

Impacts of and Responses to Classical Liberalism

Key Skill:

Analyzing differences between historical facts and interpretations in sources and narratives

Key Terms and Concepts:

- cost of living
- equal opportunity
- feminism
- human rights
- Industrial Revolution
- industrialization
- labour standards and unions
- laissez-faire capitalism
- modern liberalism
- standard of living
- Universal Declaration of Human Rights
- voting rights
- welfare state

Key Issue:

To what extent should we embrace an ideology?

Related Issue:

Is resistance to liberalism justified?

Chapter Issue:

To what extent did classical liberalism meet the needs of society?

Question for Inquiry #1:

What impact did classical liberalism have on Western society?

Question for Inquiry #2:

How did liberalism evolve over time?

In Europe and North America in the 1800s, homes were usually heated by coal or wood fires, and their chimneys had to be cleaned regularly. Because children were small enough to fit in the chimneys, they were considered ideal for this dangerous and dirty job. It was common practice for an adult to hire several children for a crew of chimney sweeps. These children often lived with their employer and received no education, except on how to do their job. One young chimney sweep, living in England in the 1800s, spoke to a journalist about what his job was like:

I remember the first time I ever climbed. I must ha' been goin' on for six then, I s'pose; but some was put to it as young as four—yes, sir, little gals as well as boys. My master had two boys as well as me—older than me—and they used to wallop me, too, and tell me all sorts o' flesh-creepin' stories about the chimbleys—lads stickin' in 'em, and bein' dug out with the flesh all burnt off their bones, and so on.

It wasn't pleasant to 'ear sich tales of a night, layin' there in that shed that was as black as pitch. And there was truth in them stories, too; though, of course, t'other boys made 'em out as bad as they could. Anyways, I was hawful [awful] scared when master first told me to go up a chimbley. He leathered me, but I caught old [hold] of his legs, and begged and prayed of him not to force me.

—Source: Richard Rowe, *Episodes in an Obscure Life*, Chapter XXIV, “A Black Missionary to the Blacks,” 1871. *The Victorian Dictionary*, <http://www.victorianlondon.org/publications7/episodes-24.htm>.

Many employers at this time felt that they were helping these children and their families by giving the children jobs. Although it was not illegal for employers to hire children, many people felt that it was cruel and unfair for children to work, especially when the jobs were dangerous. Concerns about child labour and the treatment of workers were some of the challenges to the values of classical liberalism that emerged during the 1800s and 1900s. How do you feel about children working? Do you think employers should be free to decide who they employ and how they treat their employees?

Chapter Issue:

To what extent did classical liberalism meet the needs of society?

In the previous chapter, you read about the shift from classical liberalism to modern liberalism over time. This shift occurred in response to issues in many Western democratic societies that resulted from following classical liberal values. Classical liberal values are centred on individualism: the belief that individuals should be allowed to make their own decisions and look after their own interests. This focus on the individual was eventually questioned by modern liberals, who sought to create greater equality of opportunity for all individuals through government intervention. In this chapter, you will explore the impacts of classical liberalism on society and discover why and how modern liberalism evolved. In doing so, you will address the Chapter Issue: *To what extent did classical liberalism meet the needs of society?*



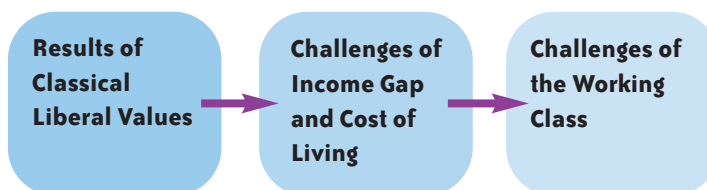
▲ **Figure 5-1** In the past, many young children were paid to do very dangerous jobs in North America and Europe. For a meagre wage, this boy risked his life cleaning chimneys.

Conditions Created by Classical Liberalism

Question for Inquiry

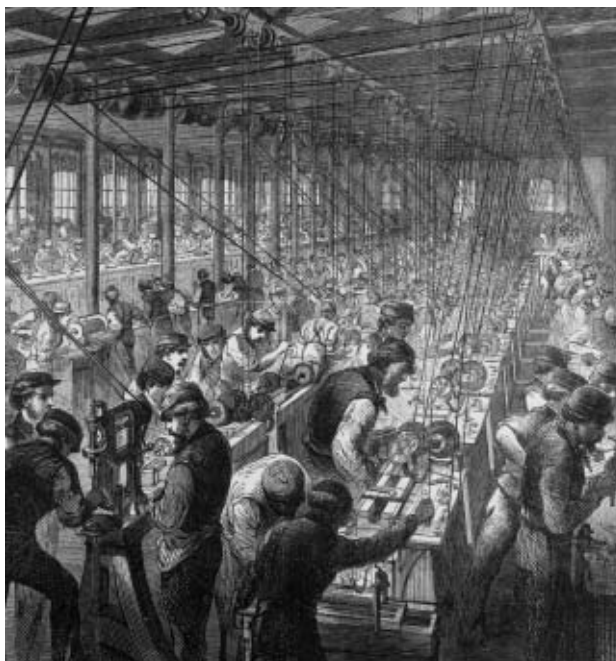
1. What impact did classical liberalism have on Western society?

In this section ...



In the late 1700s and 1800s, much of Europe and North America experienced an **Industrial Revolution**. The many scientific and technological changes during this time resulted in a major shift from skilled workers performing jobs in their homes to unskilled workers performing jobs in factories. The introduction of factories and new machinery changed the face of society, beginning a period of industrialization. **Industrialization** is the process whereby a society changes from agricultural and hand-made production to machine-driven mass production in factories. As well, machines that made farming more efficient and less labour intensive meant that fewer people were needed to do farm work. As a result, many people migrated from rural (country) areas to urban (city) areas in search of work. This mass migration resulted in a huge surplus of workers in the cities.

Figure 5-2 Many workers left rural areas in search of work in factories in the 1800s.



When people arrived in the cities, they discovered that much of the work available was in factories. Factory work brought many new changes to workers' lives. New rules, new hours, new wages, new ways of conducting business, and new ways of structuring society were all part of the Industrial Revolution.

Results of Classical Liberal Values

As the Industrial Revolution progressed, the ideas of *laissez-faire* capitalism were put into practice. Business owners were free to risk investing in businesses, to build factories, to purchase machines and supplies, and to hire workers in order to make and sell products. Many of these entrepreneurs made a fortune in profits. As many of these “*nouveau riche*” business owners sought to imitate the upper class, they built or bought large estate homes, hired servants, and purchased items to furnish these homes.

At this time, the growing upper-middle classes who benefited from *laissez-faire* capitalism had a great deal of money to spend on luxuries and leisure activities. Many of the wealthy chose to spend this wealth on elaborate tours around Europe or on summers at the seashore. Many exclusive clubs, such as golf, cricket, rugby, tennis, and country clubs, were founded at this time, allowing the influential and wealthy to socialize in a private setting. Government funds were used to build neighbourhood parks in upper and middle class neighbourhoods, where women strolled to show off the latest fashions. Competition grew among people in wealthy society, motivating them to buy the latest and best of everything, from homes and furnishings to education and clothing.



◀ **Figure 5-3** During the 1800s, many of the *nouveau riche* enjoyed spending their summers at luxurious seaside resorts in Europe and North America. This illustration shows wealthy visitors at Scarborough Beach, Britain, in 1890. The working poor could not afford to take time off work, let alone to travel.

