Chapter 8

CLASS WARFARE FROM ABOVE, 1865-1920

The profitable use of America depended on development of a working class. But concentration of workers has always cultivated a fear among employers that large numbers of workers might organize and become a counterweight or even a superior force to that of the employers. To frustrate the formation of a unified working class became a prime aim of American (and other) employers. Not only would this head off united worker action at the workplace. It would also deny workers access to political organization based on their economic interests. Weakness on this front would also stave off effective demands for legislation advancing labor's cause.

In the United States racial policy has been another way to assure that the unity of workers would not be achieved. By encouraging conflict between groups of workers divided by race, nationality, sex, language, or religion, employers rarely needed to worry about facing labor as an equal. This process has been characteristic of American history. Because the economic sphere of life has been so fundamental, patterns developing there tended to overflow into other areas of American life.

Early in American history, groups were deliberately set against one another to weaken both. Anthropologist Charles Hudson describes the situation in early 18th century South Carolina:

> The whites lived in mortal fear of black insurrections, and they were even more afraid that the blacks and Indians would combine forces. … To heighten enmity between the races they used black troops in military actions against the Indians and likewise used Indians against blacks as slave-catchers and also to suppress slave insurrections.[1]

Typically, the manipulators of conflict between Indians and blacks were elite planters and their political and economic partners. Poor whites lacked the authority and organizational capacity to indulge their personal hates. Historian Gary Nash notes the same procedure of divide and rule in South Carolina.[2]

Throughout much of United States history, employers regularly encouraged racial and ethnic conflict among workers. They did so primarily to prevent workers from forming unions or conducting strikes. Employer power was maximized while the bargaining power of workers grew minimally. Thus, racism accompanied and strengthened the development of American capitalism; to the degree that capitalist domination of politics and economic affairs came to be accepted, so, too, was racism.

After the close of the Civil War and Reconstruction, such a system was fastened upon the South. Reflecting a bargain between the rulers of both North and South, black and white workers were placed in a mutually destructive relationship. White workers as a group were paid slightly more than blacks and given a few political and social advantages over the blacks. By no means, however, were they given equality with the ruling whites. Blacks, even when used as strikebreakers against white workers, were not rewarded with any enduring improvement in living standard.

The South thus became "stable"; a productive labor supply was assured and disruption was at a minimum as the black-white system allocated its meager awards. Northern investments could safely flow to an area in which profit was embedded in such favorable conditions. The northern investors, after all, were themselves part of an industrial system in which profitable racial conflict was being practiced increasingly.

Let us examine some evidence of this during the years 1865-1920.

Around the turn of the century, economist Paul S. Taylor writes, hand laborers in the western sugar-beet industry were part of such a system:

> In 1908 German-Russians were hired in California "to break a strike among the Mexican thinners." "Mexicans" were early employed in several northern districts in the same state "to provide competition against the Japanese [workers]." In southern Colorado, Japanese and Mexicans were "employed largely as checks against" the German-Russians. In northern Colorado 200 Japanese were secured in 1903 "to afford competition against the German-Russians."[3]

Historian Daniel Nelson, reviewing the years 1880-1920 in the country as a whole, writes:

> Because strikebreakers often came from outside the area and represented a different—and presumably "lower" ethnic group— their use exacerbated racial and nationality tensions and disrupted

the ethnic balance of the community. In many factories French Canadians, East European immigrants, and blacks were first introduced as strikebreakers.[4]

In many company towns, private builders constructed ghettos for groups of unskilled immigrants.[5]

Manchester, New Hampshire was the location of a large textile firm, the Amoskeag Manufacturing Co. Historian James Hanlan notes: "The town's least desirable and prestigious employment — textile operatives and unskilled and semi-skilled labor — was reserved for the foreign born, particularly in 1870 for the Irish and for the newly-arriving French Canadians who would move into the factories in increasing numbers."[6]   The most desirable employment was reserved for selected native-born who filled executive and managerial jobs in the textile plants. These home-grown leaders well knew how to serve the corporation's interest:

> The very presence of the new immigrants and their neighborhoods caused native born workers to view the Amoskeag's resident native-dominated management more as an ally than as an adversary. … By adopting policies that fostered ethnic identity and otherwise divided group from group, employers in other "corporation towns" may have been [able] successfully to arrest the development of working-class consciousness.[7]

Steelton, Pennsylvania was founded in 1866, a year after the Civil War ended. A history of immigration and labor in Steelton was written by John Bodnar, the author of several studies of that state. Analyzing the (lost) strike of 1891 at the Pennsylvania Steel Co., Bodnar observes:

> It was in the aftermath of the strike … that the company began to encourage massive immigration from southern Europe. The influx of foreign labor dramatically increased the social divisions in the town, chiefly because the [company] policy that encouraged European immigration also segregated newcomers into certain departments in the mills.[8]

Bodnar stresses the deliberateness of the corporation's practices. "The steel company in particular implemented systematic steps which practically insured a fractured society. In an effort to maintain a source of inexpensive labor, Slavs were recruited directly, for instance, or funneled into the Pennsylvania Steel plant through a cooperative

system with certain boardinghouse keepers. Blacks were periodically recruited in groups."[9]   With reference to unionization, Bodnar reports: "The company, rigidly opposed to any form of labor organization by its workers, reinforced this [racial and ethnic] diversity by labor practices encouraging ethnic segregation in its various departments.   Ethnic tensions between workers impeded labor solidarity."[10] Dominic Del Turco, a steel worker whose father was an immigrant from Italy, recalled that when he began to work at a Jones and Laughlin mill in 1924: "No, we didn't have any union at all then. But they brought Negroes from the South to put them against whites and keep us from organizing."[11]

In 1915, when Polish workers at the oil refineries of Bayonne, New Jersey were about to go out on strike, "intransigent refinery managers imported a crew of strikebreakers — mostly Italians."[12] On the other hand, referring to conditions in coal mining in Pennsylvania, another historian writes that three companies in Scranton "played on ethnic hatred by firing their Welsh miners and hiring Germans and Irish to replace them."[13]

In the Michigan copper country around the turn of the century, the giant corporation Calumet and Hecla Mining Co. also created ethnic conflict. In 1904, two-fifths of the population in Houghton County were foreign-born; one recent feature of this group was the comparatively large representation of non-English-speaking people. Economic historian William Gates writes: "The mining companies encouraged this new immigration development in the hope that language barriers would forestall the growth of unionism and that the new workers would prove to be easily manageable."[14] During a strike led in 1913 by the Western Federation of Miners, "Calumet and Hecla imported about 1,600 men—an effort being made to obtain nationalities different from those in the Copper Country."[15]

On the iron country of both Michigan and Minnesota, writes Vernon Jensen, "a conscious policy of mixing nationality groups appeared destined to keep workers divided. … On the iron range the percentage of foreign born ran as high as eighty-five percent, mainly from Finland, Italy, and the Slavic countries.[16]

