

SECTION 3

Ten Lessons: The Modern Union Movement

LESSON 1 -THE EMERGENCE OF MODERN INDUSTRIAL AMERICA (1890-1920)

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In a social and economic sense, modern America emerged between the years of 1890 and 1920, often labeled the Progressive Era. By the first decade of the twentieth century, Americans had witnessed a rapid advance in industrialization, urbanization, and modernization that transformed the national economy, produced unprecedented material prosperity, and created great fortunes and massive corporate enterprises. Side by side with this rapid economic expansion, a significant gap in the distribution of wealth developed. Moreover, the people of the United States confronted a set of social and economic problems that would come to test the nation's commitment to creating a just society.

Thoughtful social critics were acutely aware of several socioeconomic realities as the nineteenth century drew to a close. First, most were conscious of the social disorganization resulting from the deep economic depression of the 1890s. Fresh memories of labor militancy, demonstrations by the unemployed, and violent labor-capital confrontations drove reformers to seek new institutions and policies to ameliorate social tensions and economic disparities. In addition, advocates of social and economic justice were united in their belief that the long-honored economic philosophies and political assumptions that had guided American policy makers in the past were no longer adequate. The traditional nostrums of free competition and laissez-faire economics seemed hopelessly outdated in the age of modern industrial capitalism. The pace of corporate consolidation quickened and price inflation accelerated. Critics linked the new economic environment to the unregulated growth of business. Finally, these developments coincided with a new consciousness of the stark inequities in income distribution, appalling working conditions, and a wide range of other social problems associated with urbanization and the rise of the factory system.

Progressive reformers at municipal, state, and national levels moved to confront intractable social and economic problems. Modern liberals and radicals understood that a prosperous and contented society could not exist in the absence of social and economic justice. Progressives searched for a way to maintain the material gains brought by industrialization while exerting some social control over the powerful entities that had combined with workers to create those benefits. These reformers worked to humanize the workplace, protect citizens and consumers, nurture the family, and foster democracy while continuing their efforts to support economic opportunity.

Essential to the achievement of these goals was the active engagement of workers and their organizations. The American Federation of Labor, Industrial Workers of the World, the Women's Trade Union League, and the National Consumers League all concentrated their efforts to advance worker and consumer interests. Sometimes overlooked by historians of this era is the support that was provided to middle class reformers by working class people and their organizations.

Although the Progressive movement was one of the most productive reform movements in American history, it is important that students understand its limitations. As radicals were quick to point out, the Progressive reformers' commitment to the preservation of democratic capitalism meant that they frequently failed to attack the roots of the social evils associated with industrialism. Moreover, the Progressives' hostility toward radical labor movements and their lack of attention to minority problems sometimes resulted in failure to build the social and political coalitions essential to the achievement of meaningful reforms. In some states, such as Wisconsin, cross-class collaboration did lead to important political and social advances. Whatever its limits, the Progressive movement is historically significant because of its sweeping agenda and abiding faith in the perfectibility of humankind.

LINKS TO STANDARDS

S.S. A.12.11, B.12.2, B.12.8, B.12.9, D.8.4, D.12.4

OBJECTIVE

To help students learn about the impact of industrialization on the workplace and the work process as well as on the wider society, including social relationships and economic disparities.

THEMES

Division of labor, specialization, alienation
Distribution of wealth
Physical impact of industrial labor
Class conflict

DISCUSSION ISSUES

1. How did the work process change as a result of rapid industrialization? What was the impact of those changes on workers?
2. How did workers respond to the altered work environment?

LESSON 2-RAISING PUBLIC CONSCIOUSNESS: MOBILIZING THE MEDIA

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

As the growth of industry increased the demand for workers, more and more children were drawn into the labor force. The demand for workers was so great that by 1910, two million children between the ages of 10 and 15 had entered the paid labor force and made up 18.4 percent of the total workforce.

In response to this trend, the National Child Labor Committee (NCLC) was formed in 1904 to oppose the employment of children in mines, mills, and factories. Focusing their attention on the mining, glassmaking, canning, and textiles industries, these reformers promoted state and federal legislation to prohibit child labor.

In 1908, Wisconsin photographer Lewis Hine of Oshkosh was hired by the NCLC to document the conditions under which children worked. His photographs, which captured the pathos of childhood lost, were instrumental in creating public support for efforts to control the social evil of unregulated child labor.

However, Hine's work and the efforts of the NCLC were not an instant success. Some states, including Wisconsin in 1911, adopted effective controls over the exploitation of children in the workplace. It was not until 1916, however, that the Wilson Administration succeeded in promoting passage of the Keating-Owen Bill, which established a minimum age of 14 for workers in manufacturing and 16 in mining. Although it was eventually declared unconstitutional, this bill provided evidence of the persuasive power of the visual image, as well as the significance of the photographer as social critic.

Along with the photographic image, motion pictures, serious literature, and magazine journalism were among the modern media of Progressive America. Upton Sinclair's book *The Jungle* and the ground breaking muckraking film by D. W. Griffith, *A Corner in Wheat*, both of which raised important social issues for Americans of the Progressive era, are excellent primary sources. Sinclair's work is perhaps the most well-known example of its kind because of its direct link with the battle for consumer protection laws that resulted in the enactment of the Pure Food and Drug Act and Meat Inspection Act of 1906.

Less publicized but equally provocative is *A Corner in Wheat*, which, like many short films of the early movie era, focuses on important social issues, including inequities in the distribution of wealth and the power of corporate enterprise and finance capital.

These resources expose students to the influence of media in the discussion of social issues. In each case, social critics succeeded in broadening the audience for social criticism, and played a role in the complex process by which social issues are dealt with in the political arena.

LINKS TO STANDARDS

S.S. B.12.2, B.12.7, B.12.8

OBJECTIVES

To help students interpret the important social and economic issues confronting American citizens in 1900 and to demonstrate how the media of the Progressive era were instrumental in advancing awareness of labor concerns and in the achievement of social reforms.

THEMES

Ethnic, cultural, and class conflict Identification of social and labor reform issues Media influence on the public
 Attitudes and political action
 Process of "becoming American"

DISCUSSION ISSUES

1. What does *The Jungle* emphasize as the social results of industrialization? What was Sinclair's solution to these problems?
2. Sinclair has been quoted as saying, "I aimed at the nation's heart but hit it in the stomach." What do you think he meant by this remark? What does this observation reveal about the national political consensus of the Progressive era?
3. What is the relationship between *The Jungle* (1906) and the enactment of consumer protection legislation (1906)?
4. Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes once defined a photograph as an illusion with the "appearance of reality that cheats the senses with its seeming truth." What do you think he meant? Gather photographs from this time period. What social and economic meanings can be drawn from them? Did the camera merely record the truth?
5. Why do the state and federal governments restrict work hours during the school year, set a minimum working age, and regulate the conditions under which minors may work? How are the limits set? Who has the right to set them? How did these regulations originate? What is your reaction to these limits and protections?
6. Identify Lewis Hine and the National Child Labor Committee. What were their backgrounds and social agendas? What do their contributions to social reform reveal about the impact of the media and the character of the political process in the Progressive Era?
7. In what way is the film *A Corner in Wheat* (1909) an historical document? What does it reveal about the predominant themes and social issues of the Progressive Era? What social and economic problems does it dramatize?
8. Are there muckrakers in modern American society? who are they? What are today's burning social issues? Have all the problems of the Progressive Era been solved? How do contemporary muckrakers bring attention to these issues?