During the Industrial Revolution, business owners were perceived by some as greedy because they earned great profits that they did not share with their workers. In the United States, these entrepreneurs were sometimes referred to as *robber barons*. Many classical liberals would disagree, however, and say that rich industrialists during this period were simply collecting the financial reward for taking a risk in business. These classical liberals would call the rich industrialists *captains of industry*.

Figure 5-4 Cornelius Vanderbilt made a fortune in the shipping and railroad industries, estimated at around \$160 billion in today's dollars. This photo shows the Vanderbilt family home in New York City, 1894. If you were one of the working class of this time, would you feel that you could also succeed under the classical liberal values of self-interest and competition?



The term *robber baron* represents an image of a cold and ruthless man, a wealthy entrepreneur who is greedy in his pursuit of money and who is unwilling to share his wealth with those that helped him earn it. The expression suggests that robber barons generated their fortunes at the expense of their employees, caring nothing for the troubles of their workers, their customers, or their competition.

Captains of industry is a term used by people who believe that these men's contributions to business and industry were the foundations for the economic power of many countries today. The success of these men could be seen as an example of how people in society made the most of an opportunity, took risks, worked hard, and achieved success. Many of the captains of industry or robber barons, such as Americans Andrew Carnegie (business owner and founder of the iron and steel industries in the United States) and John D. Rockefeller (business owner and one of the founders of the Standard Oil Company) earned great personal wealth and also gave back to their communities in the form of philanthropic (charitable) acts.



◀ **Figure 5-5** In the 1800s, some people profited greatly from laissez-faire economic practices, but many more people experienced extreme poverty. A gap had grown between the people who were rich and those who were poor.

READING GUIDE

To determine the difference between historical fact and personal interpretation, refer to the following criteria. Consider

- the background of the author
- the historical time, place, people, and events of the issue and example
- whether the source includes primarily subjective or objective language
- whether the source refers to other sources, experts, and reference materials such as statistics, maps, graphs, and so forth
- whether other people's points of view or perspectives are included
- the agreed-upon details you have found in three or more other sources that are not strongly contradicted by other sources

Challenges of Income Gap and Cost of Living

Vast wealth was generated by capitalists during the 19th century. Some people argue that during this time, those who already had money received even more money, and those living in poverty sank even deeper into poverty. The gap between people with money and those without it became wider.

Studies of the 19th century have shown that the economic situation of the majority of workers (their standard of living) did not improve greatly during the Industrial Revolution. People's **standard of living** is based on the amount of goods and services they can afford to buy. The application of liberal economic ideas increased the overall standard of living in society, but it did not consider the increase in the **cost of living**. The cost of living is how much money it costs to provide a person or family with the basic necessities of living: food, shelter, and clothing. As the standard of living increased, so did the cost of living, but the average wages of workers did not necessarily increase. It cost people more and more for less and less. Increases to the cost of living were just one factor that contributed to the difficult circumstances experienced by people of the working class.

PAUSE AND REFLECT

Why do you think cost of living increases? Should a fair wage take into account the cost of living or only the value of the work? In other words, if the cost of living increased, would it be reasonable to increase the minimum wage?

Challenges of the Working Class

Some industrialists of the 18th and 19th centuries used the values of classical liberalism and a laissez-faire economy to their advantage. This often meant that their workers were treated cruelly and inhumanely. Laissez-faire capitalism often resulted in pollution, city slums, abuse of employees, unreasonably long working hours, child labour, and unjust firing practices. Any government intervention was seen as meddling and harmful to the economy, so industrialists and manufacturers were given the economic freedom to run their businesses according to their self-interest because this was seen as the best way to benefit the common good in society.



How the Other Half Lives

Jacob Riis, a Danish immigrant to the United States, spent some time living and working in the tenements

(apartment buildings) of New York City. In 1890, he wrote about the conditions of the tenements in a very controversial book for his time called *How the Other Half Lives*. In the book's introduction, he stated that half of all people do not know how the other half lives. The book includes heart-wrenching accounts of tenement living, poverty, disease, and the misery that many people suffered in the United States during the late 19th century.

The whole family, father, mother, and four ragged children, sat around looking on with the stony resignation of helpless despair that had long since given up the fight against fate as useless. A glance around the wretched room left no doubt as to the cause of the child's condition. "Improper nourishment," said the doctor, which, translated to suit the place, meant starvation. The father's hands were crippled from lead poisoning. He had not been able to work for a year. A contagious disease of the eyes, too long neglected, had made the mother and one of the boys nearly blind. The children cried with hunger . . . For months the family had subsisted on two dollars a week from the priest, and a few loaves and a piece of corned beef which the sisters sent them on Saturday. The doctor gave direction for the treatment of the child, knowing that it was possible only to alleviate its sufferings until death should end them, and left some money for food for the rest.

—Jacob Riis, *How the Other Half Lives*,
Chapter XIV, "The Common Herd," 1890.



▲ **Figure 5-6** Overcrowding, pollution, disease, and crime were problems for working class people living in urban centres. This photo shows the crowded tenements of factory workers in New York City, 1912.

- 1 Why do you think Jacob Riis titled his book *How the Other Half Lives*? Who do you think his intended audience was? Which evidence in the source would you identify as facts, and which appear to be Riis' interpretation of the issue?
- 2 For what reasons do you think people such as those described in this excerpt ended up living in such extreme poverty?
- 3 What do you think could be done to prevent these circumstances? What role might the government play in this prevention?



A Contemporary Example of Income Gap

Even in contemporary societies with wealthy economies, there can be a big gap between those with wealth and those living in poverty. In the early 2000s, Calgary experienced an

unprecedented economic boom; however, journalist Amy Steele argued that not everyone in Calgary benefited from the boom. In her article “Boom gone bad?,” she explains how Calgary’s supercharged economy was making life worse for many Calgarians. She suggests that while Calgary’s boom was impressive on paper, it translated to some serious financial troubles for many Calgarians.

... [S]ays Gord Christie, executive secretary of the Calgary District Labour Council. “The boom is doing fabulous things for 20 per cent of our population, but for the other 80 per cent, the average, it’s sad. Eighty per cent of our population isn’t really and truly benefiting from our boom.

Calgary is rapidly becoming less affordable for people whose incomes are not keeping pace with cost of living increases. Housing prices increased by 49.6 per cent between August 2005 and August 2006 . . .

There’s also a growing income gap between rich and poor. In 2004, the most recent statistics available, the lowest 20 per cent of income earners made an average of \$13,100 a year while the top 20 per cent made an average of \$152,800. The homeless population increased by 32.3 per cent between 2004 and 2006 and is now a whopping 3,436 people.

—Source: Amy Steele, “Boom gone bad?”
Fast Forward Weekly, November 2–November 6, 2006, pp. 6–7.



- 1 What evidence does Steele use to support her argument that those living in poverty are not sharing in the booming economy? Which evidence in the source would you identify as “facts”?
- 2 Could this be a similar experience to that experienced by workers during the 19th century?
- 3 What might a classical liberal say about this situation? What might a modern liberal say about this situation?

◀ **Figure 5-7** Between 2004 and 2008, Alberta experienced a major economic boom and a dramatic increase in new residents. While many profited from the high economic times, others saw little increase in their wages. Because of a higher demand for housing, rents and housing prices skyrocketed, leaving many fully employed people without the means to keep a roof over their heads. This was especially true in Calgary, where many were unable to find affordable housing and instead were forced to sleep on the streets.

A look inside many of the factories or mines of the 19th century would show that laissez-faire capitalism had a negative impact on many workers. With few exceptions, factories of the 19th century were gloomy places to be. They were unsafe, overcrowded, and noisy and had very little ventilation or light. Dust and floating particles from such things as cotton and flax often caused lung diseases, such as tuberculosis, asthma, and bronchitis, in the workers.

