



VOLUME


13

L—Lyre  
pages 1-344



# Compton's Encyclopedia

## and Fact-Index



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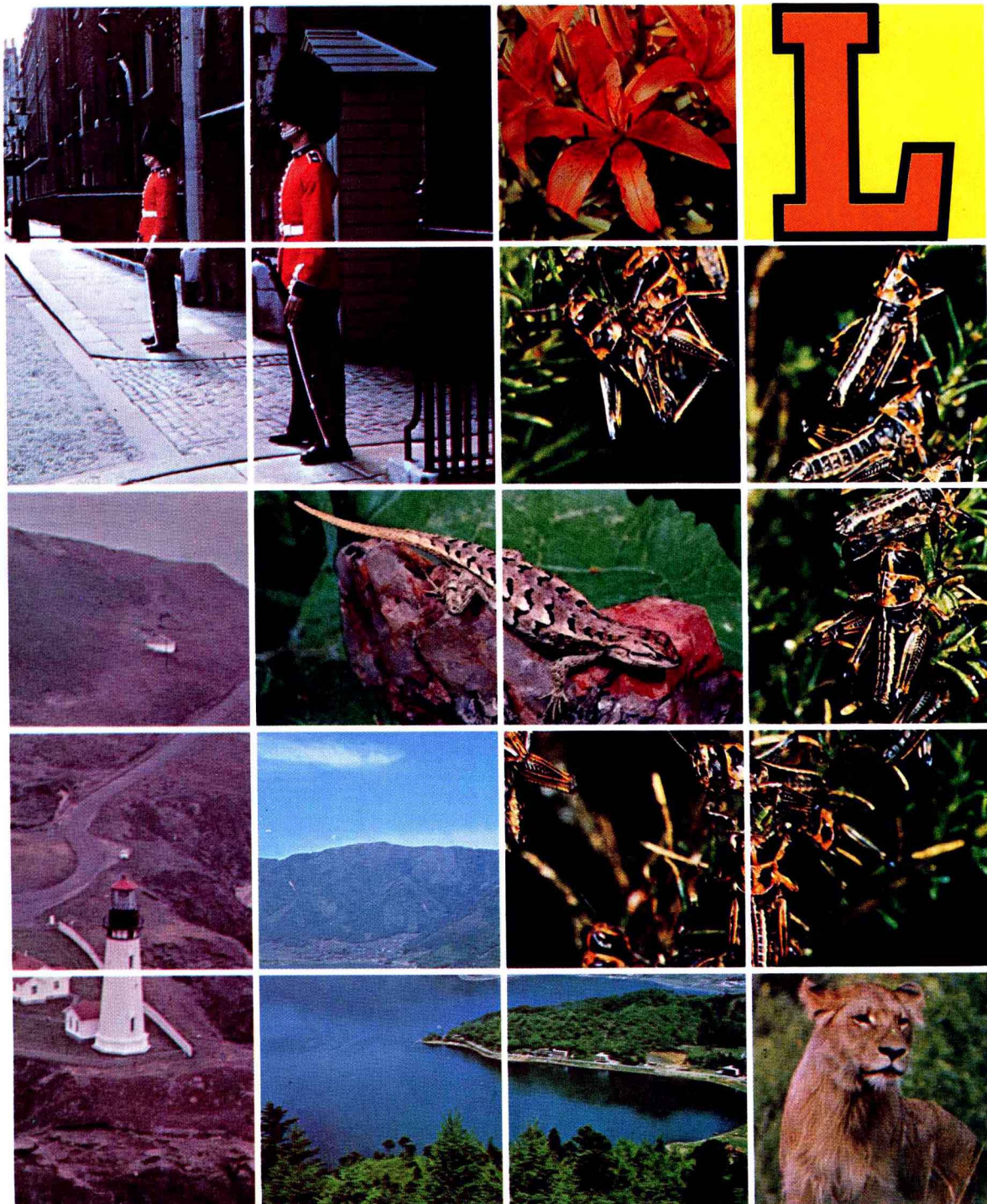


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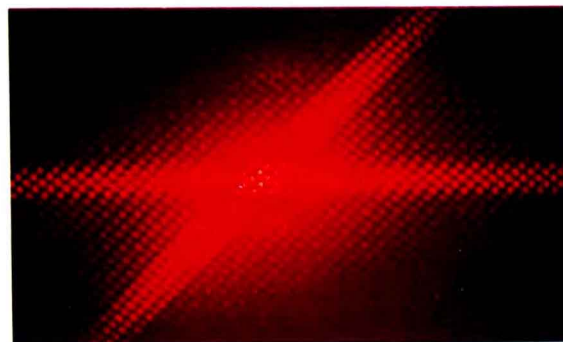
PHOTOS: Row 1: (left) Katherine Young; (right) Sven Samelius. Row 2: (right) Anthony Bannister — Natural History Photographic Agency. Row 3: (far left) United Air Lines Mainliner; (center) John H. Gerard. Row 4: (center left) Art Resource. Row 5: (far right) EB Inc.