Major copper-mining operations were also conducted in Arizona where the labor force consisted mainly of Mexicans who were highly experienced. In 1915, they struck at Ray and even though they belonged to no union, won. Thereupon they joined the Western Federation of Miners, the nemesis of mining companies which were united against the WFM. "Various attempts to foment discord and to

arouse prejudice among the Mexican workers against the WFM were carefully controlled."[17]

Hard-rock mining for metals required deep-mining and was widespread throughout the Far West, especially after 1890. The familiar labor policies prevailed. As historian Richard Lingenfelter wrote: "Many of the mining superintendents purposely hired men from as wide a range of nationalities as possible in the hope that cultural and linguistic differences would make union organization more difficult. ... The hardrock miners generally worked side by side with remarkable harmony—so long as Chinese, Mexicans, and Blacks were excluded."[18]

Another historian of hard-rock mining, Mark Wyman, noted that during strikes the native-born American "was frequently brought in as a strikebreaker—against union militants who were overwhelmingly European."[19] Few European workers became strikebreakers. Their zeal for unions was hard for employers to overcome: "Italians were so active in the WFM's Colorado strikes in 1903-1904 that Governor Peabody obtained the assistance of the Italian secret service and the Italian consul in Denver regarding the removal of undesirable aliens from the district."[20]

Employers' deliberate cultivation of ethnic and racial conflict was designed primarily to weaken the ability of white workers to bargain to their own advantage. The effort was successful. During the years 1890-1914, demand for labor expanded greatly in manufacturing industries. Immigration and movement of many farm workers to the cities, however, moderated increases in real wages.[21] In part, this slowing trend is attributable to deliberate ethnic conflict which operated to strengthen the power position of employers.

Unions largely excluded blacks at this time, but they were not highly instrumental in promoting ethnic conflict in U.S. industry. In 1900, after all, only six percent of all manufacturing workers were unionized.[22] Fifteen years later, the figure was a modest 12 percent. In any event, employers did not need much help in this task. Nevertheless, some unions played the employers' game by helping create racist structures inside the workplace. Blacks were either excluded altogether or consigned to job slots that led nowhere. White workers, especially native-born, were assigned to semi-skilled or skilled jobs. Unions incorporated provisions for such systems into collective-bargaining contracts.

After the end of slavery in 1865, employers in southern agriculture opened new avenues for conflict between black and white farm labor.

White workers replaced large numbers of black artisans in the South. During strikes by white laborers, white planters often hired black laborers as strikebreakers. The same happened off the farms. In the North, blacks were excluded from many industries. From time to time, they were employed as strikebreakers. There are also records of whites being hired as strikebreakers when blacks were on strike. As the black presence was largely restricted to the most physically-taxing jobs, whites did not aspire to many jobs held by blacks. Racial discrimination tended in the opposite direction: whites were chosen by employers to staff the better jobs and thereby appear as the privileged ones. Employers could and did threaten such whites with replacement by blacks should their wage and other demands rise too sharply. Thus, contrived racial conflict led to lower levels of earnings by white workers. Meanwhile, employers continued to profit from the equal productivity of black workers as well as from lower labor costs of blacks based on less pay for equal work.

Similar mechanisms were used by white employers to set one group of white workers against another. In each case, the employers' goal was the same: prevent workers from acting together to achieve their goals on the job. Thus, native-born Americans were preferred for certain more desirable jobs. Italian immigrants were hired to break strikes by Irish immigrant metal miners in the West, and Hungarian immigrants were used as strikebreakers against German and Irish workers in the stockyards. On the West Coast and Hawaii, Asian immigrants were manipulated by owners of sugar plantations. Japanese were hired at lower wages to replace the Chinese. Filipinos were then employed to replace the Japanese. In each case, employers' agents actively denigrated a group and encouraged another one to regard itself as superior. Meanwhile, of course, the employer benefitted from the absence of a united workers' movement. The consequence was a lowered standard of living for all workers and an elevated standard for employers and investors in the relevant firms.

The deliberate creation of racial and ethnic conflict was not a matter of individual employer prejudice but of capitalist class strategy. This was attested from afar by Karl Marx's closest colleague Frederick Engels, who, in 1892, wrote a friend in America:

> Your bourgeoisie knows much better than the Austrian government how to play off one nationality against the other: Jews, Italians, Bohemians, etc., against German and Irish, and each against the other, so that differences in the standard of life of different workers exist. …[23]

The mere multiplicity of ethnic groups did not cause racism, nor did it weaken the labor movement. Primarily when employers manipulated ethnicity to their advantage did working-class disunity occur. Canada's population was even more diverse than that of the United States. Nevertheless, Canadian unionization was more class conscious and militant. In the anthracite coal regions of the United States, workers of varying nationalities worked side by side but they were organized into separate local unions by the United Mine Workers; each local conducted its business in its own language.[24] Hog Butchers Local 116 in the Chicago packinghouses provided simultaneous translations in five languages; the sheep butchers needed seven.[25] During World War I, "the new [southern and eastern European] immigrants [in the packinghouses] provided the main source of union strength and worked to integrate Black immigrants into the movement."[26] Black workers in the packinghouses provided more than membership: "A small but solid core of Black activists … [shared] rank-and-file leadership with Slavic immigrants and German and Irish veterans."[27] Employers did little to hide their motives: many newspaper ads for workers specified the nationality or race desired.[28]

In some cases, unions and white workers adopted policies that discriminated against certain nationalities and racial groups. The United Mine Workers organized the broadest range of workers, including Blacks and immigrants from eastern and southern Europe. Yet, the national president of UMW, John Mitchell, told the U.S. Industrial Commission in 1901 that with respect to Hungarian and Italian members, "those people have been undesirable as far as our organization is concerned."[29] The American Federation of Labor paid little or no attention to organizing these newer immigrants, whatever the industry. Nevertheless, writes Judith McDonough, "when union doors were open, immigrants rallied to the union cause."[30] As David Montgomery points out, "It is folly to think of immigration and ethnicity solely in terms of barriers to class consciousness."[31] He notes that in Chicago's packinghouses, "in 1918 only 25 percent of the workers were citizens, and 43 percent did not even have first [naturalization] papers. Yet 90 percent of them were union members."[32]

The United States is the only former slave society in the world that became a modern industrialized capitalist country. Few if any historians have confronted this fact. Slavery is usually studied for its impact on the individual slave or, less often, on the individual slaveowner. We need, however, to grasp the significance of the system

of slavery for the society as a whole, and for its subsequent development.

Slavery was based on the right of owners-employers of workers to enforce labor discipline by violence. In one southern state after another, this principle was adopted by legislatures and courts. Violence as threat or actuality attended every phase of enslavement: initiation, violation of local regulation, attempts to escape, or learning to read. Northern protests against the legitimacy of violence in labor relations were rare. More than once Congress enacted laws providing for federal force to be used in re-enslavement of workers who had successfully escaped from bondage.

The utter one-sidedness of violence against enslaved workers was reproduced increasingly in relations between free workers and employers in the North, especially in the generation before the Civil War. At this time police in northern and southern cities began their long record of violence against striking workers. In the generation after the Civil War, employers demanded and received governmental permission and encouragement to use deadly violence to put down labor protests. Frequently, this involved the right of employers to use the police power of states against their striking workers. In some cases, companies hired private police who were armed and could make arrests. In other cases, privately-employed convicts under armed guard were housed on company property. Both examples were strongly reminiscent of the plantation's absolute power over its workers.