The rules for employees were often rigorous and unforgiving. Employees who were late for work might be beaten or fired. Twelve- to sixteen-hour days were common, and sometimes workers did not even get a short break for lunch. Going to the bathroom was either not permitted or resulted in a pay deduction. Injured employees were fired because they were no longer useful to the employer.

Factory workers were required to work long hours doing difficult and often tedious jobs. Their relentless work left them exhausted and sometimes crippled. Many were not allowed time to eat or could not afford to eat properly. In *The Manufacturing Population of England* (1833), the author described the effects of years of long hours and poor nutrition on these factory workers, saying they were sickly looking, short, and skinny, with thin hair and a “spiritless and dejected air.” (Source: P. Gaskell, *The Manufacturing Population of England* (London: 1833), pp.161–162, <http://www.victorianweb.org/history/workers2.html>.)

The environment within the factories was poor, as were the environments surrounding them. The factories created a great deal of pollution, which was allowed to flow freely. As well, overcrowding in the cities, especially in the working class neighbourhoods, led to filthy conditions. In the 1840s, writer Friederich Engels described the conditions near the factories in the city of Manchester, England, one of the first industrialized cities in the world:



Figure 5-8 ▲ In the late 1800s, children in North America and Europe worked in mines under extremely dangerous conditions for \$1 to \$3 a week. Children were often hired to work in mines due to their size: they could easily fit in small tunnels.

In dry weather, a long string of the most disgusting, blackish-green, slime pools are left standing on this bank, from the depths of which bubbles of miasmatic [diseased] gas constantly arise and give forth a stench unendurable even on the bridge forty or fifty feet [12 to 14 metres] above the surface of the stream...Below the bridge you look upon the piles of debris, the refuse, filth, and offal [human waste] from the courts on the steep left bank; here each house is packed close behind its neighbour and a piece of each is visible, all black, smoky, crumbling, ancient, with broken panes and window frames.

—Source: **Friederich Engels, *The Condition of the Working-Class in England in 1844*. Internet Modern History Sourcebook, Fordham University,** <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1844engels.html>.

During this period, there was also a sharp rise in child labour. Child labour is when children under the age of 18 work for pay or as slaves. Many children from poor families worked in mines, factories, and as servants, sometimes for long hours and in dangerous conditions. Many industrialists and factory owners viewed children as a cheap source of labour and favoured them over adults because they were small, agile, obedient, and unlikely to join unions. Unfortunately, the effects of long hours of labour were especially severe on the developing and growing bodies of children.



Child Labourers Speak

Peter Smart gave testimony to the Sadler Committee of 1832, which was ordered to investigate claims made by Michael Thomas Sadler against factory owners in Britain and their practices.

Q: You say you were locked up night and day? **A:** Yes.

Q: Do the children ever attempt to run away? **A:** Very often.

Q: Were they pursued and brought back again? **A:** Yes, the overseer pursued them, and brought them back.

Q: Did you ever attempt to run away? **A:** Yes, I ran away twice.

Q: And you were brought back? **A:** Yes; and I was sent up to the master's loft, and thrashed with a whip for running away.

—Peter Smart, interviewed by the
Sadler Committee of 1832. *The Victorian Web*,
<http://www.victorianweb.org/history/workers1.html>.

Sarah Carpenter was interviewed about her experiences as a child labourer in *The Ashton Chronicle*, June 23, 1849, a radical British newspaper founded by activist Rev. Joseph Rayner Stephens.

“There was an overlooker called William Hughes, who was put in his place whilst he was ill. He came up to me and asked me what my drawing frame was stopped for. I said I did not know because it was not me who had stopped it. A little boy that was on the other side had stopped it, but he was too frightened to say it was him. Hughes starting beating me with a stick, and when he had done I told him I would let my mother know. He then went out and fetched the master in to me. The master started beating me with a stick over the head till it was full of lumps and bled. My head was so bad that I could not sleep for a long time, and I never been a sound sleeper since.”

—Sarah Carpenter, quoted in *The Ashton Chronicle*,
June 23, 1849. *Spartacus Educational*,
<http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/IRpunishments.htm>.

- 1 How and why do you think factory owners treated children in this way?
- 2 Why do you think it was important for the stories of child labourers to be heard by the upper and middle classes?



Dickens on Child Labour

In his books, Charles Dickens, the Victorian novelist, exposed many abuses that occurred in workhouses. He wrote,

It always grieves me to contemplate the initiation of children into the ways of life when they are scarcely more than infants. It checks their confidence and simplicity, two of the best qualities that heaven gives them, and demands that they share our sorrows before they are capable of entering into our enjoyments.

—Charles Dickens, *The Old Curiosity Shop*, Chapter 1, 1841. Bibliomania.com, <http://www.bibliomania.com/0/0/19/41/12862/1/frameset.html>.

- 1 From the quotation, can you determine the reasons for Charles Dickens' response to values of liberalism, such as child labour? Explain your answer.

Summary

Unfortunately, the strong influence of classical liberalism and individualism during the **Industrial Revolution** had some very negative consequences. Many industrialists and manufacturers, who embraced the ideas of a free-market economy and **laissez-faire capitalism**, ran their businesses to earn profits for their own self-interests. They believed in free competition in the marketplace and freedom from government intervention, such as regulations regarding the rights of workers. As a result, their employees often had to work longer and harder than before.

The conditions experienced by those who worked in mines, factories, and farms and as servants were often dangerous and exhausting. Because business owners were free to do as they pleased, child labour increased dramatically. The **cost of living** also increased, and the industrialized jobs of the new free-market economy tended to result in the working class receiving as low a wage as the market would allow. These conditions generally left the working class with less wealth than they had before **industrialization**. In short, the social and economic impacts of classical liberalism were very beneficial to a few and devastating to many.

Knowledge and Understanding

- 1 Using the details provided in this section, create a chart in which you summarize the outcomes and impacts of classical liberalism on society during the 1800s.
- 2 In your own words, describe what classical liberal values are being supported or questioned when people referred to successful business owners as robber barons or captains of industry? Would your values agree most with supporting or challenging classical liberal values? Might your viewpoint change depending on who you are in society (for example, a business owner, a government official, or a worker) and the time period in which you live? Explain your answer.

Responses to Conditions Created by Classical Liberalism

Question for Inquiry

2. How did liberalism evolve over time?

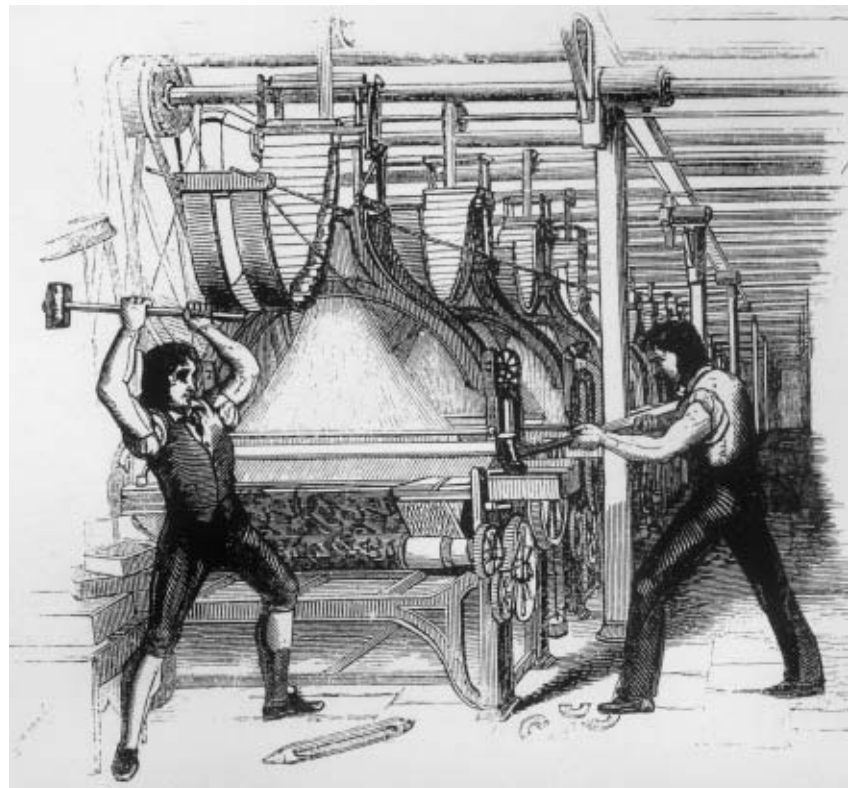
In this section ...



