



For the Greatest Good: Progressive and Labor Movements in Oklahoma

Inquiry Design Model (IDM) Blueprint™

Oklahoma History Center Museum Learning and Education Department

Compelling Question

How do people with very little money or power impact decision-making?

Standards and Practices

OKH.4.4 Describe and summarize attempts to create a state constitution joining Indian and Oklahoma Territories, including the impact of the Progressive and Labor Movements, resulting in statehood on November 16, 1907.

Practice 1. Engage in the Democratic Process

1.B.9-12.2 Analyze the role of informed and responsible citizens in their political systems and provide examples of changes in civic participation over time.

Practice 3. Acquire, Apply, and Evaluate Evidence

3.A.9-12.6 Assess the significance and impact of individuals and groups throughout local, national, tribal, and world history, tracing the continuity of past events to the present.

Staging the Question

Think about the rules/laws you follow every single day. There are probably a couple of rules/laws that seem silly, inconvenient, or unfair. If you really wanted to change one of these rules/laws, how could you go about it?

Teachers will guide discussion and write down responses. Save the responses so you can compare them later. While there are no “right” answers, an answer that advances the idea of working together is central to this inquiry.

Teachers will explain to students that throughout American history, groups without wealth or power still significantly impacted the laws that govern them. The teacher can see if students are familiar with any groups from the past that have done this.

The teacher can share with students that they will examine an example of how groups with very little wealth or power in Oklahoma managed to get the constitution they wanted.

Supporting Question 1

What challenges did a large percentage of residents of the Twin Territories face prior to statehood?

Formative Performance Task

Teachers will divide students into groups. Some groups will read about farmers, and some groups will read about unions.

Students will read “Farming Culture in Oklahoma” from *Tenant Farming* or “The Early Labor Movement in Oklahoma.” They will summarize the article and share it with the class.

Featured Sources

- “Farming Culture in Oklahoma” and “Agricultural Unions,” *Tenant Farming*, Oklahoma History Center Education Department
- “The Early Labor Movement in Oklahoma,” Oklahoma History Center Education Department

Supporting Question 2

What were the Shawnee Demands?

Formative Performance Task

Teachers may choose to divide students into groups or have them work individually. Responses can take the form of a discussion on shared sticky notes or a formal paragraph. Teachers will likely need to be prepared to actively facilitate the activity as students will likely be challenged on concepts and wording. See background information.

Students will read the newspaper article, “Farmers and Organized Labor Outline Campaign Policies,” from *The Edmond Sun*, September 19, 1906. Each student or group will explain what benefits each demand offered.

Featured Sources

- [The Edmond Sun, September 19, 1906](http://gateway.okhistory.org/ark:/67531/metadc150066/). gateway.okhistory.org/ark:/67531/metadc150066/

Supporting Question 3

What methods and arguments did farmers and unions use to influence the Constitutional Convention?

Formative Performance Task

Teachers will divide the class into groups. The teacher will assign articles from the sources list to the groups. The teacher will make a t-chart labeled “Methods” and “Arguments” on the board where students can add their answers.

Students will read the articles. They will discuss with their group members whether the source presents a method farmers and workers used (a specific technique) or an argument for why the constitution should be written to conform to the Shawnee Demands. Some articles will include both a method and an argument; others may have one or the other.

