

## Should I Join the Knights of Labor?

The year is 1886. You live in Brooklyn, New York. You are a worker in a brewery. A friend asks you if you want to join the Knights of Labor, a union active in the 1880s. You decide you want to learn more about the Knights before you make your decision. You and your friend go to a meeting to learn more.

The first speaker is Terence Powderly. He is a leader of the Knights of Labor. Someone stands up in the audience and asks him, "Who can join the Knights of Labor?".

Terence Powderly answers:

"We take all men who obey the divine injunction 'By the sweat of thy brow shall thou eat bread.'"

You turn to your friend. Your friend asks you, "What do you think of that answer." You respond:

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The next speaker is Richard F. Trevellick, an orator and organizer for the Knights of Labor. He reads from a poem (Source: The American Worker).

The time has come to stand erect,  
In noble, manly self-respect;  
To see the bright sun overhead,  
To feel the ground beneath our tread;  
Unled by priests, uncursed by creeds,  
Our manhood proving by our deeds.

You turn to your friend. Your friend asks you, "What do you think of that poem." You respond:

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You look around the room. You see men and woman in the audience. You see people from different races and ethnic groups. You learn that the Knights of Labor doesn't like strikes, but that many members must go on strike anyway. You learn that the Knights claim to have 15,000 local unions including 400 in New York. They claim to have almost a million members. You learn that they won't allow politicians and lawyers to join.

What do you decide to do? Why?