With society transforming due to advances in technology and the ideas of classical liberalism, many people were forced to adapt their ways of life. Some, however, chose to resist these changes. For example, in the early 1800s, a group called the Luddites protested changes to the economy brought about by the Industrial Revolution. With the creation of factories and the use of new technologies for the creation of fabrics and clothing, skilled workers were losing their jobs, and wages were shrinking. Between 1812 and 1816, Luddites broke into factories, destroyed machinery, and attacked business owners in towns throughout England. The Luddites rejected the replacement of skilled workers with technology, which they saw as a threat to their way of life and livelihood. The British government forcefully put a stop to the Luddite movement, sending troops to protect the factories and punishing machine breaking with death.

Many different political and social movements developed during the 1800s and early 1900s, each with a different focus. Some focused on the rights of child labourers or workers in general, some on the effects of new technology and mechanization (using machines instead of doing things by hand), some on the rights of women and **human rights** in general, and others on improving the lives of the working poor.

▼ **Figure 5-9** Why do you think the Luddites chose this form of social action in an attempt to protect their livelihoods?



Improving Conditions for the Working Class: Labour Standards and Unions

Industrialization led to great change and innovation in society, as well as a dramatic increase in the gap between the people who were rich and those who were poor. Many people viewed the unequal distribution of wealth and the treatment of the working poor as unfair. This led to political and social movements that focused on possible ways that the new wealth of industrialized countries could be shared.

Many people (for example, authors, speakers, activists, photographers, journalists, and artists) began to speak out about poverty, child labour, and the living and working conditions of the working class in industrializing countries. As more and more people came to know that these conditions existed in their own societies, they began to call for change. In response to these concerns, liberal governments began to impose some restrictions on laissez-faire capitalism. Eventually, a number of acts would be passed by governments in the 19th century to increase the age at which children could be employed, to shorten the working day, to improve working conditions, and to increase wages.

Factory Acts

The Factory Acts were a series of laws passed by British Parliament during the 1800s and early 1900s to make better and fairer working conditions for workers, particularly children and women. The earliest of such acts in Britain was the Factory Act of 1802, which addressed child labour among other topics. The following points are some of the regulations included in the Act.

- (1) *The master or mistress of the factory must observe the law.*
- (2) *All rooms in a factory are to be lime-washed twice a year and duly ventilated.*
- (3) *Every apprentice [child] is to be supplied with two complete suits of clothing with suitable linen, stockings, hats and shoes.*
- (4) *The hours of work of apprentices are not to exceed twelve a day, nor commence before six in the morning, nor conclude after nine at night.*
- (5) *They are to be instructed every working day during the first four years of apprenticeship in reading, writing and arithmetic.*

—Source: R.W. Cooke-Taylor, *The Factory System*,
1894. Spartacus Educational,
<http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/IR1802.htm>.

By 1819 in Britain, children could work a maximum of 12 hours per day. By 1833, it was illegal to employ children under the age of 9, and children over 13 could work no more than nine hours a day or 48 hours a week. By 1878, there was compulsory education for children up to the age of 10, and from the ages of 10 to 14, children could work only half days. By 1874, no worker was allowed to work more than 56.5 hours per week.

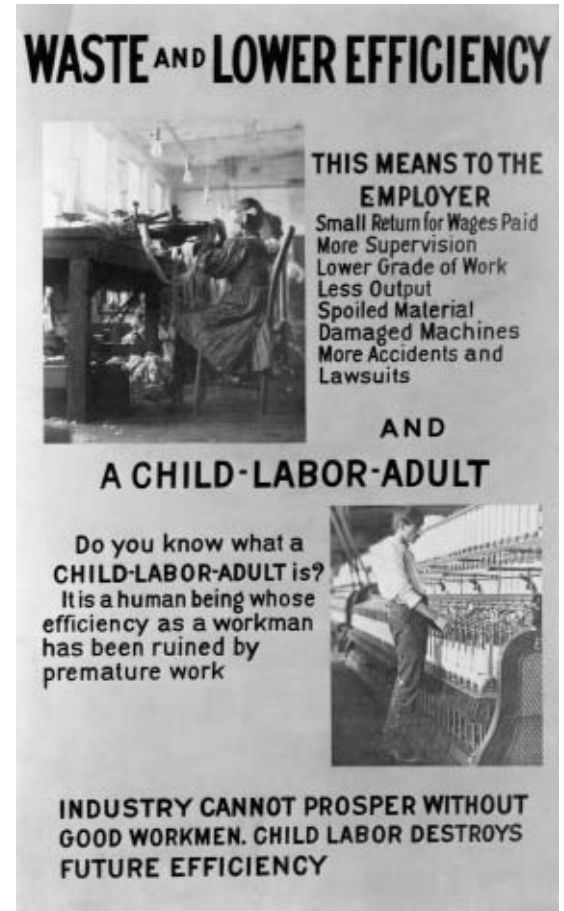
Although these various government acts went against strict classical liberal economic values that demanded little or no government intervention in the economy, they were still based on several key liberal values: the importance of individual rights and the worth of all individuals. Society came to see that decent working conditions, fair wages, reasonable working hours, and the opportunity for an education were rights that all citizens deserved. This eventually led to the idea of **equal opportunity**, which includes equal economic opportunity.

Labour Unions

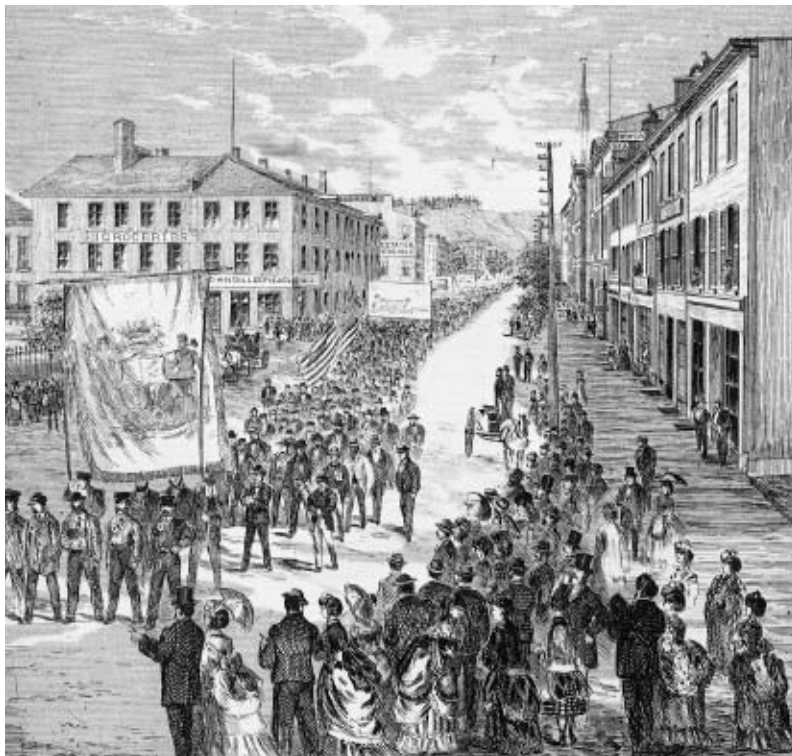
Did you know that at one point in Canada's history someone could be sent to jail for quitting his or her job? This could be done because of the Master and Servant Act (1847). This Act also made any kind of trade or labour organization that protested against these laws illegal. So what could Canadian workers during this time do to protect their interests?