Thus slavery served as a model of organization in labor relations throughout the country.

The utter subjection of slaves found its parallel in the workshop and factory. Violence against white and black workers was used at will by American employers. Machine guns as well as more conventional firearms could be found in company armories.

Much of American culture and society bears the marks of both slavery and capitalism. Slavery, however, is usually treated in a self-contained way, as though it was isolated from any other sector of the American economy or culture. Thus, a radical classic by Morton J. Horwitz, *The Transformation of American Law 1780-1860*, ignores the role of the law in saddling a system of slavery upon this country during the very years of capitalist ascendancy. Yet, the two systems were intimately interactive.

While the cost of slavery was borne wholly by the slaves, its profit was enjoyed by slave owners, merchants, bankers, and capitalists. The

political representatives of these profiteers of slavery cooperated in varying degrees on issues of common self-interest. Both customary and newly-made legal procedures were adapted to protect the property interests of slaveholders. Few, if any, legal limits were placed on the virtually absolute authority of slaveholders over their slaves. Nor was slaveholder law regarded as irregular or improper in the courts or legislatures.

The spirit of the law of slavery entered the realm of labor relations under capitalism. In slave areas of the country, slaveholders successfully mobilized the community to enforce the slave regime. Violence by direct representatives of the owner and his community was employed to discipline enslaved workers. In those areas of the North where concerted action by free workers occurred, employers called out police and others to stop the action. Violence was frequently used against these free workers. Quasi-military tactics replaced those directed against recalcitrant individuals.

During these years, the propertied classes and the federal and other governments conducted a class war against organized working people. A quasi-military alliance between large corporations and government repressed efforts to form labor unions. Government and business carried out a broad range of military functions. *Espionage* was assigned primarily to corporate employers who hired private detectives to infiltrate unions and report on the activities of workers active in union affairs. Union organizers were identified by company spies and were subjected to beatings by local and state "peace officers", private detectives, and hired thugs, while armed soldiers frequently stood by silently.

Command functions were conducted by armed service officers acting in concert with top company officials. Frequently, the former reported to the latter before initiating any armed action. *Cavalry* were provided by armed formations such as the Pennsylvania State Police who drove their horses directly into groups of unionists who were meeting to discuss union matters. These police also attacked leaders among the working people with clubs and weapons. It was not at all unusual for police to fire into crowds of strikers and leave many dead or wounded. *Infantry* forces were provided by State Police, sheriff's deputies, militias, National Guard, and volunteers recruited from among local businessmen, corporation staff employees, university students, and other middle-class persons. Their principal goal was to overwhelm the enemy, i.e., the striking working people.

At times, *combat* was waged against strikers by declarations of

martial law. This occurred even when legal requirements were not fulfilled by the armed forces involved. *Ordnance* was purchased by corporations and supplied to armed forces by regular military sources, financed by public funds. *Headquarters* were established on corporation property, including struck factories, and barracks were often located nearby. *Armories* were situated in industrial cities, alongside possible sites of strikes. *Military courts* operated even while civilian courts were in force. *Military arrests* occurred without warrants, by soldiers, sheriffs' deputies, and others.

Casualties among strikers, caused by military forces, were regarded as legitimate battle casualties; individual soldiers at fault were not held personally responsible. Frequently, strikers who retaliated were prosecuted. Most of the time, strikers were not armed and women and children were also shot down. Battle casualties caused by armed officers of the law far outnumbered those caused by strikers and their supporters. Many *military attacks* went unanswered in kind, other than in the form of protest marches or written complaints. *Vigilante actions* in support or instead of military attacks were organized and led by prominent middle-class community notables, including corporate officials.

The scale of anti-worker activity in the United States can be summarized by statements of two observers of the subject:

> From approximately 1873 … until 1937 … American labor suffered governmental repression that was probably as severe or more severe than that suffered by any labor movement in any other Western industrialized democracy. … The great bulk of violence leading to deaths and injuries was initiated by business and government and the great majority of casualties in labor disputes were suffered by workers. …[33] In the early twentieth century, state coercion and violence against strikers was substantially greater in the United States than in other industrial nations.[34]

Such characterizations are moderate statements of the case.

Infiltration of union ranks by undercover company agents gave employers detailed knowledge of union plans: "Operatives in mill towns throughout the steel districts of Western Pennsylvania reported on everything from run-of-the-mill laziness to serious organizing efforts among employees."[35] Workers discovered to be active unionists were discharged. David Brody notes that "the steel companies invested heavily in labor espionage."[36] During the Pullman Strike of 1894, General Nelson A. Miles, commanding officer of

federal troops in Chicago, hired labor spies to attend union meetings.[37] At the same time, the railroad companies' association sent reports from its own labor spies to Miles. Labor spies were also used as *agents provocateurs*, to secretly goad unionists into violent actions and thus lay the basis for police or army intervention.[38]

Cooper clarifies the significant command power held by corporate representatives. In the mining areas of Coeur d'Alene, Idaho "the state government and the Army were simply the tools the owners used to combat an increasingly militant and active union movement."[39] In Chicago during the Pullman strike, "the [Army] department heads were most deferential about troop withdrawals, usually letting the railroads set the times and conditions for the relief of troops."[40]

Cavalry was used exclusively by governments against unionists. In New York, just before World War I, "the state police made frequent use of the mounted baton-swinging charge through strike crowds."[41] State police in Pennsylvania were also mounted. Their main target was the immigrant worker. J.C. Groome, the force's first superintendent, formulated its motto: "Each Constable Must Be Equal to One Hundred Foreigners."[42] In both states, corporate businessmen occupied high posts as generals and in other ranks.

Infantry superiority in numbers swamped strikers and unionists. During the years 1886-1894, especially, armed government force helped conduct "the most intense (and probably the most violent) counteroffensive ever waged against any country's organized workers."[43] Walter Licht found that from 1877 to 1910, troops put down forcibly over 500 strikes[44]. During the 1919 Steel Strike some 25,000 persons were deputized by the U.S. Steel Corporation.[45] This meant that they were armed and had authority to arrest strikers and others. Also, of course, many of them had some kind of connection with the corporation and could be depended upon to protect its interests. In a 1910 strike at a Bethlehem Steel plant in New York, squads of the state police "were entering the houses of foreigners near the works and dragging them to work in the mills."[46] Between 1892 and 1916, the National Guard in New York intervened in 19 strikes.[47] Rarely were strikers ever appointed as deputies.[48] Federal troops played truly neutral roles only when the President himself specifically authorized their activities. Thus, in a Colorado coal strike President Wilson sent troops only after the National Guard there was demobilized; when the troops arrived, they disarmed not only the miners, but also company guards and local law enforcement officials.[49]

