to increase its membership and ensure " hard work is once again valued in the U. S. and around the world" (Randy, 03). Through commitment by its members, the federation has completely rebuilt the American labor movement. Its president, Anna Burger, has been termed as the most successful trade unions leader being the first woman to lead a labor union in America (Randy, 03).

In 2009, president Obama acknowledged the leading role of trade unions when he said that much of the social Medicare and security, paid leave, health insurance and reduced working hours enjoyed by workers were due to the endless efforts of Change to Win (Randy, 09). Overtime, the federation has continued fighting for the rights of native and immigrant workers and ensures that exploitative employers driven by the profit motive do not violate their rights.

However, the road has not been smooth for the federation. In 2012, a labor columnist stated that, " The rhetoric is no longer grand and the organization that sparked it has lost its luster It has simply failed to live up to the

misplaced hopes once put into it" With increased worker's awareness, the federation was seen as workers " watchdog."

Works Cited

Legislative Achievements of American Federation of Labor. Washington:

American Federation of Labor, 1943. Print.

Peterson, Florence. American Labor Unions: What They Are and How They Work. New York: Harper & Row, 1963. Print.

Randy Hall. " Change to Win Unions Form New Labor Federation." CNS News. N. p., 2012. Web. 13 Apr. 2014.