Labour unions are groups of people who try to improve the working conditions and wages for either a specific group of workers or an entire industry. Because labour unions often include many workers, they can use their strength in numbers to improve wages and conditions. As a result, labour unions sometimes use strikes or work stoppages to convince management and owners to negotiate the terms of new contracts.

During the late 1800s and early 1900s, some people began to believe that labour unions were necessary to reduce the negative impacts of laissez-faire capitalism. The unions pushed to limit workday hours, ensure safe



▲ **Figure 5-10** In the United States, the National Child Labor Committee was formed in 1904 in New York City by people hoping to improve the lives of working children. What arguments does this poster make against child labour?



◀ **Figure 5-11** In 1872, a group of Canadian workers organized a protest of resistance to government restrictions, such as those in the Master and Servant Act, to unite workers and defend workers' rights in what would become the Canadian Labour Union. Why would government have supported the rights of industries over the interests of workers? Should workers have the right to speak with one voice to pursue their interests?

Figure 5-12 Labour Day is an annual holiday around the world that celebrates the accomplishments of workers. In Canada, Labour Day has been celebrated on the first Monday in September since the 1880s. This photo shows one of the unions represented from the Labour Day parade in Toronto on September 3, 2007.



Figure 5-13 What is the relationship between prices and wages? What point is this cartoon making about the relationship between capital (investment needed to run a business) and labour?

working conditions, protect job security, obtain medical benefits, and provide members with legal services when needed for work-related issues.

Other people argued that labour unions interfered with the economy by creating markets with artificially high wages and, as a result, businesses had to increase their prices so that they could make profits. An increase in prices means an increase in the cost of living for everyone, not just those in the labour unions. Other people argued that labour unions slow down the progress of an industry by protecting the jobs of workers, even the jobs of workers who are unproductive, unskilled, or unsuited to their jobs.

Probably one of the most significant union actions in Canada was the Winnipeg General Strike of 1919. In a coordinated action, thousands of workers left their places of work and began a strike that would last six weeks. The government eventually ended the strike by force, but unions counted it a success because they were able to demonstrate their power to employers, other employees, the government, and Canadians at large.

Another impressive strike was held by the Crowsnest Pass miners in Alberta in 1932. The strike lasted seven months and pitted the owners of the mines against the workers who were taking large risks in the unstable coal mines.

The Winnipeg General Strike and the Crowsnest Pass miners' strike are examples of the evolution of liberalism. The strikers believed that they were entitled to better working conditions. They believed that their hard work and the contribution they made to the economy ought to be recognized and fairly compensated. They used their freedom of association (by joining a union), freedom of assembly, and freedom of speech—all liberal values—to improve their working conditions.

Increasing Rights and Government Intervention: The Welfare State

In Europe during the early 1800s, few countries were liberal democracies, and in these liberal democracies only a few people, usually male landowners, had the right to vote. Eventually, as the century unfolded, the right to vote was extended to more and more people of different classes in society. In Britain, for example, several acts were passed between 1832 and 1884 that expanded voting rights beyond wealthy, landowning, upper class men; middle class and working class men were also given the right to vote.

As the vote was extended to a wider range of the population, governments had to pass laws and introduce policies and programs that were in the interests of many different groups, including the working classes, if they wanted people to vote for them. The introduction of government programs, such as unemployment insurance and old-age pensions, resulted in the eventual formation of what has been called the welfare state.

The welfare state, which developed in many liberal democracies during the 20th century, is a society in which government plays a large role in providing for the needs and the common good of its citizens. In a welfare state, government provides many services (for example, education, health care, employment and disability insurance, public housing, and social assistance) either at a low cost or for free. Classical liberals argue strongly against creating a welfare state, because they believe that it creates a dependence on government and discourages innovation and motivation in people. Those who believe in the welfare state disagree and suggest that when people are healthy, safe, and economically secure, they are better able to be creative and innovative.



◀ **Figure 5-14** The St. Marylebone Workhouse, a shelter for the working poor, was built in London, England. This image shows the dining hall as it was in 1901. Does this photo reveal anything about the standard of living in London, England, in 1901? Why would working people need to live in this shelter?

In the mid- to late 1800s, the first signs of a welfare state were seen in Europe. For example, people unable to care for themselves were sent to workhouses, such as the one illustrated in Figure 5-14. They were fed and clothed (although not necessarily well), and they sometimes received medical attention. Children were educated until they reached working age. The reason that these institutions were called workhouses, however, is that everyone who was remotely able was sent to work every day, either at the workhouse itself or in nearby industries.

Gradually, beliefs and values about those living in poverty began to change in Western democratic societies, moving toward more modern liberal values. Governments came to believe that a basic standard of living should be provided to those who could not do so for themselves. France, for example, introduced a limited program of insurance for unemployment, old age, accidents, and illness in the 1890s.

Many of the new programs and policies provided by the welfare state developed as a result of society's active voices, such as labour groups. Labour groups and unions organized and advocated for greater protection and rights for workers and citizens.

Evolution of Individual Rights and Collective Rights

In the late 1800s and early 1900s, as a result of citizen action and the development of new legislation that supported the improvement of workers' living and working conditions, the extension of rights for all citizens in industrializing societies became a political focus. Many people, such as women and people of certain ethnic backgrounds, began to question why their political, economic, and social freedoms were limited. Citizens, including early feminists and human (or civil) rights activists, began to work toward changing the laws.

Early Feminism

With the Industrial Revolution, the role of women in society changed drastically. Some of the important jobs that were traditionally in a woman's domain, such as making clothing, were now largely done in factories owned and run by men. Instead of being in charge of these jobs in the home, many women worked in factories under the supervision of men. Many men were threatened by the introduction of women into the workforce and fought to limit what jobs women could do, the hours they could work, and the wages they were paid.

During this time, the individual rights and freedoms gained during the rise of classical liberalism and the growing development of more modern liberal values were not applied to women. Women were not allowed to pursue many careers, or to vote. By the mid-1800s, some women and men believed that the ideas of liberty, self-determination, individual rights, and equality should be extended to women.

For example, in 1867, Emily Stowe became the first female doctor in Canada. At the time, she had to go to university in the United States because no schools in Canada would allow her to attend. In 1877, Dr Stowe founded the Toronto Women's Literary Guild, an organization that fought for women's right to vote. In what was known as the women's suffrage movement, women in Canada and around the world began to push to gain the right to vote. This suffrage movement is considered the first wave of **feminism**, the belief in the social, political, and economic equality of women.