ACTIVITIES

1. One student exercise might focus on the work of the muckrakers. Students might be assigned selections from Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle* and asked to evaluate the evidence and arguments offered by Sinclair, the social critic of urban industrial society and corporate America. Focusing on Sinclair's proposals, students should consider the solutions adopted and account for the outcome. Students should review Theodore Roosevelt's view of the problem as well and try to assess the link between the novelist's work as social critic and the enactment of consumer protection legislation.
2. Using Sinclair and Roosevelt as sources, students might be asked to work in debate teams to simulate the views of Progressive-era Americans on the issue of consumer protection. Three student teams could be asked to assume the identities and positions of (a) working-class Americans, (b) middle-class consumers, and (c) corporate management. As an alternative, two student teams might argue the positions of Socialist crit

- ics and mainstream liberal progressives with regard to the appropriate solution to the nation's social problems.
3. Ask each student to describe their work life (or that of a friend or sibling near their age). The students should develop a survey to collect information on wage rates, hours, working conditions, and safety precautions in the workplace. Among the questions considered would be (a) Did your employer advise you of safety precautions that protect minors? (b) Are safety precautions adequate? (c) What procedures are required by the state and federal governments before a job-seeking minor may begin work? (d) What is your opinion of child-labor restrictions? (e) How did these laws originate? Why?
 4. Class discussion might focus on the issue of the photograph as a mirror of reality or recorder of historical truth. Students may be encouraged to ask questions about the evidence that take into account the photographer's background, agenda, and intent. Critical-thinking skills will be sharpened as students learn that visual evidence must be subjected to the same rigorous interrogation as more traditional print documents.
 5. If available, screen the muckraking film *Cry of the Children* (1912). Ask students to analyze the motion picture as a historical document, linking it with the social consciousness of the time.
 6. Students might be asked to review the film *A Corner in Wheat* (1909). Introducing the term *muckraker* as a reference to novelists and journalists, instructors could present the concept of the motion picture as a primary source, and then ask students to compare the themes of *A Corner in Wheat* to the elements of muckraking literature of 1900 to 1917. Students might also be asked to consider the film's use of visual language and editing to influence audience response. Teachers who wish to deepen the discussion of the link between muckraking film and muckraking literature may wish to assign the Frank Norris short story "A Deal in Wheat" (1903). An alternative would be a comparative analysis of *A Corner in Wheat* and an excerpt from Sinclair's *The Jungle* (1906), with an emphasis on the themes of social criticism in Progressive America.

SUGGESTED READINGS FOR TEACHERS

- Barrett, James R. *Work and Community in the Jungle: Chicago's Packinghouse Workers, 1894-1922*. 1991.
- Chalmers, David. *The Social and Political Ideas of the Muckrakers*. 1964.
- Curtis, Verna Posever, and Stanley Mallach. *Photography and Reform: Lewis Hine and the National Child Labor Committee*. 1984.
- O'Connor, John E. *Teaching History with Film and Television*. 1987.
- . *Guide to the "Image as Artifact."* Video compilation. 1988.
- Trachtenberg, Alan. *Reading American Photographs: Images as History from Matthew Brady to Walker Evans*. 1990.
- Young, James Harvey. *Pure Food: Securing the Federal Food and Drug Act of 1906*. 1989.

LESSON 3-WOMEN'S ISSUES As A PROGRESSIVE CAUSE: THE STRUGGLE FOR EQUALITY IN THE WORKPLACE

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The key assumption underlying this lesson plan is that labor history is best understood when it is linked to personal, family, and workplace issues. An examination of women's experiences as wage earners in the Progressive era will interest students if the workplace is linked with popular culture including music, leisure, gender relations, and ethnic tensions. Thus this plan invites students to explore the place of women in the expanding industrial economy of early twentieth century America. By integrating economic, social, and cultural history, students will construct for themselves a meaningful and inclusive historical picture. By examining women's role in the needle trades, the Triangle tragedy, and the pressure for protective labor legislation, students will connect social and political history, thus broadening their understanding of the content material that is the stuff of history in a way that is consistent with the findings of modern scholarship.

Between 1908 and 1912, a number of events and developments combined to sensitize consumers and reformers to the problems of women in the industrial workplace. Among these issues were the struggle in 1908 over the constitutionality of the Oregon 10-hourday law, the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire in 1911, and the movement of large numbers of female operatives into the needles trades and textiles industries. Coincidentally, women began to move into the union movement, as evidenced by the rise of the Women's Trade Union League (WTUL), the "Uprising of the 20,000," and the growth of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union (ILGWU) and the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America (ACWA). These changes not only revealed the quickening of interest in social reform through organizational action, but also initiated a volatile controversy over sexual equality and the wisdom of protective legislation.

The debate thus ignited reflected the accelerating feminization of employment in the clothing industry, especially in the shirtwaist factories of eastern and Midwestern cities. Here, large numbers of teenage immigrant women experienced industrial employment, economic discrimination, family tensions, union activity, new sexual freedom, and involvement in the new popular culture of urban America. In large measure, this lesson plan explores the lives and problems of these young women as symptomatic of the new economy and society of the industrial city in the Progressive era.

LINKS TO STANDARDS

S.S. B.8.1, B.12.2, C.12.3, E.8.6, E.8.14, E.12.2, E.12.6, E.12.12

OBJECTIVES

To help students analyze and explain the social inequities of the Progressive era; to familiarize students with the impact of gender, class, and ethnicity on workers' perceptions of reality; and to inform students about how America's history necessitated the organization of unions.

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THEMES

Development of cultural tensions and class conflict

Exploration of gender roles, including long-term implications of economic and legislative protectionism

The social process of becoming American

DISCUSSION ISSUES

1. How did immigrant women experience urban life in America? What do the primary sources reveal about the relationships among immigration, ethnicity, class, work, and the Americanization process? How did clothing, fashion, peer preferences, and workplace interaction play a role in "becoming American"?
2. How would you describe the mainstream Progressive response to working-women's issues? In what ways did the ILGWU, the "Uprising of the 20,000," and later the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America (ACWA) represent an alternative to mainstream Progressivism?
3. How did Progressive states such as Oregon and Wisconsin attempt to deal with the exploitation of women in the workplace? Did the Supreme Court aid or hinder the states' efforts to resolve deep social problems? Using the *Muller v. Oregon* case (1908) as evidence, analyze the argument for protective legislation for women. What was the significance of the Muller verdict for the overall cause of social justice? What was its long-term implication for the future of gender equality and women's rights? Why did the decision become controversial at a later date?
4. What was the immediate significance of the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire? What were its implications for the future of industrial growth and unrestrained capitalism? Using modern examples, compare and contrast today's social and workplace problems with those of the Progressive Era. What were the solutions then? What are the solutions now?
5. Why did workers sing about their experiences? What does music have to do with group identity and the drive toward union organization? How does modern music reflect the social issues of your own time?

ACTIVITIES

1. Ask students to examine a number of primary sources and develop a chart illustrating the issues and problems important to wage-earning women from 1900 to 1915. Ask students to compare and contrast these concerns with the issues confronting working women today.
2. In class, have students view the film *Heaven Will Protect the Working Girl* (American Social History Project). Schools that purchase this video will also receive a quantity of study guides. After viewing the film, students may be divided into small groups for discussion of the intersection of ethnicity, class, and gender in the women's working world of Progressive America. Each group should identify the key themes in the film (and the supporting documents). Have a group leader report the group's findings to the full class, while another group member tabulates the findings on the board for all to observe and discuss further.
3. After reviewing the sources and discussing the film, students may be asked to bring to the next class period a short statement of their analysis of workers' solutions to the problems present in the Progressive Era needle trade, shirtwaist, and garment industries.

tries. Students should identify and assess the organizational outcome of the "Uprising of the 20,000" and the outrage over "sweated" labor and the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire. (Some teachers may wish to add a screening of *The Inheritance*, a film that documents the formation of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America in 1914.)

