

- AMH 2010 & 2020: AMERICAN HISTORY I
- DR. ANDREW GOTTLIEB

## 5- THE LABOR MOVEMENT



Miami Dade  
College

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West Campus



1. America's Second Industrial Revolution led to worsening conditions for many industrial workers. They labored in unpleasant or dangerous conditions for long hours at monotonous and repetitive jobs, and received low wages. Even many children were forced to work. This is called child labor.

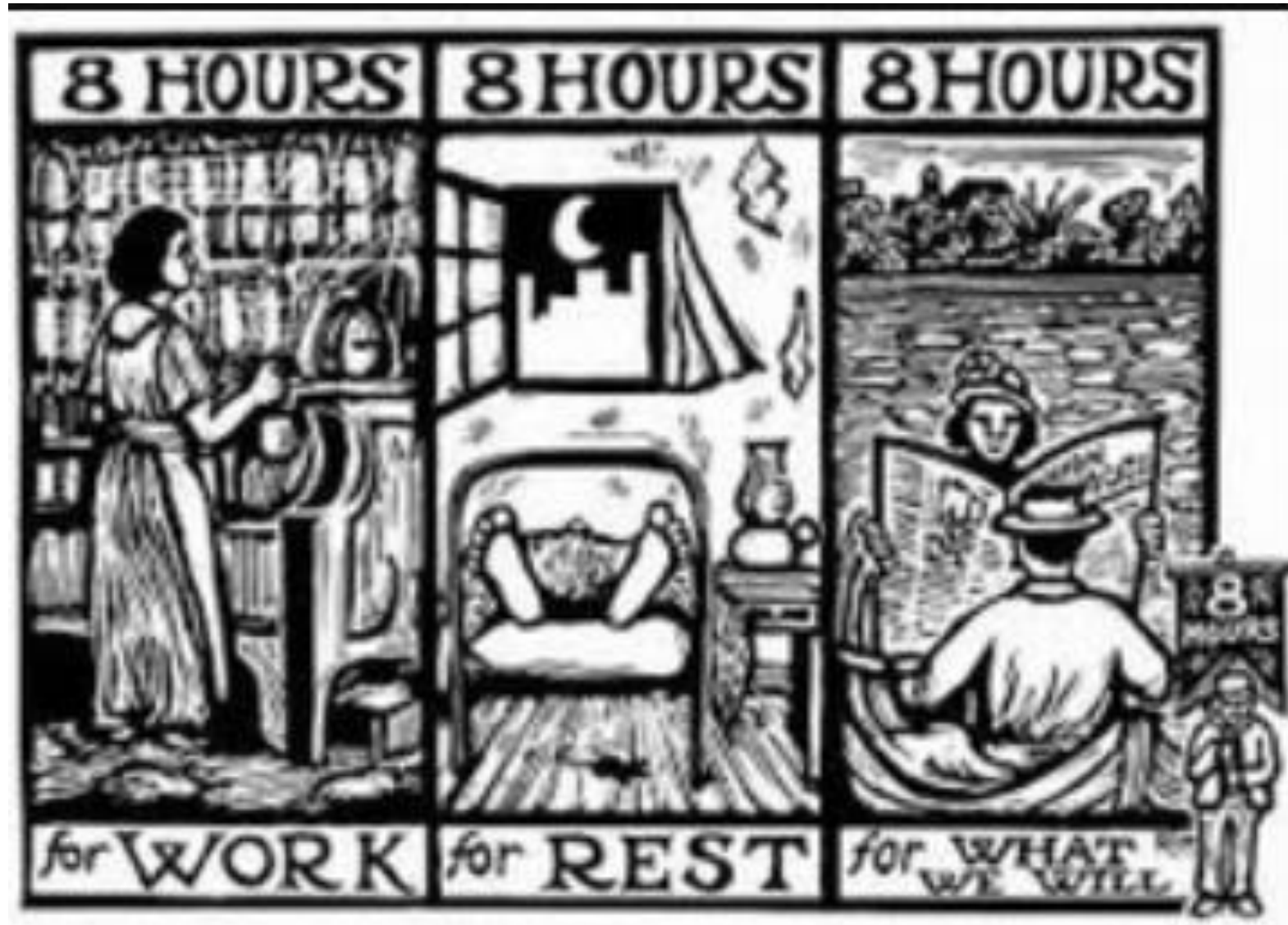


Group of Breaker boys. Smallest is Sam Belloma, Pine Street. Location: Pittston, Pennsylvania.



A typical spinner, Mamie. Lancaster Cotton Mills. Lancaster, S.C., December 1908

2. Individual workers had no bargaining power with large corporations. Some workers began to organize into groups known as labor unions to improve their conditions. Through these organizations, they could negotiate wages and working conditions collectively with their employer. They could also go on strike.