Martial law is the suspension of civilian law in part or all of a country. In the words of Robert Rankin, it "has frequently been a judicial instrument of oppression of labor, similar to injunctions against strikes."[50] Because freedom of speech and other civil liberties are suspended under martial law, labor is deprived of an opportunity to defend its case. Usually, capital continues to pursue its own interests. In connection with a coal strike in West Virginia, the governor proclaimed a "state of war". Two persons were arrested under charges that customarily were punished as misdemeanors: "They were arrested by the militia, tried by military commission pursuant to order of the governor, sentenced to terms of two and five years to the state penitentiary. ..."[51] But, as Henry Ballantine pointed out: "A state of the Union has not the constitutional power to declare war or create a state of war."[52] In the course of the Paint Creek-Cabin Creek coal strike, also in West Virginia, when the governor proclaimed martial law, the entire state militia was sent there. In addition, 300 private detectives were employed by the coal companies. Martial law simply became another advantage enjoyed by the companies. Even when political considerations did not permit a formal declaration by the governor, in New York "state police could impose a virtual state of martial law."[53]

The great majority of strikes involved no violence. One reason for the disproportion in the number of strikers and sympathizers killed was the fact that most were unarmed when they were attacked. Where a tradition of violent confrontation between labor and capital existed, employers far outspent organized workers. In the Paint Creek coal strike, "the operators had armed the nine guards with Winchesters and machine-guns of the latest pattern, but the arms of the miners were more varied and nondescript."[54] Metal workers in Rome, New York who struck in July 1919 were unarmed but their antagonists, the state police, "all were armed with service revolvers and heavy clubs, and those on foot had carbines."[55] Montgomery describes a battle between Homestead steel workers and Pinkerton detectives who had been hired by Andrew Carnegie's company: "While the Pinkerton's fired through gun slits in the armor plating of their barges, the populace at Homestead hastily erected steel barricades of their own and assaulted the invaders with rifle fire, dynamite, flaming oil, cannon fire, and fireworks left over from the Fourth of July."[56]

A similar encounter occurred among coal miners in West Virginia between miners and private detectives of the companies:

> The Baldwin-Felts [detectives] built iron and concrete forts that they equipped with machine guns throughout the strike districts and then evicted the striking miners from their company houses. … Later … [they] rigged a train … with iron-plate siding and machine guns, and then at night, with its lights turned out … they drove the monster through the valleys, machine-gunning the people in the tent colonies on the sides of the hills.[57]

Such wanton destruction brought little response from legal authorities. In Lackawanna during the 1919 steel strike, "the state and private forces were under joint command, and state police colluded with the private forces to avoid prosecution of the company detective who had shot and killed a striker."[58]

Few precise figures are available to judge the number of dead and wounded among strikers and their sympathizers. One estimate, covering 75 strikes during 1890-1909 that involved at least one death, found 308 persons killed.[59] This total includes both strikers and employer-representatives. It would not be surprising to discover that 90 percent of the total represented strikers. This would mean that about 15 persons a year were killed during the 19-year period. During the railroad strikes of 1877, according to Robert Goldstein, "at least ninety deaths occurred … the vast majority at the hands of police and militia."[60]

In the 1916 Westinghouse strike, three strikers were killed and 50-60 wounded.[61] During the 1919 Steel Strike, "authorities killed 22 people. …"[62] Historians have reported many other casualties but only in incomplete form. The overall trend, however, is unmistakable. The vast majority of dead and wounded were strikers and sympathizers. In the South, parallel events were occurring, especially among Black workers in agriculture. During the 1887 sugar harvest in Louisiana, black laborers were subjected to a "reign of terror" by the state militia. At least 30 strikers died.[63]

It is a commonplace of American writing on law that in the United States, violence is a monopoly of government. In fact, however, this chapter has shown how private business was allowed to exercise governing powers in adopting violent methods in relation to their workers forming unions. Corporate officials were permitted to be officers of military organizations. Corporate employees were deputized by the thousands. Still another manner of privatizing violence was vigilanteeism. As Robert Ingalls points out, in Tampa, Florida, vigilantes engaged in "lynching, flogging, tar-and-feathering,

and the forced expulsion of so-called 'agitators'." Targets of the violence were "workers, labor organizers, immigrants, blacks, Socialists, and Communists."[64] Organizers of the vigilantes were local elites, especially southern-born whites. In 1910, for example, they formed a Citizens Committee "led by residents of substantial wealth and political power, including Tampa's mayor … [and] obtained the endorsement of 432 local officials, businessmen, and professionals, who publicly signed their names to the enabling resolutions."[65] Strikes were broken, leaders were lynched, and union activists were deported from Florida in the name of a narrowly-conceived "community".

In 1917, the Phelps-Dodge copper company and other firms in the industry formed the Loyalty League of America. Called the industry's "own private paramilitary organization," its constitution advocated the "extermination" of the Industrial Workers of the World, an industrial union then organizing in the nation's metal-mining regions.[66] The L.L.A. then arranged for the leading organizers and activists to be arrested and deported out of Arizona. This action "destroyed all effective unionism in the district … "[67] While Phelps-Dodge and others were indicted for conducting an illegal deportation, they were cleared in a prolonged court battle ending in the U.S. Supreme Court. In San Diego "the longest, bloodiest, and most publicized battle took place in … 1911, where IWW members, after being arrested for violating a ban on downtown public speaking, were handed over to vigilante groups for punishment."[68] In 1917 and 1918, the U.S. Department of Labor reported that "'numerous citizens' committees, vigilantes or Ku Klux agencies … have come into being to oppose unions in Birmingham [Alabama]. … On May 6, 1918, the KKK led 150 robed horsemen who distributed pamphlets characterizing metal miner unionists as 'idlers and disloyalists'."[69] In St. Louis during the railroad strikes of 1877, a Committee of Public Safety ordered the creation of a private army with orders to "shoot to kill" strikers and demonstrators.[70] It was an elite body which obeyed the order.

Richard Oestreicher has summarized the situation:

Deaths of union activists and strikers were not concentrated in periods of wider strife or civil disturbance. They were a routine part of working-class life. In the United States in the 1890s, approximately two workers were killed and 140 injured for every 100,000 strikers. In France in the same years, only three workers were injured per 100,000 strikers and none were reported killed. Between 1902 and 1904, the injury rate in U.S. strikes soared to

more than 1,000 per 100,000 strikers, and 198 deaths of strikers were recorded in slightly over two years. A few of the dead and injured were strikebreakers attacked by striking workers, but the overwhelming majority were strikers attacked by police, troops, or company thugs.[71]

Similarly, Robert Wiebe records that "during 1910 and 1911 … company deputies at what was appropriately called one of United States Steel's captive coal mines, in addition to beating workers, evicting them from their homes, and smashing their belongings, killed miners at the rate of one for every five days they were on strike."[72]

Almost unrestricted warfare waged against unionists and strikers expressed a class-conscious attack by employers which grew over the years.

