

# New Deal & Workers

# Craft Unions

- American Federation of Labor
- Skilled workers
- Organized by craft
- “Aristocracy of labor”
- William Green, President, AFL

# Industrial Unions

- All workers
- Organized by industry
- Attempts in US
  - Knights of Labor (1880)
  - American Railway Union
  - Socialist Trade and Labor Alliance
  - Industrial Workers of the World

# US Industry in 1920s

- Consolidations & mergers
- Mass production
  - 1919-1929 capital/worker = plus 36%
  - Productivity increases
    - Iron & steel - 55%
    - Autos - 178%
    - Rubber tires - 292%
- Industrial wages unchanged
- Number of workers - minus 2.9%

# Opposition to Unions

- “American Plan” (open shop)
  - National Association of Manufacturers
- Unions = communists
- Failed steel strike 1919
- Railroad strike 1922
  - Federal injunction
- Union membership
  - Increases in craft unions
  - Decreases in industrial unions

# Government Opposition

- Industrial Workers of the World
  - Government raids - 1917
  - State laws re “criminal syndicalism”
- Red Scare & Palmer Raids 1919-1920
- Espionage & Sedition Acts -1917-1918
- Immigration laws - 1917,1918,1920

# Agitation under Hoover

- Unemployed Councils - 1930
  - Organized by Communist Party
- Hunger marches on Washington
- Bonus Army
- East coast textile strike - 1931
- Coal strikes - 1930-31

# FDR & Workers

- Paternalist
  - Work for workers
  - Workers incapable of helping themselves
- Urban workers: low priority
- Expert reformers/social workers
- Frances Perkins



# Frances Perkins

- Born Boston 1880
- Mt Holyoke, Columbia
- Hull House
- Advocate for workers
- NY Industrial  
Commissioner 1929-  
1932

QuickTime™ and a  
decompressor  
are needed to see this picture.

# NIRA Labor Provisions

- AFL & Garment Unions supportive
  - Favor high wage companies
  - Spur planning, stabilization & rationalization
- NAM
  - Assured that Section 7a would allow open shop

# NIRA: Labor Impact

- Section 7a authorized collective bargaining
  - UMW (John L. Lewis) took advantage
  - Few other successes
  - Companies created “company unions”
  - Key decision: Company unions in auto industry
- Section 7c allowed setting minimum wages & hours
  - 40 hours/week -- usual
- Labor boards

# FDR Administration Views

- Favored union participation
- Did not support union shop
  - Allow company unions or multiple unions
- Keep existing agreements
- Weak Labor Board
- Sided with management in key disputes

# Minneapolis Trucking Strike

- Summer 1934
- Participants:
  - Citizens Alliance
  - International Brotherhood of Teamsters
  - Farmer-Labor Party
  - Governor Floyd Olson

# Minneapolis Strike

- Violent clashes
- Olson's intervention
  - Essential goods only
- Broad support from other unions
  - Threat of general strike

# San Francisco General Strike

- Summer 1934
- International Longshoreman's Association
- Joint Marine Strike Committee
- Harry Bridges

# San Francisco Strike

- ILA breakaway
- July 5, 1934 - clash between police and strikers
- General strike -- July 16-19
- Central Labor Council
- Government arbitration
- ILA ultimately won its demands



# 1934 Textile Strike

- Unions demands
  - Recognize union
  - End “stretch out”
    - Wages, hours, workloads
- State intervention -- Rhode Island & South
- FDR committee
- UTW
  - Accepted recommendations
  - Achieved none of its goals

# Union Growth 1933-35

- One million new union members
  - United Mineworkers
  - United Textile Workers
  - International Ladies Garment Workers
  - Amalgamated Clothing Workers

# Causes of Union Activity

- Economic conditions
- FDR: no repression
- General inclination to reform
- Socialist & Communist organizers
- Business opposition to Section 7a

# Robert F. Wagner Sr.

- Born Germany 1877
- CCNY, NY Law School
- NY Legislature
- US Senator 1926-1949

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# National Labor Relations Act