4. Student groups may be assigned responsibility for researching the legislative remedies for the problems associated with exploited labor in the Progressive Era. Research topics could include the *Lochner v. New York* case (1905); the *Muller v. Oregon* case (1908); the Wisconsin Maximum Women's Hours Law (1911); and the Wisconsin Minimum Wages Law for Women (1913). As each group brings its findings to class, students should be encouraged to identify and evaluate the common assumption made by proponents of protective legislation.
5. Exercise (4) should lead to discussion of the constitutional challenge raised by opponents of protective legislation. Using the Muller case documents as a source base, the class may be divided into debate teams. One team could serve as the Supreme Court majority, one as the proponents of the Oregon law (the Brandeis position), and one as the opposition (the Muller position). The reasons for the Court's decision, as well as the future implications of the majority opinion, should be discussed and analyzed.
6. Arrange for a full class discussion of the progress of union organizing. Students might be encouraged to explain why the organization of women encountered difficulties.
7. Assign student teams to research and identify an example of worker exploitation in the history of their own city, region, or state. Each team should explain how the issue or problem was dealt with, taking into consideration the roles played by the government, voluntary associations, labor unions, or other organizations.
8. Have students discuss the importance of music lyrics as historical evidence. Ask each student to read the words of "Bread and Roses" in the context of the women's role in the Lawrence textile strike of 1912. Students should be asked to analyze the lyrics for insight into the goals of the Lawrence strikers, including their aspirations for full development as human beings. Students should be alert to changes in working-class values and consciousness implied in the evidence. Ask how music could function as a means for workers to transmit their ideas and experiences from generation to generation. (Teachers who wish to enhance this analytical exercise might want to play the Judy Collins recording of "Bread and Roses" for the class.)

SUGGESTED READINGS FOR TEACHERS

Glenn, Susan A. *Daughters of the Shtetl: Life and Labor in the Immigrant Generation*. 1990.

Piess, Kathy. *Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the-Century New York*. 1986.

LESSON 4-LABOR As A POLITICAL FORCE: RADICAL DIVERSITY AND WISCONSIN'S SOCIALISTS

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Although mainstream liberals dominated the national Progressive movement, other social critics called for fundamental changes in the structure of industrial capitalism in the early twentieth century. Many workers and their organizations remained a force for stability and conservatism, but other worker groups challenged the assumptions of those committed to production for profit. A small but dedicated band of workers, the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), expressed a thoroughgoing critique of the capitalist system. Founded in 1905, the "Wobblies" made a dramatic impact on the labor movement with their demand for a militant industrial unionism that rejected the business unionism of the more established AFL. Similarly, the reorganized Socialist Party grew rapidly after 1901, espousing a mixture of nineteenth-century radical ideas. The Socialist Party of America (SPA) committed itself to a democratic socialism, to be achieved at the ballot box through persuasion.

In no area did democratic socialism hold greater promise than in Milwaukee, with its large immigrant population and strong labor base. Since the 1890s, the Milwaukee Federated Trades Council had been a significant force on the local political scene. Labor union leadership frequently adopted Socialist ideas, including support for the socialization of capitalist holdings. Although the Social Democratic Party and the trade union movements in Milwaukee remained separate entities, the two shared leadership through an "interlocking directorate" committed to the advancement of both political and socioeconomic goals. These leaders dedicated themselves to the education of Milwaukee laborers about the values of socialism through incremental steps. Worker consciousness was to be raised through the achievement of short-term goals such as improved working conditions and hours, workers' compensation insurance, public safety measures, and improved social services. This commitment to gradualism earned the Milwaukee Socialists their reputation as "sewer Socialists."

Although the IWW never gained a strong political foothold in Milwaukee, some of its members were recruited from local unions. Far more significant, however, were the successes of the labor-backed Socialists, who had gained a strong political position in Milwaukee by 1910, when woodworker Emil Seidel was elected the nation's first Socialist mayor. In the same year, Milwaukee's Victor L. Berger was elected as a Socialist to the U.S. House of Representatives and Daniel Webster Hoan, a Socialist labor lawyer, became city attorney. Hoan was elected mayor in 1916 and served competently in that position until 1940. Dedicated to clean and efficient government, the Socialists reformed municipal government and introduced many progressive programs, which improved the quality of urban life for Milwaukee's citizens.

The Milwaukee experience reverberated around the state of Wisconsin. The city's Socialist Party sent 14 legislators to Madison in 1910, infusing the state's Progressive movement with new vigor and vital cooperation in advancing worker and consumer interests. During World War I, they would be joined by Socialist assemblymen from outstate Marathon and Manitowoc counties, where immigrant populations sympathized with the goals of the urban radicals. The most important immediate result of Progressive-Socialist cooperation was the enactment of a bold program of Progressive legislation in the landmark

legislative session of 1911, including a package of Progressive labor laws that made Wisconsin workers the envy of the nation's labor movement.

The Progressives and the Socialists parted company over the issue of capitalism, which the Progressive Republicans embraced and the Social Democrats rejected. Yet both were committed to reform, which was achieved with the enactment of workers' compensation, the Industrial Commission law, maximum-hour and minimum-wage legislation for women, and a child labor law. The blend of liberalism and radicalism, facilitated by support from labor Socialists, served Wisconsin citizens well and shielded the state's workers from some of the most damaging effects of industrial capitalism.

LINKS TO STANDARDS

S.S. B.8.1, B.8.4, B.8.10, B.I.2.4, C.I.2.5, C.I.2.B, C.I.2.16, D.I.2.7, E.8.5, E.12.17

OBJECTIVES

To familiarize students with the distinction between liberal and radical solutions to the social and economic problems of the Progressive era, and to help them see distinctions among the various forms of Progressive-era radical political and social pressures; and to recognize the difference between reform and revolution.

THEMES

Class conflict as a motivating force
Social harmony in political compromise
Reform and revolution
Unrestrained and restrained capitalism

DISCUSSION ISSUES

1. Who were the leaders of the radical labor movement and from which organizations were they drawn? How did the goals of the IWW and SPA differ from those of the AFL and the mainstream labor movement?
2. Mainstream Progressives were often hostile to radical labor. How would you account for Progressive antagonism to the programs, proposals, and actions of the IWW and the Social Democrats?
3. Within the radical labor movement, there existed several strategies and programs. What were the sources of the internal disagreement among labor radicals? How did IWW and Social Democratic strategies differ?
4. Why was socialism so successful in Progressive-era Wisconsin? What was the relationship between the Socialist and Progressive Republican programs in this period? What were the consequences for Wisconsin workers and other citizens?
5. What do the lyrics and illustrations of the period indicate about the IWW concept of class solidarity? What do they reveal about the social, ethnocultural, and economic composition of the union? Why do you think labor songs were often based on religious or military music? How can you link labor art and music to the theme of the collective struggle for a better world?