◀ **Figure 5-15** This women's suffrage parade, held in New York City in 1915, shows a variety of different groups of supporters. All supporters of the women's suffrage movement had the same ultimate goal: to establish a woman's right to vote. However, different groups often had different beliefs about why this was important. For example, some felt that allowing women to vote would result in a more compassionate society that was more concerned with caring for those in need; some felt that men and women should be treated equally in every way; and some felt that giving women the right to vote would give greater political control to their own particular political, economic, or social group.

Between the 1890s and 1920, many countries around the world began to legally give women the right to vote. In Canada, women earned the right to vote in federal elections in 1918; however, in Québec women did not have the right to vote in provincial elections until 1940. In Canada, a group of feminists known as the Famous Five fought for further political equality for women. Even though Canadian women had gained the right to vote, they were still considered “non-persons” under the law. The British Common Law used in Canada stated that women were “persons in the matter of pains and penalties, but not in the matter of rights and privileges.” (Source: “The Persons Case.” The Famous Five, Heritage Community Foundation, http://www.abheritage.ca/famous5/achievements/persons_case.html.) The Famous Five fought this, and, in 1929, Canadian women were legally declared “persons.”

These early feminists drew attention to the need to address the unequal treatment of people in society. Many people of the early feminist movements were concerned with the rights of other groups, such as children and visible minorities, and fought against slavery and discrimination.

Early feminist movements also shared many concerns with those fighting for workers' rights in labour unions. Feminism influenced liberal ideas and encouraged the shift of liberalism toward ensuring basic needs, a decent standard of living, and safety and security for all citizens of a liberal democracy.



Early Feminism

“Anyone who knows anything of history knows that great social changes are impossible without feminine upheaval. Social progress can be measured exactly by the social position of the fair sex...”

—Karl Marx, socialist writer, 1818–1883.

I do not demand equal pay for any women save those who do equal work in value. Scorn to be coddled by your employers; make them understand that you are in their service as workers, not as women.

—Susan B. Anthony (American feminist),
The Revolution, October 8, 1868.

- 1 What do you think Karl Marx is saying about society in this quotation?
- 2 What modern liberal ideas are captured in the quotation from Susan B. Anthony?

Protection of Human Rights

In their pursuit of ensuring basic needs, a decent standard of living, and safety and security for all people, liberal governments began to define and identify human rights. In the 20th century, many people argued for greater protection of human rights, not only in the workplace but outside of it as well. Some people suggest that human rights are those rights that should be guaranteed to all human beings: they are part of what it means to be human.

The United Nations (UN) adopted and proclaimed the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights** in 1948 as a standard for all countries to adopt as legislation for their citizens. This document contains some of the rights that early liberal thinkers believed to be essential to the progress of humankind, including:

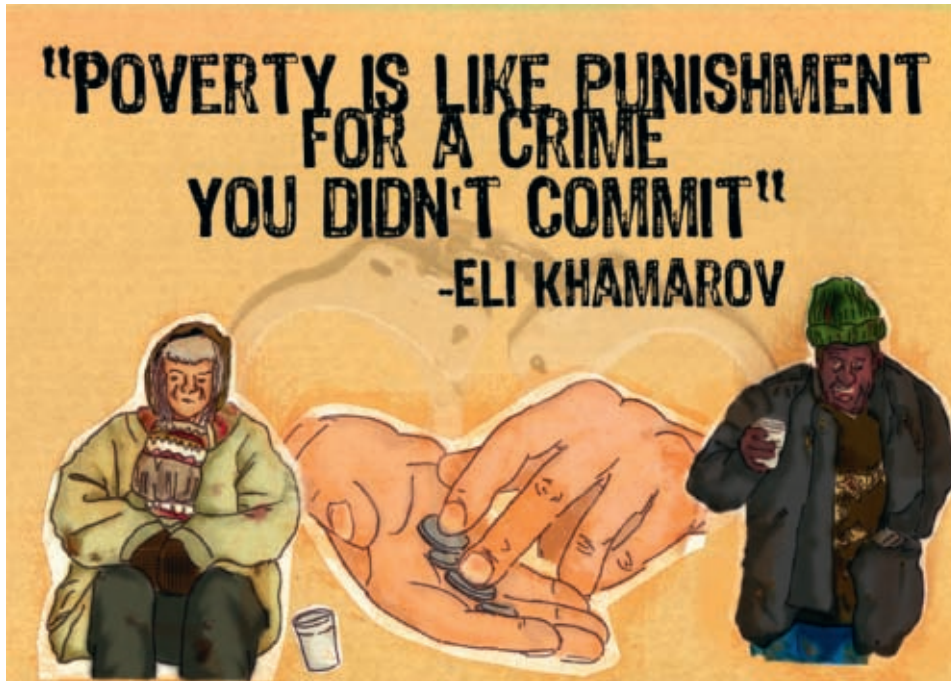
- the right to take part in government
- the right to be treated equally by the law of the land
- the right to liberty and freedom of thought and worship
- the right to own private property

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights goes beyond these rights, however, and includes specific economic protections regarding work. For example, it refers to the right to be free from slavery or servitude. Article 23 of the document states the following:

- *Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment.*

- Everyone, without any discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work.
- Everyone who works has the right to just and favourable remuneration ensuring for himself and his family an existence worthy of human dignity, and supplemented, if necessary, by other means of social protection.

—Source: **Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 23, December 10, 1948. Universal Rights Network,** <http://www.universalrights.net/main/declarat.htm>.



◀ **Figure 5-16** This poster was created by a grade 12 Alberta student and is part of the Many Faces of Poverty and Homelessness website of the Calgary Board of Education. The quotation is by Eli Khamarov, a noted social philosopher and commentator. How is poverty a human rights issue?

PAUSE AND REFLECT

What are some examples of international human rights organizations? Who decides when human rights have been violated and what to do about it? How does the protection of human rights contrast with the values of classical liberalism?

By the mid- to late 20th century, the extension of individual rights and freedoms to all people, no matter their race, economic status, sexual orientation, nationality, or gender, became a focus of modern liberal movements. The establishment of human rights for all people around the globe had become, for many, the ultimate goal. In the name of assuring these human rights, liberal governments began working together internationally, for example, by economically punishing countries accused of abusing human rights or, in extreme cases, by sending troops to protect people whose rights were being violated. Many non-governmental organizations also began to emerge to promote and protect human rights. Today, human rights violations are monitored around the world and reported through the UN, the news media, and other organizations.



▲ **Figure 5-17** In 2000, leaders of 189 countries signed the Millennium Development Goals, a global plan to halve poverty by 2015. Between October 17 and 19, 2008, over 100 million people in over 2000 events across more than 100 countries registered in the Stand Up and Take Action Against Poverty campaign in support of the Millennium Development Goals.

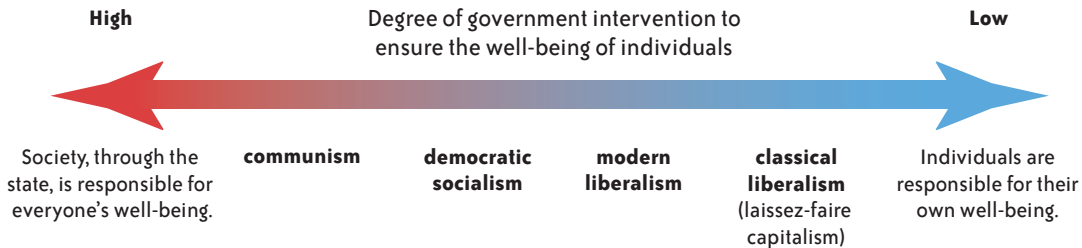
From Classical to Modern Liberalism

With such things as the work of labour unions, the extension of voting rights, the creation of government social programs, and the recognition of the rights of women and other groups, liberalism evolved into what is often referred to as **modern liberalism**. During the Industrial Revolution, many Western governments focused on classical liberal values, such as the importance of the individual (especially the industrialist and entrepreneur). By the late 1800s and early 1900s, some of these governments began to focus on modern liberal values, such as providing greater equality of opportunity for all individuals. The development of modern liberalism is illustrated in Figure 5-18.