# EXPLORING VOLUME 13

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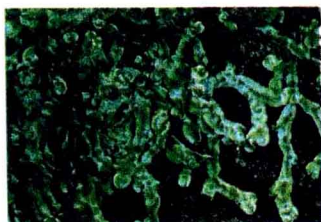


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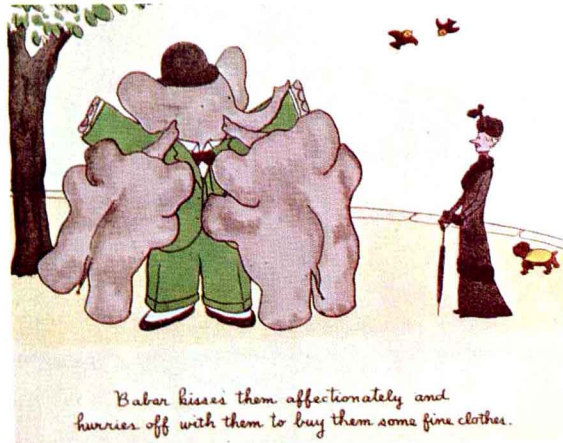
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Jean de Brunhoff, 'The Story of Babar', © 1933, 1960, Random House Inc.

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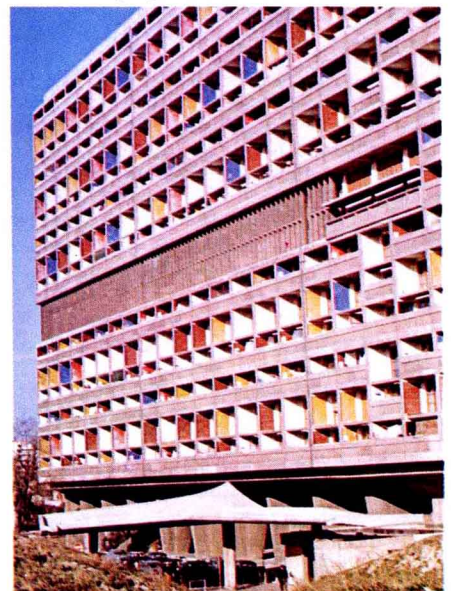
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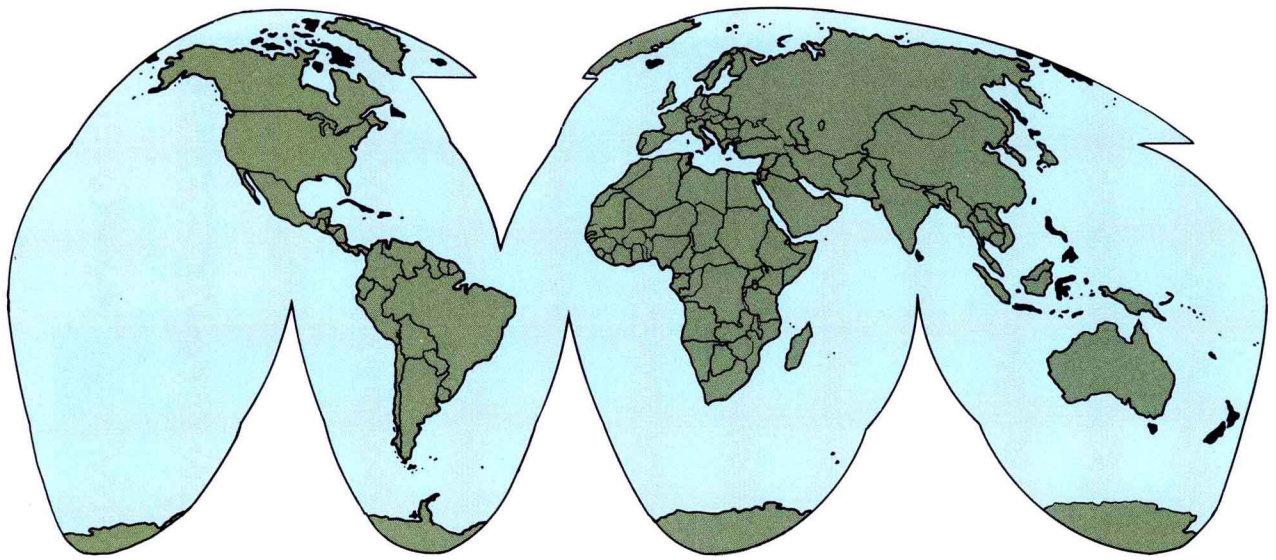
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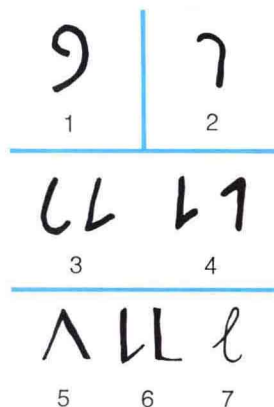
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# The letter L

