

## **Module 05: Industrialization and Its Discontents: The Great Strike of 1877**

### **Evidence 25: J. J. B., "The New Commandments," 8 September 1877**

# A

## **Introduction**

Satire offered another means of responding to the Great Strike of 1877, as this adaptation of the Ten Commandments reveals.

## **Questions to Consider**

- What is the implication of the first commandment listed?
- How did the author portray industrialists' treatment of workers?

## **Document**

Editor National Labor Tribune:

The following is recommended to your readers for earnest study:

Workingmen's ten commandments, as written down in the statute books of railroad officials, idle monopolies and Jay Gould aristocrats:

I am the lord and master, who have brought thee off and out of British bondage into a land where equal rights and free institutions given to all, black, red and white men.

Thou shalt have no other master beside myself, and you must do as I bid you to do, for I am rich and give you as much wages as I please.

Thou shalt not bow thyself down to any other master, and not belong to any trades union, or lecture on the principles of the working people's party, or do anything under the sun, contrary to my wish and command; for if you do I will call on the military.

Thou shalt not serve any other master, neither work for any more pay than I give; for I am a jealous master; I will have you discharged on the least provocation, and half starve your wife and children; and will have you punished as a communist, and not treat you as becomes an American

citizen, but as a tramp and a vagabond.

Thou shalt not call me any other name but sir and master; for I am a rich man and have piles of money. And, therefore, you are my tool and slave; for I own you, body and soul. Six days you must labor and do as I bid, or I give you another reduction. If you murmur or growl I will make you also work part of the night; for I am the all-powerful, and can use the law to suit myself.

Thou shalt honor my money-bags, and also my high social standing in society. Then thy days shall be long on earth, and in my employment, which I give thee with my usual blessing of long hours and small pay. So says the master.

Thou shalt not incite riots, with intent to kill. If you do I will have you arrested, and make you give bonds for three thousand dollars, and promise of good behavior in the future.

Thou shalt not strike for any higher wages, so as to be able to make an honest living and keep your children from begging. I will make you eat bread and drink water three times a day, as that is good enough for a greasy and ignorant mechanic.

Thou shalt not steal or commit any other nuisance; for I will find you guilty and have you punished for misdemeanor. I am mighty, and my name is Capital—O. Capital.

Thou shalt not covet my money-bags, or own a house and lot; for if you do I will have it sold by the Sheriff, and own it myself, and shall say "hands off." And I will say to the government, you must protect me in all my doings and undertakings; for I am mighty and my name is Capital O. Capital.

J. J. B.

Source:

J. J. B., "The New Commandments," *National Labor Tribune*, 8 September 1877.