Inside the Factory

Labor tactics, company responses, and competing ideas

USH.C.4.2.F "Explain growing labor unrest and industry's reactions by describing the use of sit-down strikes and court injunctions and examining why socialism and communism appealed to labor."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two hardships that fueled labor unrest, circle how Flint workers made their strike effective, number the court-order responses in Pullman and Flint, and box the reasons socialism and communism appealed to some workers.

When Workers Stayed Put

1 In the late 1800s and early 1900s, factories brought jobs but also long hours, dangerous machinery, and little say over wages. Employers could dismiss workers who demanded changes. Workers organized unions to bargain together, yet some companies refused to negotiate and hired replacement workers during strikes. Companies also sought **court injunctions**, judges' orders directing people to stop particular actions. During the 1894 Pullman strike, a federal injunction barred union leaders from interfering with trains carrying U.S. mail. When union leader Eugene V. Debs defied the order, he was jailed. An injunction could turn a labor dispute into a legal battle.

2 Decades later, the Great Depression intensified workers' worries about layoffs and pay. In December 1936, employees at General Motors plants in Flint, Michigan, began a **sit-down strike**: instead of leaving the factory, they stopped work and stayed inside. Occupying the plants made it harder for the company to bring in replacement workers or move equipment. General Motors sought court orders to remove the strikers, while police clashed with workers outside a plant. Supporters brought food to those inside. In February 1937, General Motors agreed to recognize the United Auto Workers as the bargaining representative for its members.

3 The battles over wages and control also led some workers to consider broader changes to the economy. **Socialism** appealed to people who believed that public or worker control of major industries could make wages and working conditions fairer. **Communism** appealed to some who wanted workers to replace capitalism with a society without private ownership of major productive property or economic classes. Communist organizers helped build some unions during the 1930s, but most union members were not communists. These ideas offered different answers to a shared question: Why should factory owners hold so much power when workers produced the goods?

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Why might workers facing the conditions in the first paragraph have organized unions, and how could an injunction weaken a strike?

2. How did staying inside the Flint plants increase workers' leverage, and how did General Motors respond?

3. What purpose did court orders serve during both the Pullman and Flint strikes? Identify one difference in what the orders targeted.

4. How might socialism and communism each have appealed to workers frustrated by factory owners' power? Include a difference between the two ideas.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a five-sentence note to workers at a fictional auto plant in 1937 who are considering a sit-down strike. Explain one workplace concern, how the tactic could give workers leverage, how owners might use an injunction, and why socialism or communism might appeal to some workers without suggesting that all union members share that view.

ANSWER KEY

Inside the Factory

HIGH SCHOOL · USH.C.4.2.F

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two hardships that fueled labor unrest, circle how Flint workers made their strike effective, number the court-order responses in Pullman and Flint, and box the reasons socialism and communism appealed to some workers. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Why might workers facing the conditions in the first paragraph have organized unions, and how could an injunction weaken a strike?	**Workers could bargain together for better wages and safer conditions. An injunction could restrict strike actions and expose those who defied it to legal penalties.**
2	How did staying inside the Flint plants increase workers' leverage, and how did General Motors respond?	**Staying inside made it harder to bring in replacements or move equipment. General Motors sought court orders to remove the strikers and later recognized the union as bargaining representative for its members.**
3	What purpose did court orders serve during both the Pullman and Flint strikes? Identify one difference in what the orders targeted.	**Both restricted workers' strike activity. The Pullman injunction barred interference with mail trains, while the Flint orders sought to remove workers from the plants.**
4	How might socialism and communism each have appealed to workers frustrated by factory owners' power? Include a difference between the two ideas.	**Socialism offered public or worker control of major industries to improve fairness. Communism proposed replacing capitalism with a society without private ownership of major productive property or economic classes.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Our plant has cut pay while asking us to keep up the same production pace. If we stop work but stay inside, the company may have trouble bringing in replacements or moving its machines. Management might seek a court injunction ordering us to leave, and ignoring it could bring legal penalties. Some coworkers find socialism appealing because they want workers or the public to control major industries and make decisions about pay. Others may favor communism's goal of ending private ownership of major productive property, but joining a union does not mean accepting either idea.

Accept other passage-supported hardships and accurate descriptions of worker leverage. The note should apply the ideas to a fictional plant rather than present every union member as a socialist or communist.