In the half-century after the Civil War, capitalism became ensconced throughout the South. Its main avenue to dominance was the transformation of the labor system in agriculture. As Harold Woodman declares: "[The] free labor system in the postwar South … [was] a system that in its essential features replicated that of the North."[73] Like every unskilled or semiskilled factory worker in the North, both Southern wage-workers and sharecroppers "contributed nothing to production beside labor."[74] Sharecroppers neither owned nor controlled the land they worked. They were paid with a share of the output. The expenses of production were charged against that share, leaving little if any balance to their credit. According to state laws throughout the South, sharecroppers were not tenants but employees of the landowner, just as the wage workers.[75] Landowners exercised somewhat less supervision over the cropper than they did over the wage worker.

After emancipation, freedmen sought to acquire land so as to become self-sufficient. They were denied this at every turn, first by the federal government and then by state governments. Private owners of land in the rural South were united in refusing to sell to blacks. Exceptions were few. Forty-five years after the end of the Civil War, "roughly 83 percent of black farmers remained landless."[76] In 1900 black farmers owned 7.3% of all farms and 6.5% of all farmland in the Cotton South."[77] When public land was put up for sale under a short-lived Southern Homestead Act, blacks were eligible to buy but the land was "either of poor quality or far from the railroads."[78] Nevertheless, the number of black landowners rose between 1900 and 1910 from

188,269 to 219,667.[79]   While this was a solid 16.7 percent rate of growth, over a longer period the proportion of black landowners among all black farmers was falling.[80]

Black farm laborers and sharecroppers astounded rural whites with their new-found ability to "organize labor combinations involving hundreds of workers and large land areas. ..."[81]   Planters and their allies responded to these displays of militancy with violence: "Whippings by the Klan ... were also used as a means of enforcing labor discipline."[82]   In the 1880s, the Knights of Labor organized black farm workers throughout the South.   Blacks streamed to the Knights.   In South Carolina they met a vicious reception:

> Planter-led vigilante committees terrorized the new Black Knights and destroyed the ... [Knights] in several ... counties.   A crescendo was reached with the murder of the leading Knights organizer. ...[83]

Ringleaders in the organization drives were beaten or lynched.[84] In the South as a whole, "strike leaders were subjected to beatings, arrest, and forced exile,"[85] very much as in the North.

Capitalism continued to be linked with violence against workers, whatever the section of the country.   One of the deadliest comparisons between sections was that in the South "whites always commanded the preponderance of firepower"[86] while in the North, as we saw above, corporate employers held the upper hand.

Employer and state violence against strikers in the United States outstripped that in any other industrialized country of the time. Goldstein summarizes the situation in Europe as a whole:

> The use of brutal and frequently deadly violence against strikes, demonstrations and other manifestations of popular dissatisfaction was a frequent response of governments in nineteenth-century Europe.   In hundreds of incidents, civilian demonstrators, strikers and rioters were killed during encounters with troops and police between 1815 and 1914, and in at least 20 such clashes 25 or more civilians died.[87]

Gerald Friedman has written recently about the relative absence of state violence in French strikes, but the historical record suggests otherwise.   In 1891, for example, a strike in a textile center witnessed the killing of nine workers and the wounding of many more.[88]   The following year, the American editor and writer Henry Demarest Lloyd asserted that "the French troops shoot down French miners in behalf of French mine owners, just as the American militia shoot the miners

of Tennessee and Idaho."[89]   When discussing the May Day general strike of 1906, Friedman fails to take note that "between 1906 and 1908, about 20 workers were killed and almost 700 injured in French labor disputes."[90]   Gaston Rimlinger also writes about "many instances of the use of armed force against strikers" in France.[91]   In Germany, the army intervened bloodily during the coal strike of 1889 and killed eleven miners.[92]   As the new century opened, "Prussian police officials had adopted or were seriously experimenting with the use of rubber truncheons, tear gas, armor, police dogs, and firehoses."[93] Government leaders were all the more ready for police to use revolvers and rifles if "the suspected troublemakers were perceived to be socialist or anarchist inspired."[94]   During September, 1920, Italian fascists invaded factories being occupied by 500,000 strikers and attacked them violently.[95]   As industrialists cheered, the Fascist party became a national force.

Between 1870 and 1920, the working population of the United States grew from 12,500,000 to 41,600,000. While the working class expanded from just under half the total to nearly two-thirds, the bourgeoisie—that is, the propertied group—fell from one sixth to a seventh. (See following table.)   The wealth of the entire adult population in 1870 was distributed as follows (total worth):[96]

Share held by:	%
Top 1%	37
Top 5%	70

Quintiles:	%
First	92
Second	8
Third	0
Fourth	0
Fifth	0

Table 5. CLASS DIVISIONS IN THE UNITED STATES, 1870 and 1920

	1870	Percent	1920	Percent
Working Class	5,860,000	46.9	27,015,000	64.9
Industrial Workers	2,600,000	20.8	15,370,000	37.0
Other Wage-Workers	3,000,000	24.0	7,930,000	19.0
All Wage-Workers	5,600,000	44.8	23,300,000	56.0
Clerical	260,000	2.1	3,715,000	8.9
Farmers	4,550,000	36.4	8,500,000	20.5
Bourgeoisie	2,090,000	16.7	6,085,000	14.6
Lower	n.a.	n.a.	3,759,000	9.0
Intermediate	n.a.	n.a.	2,100,000	5.1
Upper	n.a.	n.a.	226,000	0.5
TOTAL	12,500,000	100.0	41,600,000	100.0

n.a = not available

Industrial workers includes wage-workers in manufactures, mining, railroads, water transportation, municipal traction, electric power, construction, telephones and telegraphs; *other wage-workers* includes servants, hired farm laborers, etc. (but not wage-workers in government service). *Clerical* includes clerks in offices and stores, stenographers, typists, office boys and messengers, and salespeople in stores. *Farmers* includes farm laborers working on home farms. *Lower bourgeoisie* includes all non-wage-workers and non-farmers with incomes below $3,000 yearly; *intermediate bourgeoisie*, incomes of $3,000 to $10,000; *upper bourgeoisie*, incomes above $10,000.

Source: Computed from material in Bureau of the Census, *Census of Population*; Bureau of Internal Revenue, *Statistics of Income*. See Lewis Corey, *The Decline of American Capitalism* (Covici Friede, 1934), p. 560.

In the near-century between 1774 and 1870, the richest five percent of the adult population increased its overwhelming share of the national wealth while the poorest sixty percent continued to own more or less nothing of commercial value.

In an all-but-forgotten study by the Federal Trade Commission, published in 1926, the national wealth and income during 1912-1923 were analyzed. A very great amount of inequality was found. FTC staff reviewed "probate records of 43,512 estates in 24 counties of 13 States."[97] In addition, a sample study was made of 540 estates involving large fortunes during the years 1918-1923; the decedents had come from New York City (401), Philadelphia (59), and Chicago (80). Findings of the larger-scale study were as follows:[98]

Amount of Estate	Percent of Numbers of Estates	Percent of Total Value of Estates
Under $500	79.8	5.4
$500-10,000	14.9	12.7
$10,000-50,000	4.2	23.0
Over $50,000	1.1	58.9

In the smaller study, the size of the average estate was $3,850,266[99] while total holdings were $1.8 billion.[100] Among the 540 decedents, investments in stocks and bonds constituted 87.7% of the estates' property.[101]

The striking findings of the FTC inquiry led to their recognition as a landmark:

> [The data for 1912 show] more inequality than any other measurement of wealth dispersion from the entire history of the U.S. … . It appears that America had joined industrialized Europe in terms of its degree of reported wealth inequality. Whatever leveling effect the American "frontier" and more rural orientation may have imparted, they did not show up in the form of a clearly lower degree of wealth inequality. By the eve of World War I, wealth—or at least decedents' wealth—was as unequally distributed here as in Western Europe. … The American egalitarian dream had been completely lost.[102]

In the light of the revised wealth-distribution figures reported earlier for 1774 and 1870, however, the 1912 figures are not surprising. The American egalitarian dream had remained a dream

from colonial times onward.