Featured Sources

- ["Announcement \(last paragraph\)," Ward M. Fowler, *The Trade Bulletin*, September 8, 1906, p. 8.](https://gateway.okhistory.org/ark:/67531/metadc127894/) gateway.okhistory.org/ark:/67531/metadc127894/
- ["D. C. Lewis," Nora I. Krogh, *Oklahoma State Labor News*, September 28, 1906, p. 1.](https://gateway.okhistory.org/ark:/67531/metadc127894/) gateway.okhistory.org/ark:/67531/metadc127894/
- ["Paul Nesbitt's Letter to the Editor," C.C. Worrall, *The Daily Chief* \(Hobart\), September 6, 1906, p. 3.](https://gateway.okhistory.org/ark:/67531/metadc186653/) gateway.okhistory.org/ark:/67531/metadc186653/
- ["Notice to Union Men," W. F. Sylvester, *The Sulphur News*, September 21, 1906, p. 1.](https://gateway.okhistory.org/ark:/67531/metadc1814192/) gateway.okhistory.org/ark:/67531/metadc1814192/
- ["Organized Labor Meet," W.F. Sylvester, *The Sulphur News*, September 28, 1906, p. 1.](https://gateway.okhistory.org/ark:/67531/metadc1814193/) gateway.okhistory.org/ark:/67531/metadc1814193/
- ["Farmer's Union," W. F. Sylvester, *The Sulphur News*, September 28, 1906, p. 1.](https://gateway.okhistory.org/ark:/67531/metadc1814193/) gateway.okhistory.org/ark:/67531/metadc1814193/
- ["Compulsory Education," Nora I. Krogh, *Oklahoma State Labor News*, September 14, 1906, p. 2.](https://gateway.okhistory.org/ark:/67531/metadc154734/) gateway.okhistory.org/ark:/67531/metadc154734/
- ["For the Unorganized," Nora I. Krogh, *Oklahoma State Labor News*, September 14, 1906, p. 2.](https://gateway.okhistory.org/ark:/67531/metadc154734/) gateway.okhistory.org/ark:/67531/metadc154734/
- ["A Legal Eight-Hour Work Day," Nora I. Krogh, *Oklahoma State Labor News*, September 14, 1906, p. 2.](https://gateway.okhistory.org/ark:/67531/metadc154734/) gateway.okhistory.org/ark:/67531/metadc154734/
- ["Direct Legislation," Nora I. Krogh, *Oklahoma State Labor News*, September 14, 1906, p. 2.](https://gateway.okhistory.org/ark:/67531/metadc154734/) gateway.okhistory.org/ark:/67531/metadc154734/
- ["Possibility for the Union—Daylight Breaking," *The Labor Signal*, September 6, 1906, p. 3.](https://gateway.okhistory.org/ark:/67531/metadc121791/) gateway.okhistory.org/ark:/67531/metadc121791/
- ["Laws for Labor," Nora I. Krogh, *Oklahoma State Labor News*, September 21, 1906, p. 1.](https://gateway.okhistory.org/ark:/67531/metadc154735/) gateway.okhistory.org/ark:/67531/metadc154735/
- ["John Burrows Letter to the Editor," *The Labor Signal*, September 6, 1906, p. 1.](https://gateway.okhistory.org/ark:/67531/metadc121791/) gateway.okhistory.org/ark:/67531/metadc121791/

Summative Performance Task

Argument

Students will answer this modification of the compelling question: What was the most important factor in groups without power or wealth in having an opportunity to impact the creation of the state constitution?

Extension

Students can investigate if the farmers and workers were successful in their effort to shape the Oklahoma Constitution.

Taking Informed Action

Students can create an action campaign for a more recent or current social movement. They will summarize the movement (who is involved, what do they want, what have they done, how successful they are thus far) and then create a plan of action for the group for the next six months to a year.

The Early Labor Movement in Oklahoma

After the Civil War, the United States forced treaties on the Five Tribes that led to the construction of railroads across Indian Territory. When this process began in the late 1870s, railroads interested in local access to coal worked with the Choctaw and Chickasaw Nations to gain access to the rich coal deposits located in their territory. In addition, the Native nations began cooperating with individuals interested in mining in the territory. Individuals received mine leases and needed workers to work them. Throughout the last 25 years of the 1800s, immigration to the United States from all over the world continued at a rapid pace and some of those individuals made their way to Indian Territory. The first wave of mine workers were from Great Britain and Ireland. These workers had seen unions gain a position of power within their countries of origin. When faced with challenges, these workers encouraged other mine workers to organize and work together.