Figure 5-18 The shift from classical liberalism to modern liberalism in Western democracies

| Classical Liberalism | Effects | Modern Liberalism |
|---|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • involves no government intervention in the economy (hands-off) • proposes that the only function of government is to protect individuals' natural rights to life, liberty, and property • emphasizes economic liberalism and promotes the freedom of risk takers, such as business owners | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • allowed people the freedom to innovate and increase production • contributed to the development of great wealth for some • contributed to the wealth gap between people who were rich and those who were poor • contributed to the development of ideologies that opposed capitalism, such as communism and fascism, and led to the development of a new (modern) liberalism • contributed to the Depression of the 1930s | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • involves significant government intervention at times (hands-on) • proposes that people's rights should be included as a part of the political and economic systems in a society, including that all individuals should be valued equally • proposes the development of government programs to help disadvantaged individuals and eliminate the causes of poverty, crime, and abuse • promotes sharing the benefits of economic development and having some consideration for the environment |
| <p>Examples: Adam Smith's "invisible hand," capitalism, free-market systems, laissez-faire policies</p> | <p>Examples: new businesses, inventions and technology, the success of the "nouveau riche" (e.g., business owners and merchants), the rise in child labour, the extreme poverty of the working class</p> | <p>Examples: the creation of public education, welfare, public housing, unions, rights movements, civil rights legislation, labour standards and labour laws, protection of the environment</p> |

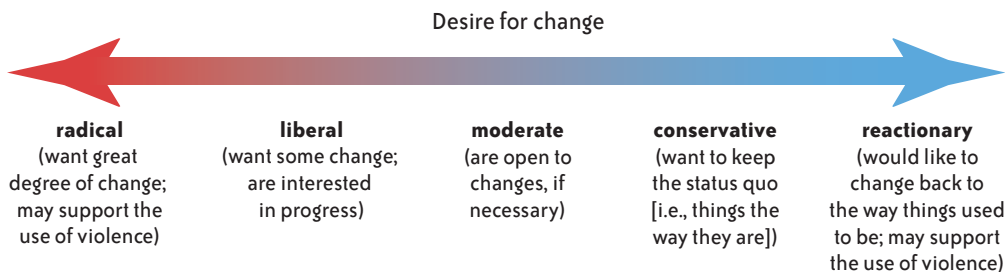
Another way of understanding modern liberalism is based on the degree to which government intervenes in people's lives to ensure their well-being. The spectrum in Figure 5-19 shows how modern liberalism relates to other political ideologies.



◀ **Figure 5-19** Political-economic spectrum based on the degree of government intervention to ensure the well-being of individuals

Different Understandings and Uses of the Term *Liberal*

It is important to note that the term *liberal* is not always used to refer to the ideology of liberalism. In some cases, *liberal* is used to describe how a person or group of people feels about political or economic change, as shown in Figure 5-20.



◀ **Figure 5-20** Political spectrum based on people's desire for change

Those people who more fully embrace and encourage changes to the established political and economic systems are considered *liberals*. They may also be considered left-wing, as liberal is on the left side of this spectrum. Those people who wish to maintain the established political and economic systems are thought to be *conservative* and may be considered right-wing. *Liberal* and *conservative* can also describe a party affiliation, for example, the Liberal Party of Canada and the Conservative Party of Canada. Even though political parties in Canada may interpret liberal values in different ways, it is important to remember that they are all still a part of a liberal democracy that largely embraces the ideology of liberalism and individualism. Thus, when you see or hear the term *liberal* used, think carefully about what it means: does it refer to the ideology of liberalism (that is, liberal democratic beliefs and values) or to more general ideas about embracing government intervention and/or change in a society?

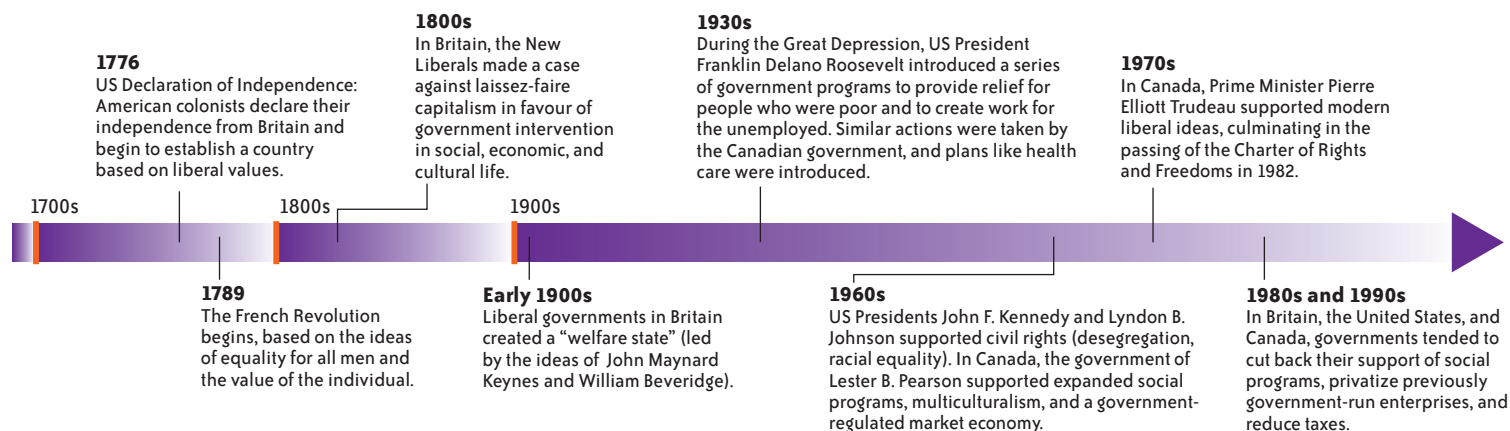


Figure 5-21 The evolution of modern liberalism. Over time, modern liberalism has moved from having government strictly protecting individual rights and freedoms to attempting to ensure equality of opportunity, as well as protecting the rights and freedoms of the individual.

Summary

In response to the negative impacts of classical liberal policies, such as **laissez-faire capitalism** during the **Industrial Revolution**, many different political and social movements developed. As the right to vote was extended to a wider range of voters, governments began to enact laws to protect the rights of workers, improving working conditions and addressing issues such as child labour. The welfare of citizens became a concern of liberal democratic governments around the world. **Labour unions** formed and allowed workers to collectively stand up to their employers. **Feminists** fought for equal political and economic rights. Eventually, **human rights** became a focus internationally.

Many movements pushed for the rights and freedoms of all individuals, including children, women, people who were poor, and visible minorities. Over time, the influence of these various movements brought about a change in liberal thought from focusing on individual freedoms to supporting increased protections for individuals and their rights. Thus, slowly, aspects of what is now called **modern liberalism** were introduced into liberal democracies that had been based on classical liberal values.

Knowledge and Understanding

- 1 Make a brief list of different concerns that are presented in this section regarding working conditions and workers' rights, government intervention or programs, labour unions, voting rights, the rights of women and other groups in society, and human rights.
Construct a T-chart presenting two different points of view that were discussed for one of these examples.
- 2 Why might some people today believe in the classical liberal value that all people are responsible for themselves

and their own success or failure? Do you agree or disagree with this belief? Why?

