Lecture 2.9: Progressive Politics, Labor, and WWI

* Politics and labor more concretely

Knights of labor replaced with American Federation of Labor (AFL)

* Era of industrial conflict
* Next prominent labor org
* Only focused on white, male, skilled laborers 🡪 change from knights who were opened to immigrant groups
* Because if there’s skilled labor, you’re the least replaceable 🡪 more negotiation power
* Union of the elite of working class
* Samuel Gompers 🡪 goal is to make unions seem less intimidating
  + Less stressed (less worry about things like Haymarket riot)
  + Push negotiation rather than striking
  + Person to person, group to group
  + Able to do to some degree, but only focused on most valuable laborers
  + Not worried about the children working in bad conditions

Industrial Workers of the World:

* More international focused labor group
* Known as the “Wobblies”
* Goal is to create one big labor group with women, children, immigrants, anybody really
* Divided by what skill/craft you’re in, but in general working for all groups
* Mostly racially integrated
* Whole stance
  + Eroding “sexual, racial, and ethnic divisions”
  + Can’t bring in like Chinese laborers for instance if we’ve allied with Chinese laborers too
* Two camps:
  + Socialists: Eugene Debs
    - They are working to make change within the system
    - Involved in politics, elections, and voting
  + Anarchists:
    - View political participation as caving to the system
    - Want to advance their cause by direct action 🡪 strikes, sabotage, demonstration, etc

Women’s Unions:

* Major factor in this era and more successful in getting legislation passed
* Seen as needing more special protection
* And, wealthy women tend to be more in support of striking women
* Getting upper class allies always helps
* Some labor leaders thought if we can get people to pass laws for women, we can get laws passed for men later on
* Two groups:
  + International ladies’ garment workers union, 1900
    - Jewish and Italian women banding together
  + Women’s trade union league, 1903
    - Elite financial support
    - More access to publicity
    - Cross-class (not just middle and upper class support)
* Multiple successful strikes by women happening

Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire, 1911:

* Big setback for laborers
* In NYC
* Multi-story factory making textile material
* Air is full of cloth particles
* Whole thing is full of cloth
* Fire codes that did exist were ignored (exits were blocked to prevent unauthorized breaks)
* No fire extinguishers/alarms
* When it caught fire, building just went up in flames, no way to get out because doors are all blocked
* Women in top floors either burn to death or jump out the window (this is front page news)
* People demand reform 🡪 that could’ve been somebody I know, this is not okay
* Finally get the creation of Bureau of Fire
  + Goal was to establish and investigate proper safety measures in workplaces for fire
  + Sprinklers, fire drills, fire extinguishers, etc
  + But also major tragedy 🡪 why did 150 women have to die for people to do something about it
* Takes a lot of effort for gov to do things
* Not completely sitting on their hands, though
* They pass….

Clayton anti-trust Act, 1914:

* This regulates monopolies
* If own all textile factories in NYC, then even if you were unhappy with factory conditions before the fire, where do you go? One of my other factories?
* Allows factories to get away with anything because theres minimized competition, you own all the other jobs somebody is qualified to do
* Four different bans
  + Charging different prices to customers
  + Non-complete clauses
    - If you were to buy something from a business, you would have to sign a contract that says you can’t buy that product from any other business
  + Harmful mergers
    - Mergers are acquisition that would minimize competition again
  + Having one person directing 2+ competing companies
    - One person can’t have this power
* Three of these things were part of Sherman anti-trust
* Biggest difference between the two:
  + Gives gov authority to approve/block these mergers before they happen
  + Gov can say no, its not something that has to be undone later on
  + Enforceable and preventative compared to just reactive

Teddy!, 1901-09

* Not just foreign policy
* Was actually a wealthy NY reformer
  + Embodiment of progressive era
  + Part of republican party (not a lot of dem presidents rn)
* Used to serve as police commissioner, NYC
* Gov of NY
* Republican party didn’t want him as pres
* They made him McKinley’s running mate in 1900 election bc they wanted him out of the way
* Other people (political machines) didn’t want him reforming things
* MK gets assassinated (less than a year into second term), then teddy becomes president
* He is not radical, despite his reputation (in the middle of conservative/reformist views)
* In terms of business:
  + Anti-monopoly, but differentiates between good and bad monopolies
* First pres to intervene on behalf of strikers in history of country
* Becomes very popular (teddy bear)
* Reelected in 1904🡪 significant popular vote win compared to narrow elections previously
* His successor that he handpicked: William Howard Taft

Taft, 1909-13:

* Tries to be moderate, but not super successful
* Get notes idk what happens here

Teddy hates him, launches a campaign against him:

* Starts the Progressive Party, 1912, but this is called the “Bull Moose” Party bc people think he’s running around like bull moose
* Teddy with progressive party, taft with republican party, Wilson with democratic party
* This means republican votes are SPLIT
* DEMS WIN (obviously)
* Utah the only real one
* Democrat Woodrow Wilson (2nd since civil war) president my gosh

Wilson, 1913-21:

* 2 terms
* 1st president to marry in office
* First to hold a movie screening at the white house
* Big white supremacist 🡪 the movie glorified the KKK (Birth of Nation)
* That moral diplomacy thing
* Biggest issue: outbreak of WWI

US Neutrality:

* War breaks out in 1914 🡪 Wilson first advocates for neutrality with a caveat
* When war breaks out, people needs supplies, uniforms, etc
* Europe needs these things! Ask the US for it! US won’t say no 🡪 we don’t want to fight, but we want money! Business! Economic boom!
* Technically neutral, but selling supplies to UK and France
  + Bombs, weapons, etc, sometimes on passenger vessels
  + Which is why, in 1915, the Lusitania gets sunk by German submarines (1k+ passengers died including Americans)
  + Upsets a lot of people
* Ongoing debate 🡪 (because of this) we should attack, we should get involved, etc
* Americans die, people want to do something about it
* Massive debate over whether the US should get involved 🡪 people dying in the millions in Europe, over here, people are debating what to do
* Neutrality 🡪 biggest issue of 1916 election (hotter and hotter every week)

Election of 1916:

* Neutrality 🡪 biggest issue of 1916 election (hotter and hotter every week)
* Wilson runs on the slogan “he kept us out of war” 🡪 we’ll keep being neutral
* And he wins, by a decent margin
* April of 1917 🡪 he joins the war smh (literally two months in)

Joining WWI, 1917:

* Lots of factors that push Wilson
* Unrestricted submarine warfare (Germany resumes this in 1917) 🡪 won’t check if it’s a civilian ship
  + Enemy’s ship, will just shoot it
  + People mad, hurting Americans
* Germany sends Zimmerman Telegram to Mexico 🡪 remember how US stole half your land, if you help us, we’ll help you get your land back
  + US intercepts it
  + Mexico probably wasn’t going to take them up on it, but it’s scary because it’s bringing war to US borders
* Bolshevik Revolution happens in Russia
  + Overthrows the csar 🡪 if a Russian autocrat is no longer in power, then Russia is out of the war and we can ally with UK and other people
  + We couldn’t ally with Russia before because it’s hypocritical to ally with an autocrat to fight for democracy
* Wilson pushing for safe democracy
* In April 6, 1917 🡪 he convinces Congress to declare war
  + House: 383-50
  + Senate: 82-6
  + Pretty popular decision

WWI and Free Speech:

* Free speech is major issue on home front
* Create Committee on Public Info 🡪 massive propaganda campaign, you must be loyal to the US, convince people to support war, threaten if you don’t
* Two laws passed
  + Espionage Act:
    - Illegal to support enemies and hurt the US
  + Sedition Act:
    - Crime to speak against the war, draft, president, or anybody involved
* People get jailed for criticizing president, the US, etc
* Creates massive anti-German sentiment in the US
  + If you don’t support, you suck

Wilson’s Fourteen Points:

* People starting to talk about what happens after the war
* Famous speech outlining his ideas for a more democratic world
  + New boundaries based on self-determination
    - Ending secret treaties, access to the ocean, etc
  + All just realigning international borders really

Armistice:

* US fights in WWi for less than 19 months
* Lot of speculation that allies would have won even if the US hadn’t gotten involved
* 1918 🡪 Austria-Hungary sues for peace and abandon Germany
* Ottoman empire gone, Germany by itself
* They agree to an armistice on Nov. 11, 1918 (now veterans day)
  + End of the war, theoretically
  + What ends the war: Treaty of Versailles

Treaty of Versailles:

* War is ended, but have to figure out how to sort out the messes
* Wilson travels to Europe to negotiate but fails mostly
* Britain + France insisted that Germany pay reparations for all of the things they did on the war
  + 55 billion in 1921 dollars
  + Want to make A-H and Germany pay
  + Germany only ever pays of 9 bil and economy is in shambles to pay
* Some people gain independence, mostly in eastern Europe
  + Get lots of new countries, people breaking off, etc
* Many other countries did not gain independence
  + Ottoman empire (German ally)
  + Carving up Ottoman empire or smth like that
* Ignore other colonized people
* Young Vietnam person (Ho Chi Minh) 🡪 asks for independence, but Wilson didn’t respond
* Lays the ground for Vietnamese war
* Allies do agree to the League of Nations (weak)
  + But, people are scared to give up power
  + I don’t want to give up decision making power
  + Wilson wants this, Senate says no
  + US rejects it, rejects Treaty of Versailles
* Wilson had a stroke 🡪 his wife and doctor hid it from the country
* Basically, Edith ran the country in 1920

Impact war has on labor:

* Initial joining of WWI benefits labor
* Huge economic boom 🡪 need people to make the supplies that are being sold and used
* Gov passes wage and price controls 🡪 because we need those workers! Be patriotic!
* Workers get a boost from this bc trying to keep up with production in war
* UNLESS, you’re part of the IWW
  + They are firmly against WWI
  + Socialist org, should not be fighting wars for empires
  + They are viewed as traitors, suspicious, arrested under the Espionage Act
  + Gets beaten up essentially

The Red Scare:

* Even when war ends, there is major fear over socialism, communism, etc
* War ends, price and wage controls go away
* When wages and benefits get cut, workers strike, record-breaking amount
* Why should we go back to having less?
* IWW general strike that shut down the city of Seattle
* If you combine that with fear of the B Revolution, communism, etc, 🡪 worried about radical socialist/communist ideology
* We have to get rid of this
* Gov launches huge wave of deportation (mostly immigrants) who are suspected to have ties with socialism
  + “Palmer Raids”
  + If you are somehow associated with socialism + we are worried, we will deport you
  + Includes Americans stripped of citizenship
* Might be targeted based on ethnic background
* Sparks formation of ACLU in 1920
* Created to fight against people being stripped of citizenship