

Unions Continued....



Re-Teach Wednesday

Standard:

US. 11 Explain the rise of the labor movement, union tactics (e.g., strikes), the role of leaders (e.g., Eugene Debs and Samuel Gompers), the unjust use of prison labor (e.g., Coal Creek labor saga), and the responses of management and government.

Prison Labor Timeline

1871: Tennessee begins leasing convicts for manual labor

1896: Tennessee stops leasing convicts

1897: States begin transferring convicts to prison-run chain gangs, a practice where prisoners are chained together and forced to perform menial or physically exhausting work

1901: Construction of the Mississippi State Penitentiary (Parchman Farm) begins. It was intended for male black convicts and in its first year of operations, the state of Mississippi earned \$185,000 (equivalent to \$4.9 million in 2015) from Parchman Farm's operations and the prisoners' labor



Prison Labor:

- Penal Labor is legal in the US due to the 13th Amendment



Coal Creek Labor Saga

- 1891: when coal mine owners in the Coal Creek watershed began to remove and replace their company-employed, private coal miners with convict laborers leased out by the Tennessee state prison system.
- These former wage-earning Coal Creek coal miners repeatedly attacked and burned state prison stockades and mine properties, all while releasing hundreds of the state convict laborers from their bondage to the mine companies.
- Part of a greater labor struggle across Tennessee that was launched against the state government's controversial convict-leasing system
- Ended with the arrests of hundreds of former company coal miners in 1892

Responses to Unions

- While employers found it necessary to negotiate with unions, they fundamentally opposed unions, claiming unions interfered with property rights
- Many owners claimed unions were un-American
- Employers used several tactics to stop workers from unionizing.
 - They required workers to sign **contracts** promising not to join or form unions
 - hired detectives to identify union leaders
 - placed union members on a “**Blacklist**”
 - used **lockouts** (locking out union workers from their jobs) to break existing unions.
- The Government opposed Unions as well
- Labor unions were associated in the public mind with criminal activity