Coal miners and their families faced many challenges. Demand for coal rapidly increased as it became the primary fuel for factories, railroads, and homes during this period. Extremely hazardous conditions existed in and around the mines. The way the leasing system worked in Indian Territory caused mine owners to have little incentive to develop the mine over time and purchase safety equipment. The most profitable option for mine owners under the system in place was to quickly extract the coal using workers who had no safety protections or labor-saving machines to help them. Accidents were frequent. At the end of the century, 2.6 people died daily in the coal fields in the country, and Indian Territory mines were considered the most dangerous in the nation. Mine explosions were a common occurrence. Death and permanent injury affected a significant portion of workers over time.



Figure 1. Headline from the *Oklahoma Labor Unit*, March 30, 1912

Owners paid miners only for the amount of coal extracted per day but did not pay for any of the other tasks that moving the fuel required. Many worked for less than \$2 a day. Coal miners did not receive actual cash as wages—they received something called scrip, which are coupons the company printed that could be used as money in their community. From the wages they received, workers gave back a significant amount of pay to the mine owners for their rent in company housing, their

supplies, fuel in the expensive company store, and to the company doctor if they had an ailment or injury.

Some coal miners began organizing as Knights of Labor in the late 1880s and early 1890s. In 1884, the miners went on strike and earned several concessions, including a nine-hour workday and a wage of \$2.50 per day. In 1894, mine owners announced they were cutting pay by 25 percent, justifying the cut with the false statement that they had lost customers. Coal miners signed on to the strike, numbering in the thousands throughout Choctaw and Chickasaw Nations. As the strike wore on into the second month, the Choctaw Nation requested that troops be sent to evict the striking workers.

In June, soldiers came into Indian Territory and forcibly evicted over 300 listed by the coal companies as striking workers. A significant amount of violence was used to force these families onto the boxcars that would take them to Arkansas. Most of the 350 families returned to where they had been removed. At the end of July, the companies came to an agreement with the union. They reduced wages by 20 percent, which was mostly a small gesture rather than a major victory, but they also agreed to cut some prices for the workers.



Figure 2. Mine No. 9 railhead loading station located in McAlester, Indian Territory (7240, Oklahoma Historical Society Photograph Collection, OHS).

The Knights of Labor experienced their peak with the 1894 strike. In just a few years, the United Mine Workers of America of the American Federation of Labor replaced the Knights as the major organizer of mine workers. They struck in late 1898. Although difficult at first, the strike gained momentum and spread to Kansas, Texas, and Arkansas. Eventually, the strike included 30 percent of coal workers in the nation. In an odd twist, they were assisted by a judge's injunction preventing the company from bringing various workers (called scabs) to replace the strikers, including convict labor. An injunction is an order by a court to either stop doing something or to continue to do something. Violating an injunction can result in criminal punishment and civil penalties. Although the companies did bring in some replacements, the injunction limited them. In August, several mine

companies came to an agreement with the United Mine Workers in a major victory for the union and workers. They received union recognition, an eight-hour workday, and payment for other tasks.

Unions in other crafts formed as more non-Indian residents came into the Twin Territories after the openings and found work. Carpenters, plasterers, garment workers, printers, teamsters, and launderers all organized unions.

Numerous publications shared information of interest to unionized workers, including *The Labor Signal* and *The Oklahoma State Labor News*. Railroad workers formed several different craft unions, and the wages they paid to the unions made negotiation a preferred tactic of employers as the unions' strike fund was full. In 1903, most of these craft unions came together to form the Twin-Territorial Federation of Labor (after statehood, the Oklahoma State Federation of Labor). The Twin-Territorial Federation of Labor, under the leadership of former miner Peter Hanraty, was a major force in the writing of the Shawnee Demands and the effort to get them adopted into the State Constitution.