- “Wagner Act”
- Introduced 1934; blocked by FDR
- Re-introduced 1935; opposed by FDR
- Passed Senate, 63-12
- FDR declared “must” legislation
- Passed House on voice vote
- Signed July 5, 1935

# National Labor Relations Act

- National Labor Relations Board
- Outlawed specified unfair labor practices
- Encouraged collective bargaining
- Did not cover
  - Railroad workers
  - Farm workers
  - Domestic workers
  - Government employees

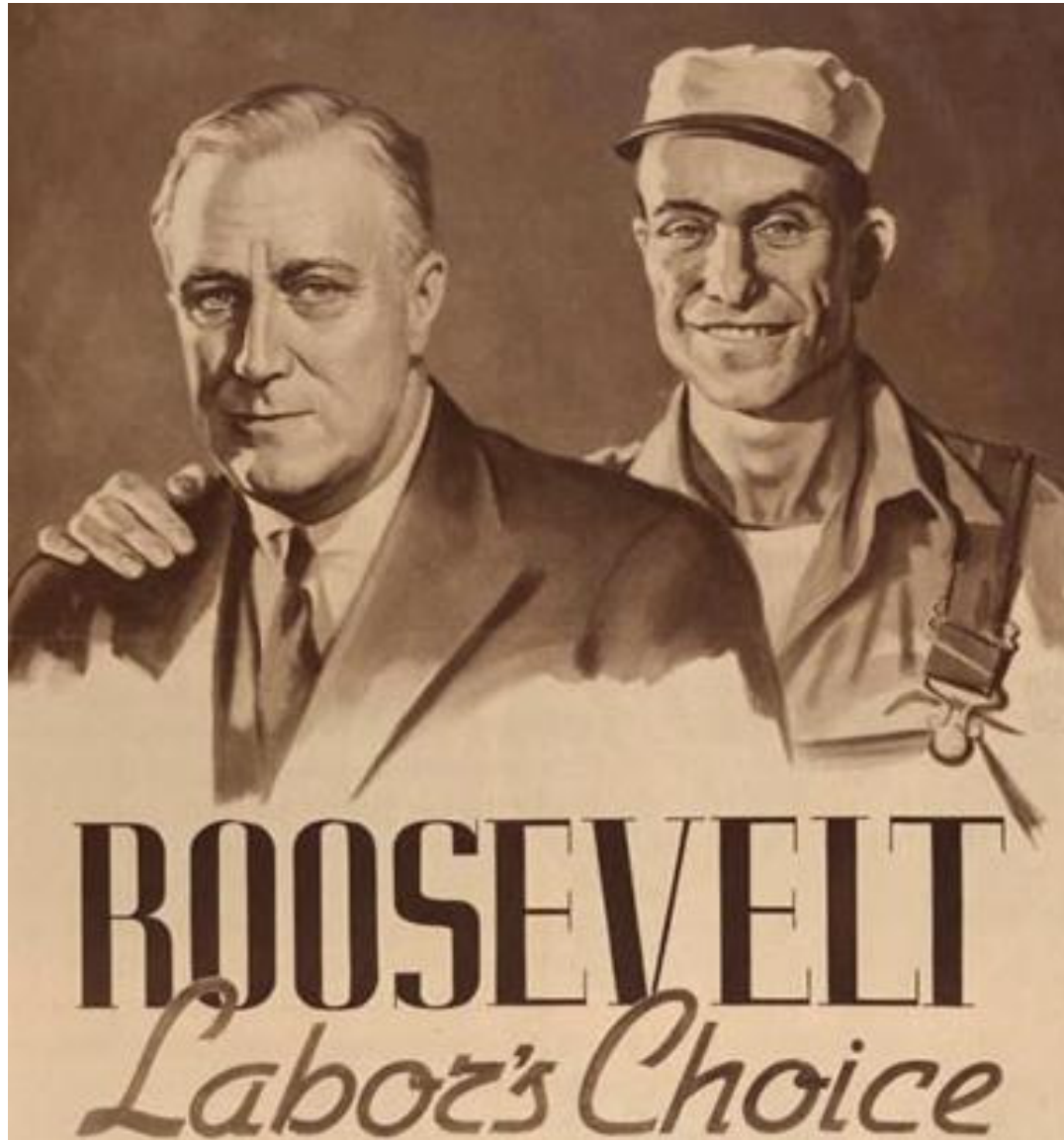
# Communist Party & Unions

- CPUSA
  - >30,000 members at one time
  - Circa 130,000 total during 1930s
- Independent unions pre-1935
- Within AFL & CIO post-1935