ACTIVITIES

1. Ask students to identify the social, economic, and political assumptions of radical unionists, both IWW and Social Democrat. Students may be asked to explain how their perspectives and programs differed from those of the mainstream AFL.
2. Ask students to brainstorm the types of sources that might shed light on radical political activity in Progressive-Era Wisconsin communities. Then form student research groups and assign each one to locate a primary source documenting the influence of the Socialist movement in a Wisconsin town, city, or county in the period from 1910 to 1920, preferably their home community. If possible, the student group should bring a photocopy of the document to class. Each group will be responsible for analyzing the evidence and attempting to account for the impact of radical political activity in the affected area. Findings should be reported by group leaders in a full class capstone discussion.
3. Hold a general class discussion of labor's agenda in the Progressive Era. Students should identify and explore the vital issues for politicized labor in the early twentieth century. Construct a chart listing the goals of the various labor organizations and movements on the scene in 1910, including mainstream (AFL), radical (Social Democrat), and radical syndicalist (IWW). Once these goals are understood, students may compare them to the goals and issues faced by today's labor movement and attempt to account for differences observed.
4. Using the documents relating to socialism as a base resource, students could explore the history of labor radicalism in Wisconsin. Students might be asked to attempt to explain why the Socialist movement gained respectability in Wisconsin when it did.
5. The IWW was, from an early date, a creative, singing movement. Some of the most memorable lyrics in the history of labor music were penned by such writers as Joe Hill and Ralph Chaplin. Similarly, Wobbly artists left a graphic record of IWW hopes, goals, and strategies. Using recorded music as a resource, explore with students the messages contained in art and music attacking unrestrained capitalism and its impact on workers, their families, and working-class life. Focus on the IWW solution to the social and economic problems of the Progressive era.

SUGGESTED READINGS FOR TEACHERS

Ameringer, Oscar. *If You Don't Weaken: The Autobiography of Oscar Ameringer* (1940; rep. 1983).
Beck, Elmer A. *The Sewer Socialists*. Fennimore: West burg Associates, 1982.

LESSON 5 -WISCONSIN PROGRESSIVISM AND **THE** FUTURE: **THE**" LABORATORY OF DEMOCRACY"

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Although organized labor in Milwaukee worked cooperatively with the Socialist Party, perhaps more significant in advancing worker interests in Progressive-era Wisconsin was the Progressive wing of the Republican Party, spearheaded by the maverick governor and later senator Robert M. LaFollette and his supporters. Equally significant for labor was the leadership demonstrated by Milwaukee Progressive Governor Francis McGovern, who presided over the enactment of landmark labor and social legislation during the incredibly productive session of 1911. Between 1900 and 1914, Wisconsin Progressives created a political, economic, and social program that became a prototype for liberal reformers throughout the United States. It was in this creative period that Wisconsin came to be referred to as the laboratory of democracy. In Wisconsin, workers, Socialists, and the labor movement were committed backers of the Progressive program for social improvement: they were the "other Progressives."

Central to this outpouring of reform legislation was the development of a close link between the University of Wisconsin and the LaFollette administration and its successors. UW scholars collaborated with Progressive legislators to craft the political and economic structure of modern Wisconsin. Especially significant were the "Wisconsin School" economists who were responsible for some of the most innovative social and labor legislation enacted in the United States. Starting with Richard T. Ely and later John R. Commons, Wisconsin economists made an indelible mark on labor policy by redefining the government's role in the workplace. Their work provided the clearest expression of what came to be known as the Wisconsin Idea.'

As a result of the collaboration among government, labor, and university figures, Wisconsin became a pioneer state, launching a bold regulatory and legal system to protect consumer, worker, and public interests. As a consequence, Wisconsin citizens benefited from the nation's first workers' compensation law, state income tax, and primary election system, as well as a bevy of other landmark innovations that included child-labor legislation, minimum-wage guarantees, protective legislation for workers, and the establishment of a strong Industrial Commission. In Wisconsin, the government was here to stay as a guarantor that the general welfare would be preserved. The labor-Socialist-Progressive coalition had reason to be proud.

From labor's perspective, there was one more issue to be addressed: the fostering of an environment in which workers might choose freely to associate and enter into collective action. Thus, labor mediation became important, as did protection against employers' use of labor spies against unions and labor organizers. Although the Industrial Commission had the authority to appoint mediators, the licensing of detectives did not become law until 1919. Despite this legislation, labor spies were to plague unions for years to come.

Nonetheless, Progressive legislation materially advanced the interests of workers and consumers in Wisconsin. The best measure of the Progressive achievement was the uniform approbation of the Wisconsin program throughout the United States. For all the state's citizens, labor and its Progressive allies had made a profound difference.

LINKS TO STANDARDS

S.S. B.8.1, B.8.4, B.12.2, B.12.4, C.8.6, C.12.9, C.12.14, E.8.S, E.12.4, E.12.11

OBJECTIVES

To familiarize students with the important shift in the function of government associated with the rise of Progressivism (abandonment of laissez-faire) and to explore the consequences of this change. Further, to evaluate the successes and failures of Progressivism by using Wisconsin as a test case in the development of the concept of the modern social welfare state.

THEMES

Past-to-present linkage
Public responsibility for the general welfare of the citizenry
Wisconsin Progressivism as prototype
Private vs. public interest

DISCUSSION ISSUES

1. Define *Progressive*. From the worker's point of view, what was the significance of Progressive reform in their daily life? What was the outcome of Progressive legislative action?
2. Which individuals and groups should be credited with the successful enactment of Progressive reform legislation? To what extent have LaFollette and his Progressive reformers received excessive notice for their role in the achievement of reform in labor legislation? What other groups or individuals played a role in the reform process? With what results?
3. In what sense could Wisconsin in the Progressive era be accurately described as the laboratory of democracy? What was the wider, long-term significance of the reform program enacted in Wisconsin between 1900 and 1914? What did observers of the Progressive era mean by designating Wisconsin as a laboratory?
4. Progressivism is chronologically situated between the agrarian Populism and the liberal reform era of the New Deal in the 1930s. In what sense do you see continuity or connections between these three reform eras? Are there any ideas or assumptions that link these reform movements? Looking forward and backward, in what ways do the core ideas of these movements, especially with regard to workers and their families, relate to one another?
5. What was the Wisconsin Idea? Describe the relationships among Progressive politicians, Socialist leaders, University of Wisconsin scholars (especially labor economists), and state government bureaucrats. What ideas and beliefs did they have in common? What was the outcome of their interaction? How did their work affect the lives of workers?

ACTIVITIES

1. Show the Wisconsin Humanities Council's videotape, *The Progressive Tradition*, together with excerpts from the State Historical Society's videotape, *150 Years of Debate*, both focusing on the Progressive legacy. Students should be instructed to watch carefully for Progressive-era origins of modern social services and protections, with an eye to the historical conditions that brought about advances in social legislation.
2. Instructors might introduce the concept of the Wisconsin Idea and encourage students to ask whether there was anything unique about the Wisconsin social, economic, and political experience in the early twentieth century. Discussion could explore connections between the Wisconsin Progressive accomplishments and programs introduced in other states or later at the national level.
3. Have students develop a chart listing the worker protections, social guarantees, and social services provided by modern state and federal governments. Key legislative advances might also be displayed on a timeline depicting the years 1900 to 2000, so that students gain a sense of chronological perspective on the place of the Progressive era in the history of social reform in Wisconsin and the nation. Students should discuss the legitimacy of these governmental guarantees, including the reasons why they originally developed.
4. Students or student groups might be assigned the task of interviewing workers in the community who are willing to talk about the issues of plant safety, workplace environment, and the legal protection of workers. The findings of these interviews may be reported to the full class. Discussion might link the issues of the modern workplace to the legislative achievements of the generation that fought for worker security.
5. This lesson might conclude with a discussion of the outcomes of the Progressive movement and their relevance to the social problems of a modern industrial society. Students might be asked to determine whose interests were best served by Progressive reform legislation and to demonstrate how the decisions and solutions of the Progressive movement may be linked to the current status of the social welfare state in which they live.

