

## UNSKILLED WORKER

You are an unskilled worker at Andrew Carnegie's Homestead steel works. You have only been in the United States for about four years. In your native village, when times were rough, it was common for different families and different workers to help each other out. As the rough times became more frequent, you and your family left Hungary and came to America, hoping for a better life.

Hearing there was work in the steel mills, you left New York City and headed for Pennsylvania. You had never seen a factory like the one you saw at Homestead; huge and loud, with smoke belching everywhere. And, sure enough, you were hired right away.

For four years you've put up with this life. A work week is six, sometimes seven, days. Most days you work twelve hours, averaging about \$ . 14 an hour. This comes out to a little less than \$10 a week!

Though you work for Andrew Carnegie, your immediate boss is really one of the skilled workers at the mill. You are considered his unskilled helper. He is paid a certain amount for every ton of steel he makes—the more steel he makes the more he gets paid. *And* the more he gets paid, the more you get. But when his wages go down, yours go down too.

The skilled workers act superior because they were born in America, speak English, and know more about the technical aspects of the work. They also think of themselves as superior because they're organized into a union. However, they don't want you to belong. "The union is for us skilled workers" is their attitude. Mostly, you socialize with other Hungarians, rather than with Americans.

But although the skilled workers hold themselves above the unskilled, the work is dangerous for everyone. Hundreds of people are killed or injured in the steel industry each year, so you need to help and watch out for one another while you work.

Your living conditions are bad: two rooms, poor sanitation, not enough money for good food, for nice clothes and furniture or to take vacations or to educate your children. What would you do if you made any *less* money?

Soon you will be attending the mass meeting called by the union. The skilled workers will try to convince you to support the strike. *At the conclusion of the mass meeting there will be a vote to determine if the unskilled workers will support the strike.*

You will meet with other unskilled workers. Talk about your feelings toward the union and the strike. In your discussion, consider the following questions:

(1) What do you have in common with the skilled workers? What differences are there between you?

(2) How could you benefit from supporting the strike? How could you lose? What other pros or cons can you think of?

(3) What questions could you ask of the skilled workers? What demands could you make?