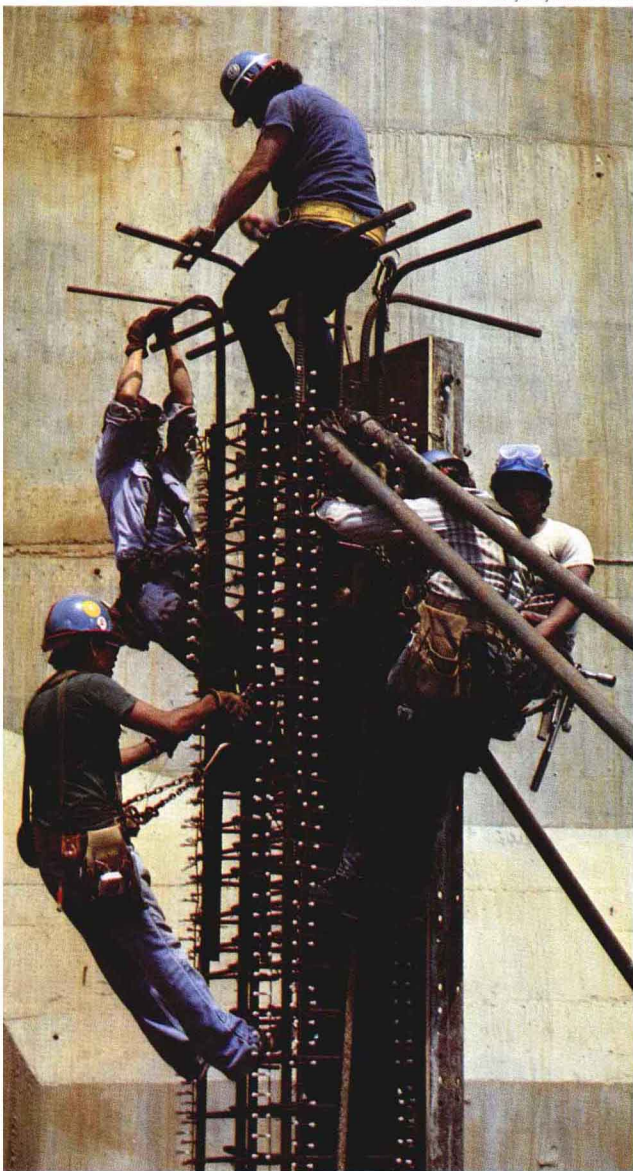
probably started as a picture sign of an oxgoad, as in a very early Semitic writing used about 1500 B.C. on the Sinai Peninsula (1). A similar sign (2), denoting a peasant's crook, is found in earlier Egyptian hieroglyphic writing. About 1000 B.C., in Byblos and other Phoenician and Canaanite centers, the sign was given a linear form (3), the source of all later forms. In the Semitic languages the sign was called *lamedh*, meaning "oxgoad."

The Greeks first gave the sign some unbalanced forms (4) and renamed it *lambda*. Later they formed their sign symmetrically (5). The Romans adopted the earlier Greek forms (6). From Latin the capital letter came unchanged into English.

In late Roman times the small handwritten "l" was developed from the capital by rounding the lines. Later a form with an open loop in the vertical stroke was developed (7).







Construction workers build a nuclear power plant in southern Texas near Bay City.

**LABOR.** In the most general sense labor means work. Young children know that when they grow up they will get a job, earn money, and use that money to live. This appears to be a basic fact of life, as basic as growing up itself. Actually, however, this form of earning a living, exchanging hours of work for money, has become common only within the last 200 years. Such paid employment is called wage labor, a narrower meaning of the word labor.

### Work in Pre-Industrial Society

Primitive peoples live in small groups. Everyone does some of the work needed to survive: hunting,

food gathering, making clothes and tools, cooking, caring for babies, and so on. Not everyone does the same work. Young adult males do different things than do boys and old men. In most primitive societies women have different tasks from those of men. Precisely what work is “men’s work” and “women’s work” differs from one group to another, though there are some tasks that almost universally fall to one sex; for instance, the feeding of young children. Individuals have little choice—they do the work that is traditional for their age and sex.

Another ancient means of organizing work, or of deciding who will do which jobs, is slavery. Slavery first appeared about 4500 BC in Egypt, Mesopotamia, and Anatolia. Slaves were fundamental to the economies of two great ancient societies—Greece and Rome. At the height of the Roman Empire in the second century AD, between 30 and 35 percent of the people in Italy were slaves. After that time slavery became less common, but it had a major resurgence between 1550 and 1888 when black Africans were forced by Europeans to work as slaves in North and South America.

Slaves worked at all kinds of tasks, but the majority did heavy or menial labor such as farming, building roads, rowing ships, doing housework, and working in mines. Slaves who did not work as they were told were punished.

At the end of the Roman Empire, another way of organizing work, serfdom, became dominant. Serfdom lasted in Western Europe for more than 1,000 years and survived even longer in Eastern Europe. Serfs were farm workers who were obliged to work a certain number of days per week for the lord of the manor on which they lived. In exchange for their work serfs were granted the right to farm small pieces of land for themselves.

Serfs had rights that slaves lacked. They could not be sold, so they did not live in fear of being separated from their families. They also did not have to obey every whim of their lord; they had certain required tasks, but they could not be made to do just anything. On the other hand, serfs were not free. They could not leave the manor on which they were born, and they could not change their employment. Like slaves, they did not receive money wages for their labor.

