

**CALIFORNIA CONTENT STANDARD 11.8.3** 

# Truman's Labor Policy

**Specific Objective:** Examine Truman's labor policy and congressional reaction to it.

Read the sequence diagram to answer questions on the next page.

### **Economic and Labor Trouble after World War II**

- Immediately after the war, government controls on the economy ended. Prices rose quickly while wages stayed the same or dropped.
- Unions avoided strikes during the war. After the war in 1946, 4.5 million workers (the most in U.S. history) went on strike for higher wages and better conditions.
- Many strikes were successful. New Deal policies supported unions and strengthened them.



# **Truman's Support for Labor and Opposition to Strikes**

- Truman generally supported union rights as defined by Roosevelt's New Deal.
- Large strikes by workers in major industries (steel, railroads, coal mines) threatened to paralyze the country.
- Truman used threats of federal government action to avoid or end strikes. Workers would be drafted as soldiers and ordered to stay on the job. The government would take control of mines and railroads. Unions gave in to the pressure.



# The Taft-Hartley Act

- The 1946 elections created a Republican Congress that opposed current labor strength.
- In 1947 the Taft-Hartley Act severely limited union activities and strength. It emphasized the rights of employees not to join a union.
- Truman vetoed the Taft-Hartley Act, but Congress passed it over his veto.
- Congress rejected Truman's request to repeal it after the 1948 election.



### The Korean War

- United States troops became involved in the Korean War in 1950.
- The United States was again in a war effort, but the government did not use total controls over the economy and industries as in World War II.



## **Strikes and National Security**

- Workers continued to strike for higher wages and better conditions.
- Truman tried to end strikes with threats or federal actions. He said strikes threatened national security and the war effort.
- Truman responded to a scheduled steel strike in 1952 by seizing steel mills.
- The Supreme Court ruled his actions unconstitutional and said he could have used the Taft-Hartley Act to delay the strike. Truman disliked the act so much he refused to use it.

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Directions: Choose the letter of the *best* answer.

# 1 Which statement best describes the economic situation in the United States right after World War II?

- **A** Prices rose, wages rose, and workers avoided striking.
- Prices rose, wages dropped, and workers went on strike.
- Prices and wages stayed the same, and workers went on strike.
- **D** Prices and wages dropped, and workers went on strike.

# Which statement best describes Truman's general position on labor?

- **A** He thought unions were only necessary in small businesses, not in large industries like coal and steel production.
- He thought unions were too strong and supported laws to limit their
- **C** He supported strong unions as defined by Roosevelt's New Deal policies.
- **D** He supported most union positions except their right to organize in new industries.

# 3 What is one way Truman used the military to control strikes?

- **A** He sent troops to break up strikes and force union members to work.
- He prevented union members from joining the military after they had been on strike.
- **C** He threatened to use soldiers to replace striking workers so they could be fired.
- **D** He threatened to draft striking workers and then order them as soldiers to keep working.

# 4 How did the Taft-Hartley Act reflect Congress's response to Truman's labor policies?

- **A** It showed that Congress strongly disagreed with Truman's policies.
- Congress gave in to Truman's demand for a limitation on union activities.
- Congress believed that government should not be involved in labor policies.
- **D** It strengthened union powers, but Congress repealed it in Truman's second term.

# How did the economic and labor situation during the Korean War compare to the situation during **World War II?**

- Truman favored more regulation of the economy than Roosevelt had.
- The government did not use the control over the economy and industry that it did in World War II.
- **C** During both wars, the government allowed the economy and labor to function on their own.
- **D** During the Korean War, business and labor leaders worked together to prevent conflicts.

# 6 Which statement best describes the effect of the Taft-Hartley Act?

- **A** It limited union powers and emphasized workers' rights not to join a union.
- **B** It reinforced union rights that had been established during the New Deal.
- It established the right of military personnel to organize unions.
- It strengthened union powers but was repealed in Truman's second term.