

The Battle of the Overpass and its Lasting Impact on Labor History

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Day 1: Students will be exploring the Wagner Act which formally allowed for the creation of unions in the United States.

Essential Question:

1. What is the purpose of a union? What are different arguments for and against unionization?
2. How did the Wagner Act of 1936 shape the debate over Unions?

Assessment:

1. Students will be answering a series of questions pertaining to the Wagner Act and Roosevelt's immediate response to the legislation he signed.

Setting the Purpose:

This lesson comes on the heels of a mini-unit about child labor working conditions and takes the content learned there into consideration with the students. In this lesson students will be introduced to unions, the Wagner Act which permitted their organization in the US and the immediate opposition to the Act from titans of industry such as Henry Ford.

- Journal question: Why were the Lowell Mill girls treated so poorly? How could they have improved their working conditions?
- Students will read segments from the Wagner Act and analyze it using document analysis sheet.
- Following the reading of the act, the class will write a paragraph as if they were Roosevelt, making an attempt to interpret how he would have viewed it. Following that, students will actually read his statement following its passage and discuss why he might have felt that way.
- Read over 'Fordisms' with remaining time and explore how Ford viewed unions and discuss what possible problems the Wagner Act might face within the Ford manufacturing plants.

Analysis of Local Primary Sources:

Fordisms: Statements from Ford on Unions and the workplace.

Ties to National Primacy Sources or Sources:

Wagner Act – 1935

President Roosevelt’s Statement on the Wagner Act (aka the National Labor Relations Act)

Annotated List of Materials and Resources:

<http://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?doc=67> - Our Documents website. This link profiles the National Labor Relations Act (AKA The Wagner Act)

<http://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=true&doc=67&page=pdf> - Download text of Wagner Act. (When you download the .pdf, you will see Roosevelt’s response.)

Riverrouge.1-2.jpg – Fordisms (quotes from Ford that are revealing in his attitude toward labor).