In the towns of medieval Europe a different system prevailed. Artisans who produced cloth, shoes, armor, and similar items were organized into guilds. Each guild set standards regarding the quality of the product and the conditions of work in the trade, such as the hours of work, vacations, and so on. Guilds had three kinds of members—apprentices, journeymen, and masters. Apprentices lived with a master and worked without pay for several years to learn the trade. After a fixed period apprentices became journeymen, skilled workers who were paid a wage in exchange for a certain number of hours of work. Eventually many journeymen could expect to become masters, or employers. In this way they differed from most modern wage earners. (See also Guilds.)



By 1500 much had changed in Western Europe. In England in particular, many serfs had gained their freedom and had become independent. They paid rent for their land but were free to move to other places and to take any job they could find. These peasants grew food to feed their families and sold the excess to others who needed it.

### The Industrial Age

Between 1750 and 1830 the Industrial Revolution transformed life in England. Many factories were built—at first in the textile industry and later in other industries. Wage labor, in which the factories hired employees and paid them for the number of hours worked, became more common.

Unlike slaves or serfs, wage laborers can choose their jobs and change their place of employment—they are mobile. Such mobility is desirable in a growing, changing, industrial economy. An employer establishing a new business benefits because he can get workers simply by offering wages somewhat above those paid elsewhere, and the workers benefit because they get the higher wages.

Theoretically, wage labor also permits more personal freedom than earlier systems of organizing work. Workers who are unhappy with their jobs can quit; serfs and slaves could not. Wage laborers, however, cannot be sure of having work. They must sell their labor to survive, and at times employers have no need to hire them. Unemployment poses a major social problem in societies based on wage labor.

Wage labor, along with division of labor, has brought about large increases in productivity, or the amount each worker can produce. Division of labor means that each task is divided into many small chores, and a separate worker is assigned to each chore. This increases productivity because workers can do one small thing rapidly, and time is not lost switching from one task to another. Division of labor also increases the possibility of using a machine to perform a task, and the use of machines greatly increases productivity.

Life in early factory towns was appalling. Sewage ran down open ditches at the sides of muddy roads, transmitting disease. Some families slept eight to a windowless room in which the ceiling was so low that an adult could not stand. In 1840 life expectancy for a laborer in industrial Liverpool was only 15 years; this contrasted sharply with 38 years for a worker in the nonindustrial district of Rutland.

Many factories operated from sunrise to sundown. This meant that in the summer workers, including young children, worked 14 hours per day. During the Industrial Revolution children and women made up 77 percent of the textile industry work force because they could be paid far less than adult men.

Eventually public outcry and pressure from unions led to the passage of laws that corrected the worst abuses of the factory system. Standards of living began to rise in England after 1840. Legislation passed in the decade after 1840 included a law regulating

employment in the mines, the Factory Act, and the first Public Health Act. Just as importantly, the higher output per worker brought about by industrialization eventually raised living standards. As cloth became cheaper, for example, workers could afford to buy more clothes.

Industrialization occurred later in the United States than in England. Working conditions were somewhat better in the United States, though child labor, recurring unemployment, low wages, and long hours also accompanied industrialization.

The United States passed federal legislation in the 1930s to set minimum wages, to establish maximum hours of work beyond which workers must be paid overtime rates, to regulate the employment of children, and to provide income for unemployed and retired workers.

With increasing industrialization, types of jobs changed dramatically. The number of jobs for office workers, managers, and professional workers began to grow rapidly in the late 1800s. This was because large corporations that required professional managers and complicated record-keeping replaced small businesses. Such occupations are still increasing.

Employment also grew rapidly in service industries—those that produce intangibles like insurance, banking services, health care, and education—and in those that sell the goods produced elsewhere. The number of agricultural workers, on the other hand, declined dramatically as the 20th century progressed. Manufacturing employment was fairly stable at around 25 percent of the total, but that has dipped in recent years. Manufacturing employment is expected to decline with increasing use of robots and automated production systems. Robots can be reprogrammed to do different things, which increases the number of operations that can be mechanized.

The proportion of women in the labor force, those working outside the home or who are looking for work, has increased rapidly. In the early 1980s more than 60 percent of all women aged 18 to 54 were in the labor force. Since 1964 discrimination against female and minority employees has been against federal law in the United States. Both groups, however, continue to earn considerably less on the average than do white males with the same education and experience. Another United States law regarding work is the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970, which regulates unsafe working conditions. (See also *Labor and Industrial Law*; *Labor Movements*.)

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**LABOR AND INDUSTRIAL LAW.** All of the laws regulating the conditions under which employees work for employers are called labor and industrial law. Examples of the types of issues regulated by labor and industrial law are: hours of labor, child labor, minimum wage, workers' compensation, unemployment insurance, worker safety and health, disability compensation, the rights of collective bargaining by labor unions, and the social security system (*see* Social Security).

While governments have seen fit to legislate in these and other areas, many of the laws are no more than general guidelines. The specifics are frequently left to arrangements between employers and employees within a given company or industry. For instance, government may legislate a 40-hour workweek, but this does not prevent a company from spreading the 40 hours over six days. Nor does it hinder an industry from offering overtime employment, providing wages meet agreed-upon standards.

### History

Work has been regulated by governments for many centuries. From the ancient world until the 19th century, slave systems were strictly regulated by both laws and custom. In some countries, such as India, certain castes, or classes, of people were not permitted to engage in some kinds of work. In Europe beginning in the Middle Ages, guilds of tradesmen and apprentices were strictly regulated by society (*see* Apprenticeship; Guilds).