Background Information

Industrialization

During the 1800s, the United States transformed in a variety of ways. The most important change was the change in how goods were made. In the 1700s, things people needed were often created by themselves or by craftspeople who had the skill to make the object well. Most everything was made by hand, and there were few factories in the colonies. Most people knew a little about many different things, such as agriculture, food preservation, building furniture, making cloth, constructing buildings, and slaughtering animals. In the early 1800s, engineers began experimenting with building machines using steam power that allowed objects to be built more quickly, more precisely, and with less cost. At first, steam power fueled major changes in transportation and textiles (making cloth), a time-consuming chore that reduced the amount of other work the person spinning cloth could do. Over time, knowledge was built to the point that people were able to make very complicated machines such as railroad engines. People began applying the idea of using powered machines to almost everything their society needed.

Doing this reorganized society, from the work people did, how they did that work, who did the work, how they acquired the items needed, and the degree to which people could acquire the items they needed and wanted. The Civil War (1861–65) sped up this process. This process of using machines to make goods is called industrialization. After half a century of change, life in the late 1800s was very different than at the beginning of the 1800s. Most everyone had some part of their lives improved by this process, but there were also challenges. These challenges were not evenly distributed, and survival for some groups of workers became very difficult. These people tried many things to try and improve their lives. Over time, people began forming groups so they could work together. Sometimes they were successful, and sometimes they failed. By the last quarter of the century, many groups began to agree that the best solution to the problems they faced was to empower the government to place rules on how companies operated and to support the people who suffered the most from industrialization.

Agriculture

No sector of the economy was as drastically impacted by the Civil War as agriculture. In the south, a system of sharecropping and tenant farming replaced the enslaved labor system that existed before

the war. Landowners hired farmers, often the people they had enslaved, to work the land. As rent, the farmers gave the owner a portion of the crop. A tenant farming family had to give a smaller amount of the crop because they had tools and seed.

Sharecroppers did not and had to pay a larger portion, sometimes up to 70 percent of their cash crop. One of the biggest issues to develop from this system was the crop-lien system, a system of credit with the other part of the crop as payment that farmers used to survive to the harvest. Most of these landless farmers ended up in debt for the rest of their lives. Overproduction, inflated prices, and cheating merchants made it virtually impossible for tenant farmers and sharecroppers to get out from under their debt.

Industrialization further transformed how people grew the food and fiber the nation needed. The major issue facing landowning farmers in the last half of the 19th century (and into the 1930s) was the challenge of overproduction.

Farmers took out loans to purchase machines that helped them increase their yields. The problem lay in the fact that large, rapid increases in production meant supply exceeded demand, so prices fell. Farmers made more and earned less. This meant they had a difficult time paying for the loans they took out for the machines that helped them increase their production. In the south, overproduction was also an issue, even though that region did not industrialize agriculture as heavily. The punishing burden of debt convinced farmers that they needed to plant more and more of the cash crop so that they would be able to pay off their debts. When all the farming families in a region did this, both landed and landless, a rapid supply increase exceeded demand, and the price fell. They often grew so much of the cash crop, usually cotton, that they sacrificed space to grow their own food and ended up needing to purchase food to survive from the merchant they already owed under the crop lien system. The debt burden increased as overproduction became worse.

Important movements

Unions

Craft guilds existed for a long time in the United States, but the union movement in the United States began after the Civil War. The transformation in how things were manufactured created more workers overall, more workers working in close proximity to each other, and deplorable conditions for many workers. Workers developed into early critics of how the process of industrialization took place in the US. Most workers responded to bad conditions by quitting and finding another place to work. Over time, workers began working together to push back against management and get them to change the working environment, pay, or expectations. They organized into unions, which is a group of workers that cooperate to achieve their goals. The way they organized varied. Some workers adopted the older tradition of organizing according to their specific job, such as cigar makers, railway porters, or typesetters. All the people who did this work were in a union, and people who did other work could not join that union. This is called craft unionism. A newer approach—industrial unions—developed during this time, even if they were not widely adopted. An industrial union organizes everyone in an industry into a union, such as a railroad, slaughterhouse, or textile workers.