3. Two early national unions were the Knights of Labor and the American Federation of Labor. The Knights of Labor invited skilled and unskilled workers to become members, including women and African Americans. However, after a series of unsuccessful strikes, it collapsed. The American Federation of Labor was a federation of unions of skilled workers with more limited objectives: raising wages and improving working conditions.



**Knights of Labor**

- Terrance Powderly
- Any kind of labor accepted—open shop
- Weakness—unskilled workers lack leverage
- Preferred to only use strikes as last resort
- Equal pay for men and women

**BOTH**

- Unions
- Want to improve conditions for workers →
- First labor organizations
- Better pay
- Better working conditions
- Shorter work week

**American Federation of Labor**

- Samuel Gompers
- Only skilled workers—craft union
- Used collective bargaining and negotiations
- Made strikes a legitimate weapon for unions

4. Management had many advantages over labor unions in the late nineteenth century. Government leaders and the public generally sympathized with management and were suspicious of labor unions. Management could fire or lockout workers, blacklist union leaders, and obtain government support to put down strikes.



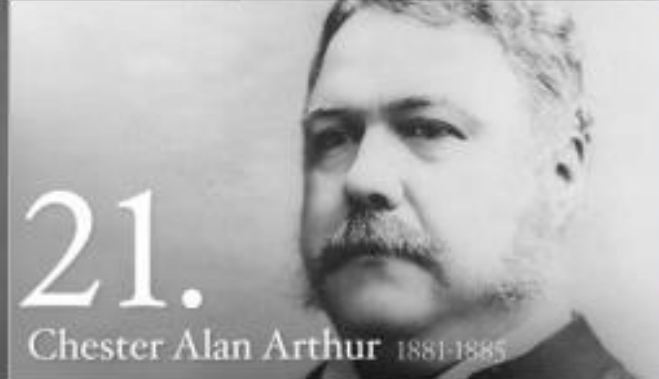
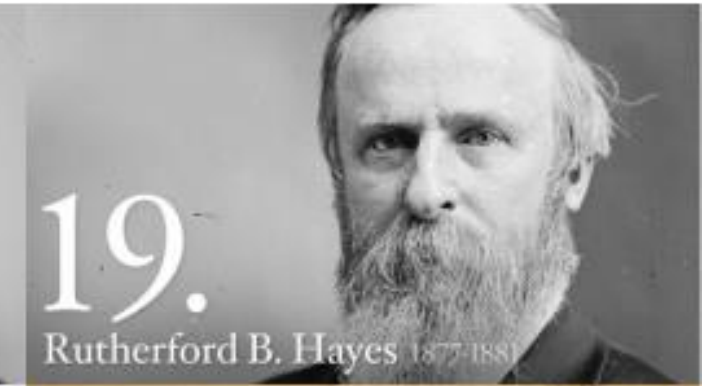
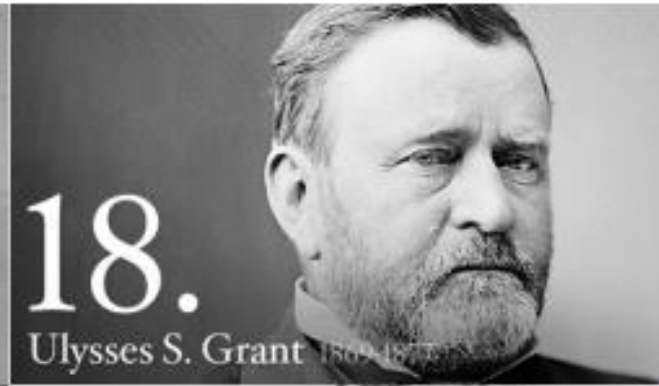
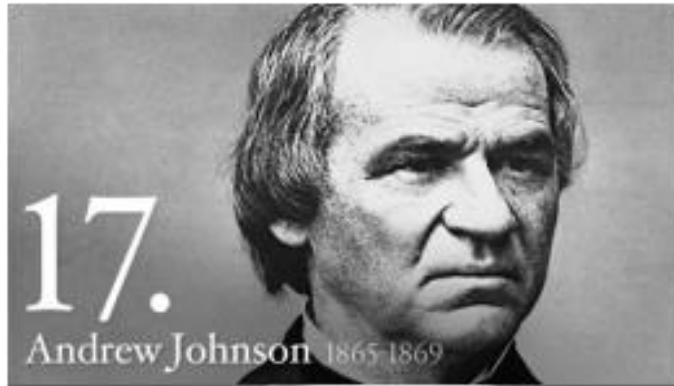
THE HAYMARKET RIOT. THE EXPLOSION AND THE CONFLICT.

