

Bethlehem Steel: The People Who Built America

Segment Three Run Time: 16:29



Overview

As the years passed, the Bethlehem Steel Company continued to near its end. In 1995, the coke ovens were turned off and the last steel was produced. There were many factors that led to the end of production for the Bethlehem Steel and much disagreement over who—management or the union—is to blame. It is most likely that management, the union, the workers, and the failure to adapt to the changes in technology all influenced the decline. The prosperous times were officially over and there were many problems that needed to be solved. The current President, Robert “Steve” Miller Jr. is looking to settle the remaining problems specifically including the issues surrounding the pension and benefits that were promised to the steelworkers.



Discussion/Questions

1. As a resident of the Lehigh Valley, was your family affected in any way by the downfall of Bethlehem Steel? If so, explain how.
2. Do you think that the pension situation could have been resolved in another manner? Explain your answer.
3. When the steel tariff was instated in 2002, do you feel that the tariff greatly influenced the steel industry or that it was merely a temporary solution?

Activities

1. Have the students break into small groups or work individually for this project. Their goal will be to develop a tourist attraction for the abandoned land which the remains of the Bethlehem Steel cover. Some ideas can range from preserving the artifacts and converting the area into a museum or demolishing the remaining facilities and building a casino.

Spotlight: Robert "Steve" Miller, Jr.

A native of Portland Oregon, Robert Miller Jr.'s first job was as a member of his family lumber business. He then earned a degree in economics from Stanford University in 1963 and an MBA degree in finance from Stanford Business School in 1968. His most notable job was serving as a chief financial negotiator for the well-known Chrysler Corporation in the early 1980's.



Miller openly accepted the role as Chairman and CEO of The Bethlehem Steel Corporation in 2001. The already diminished company was in need of someone to help solve its unanswered problems. After being asked to fill the role of chairman and CEO, Miller answered within hours. He played a major role in influencing President Bush to instate the steel tariff in 2001, which led to a raise on tariffs of imported steel by 30 percent. Miller finds himself in an "unworkable situation" today, as the annual cost for health care and insurance for 130,000 Bethlehem Steel retirees, employees, and dependents is \$300 million a year.

"The worse shape a company is in, the more it needs the kind of help I offer."
--Robert "Steve" Miller Jr., Chairman and CEO of the Bethlehem Steel

More information

<http://www.uswa.org/uswa/program/content/index.php>

Academic Standards

Bethlehem Steel: The People Who Built America is designed to address the Academic Standards for History as set forth by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. This program supports the successful achievement of standards 8.2 Pennsylvania History, as defined under grade 12 measurement criteria:

8.2.12. B. Identify and evaluate primary documents, material artifacts and historic sites important in Pennsylvania history from 1890 to Present.

C. Identify and evaluate how continuity and change have influenced Pennsylvania history from the 1890s to Present.