- 3 In a sentence or two, describe modern liberalism and the main ways in which the values and roles of government have changed from classical to modern liberalism. Make a list of examples from the chapter that support these changes in modern liberal values and roles of government. For example, it may be especially helpful to consider Figure 5-18, on page 134, which examines the effects of classical liberalism and the development of modern liberalism.

Winnipeg General Strike

Something to Think About:

When the needs of people are not met, one of the ways that they can change how they are treated is to band together to oppose those in charge. In a democratic society, labour unions are one way that people can act collectively. In 1919, the power of labour unions to unite people in protest was seen during the Winnipeg General Strike.

An Example:

After World War I, unemployment and inflation were on the rise. Unions became active around the world, fighting for the rights of workers and to improve their pay. In May 1919, negotiations broke down between management and members of the building and metal trades in Winnipeg, Manitoba. The two sides were arguing about wages and working conditions.

On May 15 at 11:00 AM, 30 000 workers left their jobs and began what would be a six-week strike. Railway workers, post office workers, public transportation workers, newspaper deliverers, telephone operators, gas station workers, retail store employees, police officers, firefighters, and other Winnipeggers stopped working.

A group of influential manufacturers, bankers, and politicians formed the Citizens' Committee of 1000 to oppose the strike. With the help of Winnipeg's leading newspapers, they attempted to discredit the strikers and declared the strike a revolutionary conspiracy started by Russian communists.

Afraid that the striking would spread to other cities across Canada, the federal government stepped in and forced the strikers to go back to work or face being fired. Ten leaders of the Central Strike Committee were arrested. Days later, police charged the strikers protesting on the streets. Many strikers were injured, and one striker was killed.

The streets of Winnipeg were then occupied by Canadian troops, and strikers decided to return to work on June 25; however, sympathy for the Winnipeg strikers fuelled other strikes across Canada from Nova Scotia to British Columbia.



◀ **Figure 5-22** The Winnipeg General Strike of 1919 was a massive response by Canadian workers to the conditions brought about by laissez-faire capitalism and some of the values of classical liberalism.

In the newspapers:

No Soviet at Winnipeg

The World, May 20, 1919 (Vancouver)

It is not correct to say that Soviet control has replaced civil government in Winnipeg. What has happened is merely that through the withdrawal of the trades of unionists from their usual occupations the leaders of labor associations are temporarily in a position to dominate the city's commercial and industrial activities.

Soviet control is a very different thing. As practised in Russia, Soviet control means the power of life and death over a whole community. There is no power above the Soviet except a central authority in which all Soviets are represented. There are no laws except those which the Soviets pass and can enforce.

—Source: “No Soviet at Winnipeg.” *The World*, May 20, 1919. *Historica*, <http://www.histori.ca/peace/page.do?subclassName=Document&pageID=402>.

Clean out the Bolchevists

The Times, May 20, 1919 (Toronto)

Winnipeg is a warning to the rest of Canada. The object of the One Big Union is plain. It is the aim of the Reds who dominate that organization to use mass-power, in defiance of agreements, for the overturning of organized society...

The Times agrees with Major-General McRae that there should be a “clean-up” of the revolutionary agitators and foreign undesirables who infest the country.

—Source: “Clean out the Bolchevists.” *The Times*, May 20, 1919. *Historica*, <http://www.histori.ca/peace/page.do?subclassName=Document&pageID=403>.

Questions for Reflection

- 1 Create a cause-and-effect chart based on the events that led to and occurred during the Winnipeg General Strike. Use the following chart as a guide.

| Causes | Effects |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• rising unemployment and inflation• power in the hands of business owners and employers, as people do not want to lose their jobs | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• feelings of financial insecurity• workers go on strike to try to regain some power and keep their jobs |

- 2 Write an argument supporting the idea that the Citizens' Committee of 1000 represented classical liberal values and beliefs and the Central Strike Committee represented modern liberal values and beliefs. Make sure that you include evidence to support your argument, including both facts and different supporting interpretations or points of view about the topic.
- 3 How could two newspapers have two very different editorial accounts of the Winnipeg General Strike? Compare and contrast the two newspaper editorial excerpts, and identify what could be considered common facts and what could be considered their specific interpretation of the event. Examine the different perspectives they represent, the language they use, their tone, their audience, and the purpose each writer likely had in mind. You may also wish to refer to the Reading Guide on page 119 to help you determine which evidence is fact and which is interpretation.

FURTHER EXPLORATION

- 1 Child labour is still used in many countries around the world today. Some feel that children in poor and developing countries should be allowed to earn what they can to help their families. Others believe that child labour is unnecessary and does not improve the lives of people living in poverty. Investigate whether child labour should be allowed in India, South America, or Africa. Form a position on the issue based on your investigation, and present your position to the class. Does your position reflect the beliefs of classical liberalism or modern liberalism? How?
- 2 With a group, create a presentation that shows various ways that people resisted the effects of classical liberalism during the 1800s and early 1900s. Include in your presentation a position on the following issue: **Is resistance to liberalism justified?** As you work with others, remember to consider their points of view and work co-operatively with other members to resolve any conflicts that arise.
- 3 As a class, discuss the following question: What evidence of classical liberalism still exists today? Consider classical liberalism's focus on individualism as you brainstorm examples.
- 4 Why do you think that many governments did not begin to address human rights until the 20th century?
- 5 Explore and research various sources that discuss the impact of classical liberalism and the development of modern liberalism. Following your research, develop a response to the Chapter Issue: **To what extent did classical liberalism meet the needs of society?** Evaluate your research and sources to determine the validity of the information based on context, bias, source, objectivity, evidence, and reliability and to identify what is fact and what is interpretation or point of view. Make sure that you clearly identify the main reasons and the strongest evidence underlying your position.

Chapter Summary and Reflection

In this chapter, you explored the rise of classical liberalism and its impact on society. The focus of classical liberalism on individualism was seen in the development of **laissez-faire capitalism**, in which government does not intervene in the economy. People were given the freedom to decide what they wanted to buy or sell and for how much.

This economic freedom and the development of new technologies helped to fuel the **Industrial Revolution**. The focus on farming changed to a focus on manufacturing. Coal mining became increasingly important to fuel the new machines of industry. With these changes, people moved from rural areas to urban centres, where many found work in factories. A great deal of new wealth was generated, but most of it stayed with the wealthy business owners. Due in part to a steady rise in the **cost of living**, workers had trouble making ends meet and the working class became poorer and poorer.

Dangerous working conditions, long hours, child labour, and the abuse of workers became commonplace. People recognized these problems and organized themselves to try to change things. **Labour unions**

were formed to fight for the rights of workers. People protested child labour. **Feminists** began to fight for equality between men and women. Eventually, things began to change as a wider range of people obtained the right to vote, and governments had to enact legislation that would appeal to these voters. Women also gained the right to vote, and new laws were introduced to protect workers. The **welfare state** was introduced, which meant that liberal democratic governments began providing help to those in need: people with disabilities, people who were poor, and the unemployed. These changes, which resulted in an increased role for government in protecting individuals and their rights, led to what is known as **modern liberalism** or more modern liberal values.

What you have learned about classical liberalism and its effects and the development of modern liberalism should help you make an informed response to the Chapter Issue: **To what extent did classical liberalism meet the needs of society?** Considering all that you have explored in this chapter, what new ideas do you have regarding the Related Issue: **Is resistance to liberalism justified?**