SUGGESTED READINGS FOR TEACHERS

Buenker, John D. *History of Wisconsin*. Vol. VI, *The Progressive Era, 1893-1914*. Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1998. Nesbit, Robert C. *Wisconsin: A History*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989. Ozanne, Robert W. *The Labor Movement in Wisconsin: A History*. Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1984, chapters 4 and 8.

LESSON 6- THE IMPACT OF WORLD WAR II AT HOME: CATALYST FOR SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CHANGE

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

For many Americans, World War II constituted the central national experience of their lives. The war was a multifaceted conflict, a battle waged not only overseas but on the home front, where millions of working Americans were mobilized for their own version of combat in the struggle against fascism. Any balanced account of the wartime experience must consider the effort and sacrifices made by the millions of noncombatants who were instrumental in the battle against the Axis powers of Germany, Italy, and Japan. The home front experience must be well understood, for it was in the factories, farms, and homes of the United States that the economic miracle of World War II occurred.

For more than two years before Pearl Harbor, the war in Europe stimulated American production and thereby unleashed economic forces that were to reverse the stagnation of the Depression era. The result was the beginning of a new war-related prosperity that erased memories of the "hungry 30s." The gradual decrease in unemployment meant new disposable income and a return to the good life for most Americans. It was this economic revival that led writer Studs Terkel to label World War II the "Good War."

This sunny picture of the wartime experience reflects the predominant view of the wartime generation, which saw the conflict as a struggle for survival in which the moral issues were clearly drawn. As in all total wars, the government labored mightily to reinforce the public's understanding of the purposes for which Americans fought. Hence, the Office of War Information, the Office of Civilian Defense, the military intelligence services, the Department of the Treasury, the War Labor Board, the Office of War Mobilization, and many other agencies combined to encourage citizens to accept personal responsibility for the war effort. For many, World War II became a great unifying experience in which all Americans played a part, whether in the home, on the farm, in the armed services, or in the workplaces of America.

For workers and their unions, World War II represented an unprecedented opportunity. After a series of defense strikes during the neutrality period (1939-1941), workers and labor leaders moved into positions of responsibility as part of the national economic planning effort. Once America had joined the war, unions consolidated their positions by accepting the Little Steel formula, which provided modest wage increases while permitting extensive overtime earnings. Perhaps more significant were the union security agreements, dues check-off provisions, and maintenance of membership guarantees that enabled labor to grow in size and influence as a partner in the war effort from 1942 to 1945. By war's end, American unions had won a seat at the table in the effort to manage the national economy.

Despite these gains, rank-and-file unionists were not always content with their leadership's decisions and compromises. Chafing under wage restrictions and committed to shopfloor control, workers participated in numerous wildcat strikes during the war years. Despite the critical worker role in national defense, interrupted production bore witness to the persistence of rank-and-file militance and worker insistence on union democracy. By August 1945, workers were poised to launch a renewed struggle to consolidate wartime economic gains and the provisions of the New Deal social contract that had

begun to erode during the later war years. World War II had presented workers with a great opportunity, to be sure, but many looked to the future with hopes of strengthening American social welfare support.

In the final analysis, World War II had effected a historic transformation in American industry, as well as American society at large. The United States that emerged from World War II was remarkably mobile, highly organized, heavily industrialized, technologically advanced, militarily strengthened, governmentally centralized, and socially cohesive. Total war had galvanized the economy and revolutionized society in irreversible ways. Americans now looked forward to the future with both hope for prosperity and apprehension over the perils of reconversion.

LINKS TO STANDARDS

S.S. B.8.3, B.8.1O, B.I2.I, B.I2.2, B.I2.8, D.8.IO, D.I2.7, E.8.4, E.I2.6

OBJECTIVES

To enable students to learn about the social and economic impact of World War II, and to help students recognize the role played by workers, their families, and their organizations in the war effort.

THEMES

Can a war be a "good" war?

Achievement of the "economic miracle" of World War II

Development of labor unions and organizations as instruments for promoting the wider common good while serving the social and economic needs of workers, their families, and communities

DISCUSSION ISSUES

1. In view of the national emergency created by World War II, how would you account for labor militancy from 1939 to 1946? What were the issues in labor disputes and how were they resolved?
2. Define *total war*. What evidence is provided by the sources to clarify its meaning?
How was the government's function influenced by wartime concerns?
3. In what ways did World War II differ from more recent military conflicts, particularly with regard to their impact on the home front?
4. In what way could World War II be considered a "good war"? Which groups benefited and which groups suffered as a result of the war? Was World War II "good"? Defend your response.

ACTIVITIES

1. Screen excerpts from *The Homefront* and *Who Paid the Dues?* in class. Ask students to compile lists of the ways in which the war directly influenced individual citizens, including workers and their families, on the World War II home front. Have students take their lists home to ask grandparents or other family members which of the influ

ences on their lists were felt in their families or communities from 1939 to 1945. Responses may provide the basis for follow-up classroom discussion.

2. Discussion might feature a comparison between the home front impact of World War II and that of Vietnam or the Gulf War, to illustrate the distinctions between historical circumstances and situations.
3. Focusing on the rise of labor militancy (1939-1946), teachers might comment on the tension between workers' desires and actions to support the war effort and their need to preserve some control over their lives and maintain an acceptable standard of living.

SUGGESTED READINGS FOR TEACHERS

Blum, John Morton. *V Was for Victory: Politics and American Culture During World War II*. 1984.

Jeffries, John. *Wartime America*. 1996.

Perrett, Geoffrey. *Days of Sadness, Years of Triumph: The American People, 1939-1945*. 1985. O'Neill, William. *A Democracy at War*. 1993.

LESSON 7 -VISUAL REPRESENTATIONS OF DEMOCRATIC WARFARE: GOVERNMENT AND MEDIA PORTRAYALS OF A PEOPLE'S WAR

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Although guns, tanks, and planes were the main weapons employed by the military in World War II, the Franklin Delano Roosevelt administration understood that public support was essential to a successful war effort. Consequently, the government searched for media through which it would be possible to communicate the issues of the war to a receptive American public. Although cautious about a full commitment to a propaganda agency, Roosevelt was persuaded that some kind of government information agency would be needed to effectively mobilize American public opinion behind the war effort. As a result, in 1942 he sanctioned the creation of the Office of War Information, led by CBS newsman Elmer Davis.

Davis and his agency were intent upon following a "strategy of truth," but inevitably, information often shaded into propaganda and persuasion. This lesson plan examines the use of poster art as one medium of communication employed by many agencies of the federal government between 1942 and 1945 in their effort to unite the American public behind a "people's war." Emphasis will be placed on messages aimed at workers and their families, who were encouraged to make sacrifices in the name of the common good.

During the war, persuasion itself became a wartime industry, as government agencies worked to galvanize popular support. Citizens were exposed to daily reminders of their responsibilities from all sides, including the radio, films, and the poster art that was found in most public places. By war's end, some of the nation's most distinguished artists, intellectuals, and filmmakers had enlisted in the campaign.

The topics addressed varied widely, but included the messages of conservation, sacrifice, hard labor, and nondiscrimination. Citizens were exhorted to save, work, and do without luxuries as part of their contribution to victory. Victory gardens were planted, extra shifts were worked, and shortages endured. Americans were frequently reminded that the Axis threat was real, and the immediacy of danger to citizens on the home front was often exaggerated. Especially urgent were the appeals made to American workers for greater production and renewed effort. By constantly bombarding the public with patriotic imagery, the government ensured that every American would feel a personal commitment to the successful prosecution of this "people's war." In the process, the federal government took a long step toward the centralization of power and authority in Washington that was to accelerate in the postwar era.