The American working class in this period undoubtedly was the principal occupant of the lowest sixty percent on the wealth scale. How did they fare in the struggle for wages? According to Andrew Dawson, members of the working class constituted about 61 percent of the entire labor force during 1870-1910.[103] Just over an eighth (13.1 percent) of the working class were skilled workers; the remainder were semiskilled and unskilled, mostly the latter. Skilled workers earned higher wages and a number were union members; almost none of the others were, primarily because the unions were not interested in recruiting them.

The annual income of an average industrial worker's family during the first decade of the 20th century ranged from $700 to $800. A series of studies conducted in 1901-1910 reported a range of $345 to $883.[104] It should be noted that in many cases, the annual sums also included wages earned by wives and children. Average annual wages per factory employee were considerably lower. Following is a listing of such figures for two years in this period:[105]

Industry Group	1914	1919
Iron and steel	$ 682	1,449
Machinery	667	1,242
Metal and metal products	646	1,177
Lumber and allied products	516	995
Average:	$ 579	1,157

Money wages doubled from 1914 to 1919 but so did food prices and wholesale prices. Only the highest-paid workers enjoyed a significant rise in real wages. Telephone operators, almost all of whom were women, received $337 in 1912 and $476 five years later. Employees on Class I steam railways received $1,003 in 1917. Amidst conditions of rapidly rising consumer prices after the United States entered World War I, by 1918 an annual family income of some $1,600 was required to maintain "an 'average' family under healthful conditions of living."[106]

How adequate were the wages? Researchers in the field were generally agreed that a working-class family required an annual income of $800 or more to finance a minimal standard of health and

decency.[107]   Eugene Smolensky found that "from the turn of the century until the Depression [of the 1930s] the proportion of the population considered poor hovered around one-third."[108] As in the case of wealth, persons concentrated toward the lower incomes tended to be workers. Similarly, researchers concluded that a woman worker needed a minimum of $8 per week to "live decently and without detriment to her health". A federal study during 1907-1909, however, found that more than three-quarters of women workers 16 years of age and over were paid less than that amount.[109] Welfare was virtually absent from the national scene: "In 1914, total welfare spending, public and private, equaled 0.45 percent of GNP." A review of the living conditions of working-class persons highlights some areas of acute deprivation.[110]

Housing

In a report to the American Medical Association in 1874, Dr. A.N. Bell informed delegates that the previous year in New York City, city officials "discovered thousands of people actually living in holes in the ground, a dozen or more in a huddle, in holes nine or ten feet square, swarming with vermin and rotting with disease."[111] This, obviously, was worse "housing" than even ancient cave dwellers had endured. Nearly 40 years later, several physicians discussed the economics of decent housing. Southern blacks—overwhelmingly of the working class—were being housed in facilities unfitted "for human habitation". Dr. C. E. Terry of Jacksonville, Florida pointed out that "they live for the most part in ill-ventilated shacks, without provision for sewerage or proper water supply, the privy, the surface well, the rain barrel and filthy stable are evidences of our own shortsightedness and their needs."[112]

Dr. L.L. Lumsden of the U.S. Public Health Service commented: "When we begin to recommend the extension of sewerage systems or the installation of sanitary privies in every home in these [southern] cities, we realize that it is almost out of the question, in some instances, to provide a home with sewerage connections which will cost as much as the house is worth."[113] Another physician, Dr. Woods Hutchinson of New York City, called attention to financial arithmetic that was compelling: "The property owners of that section are white men who oppose the improvement of the streets and the laying of sewers and who refuse to improve their property because for a shack costing $150 they can get $10 or $12 a month rent. That is not peculiar to the Negro or to the South."[114] Dr. Terry rejoined the discussion by a declaration

that "if we condemn every house that is unfit for habitation in Jacksonville, we would condemn 33 percent of all our houses, and … 90 percent of these are occupied by Negroes."[115]

Did the hole-dwellers of New York City pay rent for their quarters? It would not be surprising if they had. Both they and the southern black workers inhabited the uninhabitable. Elements of their plight could be found throughout the ranks of low-paid workers in the rest of the country. In 1911, Lawrence Veiller, Secretary of the National Housing Association, wrote that "with two exceptions, New York and Chicago, no city in America has as yet developed a system of [housing] inspection that is worthy of the name of system. And even in these two cities only a beginning has been made."[116] That same year, in Chicago, Breckinridge and Abbott reported that out of 1,981 rooms visited by investigators in the Stockyards area, fully 53.1 percent of tenants were sleeping in rooms with less than the legal minimum of air.[117] Over ninety percent of the 1,616 apartments visited were smaller than the minimum required by law.[118] Of the lodgers who were present in over half the apartments, the investigators found that "they sleep on the floor both with and without mattresses and sleep in beds with people who are total strangers."[119]

In Philadelphia of the turn-of-the-century, up to a quarter of the population owned their own homes, exceeding that in New York, Chicago, or Boston. But the City of Brotherly Love built its slums in the backyards of the single homes, fronting on back alleys. Band-box buildings, two or three floors high, with one room per floor, were built for immigrants and blacks. These rear dwellings exhibited "paving and sewers in some cases; unspeakable toilet facilities; overcrowding. …"[120] Immigrant streets "were notorious for their decaying wooden 'bandboxes', the offal and animal excrement encrusted in their wooden sidewalks and cobblestone alleyways."[121] As with workers here and elsewhere, laboring Philadelphians could afford only to live nearby their work, obviating the need to pay for transportation. Neighborhood sweatshops solved this problem for many workers.

The rise of mass unemployment in industrialized Massachusetts produced a growing number of homeless men: "Every depression of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was accompanied … by an increase in the number of homeless men who roamed the commonwealth in search of work."[122]

Health

Lauck and Sydenstricker found that "health has been a luxury to the wage earner because it has been a purchasable thing."[123] The cost of sickness to the worker was extremely heavy since "when a man is injured [on the job], in eighty percent of the cases, his pay is discontinued."[124] Two estimates of the portion of industrial employment attributable to sickness and accidents were 11 and 30 percent.[125] In reviewing fatalities of railroad workers, Mark Aldrich uses the word "slaughter".[126] During 1889-1892, 9 per 1000 trainmen died in railroad accidents.[127] Some 25 years later, Pennsylvania's "hard coal miners experienced a fatality rate that was 4.75 times greater than that in manufacturing."[128] Not that the latter field was especially safe. As Kleinberg notes: "Carnegie's profits derived partially from pushing his men like machines and shaving costs by installing no safety devices in his mills."[129] Between 1907 and 1916, in the Carnegie South Works, it was "discovered that 25 percent of the recent immigrants employed there had been injured or killed."[130] A survey in Pittsburgh found that fewer than half the casualties owned either insurance or savings accounts. Of those earning less than $15.00 per week — primarily unskilled laborers — none had either.