Unions used several different tactics to get what they wanted. They used simple negotiation, boycotts, and picketing. Their ultimate weapon, the strike, had workers stop working to show employers they could not function without workers. In the late 19th century, there were few rules

about how employers could treat workers. During time of union unrest, many employers hired people to use violence against union leaders and to frighten other workers back to work. The Pinkerton detective agency is well known for this kind of work. If the workers had jobs that did not require a lot of training, the employers might hire scabs, or people willing to cross a picket line, during a strike.

Union workers sometimes responded to scabs or Pinkertons with violence. Most of the time, unions wanted the employer to recognize that the union represented the workers. They also pushed for better hours, wages, and working conditions.

Although unions would grow large and powerful in the next century, during the late nineteenth century, unions seldom found themselves victorious over employers. The public, irritated at the inconveniences they faced because of a strike, very often pressured the government into intervening in the conflict. When they did, they supported the employers and consistently helped break the strike, forcing a loss on the union. It was common for law enforcement officers and the military to be used against striking workers. As a result, workers not trust the government to intervene in the economy and thought they would be more successful if they could just unionize more people.

Farmer-Centered Movements

The Grange

In 1867, Oliver Kelley, a Department of Agriculture employee, noticed how isolated the farmers he worked with were. He began organizing opportunities for farmers to talk to each other. A permanent organization named The Grange developed from these efforts. The Grange began as a way to socialize, but in a short time, farmers were using the organization to achieve economic and political goals. They organized cooperative groups of farmers to buy and sell as a bloc, forcing merchants to negotiate with a group that did not undercut each other. They purchased supplies, such as flour, seed, and tools, together to lower the unit price of the item. Most importantly, the Grange offered farmers an organization to change the government. Grange farmers pushed the government to become more active and intervene in economic activities when the size of corporation had grown so large negotiation became impossible, such as railroads or granaries. The Grange reflected the concerns of landowning farmers. Many farmers during this time believed that large companies acted unfairly and paid off government officials to look the other way. The organization pushed for “Granger” laws that protected landowning farmers from both large corporations and actions by tenants that could hurt the landowner. For example, one Granger law that passed prevented farmers from selling cotton after nightfall. This law was designed to keep tenants from selling part of their harvest before they split the crop for rent. The most important Granger law centered on the idea of a government being able to limit the rates railroads charged for shipping. The Granger laws introduced the idea of permanent government regulation of the economy. The impact of the Grange cannot be overstated.

The Grange maintained a strong presence in Indian Territory after the openings and for some time after statehood.

The Farmers Alliance

The Grange remained popular, but another organization led farmers’ efforts for reform in the 1880s. The Farmers Alliance in the 1880s was actually three different organizations: an integrated northern alliance, a southern white alliance, and an alliance for African Americans. The Farmers Alliance also

had economic and political goals. Like the Grange, the Farmers Alliance organized cooperatives for the farming families that were members. They operated stores that undercut the merchants who benefitted from the crop-lien system. They were able to purchase supplies at a lower price than the usual merchants. They built mills cooperatively and saved money paying for the processing of their crops thereafter. The alliance advocated changes in the crop-lien system. They also wanted an income tax, government-owned crop warehouses, and government loans on those crops. They wanted silver to be added to the economy so that farmers could more easily pay off their debts. They sought an alliance with unions and advocated for an eight-hour workday. In the 1880s, the Farmers Alliance would select politicians from the Democrats or Republicans to support. After some success in the elections of 1890, the Farmers Alliance decided to form their own party—the Populist Party.

The Farmers Alliance was active and popular in Indian Territory after the land openings.