Modern labor law has its origins in the Industrial Revolution that began in England and Europe in the 18th century and spread to the United States and other nations later. There is a crucial difference between the older laws on work and modern labor codes: the earlier work laws were passed by government for the benefit of the state, of employers, and of owners of slaves; the modern codes, originating mostly in the 19th century, have been passed largely for the benefit of workers and all of society.

The reason for this difference is that, as the Industrial Revolution was gaining momentum, there arose in Western Europe and North America a variety of political and economic theories—including anarchism, communism, liberalism, and socialism. These theories, though they differ on many matters, all sprang from the desire for greater political and economic democracy for the masses of people. At the same time, a philosophical movement called the Enlightenment propagated many new ideas concerning the rights of mankind in relation to the state. (The American Declaration of Independence is one of the best statements of Enlightenment principles in this regard.) The American and French revolutions, with their declarations of rights, did much to spread the notion that individuals have certain rights that governments must honor. (*See also* Anarchism; Bill of Rights; Communism; Liberalism; Socialism.)

In this new, more democratic political setting, it became increasingly obvious to many people that the

combinations of government and those with great wealth would not look out for the interests of workers unless pressured to do so. Hence, there emerged the first attempts to organize workers into labor and trade unions to exert just such pressure on politicians and employers. For a century or more, these attempts at unionization were regarded by governments as criminal conspiracies (*see* Labor Movement). Gradually, aided by the efforts of liberal politicians and the enlightened self-interest of employers, unions began to gain recognition. Their demands for better working conditions, shorter hours, and social welfare began to be met.

The first major labor law, the Health and Morals of Apprentices Act, was passed by Great Britain in 1802. Other European nations passed similar legislation in the next few decades. The first legal limitation on the working hours of adults was passed in Switzerland in 1848. Germany pioneered in the field of health insurance, workers' compensation, and old-age pensions during the 1880s, when Otto von Bismarck was chancellor. Compulsory arbitration in labor disputes was introduced in New Zealand in the 1890s. Limitations were put on the working hours of children in India in 1881, but similar legislation for adults was not passed until 20 years later.

Most of these laws were designed to meet specific situations in particular localities. The notion of generalized labor laws to cover virtually all the aspects of the employer-employee situation did not emerge until after World War I. In the United States there was virtually no labor legislation of any consequence, except for limitations on hours of work, until the worst of the Great Depression was over in the 1930s. The first comprehensive labor code was promulgated in France between 1910 and 1927. The Mexican Constitution of 1917 and the German Weimar constitution of 1919 both contained extensive formulations about the conditions of labor. Departments or ministries of labor were established to administer labor legislation in Canada in 1900, in France in 1906, in the United States in 1913, in the United Kingdom in 1916, and in Germany in 1918. Such departments were established in most industrialized nations thereafter and in the newly independent countries in Africa and Asia in the 1940s and 1950s.

### The Essentials of Labor Law

Apart from the fairly complex matter of government social insurance programs (*see* Social Security), labor and industrial law deals with the following categories: employment, employee-employer relationships, wages and salaries, working conditions, occupational health and safety regulations, and labor-management relations. Because the variety of workers in an advanced society is so great, there are also numerous laws pertaining to specific occupations, such as mine workers, agricultural and migrant laborers, transportation workers, and government employees. Certain categories of personnel, such as managers and part-time workers, are frequently not



covered by labor statutes except in the most general way. The same is true for armed forces personnel.

**Employment.** On Jan. 11, 1944, President Franklin D. Roosevelt, in his annual message to Congress, stated what has come to be called an "economic bill of rights." He urged, among other things, that all people be guaranteed "the right to a useful and remunerative job in the industries or shops or farms or mines of the nation." This speech symbolized a shift in public policy that had been taking place since the onset of the Great Depression both in the United States and in the rest of the industrialized world. In the earliest stages of the Industrial Revolution, the concern of employers had been to find enough workers. Later the problem became finding solutions to cases of massive unemployment during economic panics and depressions. The new approach has expressed itself in the efforts of government and the business sector, working together, to create job opportunities, forecast labor needs, set up worker recruitment centers, and provide vocational and apprenticeship training. Taken together, these combined efforts are called a full-employment policy.

**Employee-employer relations.** This general-sounding term has its basis in the older master-servant contract that existed before the Industrial Revolution. Today it includes such issues as hiring policy, promotions, transfers, and termination of employment. Fair-employment-practice laws that bar discrimination in hiring because of race, sex, or religion are examples of modern legislation in this area.

**Wages, salaries, and other remuneration.** This area of labor law covers all the aspects of how workers are rewarded for their labor. Included are minimum wage laws, fringe benefits, cost-of-living increases, and laws protecting workers from forced wage deductions. Many of these matters are decided in collective bargaining between unions and companies. The laws provide general guidelines within which such collective bargaining takes place.

In modern highly industrialized nations, the issue of fringe benefits has grown in importance to rival the basic matter of salaries. In the late 20th century, workers may have paid vacations, pension plans, life and health insurance, paid personal days off from work, and reimbursement for job-related schooling. With the greater number of women in the work force, some companies have started providing day-care centers for children.