LINKS TO STANDARDS

S.S. B.8.1, B.8.3, B.12.2, B.12.5, E.8.8, E.12.6

OBJECTIVES

To develop students' critical skills through analysis of media images projected during World War II; to help students become more sophisticated receivers and analysts of information:

to broaden students' experience in using primary source material; and to enhance students' capacity for decision making based on objective analysis of available information.

THEMES

Total war
National unity
Cooperation and community effort
Analysis of media messages
Citizens' commitment to common good
Labor's/workers' role in the national community

DISCUSSION ISSUES

- 1. How did artists and governmental agencies attempt to motivate World War II-era viewers of their poster art? What reactions did they seek to provoke? To which emotions did they appeal? How did the government appeal to workers and their families? What messages were most successful, in your view? How did workers respond to government arguments and pressures?
- 2. Define *propaganda*. With what regimes was this term identified in the years 1939 to 1945? To what extent were propaganda devices employed by the u.s. government? How could these techniques be reconciled with the fighting of a democratic war?
- 3. Compare and contrast various examples of the government's visual images that were projected at workers and citizens. What similarities and differences may be identified in these documents? Where do you think these posters were displayed? Why?
- 4. To what specific segments of the home front audience were particular posters addressed? Why was it believed necessary to target those audiences?
- 5. What characteristics made a particular poster an effective communications or propaganda instrument? What made visual images such popular tools of persuasion?
- 6. In what ways may poster art or films be understood as historical documents? What do they reveal about the society that produced and viewed them?

ACTIVITIES

- 1. Students might be assigned responsibility for individually creating their own World War II poster carrying a patriotic message. As an alternative, each group could be assigned a contemporary issue or interest (e.g., labor, worker families, agriculture, consumer issues, volunteerism, school, community) and instructed to create its own poster focusing on the assigned topic. Display resulting images.
- 2. Teachers might screen a World War II vintage feature film and urge students to critique the film, with emphasis on the messages projected to workers by the filmmaker. To coordinate this exercise with the government posters of the period, teachers could choose *Pittsburg* (1942), the film analyzed by the Wisconsin Fox Theater publication *SRO*. A good alternative might be *An American Romance* (1943), which depicts labor-management cooperation. Teachers may have their own preferences concerning the use of other films.

3. Teachers might make a transparency of a single poster or a series of posters. With the image projected for the class, have students list and describe the symbols they see in the poster, both pictorial and written. They might also be asked to identify the propaganda devices employed by the artist and sponsoring agency.
4. As an out-of-class assignment, students might be instructed to log on to the National Archives and Records Administration Web site for a more detailed and complete examination of World War II poster art. Students could be asked to report to the class or write short analyses of the messages projected by the Roosevelt administration, with emphasis on the worker's role in the war effort.

SUGGESTED READINGS FOR TEACHERS

Fox, Frank. *Madison Avenue Goes to War: The Strange Military Career of American Advertising, 1941-1945*. 1975.

Koppes, Clayton R., and Gregory D. Black, *Hollywood Goes to War: How Politics, Profits and Propaganda Shaped World War II Movies*. 1987.

LESSON 8- THE CHANGING FACE OF THE WORKFORCE (I): WOMEN IN THE WARTIME LABOR FORCE

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

As previously noted, the military conflict of World War II was accompanied by a social transformation of major proportions. As wartime production requirements escalated, the demand for workers also increased. At first, men took the new positions created by the boom, but by mid-1942, the government turned to "womanpower" to fill the gap. As a result, the number of employed women shot up nearly 50 percent, from 12 million to 18 million. Women ultimately comprised one-third of the workers added to the labor force.

Because conditions during the Great Depression had discouraged many women from participating in the paid labor force, it became necessary for the government to actively recruit women for defense work and other employment. Consequently, the War Manpower Commission conducted aggressive publicity campaigns, with the support of the Office of War Information. In cooperation with the government drive, the mass media encouraged women to leave the home by glamorizing war work and appealing to their patriotic instincts. By 1943, a full-scale campaign was under way, and American women responded to the call.

Not only did working women's numbers increase, but their workplace responsibilities also underwent significant change. Although some women had worked in light industry before World War II, the war provided new opportunities to many female workers. Employers initially emphasized detailed assembly work, assuming women had a natural manual dexterity, but before long, production work in traditionally male jobs was opened to them. Although the "Rosies" (welders, riveters, shipbuilders, and aircraft assemblers) never constituted a majority of the wartime labor force, women's acceptance of these occupational responsibilities demonstrated their competence in jobs long regarded as male preserves.

Despite their proven capabilities, women did not experience equality in the workplace. Instead, they often confronted indifference or hostility from male coworkers and supervisors. In many industries, women entered labor unions for the first time, thus contributing to the dramatic growth of the industrial union movement, especially the burgeoning ranks of the militant CIO. Although some unions insisted on equal pay for equal work, others tolerated sexual discrimination and manipulated job classification and seniority systems to the benefit of the men who dominated the union hierarchy. Consequently, although all workers benefited from wartime pay increases, the gap between men's and women's wages did not narrow significantly.

Like their sisters throughout the United States, Wisconsin women experienced the opening of economic opportunity occasioned by World War II. Closer examination, however, reveals that as early as 1940, approximately 20 percent of Wisconsin women over age 14 already worked for wages. It is likely that that number rose to 33 percent as a result of the wartime stimulus. Thus, it is evident that the war actually accelerated a trend already under way in Wisconsin well before Pearl Harbor opened new opportunities. In addition, nontraditional opportunities became available and women gained a firm hold on other job categories. Whereas in 1940 clerical positions were equally shared by men and women, by 1945 women dominated this occupational category. At the same time, it is important to note that most Wisconsin women made their contribution to the war effort in the family

context, sometimes as heads of families. Whatever their location in the labor market and society, Wisconsin women contributed heavily to the war effort between 1942 and 1945. This unit compares the experiences of Wisconsin women with those of their sisters in other parts of the country.

It is clear that many Americans regarded the gender-bending impact of World War II as a temporary phenomenon. Even at the peak of demand for labor, debate over women's social and economic roles persisted. Women in the workplace continued to struggle with multiple responsibilities, including work, home, and family. As the war-induced acceleration of women's employment began to level off in 1945, government propaganda contributed to the reassertion of traditional social values, though many working women resisted the pressure to return to prewar conditions. In the final analysis, the wartime changes proved to be a temporary response to a national crisis. Yet the new freedom and economic advances had demonstrated that women were fully capable of accepting workplace responsibilities. And although there would be a brief postwar downturn in women's labor force participation rate, the long-term trend toward engagement in all forms of employment would resume, starting in the late 1940s. In this sense the impact of World War II had been profound and permanent.

LINKS TO STANDARDS

S.S. B.4.3, *BAA*, *BA*.9, B.8.2, B.8.3, B.12.2, B.12.5, C.12.10, C.12.11, C.12.16, D.8.10, E.8.2, E.8.6, E.12.2, E.12.7, E.12.12

OBJECTIVES

To develop student skills in document analysis; to sharpen student awareness of government and institutional roles in shaping social values and practices; to help students learn how external events and national crises bring about social change.

THEMES

Social construction of gender roles
 Role of women in labor force/war effort
 Drive for sexual equality
 Impact of government propaganda

DISCUSSION ISSUES

1. What was/is "women's work"? How have these definitions been historically and socially constructed? How could women's wartime activities be reconciled with the prevailing definition of 1940?
2. Assess the role of unions in meeting women's needs as workers in the period from 1941 to 1945. How would you explain the performance of unions, including variations in policies and actions among labor organizations?
3. What do you think wartime work opportunities meant to female workers? How did women's work experiences during World War II influence their self-images and self-assessments? How widespread were these changes? Did the war produce permanent revision in predominant social values and assumptions concerning gender roles?