Political Groups

Populists

The Populist (or People's) Party was organized in 1892 in Cincinnati, Ohio, because some Farmers' Alliance candidates performed well in the 1890 elections. Farmers from the South and West made up most of the membership. The Populists believed that the government at all levels had been captured by wealthy corporations and no longer reflected the will of the people. They believed in removing the corruption in government and then using the government to protect farmers and workers from powerful corporations. Their specific suggestions included:

- Adopting the initiative, referendum, recall, and secret ballot to allow the people to have more say in what happens
- Government takeover of the railroads
- Government should run warehouses where farmers can store their product until they can get a good price (subtreasury plan)
- Post offices should offer bank services, and private, national banks should be prohibited
- Adding silver to the currency system, so more money can circulate in the economy and make it easier for debtors to pay their debts

Populists hoped to attract urban workers who, they believed, were also exploited by the same corporations that made their lives difficult. They supported the eight-hour workday, limits on immigration, and the abolition of the Pinkertons, a private group that used force against labor unions. In the South, the Populists briefly argued poor white Democrats and poor Black Republicans should be voting for the People's Party. This provoked a huge backlash, and efforts to disenfranchise Blacks completely began throughout the South. The Populist presidential candidate in 1892 received almost 9 percent of the vote—a strong performance for a third party in the US. The party also elected several Congressional representatives and many more at the state and local levels, especially in the West. In 1896, the Democrats, with William Jennings Bryan as their candidate, adopted several Populist positions. Voters were forced to choose between a weak third party or one of the two primary parties in the US, with both having similar platforms. Practicality won out, and the Populist party rapidly fell in power and reach.

Voters in Indian Territory proved to be strong supporters of Populists at different levels of government.

Progressives

The “progressives” were not a party. There were progressive Democrats (Woodrow Wilson) and progressive Republicans (Theodore Roosevelt, Robert LaFollette).^{*} This loose group of reformers shared a belief that the government should be empowered and tasked with regulating and monitoring corporate behavior. Prominent progressives often came from the upper and middle classes. They had the leisure time and money to read widely, such as Ida Tarbell’s investigation of the corruption of Standard Oil and the photographs of Jacob Riis showing the desperation of tenement life. Offended by the violation of their sense of fair play, the progressives moved to use government to protect vulnerable workers, force companies to be honest with their consumers about their products, and intervene in the lives of people who had a difficult time becoming productive citizens. They sought government that was honest, efficient, and fair. The progressives believed, generally, that people fell on a wide spectrum of intelligence and ability. This meant that they often supported laws that protected people they viewed as weaker and vulnerable, such as women and children. They also respected people who possessed expertise on a subject, and they wanted experts involved in government. This belief also meant that most white progressives embraced the racism of their time and thought non-white Americans were lesser than white Americans in some way. They believed that the Populists and other groups further to the left represented a dangerous break from American tradition through their more radical reforms, even though progressives might support some of their specific proposals. The progressives had power and implemented a transformation of the role of government in the United States. They strengthened older laws to take large corporations to court and break them up. They created numerous agencies focused on public health and safety; these agencies had enforcement power. They reordered how the United States pays for its functions and developed a structure that allowed money to flow more freely and widely through the US.

^{*}The Progressive Party, organized by Theodore Roosevelt in 1912, included many progressives, but the party is not what is meant generally when progressives are mentioned.

Many early Indian Territory and Oklahoma politicians would be considered progressives, including Robert Owen and Kate Barnard.

Socialists

Socialists in the United States believed that since industrialization had transformed the way people lived, it made sense to transform the government so that more people could live more comfortable lives in this new environment. They were deeply critical of the exploitation and suffering that industrialization and, in their view, capitalism produced. They believed the time had come to make the common good the reason for producing things instead of for private profit. The Socialist Party, which organized in 1901, was led by Eugene V. Debs, leader of the American Railway Union. Most of the people in the Socialist Party were democratic socialists, which meant they believed they should participate in elections, run candidates for office, and gain power through the electoral process.

They believed that the people should have a powerful impact on how the government ran and wanted those that represented the people in government to be close to their constituents. Eugene V. Debs regularly ran for president. If they did gain power, they proposed that government should take over certain corporations, such as the railroads and steamboat lines. They thought the government should be heavily involved in regulating other companies and have a say in how much they produced and how much they profited. Socialists believed that there should be many strong and powerful unions that would fight for workers to have better working conditions and better pay.