# Labor & 1936 Election

- Unions contributed \$700,000 to FDR's campaign
- 2/3 from United Mine Workers (UMW)
- Formed Labor's Non-Partisan League
  - Campaigned for FDR & Dems





# John L. Lewis



- Born Iowa 1880
- Miner; organizer
- Pres. UMW, 1920-60
- Autocrat
- Republican
- Supported Hoover in 1932

# Committee for Industrial Organization

- Interest among auto & other workers
- 1935 AFL Convention
  - Lewis proposes industrial unions
  - Loses, but draws attention
- Dissident unions formed the CIO
- Suspended from AFL in 1936
- Congress of Industrial Organizations

# CIO Leaders

- Charles Howard (Typographical Union)
- Philip Murray (UMW)
- Sidney Hillman, (Clothing Workers)
- David Dubinsky (Ladies Garment Workers)
- Max Zaritsky (Hatters)

# Akron Rubber Strike

- January 1936
- Local reaction to longer hours
- Sit down strikes at Goodyear, Goodrich & Firestone
- Goodyear refused settlement
- Goodyear strike lasted until March
- Concessions, but unrest until 1941

# Auto Strikes

- November 1935
- Local strikes began in Atlanta
- Spread nationwide
- December 1936: sitdown strike in Flint
- January 11, 1937: clash with police
- Gov. Murphy
  - Sent troops to protect workers
  - Forced settlement

# Auto Strike: Aftermath

- UAW membership:
  - 88,000 in January 1937
  - 400,000 in October 1937
- March 1937
  - 170 sit down strikes
  - 167,210 workers
- US Steel agreement with Steel Workers Organizing Committee

# Resistance to Unions

- Ford, Goodyear, Republic Steel
- Final settlements in 1941
- Eve of WWII



# 1937 Memorial Day Massacre



*Memorial Day Massacre, Republic Steel  
in Chicago*

- Republic's South Chicago mill
- Clash between strikers & police
- 10 strikers killed; 58 hurt

# Battle of the Overpass



- May 1937
- River Rouge plant
- Ford security guards attack Walter Reuther & UAW leaders

# FDR on Republic Steel Strike

“A plague on both your houses”

# Lewis' Response

“It ill behooves one who has supped at labor’s table to curse with equal fervor and fine impartiality both labor and its adversaries when they become locked in deadly embrace.”

# Senate Civil Liberties Committee

- LaFollette - chairman
- Documented anti-union activities
  - Industrial espionage
  - Stockpiling weapons
  - Strike breakers
  - Private police
  - Propaganda

# Reaction to Union Growth

- House Committee on Un-American Activities
  - Martin Dies - Chairman
  - “Rid unions of leftists”
- Foreign Agent Registration Act -1938
- 1939 Relief Act
- Hatch Act - 1939
- Espionage Act - 1940

# End of Sit Down Strikes

- 1939 Supreme Court decision
- NLRB v Fansteel Metallurgical
  - Ok to prosecute for trespass
  - Ok to dismiss workers
  - Regardless of unfair labor practices

# Wages & Hours Legislation

- FDR support
- Southern & union opposition
- Claude Pepper & 1938 Fl. Primary
- Supreme Court shift



# Fair Labor Standards Act

- Outlawed child labor
- \$0.25/hour & 44 hours/week
- After 2 years: \$0.40/hour & 40 hours/week
- Covered about 25% of workers
  - Domestic & farm workers excluded
  - Other exclusions

# FLSA: Immediate Impact

- Raised pay for 12 million workers

# Labor Unions & New Deal

- FDR administration
  - Acquiesced to union growth
  - Brought unions within statutory framework
- Unions produced
  - Higher wages & better working conditions
  - Bitter business & rural opposition
  - Congressional opposition