4. What problems were unique to the work experience of women during World War II? In what ways do you think the awareness of a national emergency influenced the ability of women and their families to adjust to these concerns?
5. How were socially sanctioned messages concerning gender roles communicated to women and men in the period from 1941 to 1945? What were the roles of government, business, and the media in this process?
6. In what ways did World War II affect Wisconsin women? How were the state's communities influenced by the wartime emergency? In what ways were Wisconsin women's lives, attitudes, and self-images affected by the war? How were these working women's attitudes toward unions shaped by their wartime experiences?

ACTIVITIES

1. Teachers might show students the film *The Life and Times of Rosie the Riveter*; together with the original film source, *Women in Defense* (1944). Students could be divided into focus groups, each of them assigned to one of the major interviewees in the film. Each group should conduct an analysis of the motives, problems, experiences, reactions, and career paths of the individual worker to whom it has been assigned. Following this group work, full class discussion might seek to identify similarities, themes, and differences among the life experiences considered. (See discussion guide in Frank, Ziebarth, and Field [1982].)
2. Have students read excerpts from *Like Our Sisters Before Us* and *Voices of the Wisconsin Past: Women Remember the War; 1941-1945* in order to form an impression of Wisconsin women's experiences during World War II. Students might compare the Wisconsin situation with the status and participation of women in other regions of the United States. This discussion should include consideration of the advantages and disadvantages of oral histories as records of the past.
3. Use the documents and the film to focus a full class discussion on the union experiences of female workers in Wisconsin and elsewhere. This exercise should include discussion of the successes and shortcomings of labor unions in addressing the needs and problems of women in the wartime workplace. Using the chart provided, students may examine the status of women in selected unions and account for differences identified.
4. Use the primary sources to identify the predominant definition of "women's work" in 1940. Ask each student to write that definition on a note card, together with their own definition of "women's work" as it is understood today. Collect cards and tabulate definitions in categories on the board. Students might discuss changes in the definition by 1944, 1946, and their own time. Use the films to provide enrichment of this discussion.
5. Students could be assigned to research groups to investigate the wartime history of individual industries in their home community, focusing on their wartime policies toward women in the workforce. Results of these independent research projects could be a) the subject of follow-up classroom discussion and/or b) the topic of group-produced exhibits or research papers.
6. Conduct a classroom discussion of the term *propaganda*, focusing on both government and media messages concerning the status, roles, and responsibilities of women before, during, and after World War II. Students should be encouraged to inquire into the sources or origins of social values and the concept of appropriate gender roles.

This discussion could conclude with an effort to assess the short- and long-term significance of World War II in shaping, confirming, or revising socially constructed role definitions.

7. By reviewing the documents, with special attention to the visual images provided, students should be asked to identify similarities and differences between male and female workplace and family experiences. Students might write short essays describing those experiences, using the images as evidence to support their analyses of women's unique problems and experiences as workers and family members.

SUGGESTED READINGS FOR TEACHERS

Anderson, Karen T. *Wartime Women: Sex Roles, Family Relations, and the Status of Women During World War II*. 1981.

Frank, Miriam, Marilyn Ziebarth, and Connie Field. *The Life and Times of Rosie the Riveter*. Film guide. 1982.

Gluck, Sherna. *Rosie the Riveter Revisited*. 1987.

Honey, Maureen. *Creating Rosie the Riveter: Class, Gender, and Propaganda During World War II*. 1984.

LESSON 9—THE CHANGING FACE OF THE WORKFORCE (II): THE MINORITY STRUGGLE IN WISCONSIN AND THE NATION

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

As World War II loomed on the horizon, the status of African Americans and other minority groups had not improved significantly over the circumstances under which many had lived during the dark days of the Great Depression. Black unemployment stood at twice the white rate and black family income hovered at approximately one-third that of white Americans. Most African American workers labored in unskilled occupations and the median education level among blacks lagged behind that of whites by one-third. Similarly, Mexican Americans found themselves at the bottom of the educational and economic ladder. Although some Mexican Americans had been repatriated during the Depression, those who remained suffered economic discrimination comparable to that faced by African Americans. In short, the prewar condition of American minority communities was dismal by most measures applied.

Although wartime demand resulted in slow economic improvement, the national defense buildup between 1939 and 1941 was marked by continued prejudice and discrimination. By the end of 1940, for example, only 240 of the nation's 100,000 aircraft workers were African American. Similarly, in 1941 no Mexican Americans were working in the Los Angeles shipyards. As a result of these discriminatory practices and situations, minority group leaders escalated the pressure on government to open opportunities to all Americans. By 1941 a movement for change was under way.

In 1941, African Americans began to call attention to the conflict between the professed ideals of American democracy and the reality of actual practices in the United States. The accelerating urbanization of America's black community contributed to the rising demand for governmental action. These pressures coalesced in early 1941 with a proposal for a March on Washington to insist upon equal employment opportunity in defense industry. Led by A. Philip Randolph, the militant head of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, the march was intended to force action by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt through mobilization of the black masses, not the middle classes.

When Roosevelt met with Randolph in June 1941, he hoped to persuade the union leader to back off, but he was unsuccessful, as Randolph insisted on "something concrete, something tangible." The result of Randolph's resolve was Roosevelt's issuance of Executive Order 8802, declaring that henceforth, there would be no discrimination in defense employment on the basis of race, color, or national origin. Moreover, Roosevelt created the Fair Employment Practices Commission (FEPC) to enforce the order. Presented with a substantial victory, Randolph agreed to call off the march. Though the FEPC was never fully effective, the president's actions carried powerful symbolic significance as the nation prepared for its involvement in the war to come.

Although the FEPC enforcement machinery was inadequate and underfunded, gradual improvement did occur. In 1942, blacks had constituted only 3 percent of defense employees, but by 1945 that figure had risen to 8 percent. Discrimination and segregation were rampant within the military; however, slow progress was made in the navy and army air corps. Meanwhile, on the home front the National Labor Relations Board refused to certify unions that excluded minority groups. Not only did African American defense

employment increase, but also the number of black foremen and craftsmen slowly grew. Despite these gains, it is clear that the modest improvement was due in large measure to the war-related labor shortage.

The African American community moved on many fronts. Black participation in union activity increased, especially in such progressive unions as the UAW (United Automobile Workers) and other CIO affiliates. Founded in 1942, the Congress on Racial Equality (CORE) launched protests against discrimination and segregation in urban areas. Complementing these efforts, the black press and middle-class groups carried on a “double V” campaign that stressed the dual goals of victory over racism and despotism abroad and victory over racial oppression at home. Despite the limited nature of the gains made, African Americans, including workers and their families, were justified in their belief that World War II marked a watershed in the drive for racial equality. In agreement with this analysis, most modern historians locate the foundation of the modern civil rights movement in the period between 1942 and 1945. Though progress was halting and produced mixed results for American minority groups, a turning point had been reached.

LINKS TO STANDARDS

S.S. A.8.7, B.8.1, B.8.3, B.8.5, B.12.2, B.12.15, B.12.18, C.8.1, C.8.5, C.12.9, C.12.16, E.8.4, B. 12. 12

OBJECTIVES

To help students learn about the democratizing impact of war; to encourage them to recognize the war-induced expansion of community; to underscore the economic impact of total war on all Americans, including minority groups; to stimulate student consideration and assessment of the appropriate role of the government as an advocate for an enlarged definition of the public interest and common good.