Socialists generally believed that the racism that existed in society was a way to separate Black and white workers from recognizing what they had in common and work together. They were the only political party to support Black voting consistently. In Oklahoma, the Socialist Party was very strong, and many tenant farmers were Socialists. A big difference between the Socialist Party at a national level and the Socialist Party in Oklahoma was the belief that Christianity was an important guide for socialism.

The Shawnee Demands

1. Initiative, referendum, and recall
 - a. Initiative allows voters to put a measure on a ballot (state questions are examples); referendum allows voters to vote on a law passed by the legislature; recall allows voters to remove someone from office before the end of their term
 - b. Generally, the argument used to support these “direct election” measures was that corporations too easily corrupted the legislature, so these measures allowed a high degree of voter participation which would serve as a check on that corruption.
2. Blanket primaries or plurality vote
 - a. This is a primary election in which all the parties participate. The leading vote-getters then go to the general election. Plurality vote allows a winner with the most votes, even if they do not get a majority of votes.
 - b. The argument for a blanket primary is that it gives voters the most choice because they are not limited to voting for a specific party. The argument for a plurality vote is that it expresses the will of the people.
3. Civil authority is always superior to military authorities
 - a. This is a fundamental element of our constitutional system
 - b. The argument is that civil authority is always, in some way, responsible to and representative of the people, whereas the military is separate from this system of accountability. To allow the military to run things would be anti-democratic.
4. State can engage in enterprise
 - a. This allows the government to compete with private business in any industry.
 - b. The argument supporting this policy is that by having some level of government compete in an industry, this allows for a better understanding of what actual costs are involved and, from that, what appropriate rates/prices are. A good example of this in practice that occurred in the 1930s is the Tennessee Valley Authority.
5. All gambling on farm products to be prohibited
 - a. The word “gambling” here means “speculation.”
 - b. Farmers deeply resented individuals without a connection to agriculture making investments in their products. They believed these practices disrupted their market and made things more difficult for farmers.
6. Fellow-servant rule abolished
 - a. The “Fellow-servant rule” was a legal precedent that if another coworker could be proven to have been the cause of an accident, then the owner would not be liable.
 - b. This was one of three rules that largely shielded owners from compensating workers or their families for accidents or deaths at their workplace. In a short time, a comprehensive workers’ compensation law would be passed.
7. No statute of limitations for injury or death
 - a. This would open the time period for civil action against an entity that caused an injury or death

- b. Workers supported this idea because it allowed greater freedom for the injured party to make some sort of recovery.
- 8. Eight-hour workday for mine workers and state workers/ safety laws
 - a. During this period, a fight for the eight-hour workday was a major component of many of the union actions, which led to piecemeal success.
 - b. The argument for the government intervening and establishing hours/safety laws for industry is that unless compelled, business owners were unlikely to establish rules that would protect workers as that reduced their profit. They would also argue that the government regulating hours/safety would make businesses more competitive because they would be on the same playing field instead of a large degree of variation within an industry.
- 9. Regulation commission
 - a. Railroad rates were a singular issue of anger for farmers. They were convinced that the railroads charged excessive and exploitative rates for their farm products, and they wanted government intervention to end these practices.
 - b. The argument for regulation of rates charged for the emerging infrastructure of the country was that these industries were of singular importance and of benefit to all so these industries had a special responsibility to serve the public. Additionally, much of the infrastructure in place was built with some sort of government support, so the idea that these industries were at least partially funded by taxpayers and should, again, charge for services in a way that served the public interest.
- 10. Compulsory education and free textbooks
 - a. Many people during this period were convinced that education had become essential to survive in modern society. Farmers and poor families had too much of an incentive to limit their children's access to schooling because they were needed to contribute to the household income.
 - b. By requiring school attendance, the incentive for farmers and poor families to keep their children out of school was counterbalanced with a penalty. Free textbooks would eliminate a major obstacle for some families to send their children to school.
- 11. Commissioner of labor/commerce/agriculture/corporate tax commission (four separate demands)
 - a. Many people objected to the treatment of workers in a variety of industries and the behavior of companies toward other businesses and consumers.
 - b. They believed it unlikely that businesses would reform their unethical practices unless they were compelled by government. A labor commissioner would be focused on issues facing workers. An agriculture commissioner would focus on farming and ranching and the issues in those industries. A corporation commission with significant power to review internal documents would be able to limit the unethical conduct within the marketplace by some businesses. A corporate tax commission would be able to determine if companies were paying their fair share of taxes.
- 12. Liberal homestead and exemption law
 - a. A homestead is the primary residence of the property owner. An exemption law reduces the tax burden from property tax and prevents the actual primary residence of a family from falling into the hands of creditors upon the death of an indebted property owner.

