

Workers in america

[History](#)



Workers in America Introduction The rise of the industrial capitalism compelled the workers to form movements to cushion themselves from the widening gap between the affluent and destitute in the society. The movements aimed at solving the rampant labor problems that existed in late 1860s. Knights of Labor was a notable movement that agitated for equal pay, the abolition of the child labor, and the establishment of the cooperatives to tame the excesses of the industrial capitalism. The Knights of Labor was an instrumental movement that brought together workers from different trades.

Origin

Uriah Stephens together with eight tailors founded the Knights of Labor in Philadelphia on December 9, 1869 (Brexel 19). It is noteworthy that this was the first national industrial labor movement in the United States. Originally, the movement was Noble and Holy Order of the Knights of Labor, which replaced the failed Garment Cutters Association of Philadelphia (Weir 20). Knights of Labor maintained a highest level of secrecy, as well as, fraternalism, and it was not until 1879 when the movement utilized symbols to call for meetings. Initially, the movement excluded bankers, lawyers, liquor dealers, and professional gamblers. In addition, women did not join the movement until 1882 when the membership had grown hugely. However, the movement declined in 1886 due to competition from other unions and internal disagreements.

Political and Social Perspective

The Knights of Labor advocated political reforms. Notably, the movement championed for the levying of the graduated income tax. On top of this, the movement demanded the establishment of the national monetary system <https://assignbuster.com/workers-in-america/>

that did not have the banks as intermediaries. Similarly, the movement agitated the government to maintain the ownership of the telegraph lines and the railroads. Moreover, Knights of Labor wanted a new land policy that sought to benefit the settlers as opposed to the speculators (Brexel 22). In addition to the political matters, the movement raised grievances on the social issues.

Knights of Labor advocated the abolition of the child labor and the contract systems on municipal, state, and national works. In addition, the national union championed for pay equality for equal work, and the establishment of the cooperatives in order to replace the repressive and archaic wage system that promotes oppression of the workers by the capitalist employers (Weir 21). Moreover, Knights of Labor agitated for health and safety of the workers in the building, manufacturing, and mining industries.

Important Labor Conflict

The Wabash Railway strike was a significant strike, which the Knights of Labor successfully won in 1885. The movement organized the workers to disrupt the operations in the Wabash line in the Southwest. Fundamentally, the strike erupted after the layoff of the movement's shop attendants. The move prompted the union members to refuse to operate the trains with the Wabash cars (Weir 27). Eventually, the strike resulted in talks that ended the discrimination against the Knights. Consequently, the agreement led to the cessation of the strike after the Knights of Labor had emerged victorious in the talks.

Conclusion

The Knights of Labor played an instrumental role in bringing together workers from various trades. Notably, the movement agitated for the rights

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of the workers, including better pay and working environment. The achievement such as the victory in the Wabash Railway strike underscores the significance of the Knights of Labor in influencing the improvement of the employer-employee relationship in America during the industrial capitalism period. In sum, tamed the aggressive capitalists and corporations, and protected the workers.

Works Cited

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