**Conditions of work.** This aspect of labor law originated in laws to limit the hours of work, eliminate child labor, and protect women in the work force. In today's industrial societies the scope of such laws has broadened considerably and shifted its emphasis. There is now much concern with vocational training, career guidance, and job placement, as economies shift from industrial bases to sophisticated technology or service-related enterprises.

The former emphasis on protective legislation for women has become outmoded. Limitations on kinds of jobs and hours of work for women have come to be

regarded as discriminatory. More recent laws focus on equal pay for equal work, equal employment opportunities, and adequate maternity protection.

Working conditions have also been improved by legal provisions allowing for at least one day off per week. This principle has been amplified by legislation granting annual vacations and holidays with pay.

**Health and safety regulations.** This vital area of labor law is one of the most recent to develop. It began with prescribing elementary safety rules for work in mines and for other extremely hazardous jobs. It has since spread to cover a great range of industrial processes and other occupations. Statutes are concerned not only with accident prevention and building safety but with workers who are exposed to radioactive materials, poisons, lead, asbestos, and chemicals with potentially harmful effects. In the United States, these laws are enforced by the federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration. Many states have similar enforcement agencies.

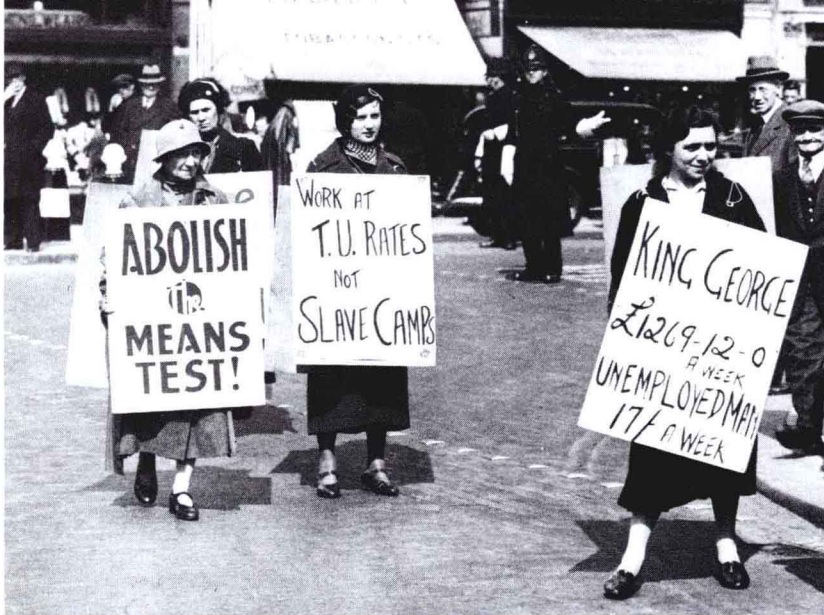
**Labor-management relations.** Some of the earliest labor laws were those granting legal status to labor unions. The scope of these laws has also broadened considerably to include guarantees of collective bargaining between companies and unions, worker participation in management, work rules, and the prevention and settlement of labor disputes—particularly when they result in strikes or lockouts. There is, in the United States, a considerable body of law, as well as many judicial decisions, in this area of labor law. The two major labor laws are the National Labor Relations Act of 1935 (the Wagner Act) and the Labor Management Relations Act of 1947 (the Taft-Hartley Act).

### The International Labor Organization (ILO)

Founded in 1919 as an adjunct to the League of Nations, the International Labor Organization today works as a specialized agency in concert with the United Nations. The purpose of the ILO is to formulate international standards for the betterment of working and living conditions. These standards are submitted to member nations for ratification, and, once the standards have been adopted, they are considered to be binding upon those nations that ratify them. The ILO also publishes labor statistics and does research on labor and management relations, unemployment and underemployment, working conditions, technological change, economic development, and international economic competition.

Since World War II and the breakup of the old colonial empires, the membership of the ILO has become predominantly the developing countries of what is called the Third World. Hence the emphasis of the ILO has shifted to problems of human rights, technological assistance, and economic development. In the early 1980s the ILO had a membership of 145 nations. Member states are represented at the ILO's annual International Labor Conference by government representatives and nominees from businesses and labor organizations.





Women in London carry sandwich-board signs in 1935 protesting wage cuts outside the House of Commons.

EB Inc.

**LABOR MOVEMENTS.** The term labor movement is often applied to any organization or association of wage earners who join together to advance their common interests. It more broadly applies, however, to any association of workers by geographical area, trade or industry, or any other factor. While labor unions have been the almost exclusive center of the modern labor movement in the United States, in Western Europe, and in many other countries, the term labor movement has come to embrace labor-oriented political parties as well as labor unions, usually combined in a loose alliance. (*See also* Labor.)

### Beginnings of Trade Unions

There are records of fragmentary instances of collective labor action such as strikes as far back as the ancient world, and medieval workers undertook some protective collective labor activities. But a labor movement in the sense of an organized and continuous effort by wage earners to improve their standard of living is a relatively recent event in human history. Only when workers, in the words of labor historians Sidney and Beatrice Webb, "passed into the condition of lifelong wage-earners, possessing neither the instruments of production nor the commodity in the finished state," would substantial, permanent associations of employees emerge.

