



Labor History and Labor Unions

Labor unions were created in order to help the workers with work-related difficulties such as low pay, unsafe or unsanitary working conditions, long hours, and other situations. Workers often had problems with their bosses as a result of membership in the unions. Sometimes the unions organized strikes in order to try to change the conditions of the workers. Early strikes were rarely successful.

Choose one of the following situations from the early history of the labor movement. Use a variety of resources to research the situation you have chosen. Find out as much as you can about it and how important it was to the steel industry and the economy of the region. Explain the impact of the situation on the steel industry, other industry in the Pittsburgh area, and the economy of the region.

Create a visual display to demonstrate the situation and its impact on the industry and economy of the region. You may choose any type of display to explain the situation.

Prepare a speech to explain the situation. Describe the good things that resulted because of the situation. Explain the problems and difficulties that resulted because of it.

Choose from among the following situations:

- * 1828: Working Man's Party established – the world's first labor party;
- * 1867: the first factory inspections for safety hazards implemented in Massachusetts;
- * 1870: the first mine safety act passed in Pennsylvania;
- * 1876: formation of the AAISW (Amalgamated Ass'n. of Iron & Steel Workers);
- * 1881: FOTLU formed (Federation of Organized Trade and Labor Unions);
- * 1882: the first Labor Day is celebrated on September 5, 1882, in New York City;
- * 1886: FOTLU becomes the American Federation of Labor (AFL);
- * 1890: the United Mine Workers organization is formed;
- * 1891: coke oven workers strike in Pennsylvania for an eight-hour day, but the strike is unsuccessful;



- * 1892: the Homestead Strike, including the Battle of Homestead;
- * 1902: anthracite miners in Pennsylvania strike, unsuccessfully, for a wage increase and shorter work week;
- * 1906-1909: pressed steel car strike;
- * 1911: establishment of the National Safety Council;
- * 1919: “Hunky” strike – nationwide steel strike;
- * 1935: the Committee of Industrial Organizations (CIO) is founded by John L. Lewis;
- * 1936: the Walsh-Healy Act is passed;
- * 1936: the National Labor Relations Act, also known as the Wagner Act, is passed;
- * 1937: Wagner Act tested with the Little Steel Strike;
- * 1947: the Taft-Hartly Act is passed;
- * 1955: the AFL and the CIO merge;
- * 1959: the Landrum-Griffin Act is passed;
- * 1964: the Civil Rights Act is passed;
- * 1968: the United Auto Workers labor union withdraws from its membership in the AFL-CIO;
- * 1969: the Construction Safety Act is passed;
- * 1970: the Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHA) is passed;
- * 1972: passage of the Black Lung Benefits Act;
- * 1974: the formation of the Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW);
- * 1978: the Civil Service Reform Act is passed.