

# Before and after the German Revolution 1918: the Construction Union Pioneering in Germany

- The 1910 Lockout in the German Construction Industry
- Building Guild Movement (“Bauhüttenbewegung”)  
Association of Social Construction Companies  
 (“Verband sozialer Baubetriebe”, VsB)
- Stages in the Liberation of Labour from Property

## Foundation of joint-stock companies in the construction industry

1851-60	2	
1861-70	1	
1871-80	4	
1881-90	2	
1891-1900	14	
1901-5		10
<u>1906-9</u>		<u>16</u>

Statistisches Jahrbuch des Deutschen Reiches 1911

## **Year of turning into joint-stock companies**

1880 Grün & Bilfinger

1889 Beton- und Monierbau

1890 Julius Berger Tiefbau

1896 Hochtief

1900 Wayss & Freytag

1907 Dyckerhoff & Widmann

“The development of joint-stock holding ... separates executive leadership from property and makes executive function a special function of higher paid wage earners and employees.” Through this separation “... a concentration process of property, independent from the concentration process in the industry, also takes place at the stock exchange.”

*Rudolf Hilferding 1910*

“The significant feature of the joint-stock company ... is this, that in the joint-stock company the entrepreneur of things, the ‘capitalist’, is detached from the enterprise”. *Werner Sombart 1916*

**Table 3: SPD Reichstag Members and Party Membership**

<u>Year</u>	<u>Reichstag Members</u>	<u>SPD Membership</u>
1890	<u>35</u>	
1893	44	
1898	56	
1900		~250,000
1903	81	
1906		384,327
1907	43	530,466
1908		587,336
1909		633,309
1910		720,038
1911		836,500
1912	110	970,000

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<b>Year</b>	<b>Strikes</b>	<b>Lockouts</b>
1901	378	8
1902	467	15
1903	520	28
1904	742	54
1905	865	89
1906	1,079	91
1907	704	84
1908	429	76
1909	605	51
1910	506	1,016

## German Construction Employers Association

Year	Local Organizations	Members
1901	67	2,850
1902	82	3,500
1903	124	5,700
1904	147	7,758
1905	159	8,465
1906	168	13,814
1907	388	18,300
1908	469	20,222
1909	521	20,930

## Percentage of workers under collective agreements in 1912

<u>Sector</u>	<u>%</u>
Textile Industry	1.6
Engineering and Metalwork	9.7
Polygraphic Trades	38.6
Construction Industry	39.6
Woodworking	25.1
Food and Beveridge	10.5
<u>Clothing and Cleaning</u>	<u>16.9</u>

*Volkmann (1979), p. 428*



### Membership of Construction Labour Unions

Year	Bricklayers	Carpenters	Labourers	$\Sigma$ Constr. Workers
1891	12,523			
1892	12,928		2,563	
1893	12,073			
1894	12,187	8,862	1,793	
1895	15,360			
1896	26,600	13,701		
1897	42,652		3,840	
1898	60,175	22,104		
1899	74,534		11,149	
1900	82,964	24,149		
1901	80,869	23,246	16,350	
1902	82,223	23,377		
1903	101,155	28,953		
1904	128,850	86,243		
1905	155,911	42,249	39,000	
1906	183,537	50,438		
1907	192,582	54,395	84,612	
1908	175,019	51,315		
1909	171,337	53,077		
1910	169,645	54,550	72,203	241,848
1911				290,313
1912				344,725

“Before we have been victorious in a great trial of strength, we shall not achieve rest and piece; such a trial of strength has to be carried out. We have to come to a point, when we can lock out the workers in large enterprises, if not in the whole of Germany, in order to put an end to the unjustified demands.”

*German Construction Employers' Federation*

- Central organisation to be accepted by the industrial partners;
- 10 hours maximum working time, further reductions to be negotiated, overtime admitted only under special conditions;
- No wage differentials according to proficiency;
- Wages to be raised variably according to region by on average about 10% and generally binding for all employers;
- Agitation of workers' unions on construction sites to be allowed.

Conversely, three of the employers' demands protecting their control over labour were accepted:

- Employers' reference letters remained uncontrolled;
- Workers' sympathy campaigning became forbidden;
- Piecework by individual agreement remained permitted.

“The standardization of the labour contract  
replacing its authoritative determination  
by the employer ...”

*Sinzheimer 1907*

“The transformation of the labour contract from a one-sided relation of dependency into a legal relationship under mandatory norm ...”.

*Hugo Sinzheimer 1908*

“It must be our aim to achieve as soon as possible the socialisation of the entire construction industry, including the construction materials industry, in order to liberate construction workers of all kinds from the fetters of wage slavery and the rest of workers and German people from exploitation through private capital.” *Der Grundstein 1922*



# UNESCO World Heritage: Hufeisensiedlung Berlin-Britz