While the economic cost of work accidents was overwhelming for workers, it was quite minor for railroads. Aldrich reports a study of Ohio railroads during 1873-1888:

> Each additional nonfatal injury cost about $38, while another fatality added only about $43 to costs. By contrast, in 1884, Ohio railroads killed 1,693 horses, mules, cattle, sheep, and hogs at an average cost of $79.59 each.[131]

It was less expensive for railroad workers to die than for a wandering farm animal. The experience was not peculiar to railroads: In soft-coal mining, "the fatality rate in 1910 was about *twice* as high as it had been a generation earlier."[132] Mine-owners were especially concerned only with accidents that involved large-scale destruction of mine property, such as explosions and fires. "By the twentieth century, manufacturing dangers had risen to extraordinary levels."[133] The enactment of workmen's compensation laws directed the attention of corporation managers to searches for ways to lower accident costs. Still, by 1920, only the very largest firms had undertaken general safety measures.

The United States lagged far behind European countries in

industrial safety, including railroads, coal mines, and factories. This needs to be taken into consideration when gauging comparative standards of living of workers.

Occupational health was endangered not only by work accidents but also by diseases originating in or aggravated by work processes. Before the Civil War, as we saw in Chapter 6, work-related illnesses were clearly related to numerous operations in New England textile mills. In 1870, Dr. Francis Condie reported on the health situation among Pennsylvania coal miners: "Among miners, bronchial irritation is a complaint constantly present. … 'Miner's Asthma' is a chronic bronchitis, with thickening of the mucous lining of the air passages, causing emphysema and nervous distress in breathing."[134]   He observed also that very few men over 55 years of age could be found in mining villages, a hint of deadly occupational diseases at work. Two years later, Dr. E.A. Hildreth of Wheeling, West Virginia, described the work of nailers in an iron mill who continually inhaled iron dust as they ground cutters for a nail machine. He and a colleague examined the iron dust microscopically and found it full of tiny sharp metal particles, variously shaped. "It is presumed," he wrote, that "the inhalation of such materials irritates and inflames the bronchial lining down to the air vesicles." In conclusion he called for research in the area: "The whole subject of dust factories and mills, as a cause of disease, deserves attention."[135]   It undoubtedly did, but little was given. Employers in industry successfully resisted the issue while the organized medical profession did likewise. Edward Beardsley's comment is appropriate: "Along with physicians everywhere, Southern professionals also chose to ignore mounting problems of occupational health, partly because their schools gave no training in such matters but partly, too, because they feared intruding in the domain of local economic elites."[136]

During the closing decades of the 19th and early in the 20th centuries, lead poisoning was widespread in American industry, especially in the manufacture of white lead paint. In such factories, workers' "decisions to leave [their jobs] often came at the encouragement of employers or foremen, who kept an eye out for signs of characteristic occupational ailments among their charges.[137]   In other words, employers were well acquainted with the dangers of white lead paint but took care to avoid any liability for occupational illness by separating workers who were being poisoned by their work. Scientific research into lead poisoning by Dr. Alice Hamilton soon led to her recognition as the nation's premier investigator of occupational

diseases."[138]   It was quite true that as of 1900 "the field of occupational health was still *terra icognita* to most Americans including the medical profession."[139] In 1910 and 1912, however, the First and Second Conferences on Industrial Diseases were held; at the latter, a critical bibliography of medical literature on the subject was distributed.[140]   Nevertheless, before 1914, only a single state—Massachusetts—covered occupational illnesses in workmen's compensation; there was no federal legislation on the subject. During the years 1867-1920, the Virginia City Miner's Union paid members over $450,000 in compensation for illness due to work accidents or other sickness.[141] Some 25 local unions of the Western Federation of Miners managed their own hospitals.

Unions were in the forefront of efforts to safeguard their members from occupational diseases and work accidents. Alan Derickson writes that "from its founding, the United Mine Workers of America fought to protect its membership against work-induced disease."[142] Christopher Sellers makes a similar point: "It was the workers who, in alliance with their private doctors and lawyers, goaded corporations into sponsorship of disease research."[143] State labor bureaus, created by state legislation and headed by union people at least during initial years after the Civil War were active in the area. As George Rosen states: "The workers' health was one of the problems that early attracted the attention of these bureaus."[144] Unions sometimes went on strike to compel employers to implement laws already passed by state legislatures. On the other hand, Sellers declares that "state government agencies sometimes served as stand-ins for corporate resistance."[145]

The country's medical schools did little about occupational disease and accidents. Graham-Rogers, writing in 1914, reported: "The subject of industrial hygiene is given but scant attention at all in our medical schools. … In but few of the engineering or technical schools is the subject considered at all."[146]   By the same year, however, occupational disease clinics had been opened in several medical schools.

As serious as occupational illness and accidents were for the working class, non-work sickness was even more destructive since whole families suffered. The strong tendency of American generations to experience shorter size and weaker nutritional status continued after the Civil War into the 1890s.[147] Fogel writes that in the United States the "negative effects" of technical progress, industrialization, and urbanization "probably exceeded the positive ones through the

1870s."[148]   At the same time, he points out that "it was not until well into the twentieth century that ordinary people in… America began to enjoy regularly the levels of nutrition and longevity that characterize our age."[149]   While, as Steckel and Haurin note that "the bottom of the secular decline in American heights was reached for those born in approximately the last decade of the nineteenth century," it remained true that in the U.S. "social standing affected height throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries."[150]   They meant that the working class was at a further health disadvantage. Similarly, Dora Costa, in a study of the New York Lying In Hospital's records for 1910-1930, discovered that in the period "differentials in infant mortality by social class increased."[151]   One medical historian holds: "For all practical purposes prenatal care did not exist in the first decade of the century."[152]   But it did after that, and it was in the those later years that Costa found class differences.

As late as 1919, in Gary, Indiana:

> … two-thirds of the children of black and foreign-born workers … had no milk, fruit, or eggs in their diet. Over half had no vegetables, and a third no meat. … Some 15% of these children were suffering from bone defects consequent to inadequate nutrition.[153]

Edward Greer observes that "massive poverty among the working class of Gary persisted until World War II."[154]   [155]   Again and again, the issue of poverty pervaded studies of ill health. Warren and Sydenstricker declared that "poverty is the greatest problem in public health."[156]   Julia Lathrop, director of the U.S. Children's Bureau, reported on a series of studies of infant mortality made by her organization in eight industrial cities between 1912 and 1919. Overall, mortality rates averaged from 84.6 to 165.0 per 1000 live births. Divided into two groups, however, infant death rates for fathers earning $1,250 or more were considerably lower than for fathers who earned less than $550 (22.2 to 87.6 and 67.1 to 200.9).[157] During a two-month period in 1917-1918, Dr. Louis J. Harris studied the impact of a rapidly rising cost of living on health. Somewhat over 10,000 persons in more than 2,000 families were involved. Dr. Harris found that rising prices had resulted in elimination of meat in the diet of 807 families or 37 percent of the total. Almost 300 families had eliminated milk from their children's diet.[158]   Shortly after the Civil War, during 1867-1869, 547 Philadelphians died of marasmus ("a progressive wasting of the body, occurring chiefly in young children and associated with insufficient intake or malabsorption of food").[159]

It is not known what the later record of this disease was.

