

1921-1929

Overview

The 1920s were a time of social and political change in the United States. For the first time, more Americans lived in urban areas than on farms. It was a time of dramatic economic growth. During the "Roaring Twenties," the nation's total wealth more than doubled. More and more consumer goods became available.

Labor Related Issues of the Period

- Union membership fell during this time of prosperity, and so did the number of strikes.
- The "Red Scare" takes its toll on unions, as hysteria over suspected Communist influences lead to raids of union offices, deportations, and general repression of the labor movement.
- Corporations increase their use of injunctions to quell labor unrest during this period and the courts become less supportive of union activities.

Labor Related Events of the Period

1921 The Supreme Court held that nothing in the Clayton Act legalized secondary boycotts or protected unions against injunctions brought against them for conspiracy in restraint of trade.

The Presidential Commission on Unemployment placed the main responsibility for unemployment relief upon local communities.

In *Truax v. Corrigan*, the Supreme Court ruled that an Arizona law forbidding injunctions in labor disputes and permitting picketing was unconstitutional under the 14 amendment.

1922 The United Mine Workers was held not responsible for local strike action, and strike action was held not a conspiracy to restrain trade within the Sherman Anti-Trust Act. (*Coronado Coal Co. v. UMMA*)

In southern Illinois, coal strikers kill twenty guards and strikebreakers in the "Herrin Massacre".

1924 AFL President Samuel Gompers dies. William Green becomes the AFL president. An amendment to the Constitution is proposed restricting child labor but not enough states passed the measure.

1926 The Railway Labor Act required employers to bargain collectively and not discriminate against employees who wanted to join a union. The act also provided for mediation and voluntary arbitration in labor disputes.

1927 The Longshoremen's and Harbor Worker's Compensation Act was passed.

The Journeymen Stone Cutters' action in trying to prevent purchase of nonunion cut stone was held to be an illegal restraint of interstate trade. (Bedford Cut Stone Co. v. Journeymen Stone Cutters' Association, et al.)

- 1929 The Hayes-Cooper Act regulating the shipment of prison labor goods in interstate commerce was approved.
The stock market crash in October began the longest economic period in American history.

Important Concepts

boycotts, injunctions, Red Scare, urbanization