

## SECTION 4

# American Labor History

## Time Line

- 1640s First guilds form in the colonies
- 1700s Trade workers continue to form societies and organizations
- 1724 Carpenter's Company of Philadelphia chartered to assist in carpenter instruction and well-being.
- 1775 United Company of Philadelphia for Promoting American Manufacturing employs 400 women in one shop, foreshadowing future industrialization
- 1776 Declaration of Independence signed in Carpenter Hall, Philadelphia, which was built by Carpenter's Company.
- 1780—1800 Early strikes and walkouts by shoemakers, carpenters, and printers
- 1820s Industrial workers think about organizing; women begin to organize
- 1827 First citywide labor council formed (Philadelphia)  
First all-women factory strike: In Dover, New Hampshire, female mill workers walk off their jobs at the Cocheco mill when the company imposes several new policies, including a 12.5 cent fine for tardiness, the introduction of a blacklist, and a ban on talking on the job. The policies are later withdrawn.
- 1840 Ten-hour day without reduction in pay proclaimed by President Van Buren for all federal employees on public works.
- 1842 Connecticut and Massachusetts pass laws prohibiting children from working more than 10 hours a day.
- 1847 New Hampshire becomes the first state to make the 10-hour day the legal workday
- 1848 Child labor law in Pennsylvania makes 12 the minimum age for workers in commercial occupations
- 1852 The Typographical Union founded—the first to endure until the present
- 1860 Successful strike of 20,000 shoemakers in New England. Abraham Lincoln, in support of the strikers, says, "Thank God that we have a system of labor where there can be a strike."
- 1867 Knights of St. Crispin, a union of shoemakers, founded in Milwaukee. It was the nation's largest union until its demise during the Panic of 1873.
- 1868 First federal eight-hour-day law passes; applies only to laborers, mechanics, and workmen employed by the government
- 1874 Union label first used, by Cigar Makers International Union

- 1881 Federation of Organized Trades and Labor Unions formed in Pittsburgh; forerunner of the American Federation of Labor
- 1882 First Labor Day celebration held in New York City
- 1886 Bay View Tragedy: Seven workers killed by state militia while on peaceful march for establishing the eight-hour day (Wisconsin's worst labor violence) American Federation of Labor (AFL) formed with Samuel Gompers as president.  
Violence erupts following a mysterious explosion at Haymarket Square in Chicago during a rally in support of the eight-hour workday
- 1887 Seven accused in the Haymarket explosion are sentenced to death; five executed later
- 1888 First federal labor-relations law passed; applies only to rail companies
- 1893 Wisconsin State Federation of Labor founded (predecessor of Wisconsin State AFL-CIO)
- 1897 Formation of Socialist Party in Milwaukee, which helped to develop much progressive action in Milwaukee and the state of Wisconsin
- 1898 Citywide strike of woodworkers in Oshkosh from May 6 through August 19 puts thousands of workers on strike against most major industrialists and civic leaders of city. One striker killed in a melee. Conspiracy charges placed on union leaders, but beaten back after dramatic trial led by famed defense attorney Clarence Darrow.
- 1900 International Ladies Garment Workers Union founded
- 1900—1905 Strikes by paper workers to have Saturday night "off" first won, then lost in mills as employers bust union efforts
- 1903 Blue-collar and middle-class women unite to form the National Women's Trade Union League at the annual AFL Convention. Mary Morton Kehew is elected president; Jane Addams is elected vice-president.  
The Department of Commerce and Labor is founded Mother Jones (Mary Harris Jones) leads the March of the Mill Children to President Theodore Roosevelt's home in New York; many of the children are victims of industrial accidents
- 1906 Upton Sinclair publishes *The Jungle*, which effectively exposes the unsafe and unclean aspects of the Chicago meatpacking industry
- 1907 The Supreme Court rules that female-maximum-hour laws are constitutional due to a woman's "physical structure and ... maternal functions"
- 1911 First workers' compensation law in United States established in Wisconsin The Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire takes the lives of nearly 150 workers, mostly young women, who are unable to escape due in part to locked doors and sealed windows
- 1912 Massachusetts adopts the first minimum wage law for women and minors
- 1913 U.S. Department of Labor established; Secretary of Labor given power to "act as a mediator and to appoint commissioners of conciliation in labor disputes"
- 1914 Wives and children of striking miners are set aflame when national guardsmen attack their tent colony during a strike against the Colorado Fuel and Iron Company; event referred to as the Ludlow Massacre
- 1924 An amendment to the Constitution restricting child labor is proposed, but not enough states pass the measure for enactment