Black children were under special health threats. Their infant mortality rates ranged double to triple those of white children.[160] "Negro wage-earners' families in the South were found to have the smallest food expenditures, in proportion to income, of all races."[161] Since black doctors were barred from white medical societies, they were not permitted to use hospitals in any community. The only exception was the case where black doctors agreed beforehand to have their patients treated in a hospital by white doctors. It did not matter whether the black doctor had graduated from an accredited medical school. In the absence of such an agreement, a black patient had no alternative.[162] John Ellis sums up the situation:"The double burden of segregation and discrimination based on color served to further institutionalize the causes of ill-health."[163]

The working-class districts of urban America were incubators of ill-health. Throughout the historical literature are accounts of changes for the better, followed almost always by cautionary notes that the changes did not occur in neighborhoods occupied by the poor. This was especially the case in measures for improving sanitation. With reference to Atlanta, New Orleans, and Memphis late in the 19th and early in the 20th centuries:

> The real health benefits resulting from sanitary reform accrued principally to the business sections and to the residential neighborhoods of the upper and middle classes. Regular garbage service, paving, and sewer and water mains were not to be found in poor neighborhoods where incomes and tax receipts were low. ...[164]

The situation was not basically different in Pittsburgh at the same time:

> Large water mains and indoor water pipes served the homes of the affluent, but working class dwellings had smaller water pipes in the courtyards or down the street. ... Though the first decade of the twentieth century ... these improvements in hygiene, and therefore in health, were primarily limited to the middle class.[165]

This class selectivity may have been the reason that one historian asserts that "expenditures on sewers and waterworks had a relatively small effect on the decline in urban mortality before the beginning of the twentieth century. ..."[166] In England, this was not the case.[167]

Democracy

The continued existence of democratic rights for many workers complicated the class war from above. Occasionally, state legislatures as well as Congress responded to worker pressures for social and labor legislation. The right to vote stood at the heart of these successful efforts. However, between the 1890s and 1920, workers' voting rights were attacked in a series of offensives activated by the strategists of American capitalism: "Business and corporate leaders were usually the instigators of proposals to change the rules of electoral politics."[168] Outright disfranchisement, poll taxes, complex voting registration procedures, literacy tests, and other mechanisms were specially tailored to fit working people. During these three decades, voting turnout tumbled. As Eric Foner writes, "millions of men—mostly blacks, immigrants, and other workers—were eliminated from the voting rolls. ..."[169]

In Houston it took only four years to reduce the number of registered voters from 76 to 32 percent (1900-1904).[170] Friedman examines the national picture:

> Eleven northern states followed the southern lead in using [literacy] tests to remove poorer and immigrant voters from the electorate. Ray Stannard Baker in 1910 observed that registration laws eliminated "hundreds of thousands of" voters in the northern states. ... It is revealing that many registration requirements applied to urban and industrial areas but not elsewhere. ..."[171]

In 1900, African-Americans were a majority of male industrial workers in five southern states while in the Confederacy states as a whole white male workers constituted from 11.1 to 27.2 percent. In such a setting, Halevy noted, "the disfranchisement of the Negro in ... [the former] states has reduced the strength of the industrial proletariat at the polls by from one-half to nearly two-thirds. ..."[172]

In the nation as a whole, voting turnout dropped sharply. Wiebe provides an overall picture:

> In national contests, turnouts declined from about 80 percent of the eligible voters in 1896 to under 50 percent in 1924. ... In South Carolina, where prospects of a turnout in excess of 80 percent had been realistic in the 1880s, 18 percent voted in 1900. ... In Indiana ... from approximately 92 percent of the eligible voters in 1900 to 72 percent in 1920, in New York from approximately 88 percent to 55 percent. ... Turnouts in national elections ... remained on average about 20 percentage points below 19th century norms.[173]

Friedman contrasts well-to-do areas with those of poorer folk:

> Turnout declined little after 1896 in affluent areas but "cumbersome, expressive, and inconvenient" registration systems reduced voting by over 50 percent in working-class districts. In some urban areas, the working-class electorate virtually disappeared. By 1912 … poll taxes and restrictive registration rules reduced the share of adult male workers eligible to vote in Lawrence, Massachusetts to only 15 percent.[174]

Never before in such a short time had American workers or any other class lost so large a portion of their political presence.[175]

At the same time, as Nell Painter pointed out, "disfranchisement also increased the political power of well-off whites vis-a-vis the poor, black and white."[176]   As fateful as the loss of voting power undoubtedly was, crucial decisions regarding workers were increasingly made by private governments constituted by corporations. More and more, the only votes that mattered were those of corporate boards of directors.

SUMMARY

Early in American history, groups were deliberately set against one another to weaken both. Employers regularly encouraged racial and ethnic conflict among workers, both in the South and North. This was not a matter of individual employer prejudice but of capitalist class strategy.

Slavery was based on the right of owners-employers of enslaved workers to enforce labor discipline by violence. In the generation after the Civil War, employers demanded and received governmental permission and encouragement to use deadly force to put down labor protests. Slavery thus served as a model of organization in labor relations throughout the country. Violence against white and black workers was used at will by American employers. A quasi-military alliance between large corporations and governments repressed efforts to form labor unions and conduct strikes. Factual accounts of such episodes can be described by such terms as ordnance, headquarters, armories, military courts, military arrests, casualties, military attacks, vigilante actions, espionage, command functions, and infantry.

In the South, as slavery was abolished and replaced by a capitalist form of sharecropping, employer terror continued to be used against black workers by various violent means. Thus, the advent of capital-

ism both north and south was accompanied by rising violence against workers.

The advance of capitalism also meant a further concentration of the distribution of wealth in the United States. By 1912-1913, wealth dispersion showed greater inequality than ever before and "was as unequally distributed here as in Western Europe." From 1900 to the 1930s, a third of the population was in poverty. Thousands in New York City were living in houses "unfit for habitation." Workplace accidents and illnesses occurred at high rates in coal mining, railroads, and steel. Very few unskilled workers had insurance. In a New York City hospital during 1910-1930, "differentials in infant mortality by social class increased." Black children were under special health threats. The working-class districts of urban America were incubators of ill-health.

Early in the 20th Century, outright disfranchisement, poll taxes, complex voting registration procedures, literacy tests, and other mechanisms were tailored to fit working people especially. They thus became less able to exert political power just at a time when they sorely needed protection from new economic and social problems.

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