them." Disillusioned with simple union objectives after his Molders' Union—the most important union of this period— was defeated in a strike, he organized the Troy Cooperative Iron Founders' Association. This approach had considerable appeal and was followed by many other unions—Bakers, Coal Miners, Printers, Machinists, Shipwrights, Shoemakers. It seemed like a simple answer: why let the employers pocket the profit sweated out of the workers' hides, when the workers could and should have it all to themselves? The amount of capital needed for business ventures was still not prohibitive; the program of producers' cooperatives was thus more attractive than that of striking for higher wages.

The International Labor Union, formed in 1878 by socialists and anarcho-syndicalists, attacked the problem in a different way, but all to the same end: the abolition of capitalism. The leaders of this group, Parsons, Schilling, Wedemeyer, Sorge, called for such an increase in wages "until wages represent the earnings and not the necessities of labor; thus melting profit upon labor out of existence, and making cooperation, self-employed labor, the natural and logical step from wage slavery to free labor."

Cooperation and uplift were also the theme of the successful Knights of Labor, which grew by 1886 to 700,000 members. The Knights spoke of "harmonizing the interests of capital and labor," and had little faith in strikes or in the struggle for wage increases and shorter hours. Terrence Powderly, the vain, platitudinous "Grand Master Workman" of the Knights, refused to endorse the eight-hour-day movement in 1886 (one of the reasons for the decline of his organization) on the grounds that such gains were illusory. The end goal, he said, must be to abolish the wage system itself through cooperation, not to try to improve the system.

Few people, either on labor's or management's side, seemed to foresee the day when some *modus vivendi* could be established, or when labor could be appeased within the context of capitalism.

America, then as today—though not in the same proportions—was a study in contrasts, big and little, rich and poor. "There are too many millionaires and too many paupers," cried the *Hartford Courant* in 1883. President Cleveland, in his message to Congress in December, 1888, spoke of "the existence of trusts, combinations and monopolies, while the citizen is struggling far in the rear or is trampled to death beneath an iron heel." Samuel Gompers complained in 1883 that wages were lower than in 1870. The United States Census of 1880 estimated per capita income at $300, whereas a decade earlier it was $400. Despite growing prosperity there was also great poverty; side by side with the concentration of capital into large aggregates, there was unemployment and wage slashing.

Under the circumstances it is quite understandable that many unionists could see little hope in the prevailing social system. For the most part they were fighting defensive battles to prevent wage cuts or to win wages back, once they were cut. Strikes were incredibly harsh affairs, and unions disappeared in depressed years as if into a squall. In the depression year of 1877, for instance, there were three million unemployed. Of the newly formed national craft unions, only twenty-two of thirty survived. Cigar makers lost four-fifths of their membership; New York's union roster fell by eight-ninths, from 44,000 to only 5,000. Textile strikers in Fall River, hitting back at wage cuts, lost two bitter strikes after almost a half year on the picket line. The 1877 railway strike, across the nation, reads almost like a revolution: twenty-six workers killed by troops in