- 1931 The Davis-Bacon Act provides for the payment of the prevailing wage to employees of contractors and subcontractors on public works construction
- 1932 Wisconsin creates the first unemployment compensation act in the United States
- 1935 American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees Union founded in Madison; now one of largest unions in the nation  
The Wagner Act (National Labor Relations Act) establishes the first national labor policy protecting the right of workers to organize and to elect their representatives for collective bargaining  
Social Security Act adopted  
Committee for Industrial Organization (CIO) formed within the AFL to foster industrial unionism
- 1936 First large sit-down strike, by United Rubber Workers at Goodyear Tire
- 1936—1939 Workers organize into unions after passage of Wagner Act; hundreds of thousands join, from Kenosha to Superior, making Wisconsin one of most heavily unionized states and bringing top wages and benefits to all workers in state
- 1937 The CIO is expelled from the AFL over charges of dual unionism/competition
- 1938 The old CIO becomes the Congress of Industrial Organizations with John L. Lewis as its president
- 1941 The United States enters World War II; the AFL and CIO announce a no-strike pledge for the duration of the war
- 1944 There are 18,600,000 union members in the United States; 3,500,000 are women
- 1946—1947 A long strike at Allis-Chalmers Manufacturing Company in West Allis becomes a national symbol of the struggle for shop floor rights and the debate over the role of communism in unions. The strike by United Automobile Workers (UAW) Local 248 is one of the most memorable in the history of U.S. unions.
- 1947 Congress passes the Taft-Hartley Act, which restricts union activities and permits states to pass right-to-work laws
- 1948 The federal government holds its first conference on industrial safety
- 1949 An amendment to the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 directly prohibits child labor for the first time
- 1952 President Truman takes control of the steel industry when companies reject the Wage Stabilization Board's recommendations; an eight-week strike follows when the Supreme Court finds the President's action unconstitutional
- 1955 The AFL and the CIO are reunited under the leadership of George Meany, bringing together about 85 percent of all union members
- 1957 AFL-CIO expels Bakery Workers, Laundry Workers, and Teamsters for corruption
- 1958 Wisconsin State AFL-CIO created through merger of State Federation of Labor and Wisconsin CIO
- 1959 Public Employee Collective Bargaining Act (Wisconsin statute 111.70) passed in Wisconsin, making the state one of first in nation to recognize right of public employees to organize and bargain collectively. Later, 111.80 was added, giving rights to organize to Wisconsin teachers.  
The Landrum-Griffin Act (Labor-Management Reporting and Disclosure Act) passed by Congress; regulates the internal affairs of unions to avoid corruption

- 1962 Federal employee unions given the right to bargain collectively with government agencies as a result of President Kennedy's executive order
- 1963 The Equal Pay Act prohibits wage differences for workers based on sex
- 1963—1970 Migrant farmworkers organize in Wisconsin, aided by widespread support of unions, AFL-CIO, church groups, and others
- 1965 The Civil Rights Act prohibits discrimination in employment based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origin
- 1965 Long strike by UAW at Kohler Company, begun in 1954, ends with union and company establishing peaceful relations
- 1968 The Age Discrimination in Employment Act goes into effect, prohibiting discrimination in hiring or firing of persons between 40 and 65 on the basis of age
- 1969 First mass postal strike in the history of the U.S. Postal Service
- 1970 Congress passes the Occupational Safety and Health Act
- 1981 Most of the nation's air traffic controllers fired by President Reagan
- 1993 Family and Medical Leave Act passed by Congress. Strongly supported by labor unions. Requires most employers to provide 12 weeks unpaid leave for workers to care for a newborn, adopt or provide foster care, care for a family member, or recover from illness.
- 1995 John J. Sweeney elected president of the AFL-CIO at the federation's biennial convention in October. At the time of his election, he was serving his fourth four-year term as president of SEIU, which grew from 625,000 to 1.1 million members under his leadership.
- 1997 Teamster Union has national strike against United Parcel Service, ending with greater benefits and rights for Teamster members. One of the first successful strikes since Reagan's dismissal of striking PATCO air traffic controllers.
- 1999 Labor unionists from all over United States join with civil rights and environmental activists to force World Trade Organization negotiators in Seattle to provide consideration for labor, human, and environmental rights in making trade decisions