Such economic conditions emerged with the growth and triumph of market civilization and the Industrial Revolution. It was primarily in the 18th and 19th centuries in England and, beginning a bit later, in the United States that lasting trade unions were established.

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### First Unions in the United States

Contrary to popular opinion, it was not among the employees of the first factories of the Industrial Revolution that such durable associations of wage earners arose. It was rather among such skilled craft workers as printers, woodworkers, shoemakers, and metalworkers. The skilled journeymen—trained craft workers who worked under the supervision of a master with hopes of becoming masters themselves—felt the first loss as they passed into a permanent wage-earning status instead of independence. Such journeymen found themselves increasingly at the mercy of the growing power of merchant capitalists who invaded local community markets and threatened the living standards of craft workers by offering products produced elsewhere at lower cost.

**City craft unions.** These unions of skilled craft workers were confined to particular cities such as Philadelphia, Boston, New York City, Pittsburgh, Baltimore, and Providence. It was only later, when markets grew even more, that permanent links were established and national unions of printers, metalworkers, and the like were established. These early unions sought to limit the length of the work day and to establish uniform wage scales for their members.

The 1830s were a period of rapid growth for these early American unions, and by the middle of that decade combinations of unions in a number of cities were joining together to form central, city-wide union bodies. Early efforts to establish a national organization were generally unsuccessful.

**Decline.** The great depression of 1837 struck down much of this early movement. Cuts in wages and campaigns against unions by employers, assisted by the courts, undermined what had promised to become a significant economic and political force.

Throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, the ups and downs of the business cycle have influenced labor



movements in the United States. The expansion of economic activity—bringing with it growth in the demand for labor—creates conditions favorable to union organization and to demands of wage earners for improved living standards. Correspondingly, significant economic decline weakens the position of workers and labor unions and often leads to a greater emphasis on government solutions to labor's problems. (*See also Business Cycle.*)

**National unions emerge.** A new tide of industrial prosperity in the late 1840s and early 1850s helped revive the labor movement. The great expansion of United States' markets then and in the period of the Civil War created a new economic environment for unionism. To deal successfully with employers, many unionists found they had to "match" this new national market with national unions. The National Typographical Union, for example, was established in 1850, soon followed by separate national unions of moulders, machinists and blacksmiths, stonecutters, and hat finishers. During the Civil War additional national unions were established, including those of carpenters, bricklayers, and cigar makers.

Alongside national unions there continued to be many local unions whose operations were confined to a single city. By the end of the Civil War, virtually every major city had a city-wide assembly representing unions from all crafts and trades.

**The NLU.** It was on the basis of these local assemblies and some of the national unions that the National Labor Union (NLU) was established in 1866. This organization was primarily interested in broad social reform and political objectives. It was dedicated to the promotion of consumer-producer cooperation and to the elimination of the wage system itself. It also supported restriction of immigration, limitation of public lands to actual settlers, establishment of a Department of Labor in the federal government, and an eight-hour work day.

Black workers assumed growing importance after emancipation in the Civil War. The NLU made a conciliatory gesture to black workers and suggested that they form their own labor unions to cooperate with white labor. Most NLU efforts to establish cooperation failed. The organization also became enmeshed in campaigns for political and money reform and other issues that were not among labor unions' immediate concerns. The NLU expired in 1872. The great depression of 1873 dealt organized labor another blow, and within a few years many of the national labor unions were swept away.

**Knights of Labor.** After the depression several national unions were gradually reconstructed, and a more general organization, the Noble Order of the Knights of Labor, came into existence. Founded in Philadelphia in 1869 as a secret organization, the Knights combined both skilled and unskilled workers behind a plan for broad reform. This included the eight-hour work day, abolition of child labor, public ownership of utilities and railways, and support of corporations for production and distribution of

goods. The Knights gradually expanded from Philadelphia into a national organization and grew rapidly in the late 1870s and early '80s. Although the Knights sought to combine both unskilled and skilled workers, their efforts at political and social reform were viewed with skepticism by the national unions of skilled craft workers who were more interested in practical, day-to-day economic objectives.

Having entered the national field, the Knights won a series of victories that climaxed with a successful strike in 1885 against the Wabash Railroad, which was controlled by the financier Jay Gould. The efforts of the Knights to combine unionism and radical social reform began to meet increasing resistance. Moreover, the rising tide of immigration into the country made efforts to organize skilled and unskilled workers more difficult.

**The AFL.** The return of prosperity strengthened the national unions of skilled workers. In 1881 they established the Federation of Organized Trades and Labor Unions of the United States and Canada, which in 1886 became the American Federation of Labor (AFL). Although the AFL included political demands in its platform, it was largely controlled by the national unions of skilled workers and was devoted to practical union objectives. A basic principle was the safeguarding of its affiliates' individual autonomies and jurisdictions.

The unions of the AFL placed great emphasis on written collective agreements, including the closed shop, in which only union members are permitted to work. The AFL unions also insisted that members pay relatively high dues, and many of them established insurance and strike benefits. They came to be characterized by job consciousness as opposed to class consciousness. While the AFL grew slowly, it wrested the leadership of American labor from the Knights of Labor by the 1890s.