- b. This limits what can be lost for poorer families if they experience a death or bankruptcy, which was not uncommon during this period. The argument supporting this idea is that being evicted from one's home should be minimized as a practice to recover debts.
- 13. Sanitary inspections
 - a. Many businesses and homes did not conform to emerging understandings of public health and germ theory.
 - b. The argument for this is that public health affects everyone, so the government should have the authority to demand businesses and homes maintain a standard of cleanliness.
- 14. Mine inspector
 - a. Mines were so dangerous that, in Oklahoma, the major union effort centered on the mining industry. An inspector would allow the government to force mine owners to make the mines more safe.
 - b. The argument here is similar to the ones for the other commissions: that businesses were unlikely to reform themselves in order to protect people at the expense of their profit, so the government should regulate them.
- 15. End child labor
 - a. Generally, people wanted children to attend school, but many families needed the children to provide income through working.
 - b. A law criminalizing child labor would neutralize the incentive.
- 16. Convict labor contracts
 - a. Convict labor represented a significant source of inexpensive labor at this time.
 - b. Workers objected to convict labor because it increased competition. Many would argue that with the 13th amendment (with the section that allows involuntary servitude for people convicted of a crime), the impact of wages was artificially reduced because the convicts were not working by their own choice.
 - c. Another demand wanted to limit convict labor outside of prisons to roads only, as farmers and workers did not want them performing work for the state as well because of its impact on the ability of other workers to find work and secure adequate wages.
- 17. Political and commercial control of employees
 - a. During this time, employers had broad power over the private time of their workers. This limited unionization and created major challenges for employees to move jobs (for example, scrip would be a form of commercial control, and workers who lacked access to actual legal tender in their wages would have a more difficult time changing employers).
 - b. The argument is that employers should only have a degree of control over employees during their working hours. Further, the idea that employers can place limits on speech and purchasing would be an unethical violation of free will.
- 18. Railroads cannot own coal lands or lease mines
 - a. During this time, coal made trains run, so railroad companies wanted a secure coal supply. If they were able, they expanded into the mining industry.
 - b. An argument supporting this ban would be that railroads participating in the mining industry introduced a very powerful force within the mining industry and could, with the railroad companies' incredible power, force the end of the unionizing activity and

reduce the opportunity to improve worker conditions. Although it would not be a monopoly, the reason for their opposition is similar to that against monopolies.

19. Corporations must have a charter.

- a. A charter would force a corporation to comply with the laws of Oklahoma. Additionally, applying a charter would increase transparency and accountability for the companies because the state would be aware of the corporation.
- b. The argument for this once again aligns with the belief that corporations will only act to increase their profits at the expense of all else and government must check these actions.

20. The legislature cannot grant an irreversible franchise

- a. Legislatures could sometimes be convinced to provide extremely favorable environments for corporations, and they sometimes gave permission for a particular business to have special permissions
- b. The argument supporting this idea is that the legislature is suspect because corporations might corrupt it, so the people must have the ability to reverse laws made by the legislature. The argument is the same for initiative, referendum, and recall.