THEMES

Government as a promoter of social change
War as a catalyst for social and economic advancement
Resistance to segregation and discrimination
Origins of modern civil rights movement in World War II experience
Impact of unionism on enlargement and/or restriction of opportunity in a democratic society

DISCUSSION ISSUES

1. How did labor unions in Wisconsin and the nation regard minority participation in the workforce and labor’s organizational activity?
2. What was the role of the federal government in the advancement of African American labor force participation between 1941 and 1945? What factors and forces lay behind governmental actions and programs?
3. What were the key demographic changes experienced by the African American population between 1915 and 1945? How did population and settlement patterns influence African American economic, social, and political activity?

TEN LESSONS: THE MODERN UNION MOVEMENT

4. How did the African American experiences of World War II differ from those of World War I? How would you explain similarities or differences? Assess the economic and social significance of World War II to the African American community.
5. With special focus on the employment experience of African Americans in Wisconsin, evaluate the efforts of the government to promote economic equality for all Americans during World War II. What was the significance of the Fair Employment Practices Commission in Milwaukee? How would you account for the results of its efforts? What does the wartime experience reveal about the function of government in the struggle for racial equality?

ACTIVITIES

1. Show the film *Miles of Smiles*, which documents the career of African American union leader A. Philip Randolph. All students should also be instructed to read and analyze the excerpt from Randolph's writings as well as the text of Executive Order 8802. Discussion might focus on the contrast between the government portrayal of wartime cooperation across racial lines and the militance of Randolph's March on Washington movement. Emphasize the ways in which social change may be accomplished, including the roles of labor organizations, individual activists, and government leaders.
2. Screen both *Up South* (which deals with black northward migration during World War I) and *Goin' to Chicago* (which focuses on the impact of World War I on the postwar era). Students might compare the results of the first migration with the outcomes of World War II, with emphasis on black employment opportunity. Excerpts from *The Homefront* and *Miles of Smiles* will deepen student awareness of World War II's impact on the status of African Americans.
3. Focus discussion on the work experiences of African Americans in Wisconsin. Ask students to study the data on black employment in the Milwaukee-area defense industry and to assess the impact of the Fair Employment Practices Commission on African American economic status in Wisconsin.
4. Assign individual students or pairs of students to prepare themselves to express the opinions of one of the key witnesses appearing in the primary sources. Each student or pair may role-play the positions of A. Philip Randolph, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Walter White, Nellie Wilson, Sarah Killingworth, and Mickey Ruiz in a classroom debate over the impact of World War II on American minority groups.
5. Ask students to review the evidence with an eye to an assessment of labor unions as a force for social change/betterment. Students might explore labor union reaction to the workforce and workplace changes induced by the wartime emergency.

SUGGESTED READINGS FOR TEACHERS

The Great Depression. Part VII, *Arsenal of Democracy*. PBS. Videocassette.

LESSON 10—ORIGINAL RESEARCH PROJECTS: STUDENTS CREATE THEIR OWN HISTORY

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

This lesson plan will focus not on a theme, but rather on student-centered approaches to the study of World War II's impact on workers, their families, and their communities. This plan is grounded on the assumption that history involves not only institutions, but also the people who create them. Thus, our focus as historians and teachers must be on workers, families, worker culture, and the workplace experiences that constituted the daily lives of working people.

There are several ways in which teachers may tap the knowledge of experienced men and women, including oral history, family history, and community history. In the process of employing these approaches, faculty will be able to ignite a spark of interest in students who typically find local history especially attractive. By examining the microcosm, students will come to learn about the sweeping state and national events that so often occupy teachers intent on "covering the material." The study of local history enables students to integrate learning by linking the community's story with the nation's history. Moreover, engaging students as historians themselves can sharpen those necessary critical skills as students move into the community as participating citizens. Hence, this lesson plan seeks to engage students in the historian's process of inquiry as they learn to "do history" as novice practitioners.

No topic lends itself to this approach more than the study of the worker's wartime experience. Although traditional instruction in history has often denied the existence of class struggle, it is clear that conflict with employers and governments has been a part of worker life in the United States. Very often retired workers can provide vivid testimony to the struggles that shaped work life in and out of the factory. When exploring the home front history of World War II, it is especially likely that women's work experiences will become part of the stories students uncover.

As students explore American labor history firsthand, the richness of local heritage will become clear. Students will find relevance in their own backyards, even as they broaden their understanding of the stuff of history. As a byproduct of this exercise, the important contributions of working men and women to the victory over fascism abroad will become clear to students who sometimes fail to look beyond the military history of the war. The study of local, community, and family history in Wisconsin thus enhances student awareness of the meaning of true community, which was a central feature of the wartime response to national emergency.

LINKS TO STANDARDS

S.S. B.8.1, B.8.4, B.12.1, B.12.2, B.12.4, E.8.2, E.8.14, E.12.4

OBJECTIVES

To develop students' research and analytical skills; to help students learn to organize and discuss data and information; to foster students' ability to defend conclusions; and to sharpen students' awareness of the relationship between local historical developments and national trends.

THEMES

Worker contribution to the war effort
Impact of World War II on the workplace
Wartime laborers' experience/lack of experience with union activity
Local community activities as part of the national war effort

DISCUSSION ISSUES

1. What is history? What is labor history? How do we determine what aspects of historical experience are most significant?
2. Define the term *primary source*. In what ways are oral histories useful and valid primary sources? What cautions are necessary in evaluating oral accounts or personal memories? How is it possible to verify oral history sources for accuracy? What other benefits may be derived from studying history through analysis of the oral tradition?
3. To what extent do you think there was a "typical" human, individual, or family experience during World War II? Can you identify common aspects of oral accounts uncovered by your classmates? What, if any, generalizations about labor or worker experience may be drawn from discussion of the varied oral histories presented by your classroom research team?
4. What do you think you have learned about workers, their families, and their community as a result of this assignment? How would you compare this type of learning to reading about the history of World War II in a secondary source? After completing this assignment, what is the single most intriguing question about worker life on the home front that you would like to have answered?
5. What did World War II mean to the labor union movement? How did American unionism in your community change as a result of the wartime emergency? What attitudes toward unions, their function, and their contributions to the war effort were evident in your interview? How would you account for (explain) those attitudes?

ACTIVITIES

1. Discuss oral history techniques and procedures with the class and have students work in pairs to practice techniques. Discuss the importance of tape-recording interviews whenever possible.

Instruct each student or pair of students to locate an individual who will have a home-front memory from the period between 1939 and 1945. Students may interview a person who worked in the paid labor force or someone who stayed at home with their family. Students should be provided with or develop interview themes. The focal point of the interviews should be the impact of the war on the individual's work life, workplace experience, or family life.

Send students out in pairs to conduct interviews. Students should tape-record interviews and make field notes. Interviews should be presented by students to the whole group or another audience. Interviews may be transcribed and presented in written form individually or combined in a single report.

2. A variation on this lesson plan theme might involve an assignment requiring students to explore their own family histories through use of the oral history technique. This could be made a semester project in the development of student research skills. Project results might be brought to a closure in a classroom discussion on the social impact of World War II. After discussion of results, students might debate the issue of “typical” wartime experience. It is likely that some will conclude that there were few common experiences; others will disagree.

3. Have students view *The Life and Times of Rosie the Riveter*, paying special attention to the women interviewed. Ask students to write a brief critique of one of the five interviewees’ recollections of the war, focusing on the validity and accuracy of her account. For further perspective, student papers could compare the remembered experience of this “Rosie” with that of the person the student has interviewed. Classroom discussion might explore the varieties of wartime experiences.

SUGGESTED READINGS FOR TEACHERS

Oral History Review. Oral History Association.

Terkel, Studs. *The Good War*~ 1984.

