Labor Movements of the Gilded Age

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| 1842 | *Commonwealth v. Hunt* | Legalized labor unions, which tended to be small and limited to skilled trades. |
| 1877 | *Munn v. Illinois* | States passed pro-farming legislation known as the Grange Laws. The railroads challenged these laws, but the Supreme Court ruled that private property was subject to government regulations when property was devoted to the public interest. |
| 1877 | Great Railroad Strike | A large number of workers went on strike because of wage cuts. After a month of strikes, President Hayes sent troops to stop the rioting. The worst violence was in Pittsburgh, with over 40 people killed by militiamen. |
| 1886 | Haymarket Square Riot | 100,000 workers rioted in Chicago. After the police fired into the crowd, the workers met and rallied to protest police brutality. A bomb exploded, killing or injuring many of the police. The Chicago workers and the man who set the bomb were immigrants, so the incident promoted anti-immigrant feelings and general opposition to labor unions. |
| 1886 | *Wabash, St. Louis and Pacific Railroad Co. v. Illinois* | The Supreme Court ruled that individual states had no power to regulate interstate commerce; responsibility rested with the Federal government. |

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| 1892 | Homestead Strike | The workers at a steel plant in Pennsylvania went on strike after their hours were increased and their wages were cut. The strike forced the owner to close down the mill and the workers blocked scabs from entering the facility. The strike was broken when the owners hired Pinkerton detectives to remove the strikers. 15 people were killed and 150 were wounded in the violence. |
| 1894 | Pullman Strike | Workers of the American Rail Union in Chicago railcar factory went on strike after their wages by more than 30% while maintaining rent prices in the company town. The strike led to a slow down in the delivery of mail across the country to which President Cleveland sent in federal troops to end the strike declaring, “if it takes the entire army and navy to deliver a postal card in Chicago, that card will be delivered.” |
| 1869 | Knights of Labor | Early labor union led by Terence Powderly that sought to create one big union of all workers, skilled and unskilled. The organization eventually dissolved after it was wrongfully associated with the anarchist movement. |
| 1886 | American Federation of Labor (AFL) | Organized by Samuel Gompers for skilled workers only. It focused on “bread and butter” issues such as higher wages, shorter hours, safer working conditions, and the institution of closed shops. |
| 1887 | Interstate Commerce Act | it forbid Railroads  to form pooling agreements to charge more for a short haul than for a long haul under the same conditions and same traffic to grant rebates. |
| 1890 | Sherman Anti-Trust Act | Created in response to the public demand to for curbing excesses of trusts. It was used most effectively to control labor unions rather than businesses early on.  |
| 1873 | Slaughterhouse Case | Protected businesses from federal regulation if they engaged only in intrastate commerce (within a state) |
| 1866 | National Labor Union | Led by William Sylvis, it sought to bring together skilled craft unions and focused on social reforms including an 8-hour workday, which it eventually won for government workers.  |
| 1913 | Clayton Anti-Trust Act | Exempted unions from Sherman Antitrust provisions. |
| 1867 | The Grange | Organized to provide farmers with social and educational activities in sparsely populated areas of the Midwest and South. They also actively pursued the establishment of laws giving state governments the right to regulate railroads rates and storage fees charged by the railroads. |
| 1894 | Coxey’s Army | Unemployed workers marched on Washington DC demanding the government relieve unemployment by creating public works programs and increasing the money supply. 500 of the protestors were arrested in Washington for walking on the grass. |