The Haymarket Riot of May 1886 occurred in Chicago during a labor demonstration agitating for an eight-hour workday. Someone threw a bomb into a group of police. Gunfire erupted, and several people were killed and injured. Eight anarchists and socialists were convicted, and the Illinois Supreme Court upheld the convictions in *Spies v. Illinois* based on their past deeds and prior speeches and writings that urged workers to rebel and descriptions of bomb-making.

This violence caused many Americans to Sympathize with management over labor.

(1889 illustration of riot, public domain)

6. Ideologies are sets of related beliefs about people, society, and government. Several new economic and philosophical ideologies emerged in response to the Industrial Revolution. Capitalists continued to support laissez-faire policies, in which there was very little interference by the government in the economy. We often refer to the presidents of this era as "forgettable presidents," because of their *laissez-faire*, or "hands off the economy" approach to governing.



Instead, we often teach that the true American leaders of the time were the *Titans of Industry*, who led our country to become the most industrious and wealthy in the world.



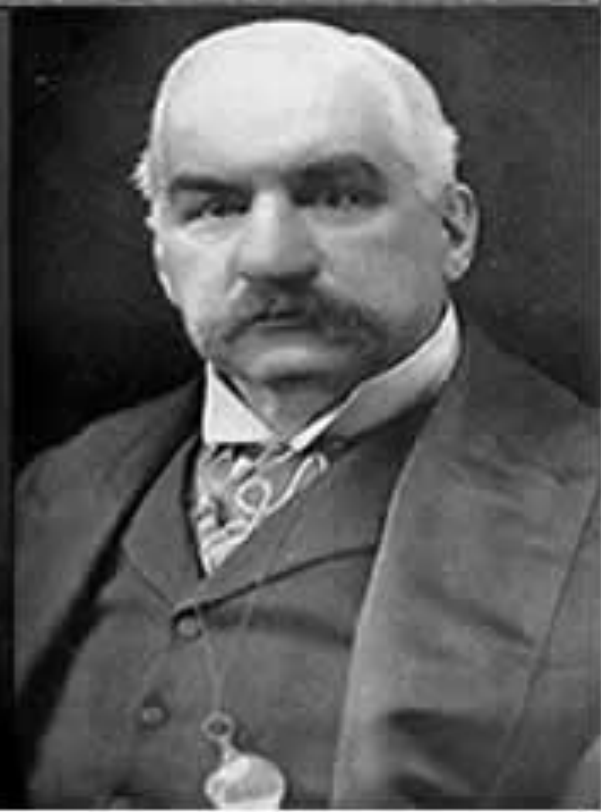
John D. Rockefeller



Cornelius Vanderbilt



Andrew Carnegie



J Pierpont Morgan

Followers of Social Darwinism thought the wealthy at the top of society were simply superior to others.

# SOCIAL DARWINISM

Social Darwinism suggests that societal advancement is driven by "survival of the fittest." It proposes that the most socially adept or powerful individuals or groups tend to succeed.

## OVERVIEW

Social Darwinism applies Charles Darwin's Theory of natural selection to human societies. Walther (2023) proposes that "...for the good of the species, nature should be allowed to weed out the weak. In other words: the struggle for resources should be maximized as a way of getting rid of the weaker members of society, which allows the naturally strong to thrive" (p. 2).

## EXAMPLE

- **Capitalist competition:** The good businesses succeed and the bad ones fail.
- **Imperialism:** The strong and superior nations conquer the weak ones.
- **Eugenics:** The belief that a society should filter-out weak genes and encourage the reproduction of strong genes.



Communists predicted a violent proletarian revolution would overthrow the wealthy ruling class and create a more just and egalitarian society in which property was held in common. Communists favored having a planned economy, in which the government made major economic decisions. Socialists also desired social change but sought to achieve this through peaceful means. Anarchists opposed organized government.

**Let's discuss this more, particularly in terms of the concept of *American Exceptionalism*.  
I will explain the concept further...**

## The Turner (Frontier) Thesis

Frederick Jackson Turner "The Significance of the Frontier in American History,"  
(1893)

Major points:

- ♦ Turner conceived of the West not as a place but a process - a series of Wests in a receding frontier line - the point where savagery meets civilization.
- ♦ For Turner, American history is largely about people leaving settled areas for the frontier, and their struggle to find new ways to live in new lands. This struggle explains American development, according to Turner.
- ♦ The frontier produces American democracy and individualism- the frontier requires Americans to develop new institutions and "Free land makes free men."
- ♦ Finally, Turner claimed that in 1890 the frontier was closed, ending the first stage of American development. This created uncertainty, for if the frontier no longer existed, how would American democratic development be maintained?