**The IWW.** The AFL repelled the challenge of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), which attempted to unionize workers of major industries into one big industrial union for the revolutionary purpose of overthrowing capitalism and replacing it with workers' self-management. The IWW scorned the written collective agreement as giving in to capitalism, and it fixed members' dues and initiation fees at low levels to avoid creating a bureaucratic structure. Although the IWW gained some strength and led several spectacular strikes before and just after World War I, its radical program and tactics did not attract a permanent following among American workers, and it dwindled by the 1920s.

### Western Europe

In the decades in which the AFL took form, European labor on the Continent was establishing significantly different labor movements. Largely as a result of feudal traditions and institutions, European workers lacked the basic political and social freedoms—voting rights, equality before the law, and the right to move from job to job. In addition, many European



## LABOR MOVEMENTS

workers and their children did not have the right to free public education.

**Labor political parties.** When European labor formed its organizations in the closing decades of the 19th century, it also supported labor, or socialist, political parties to bring about social and political emancipation. In almost every European country, there was a virtually united labor movement that combined unions with a socialist political party.

Because of the European labor movement, workers gained the right to vote, free public education was established, and full citizenship rights were granted before World War I. These successes reinforced the loyalty of European workers to their unions and socialist parties. Legislative action to improve wages, hours, and working conditions was readily employed. Marxism became less important as the guiding philosophy as workers became more integrated into their own societies. (See also Labor and Industrial Law.)

### United States After World War I

Under the leadership of the AFL, American unionism remained largely confined to skilled craft workers, though unions organized along industrial lines in coal mining, breweries, and clothing and paper manufacturing were affiliated with the AFL. Unsuccessful efforts were made by the AFL shortly after World War I to organize workers in several mass production industries, especially in steel and meat packing. Strong opposition from employers, often aided by the government, caused union membership to decline from its immediate postwar peak of 5 million to 3 million by the end of the 1920s. Employers used such tactics as the yellow-dog contract in which job seekers were not hired unless they pledged not to join unions. Employers also used labor spies to report union activities, and employees sympathetic to unions were often fired. Some companies established their own employer-controlled unions to forestall outside union organizing. It was common for employers to seek court injunctions to halt strikes on the grounds that they were a threat to property.

**The Great Depression and the New Deal.** The Great Depression, which struck at the end of 1929, further weakened unions. But the same depression unleashed powerful changes that helped to give birth to a great upsurge of unionism. Traditional social and

economic ideas about the inviolable rights of employers and their economic property came under serious reconsideration. Congress, under the leadership of President Franklin D. Roosevelt, enacted many far-reaching economic and social reforms as part of the New Deal. Notable among these reforms were sweeping changes in the laws regulating labor unions.

**Emergence of a national labor policy.** Prior to the 1930s the United States lacked a comprehensive labor policy. In the first half of the 19th century, employers frequently resorted to the courts—under common law proceedings—to halt union actions, including strikes. Often the courts held unions to be conspiracies in restraint of trade and restrained them from any effective action. Although the conspiracy doctrine was overturned by the courts by the middle of the century, employers used such laws as the Sherman Anti-Trust Act to persuade the courts to halt union activities. On occasion they even compelled union officials to pay damages to employers. In some labor disputes state governors, and occasionally the federal government, used the national guard to halt strikes. Toward the end of the 19th century, employers' most effective tactic to halt union action was to seek an injunction; usually the judge did not even hear the union's side of the case.

Public opinion began to turn more favorable to labor unions, and in 1932 the Norris-La Guardia Act was passed. It severely limited use of court injunctions in labor disputes, and it outlawed the yellow-dog contract. Finally in 1935 the National Labor Relations Act was passed, as part of the New Deal legislation, clearly establishing workers' rights to form unions without interference from employers.

**The CIO.** A wave of union growth occurred as unions took advantage of the changed climate of opinion as well as the new legislation. At the center of this wave of organization stood the newly formed Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), led by John L. Lewis (see Lewis, John L.).

The AFL had largely ignored mass production workers in the 1920s. Lewis and other labor leaders proposed great new organizing drives to build industrial unions that would embrace all employees—skilled and unskilled—in the steel, auto, rubber, and other major industries. When his proposal was rejected by the traditional craft unions in control of the

### UNION GROWTH IN SEVEN COUNTRIES

Country	1948		1970		1985	
	Union Membership*	Percent of Wage Force†	Union Membership	Percent of Wage Force	Union Membership	Percent of Wage Force
Australia	1,456	54.5	2,315	50.5	3,154	51.2
Canada	—	—	2,550	35.9	3,493	30.5
Japan	—	—	11,605	35.4	12,418	28.9
Sweden	1,549	66.5	3,110	80.4	3,762	96.3
United Kingdom	9,363	45.2	11,187	48.5	10,716	43.3
United States	14,319	29.7	21,248	27.2	16,996	15.7
West Germany	5,076	33.5	8,098	37.0	9,251	37.0

\*Union membership in 000s. †Percent refers to union membership as a percentage of the wage and salary force in each country. Sources: R. Bean, ed., *International Labour Statistics* (Routledge, 1989), George Bain and Robert Price, *Profiles of Union Growth* (Basil Blackwell, 1980), and further data supplied by correspondence from the authors.