

**P57 Vocabulary Review for LEP868 How the USA is changing  
with Lindsay McMahon**

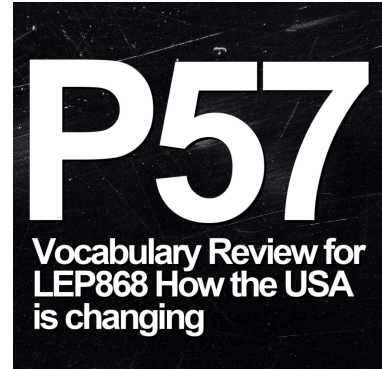
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Hello premium subscribers,

**This is P57.** At this stage, I am not sure if this is going to be a single episode, or if this is just part 1 of another multi-part series.

We'll see how much I manage to do in just one episode here. In any case, this is P57.

Hello!



In episode 868 I spoke to Lindsay McMahon from All Ears English about how the USA is changing, and we had an interesting conversation about politics, economics, culture and society, comparing social changes in the USA and the UK.

Have you heard that episode? It's number 868.

Here in this premium episode I'm going to recap a lot of the vocabulary which came up during that conversation.

So here is an episode full of vocabulary related to social changes, politics, employment and workers rights and so on.

I was inspired to do this premium episode by a comment from a PLEPster called Raquel.

Raquel on **868. How the USA is changing**

<https://teacherluke.co.uk/2024/02/12/868-how-the-usa-is-changing-with-lindsay-mcmahon-from-all-ears-english/>

My comments or corrections are written (in brackets).

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Hi Luke,

I must admit that this episode was hard for me to understand.

Many (a lot of) specific vocabulary about politics which I'm not familiar with. Could you please make a premium episode about this free one? That would be extremely helpful 😊.

I am writing from Spain. North of Spain, which is pretty different from the typical image of Spain. Not only the landscape but culturally speaking. I am not very into politics but I know that we are living convulsive moments (we are living through turbulent times); the left wing president got the position thanks to harsh negotiations with many different parties and he had to make a lot of compromises. The right wing party is not very happy with those and the situation is quite tense. And in the middle of all that are we, the citizens (is us - "are us" is also correct but I think here we are referring to "us" as a single unit), who seem that we are not important at all. 🧑 (who seem not to be important / who don't seem to be important at all)

I have the feeling that we never really abandon (abandoned) the feudalism (feudal) system.

Sorry for the long message.

As always thanks and, see you....bye

There are various reasons why you might have found it a bit tricky to understand that conversation.

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Specific vocabulary is certainly one of them, but also things like speaking speed - connected speech in pronunciation, a lack of familiarity with the topic, specific references to places and situations you aren't so familiar with (US and UK society/politics) and familiarity with the voices you're hearing.

But surely, vocabulary is a huge one here as we used quite a few specific words and expressions when talking about this topic.

So, let's re-cap some of the vocabulary from the conversation with Lindsay.

I know I always say this, but I really want to fly through this quickly. I don't plan to do another 8-part series so this is genuinely going to be an express vocabulary review, where, like an express train doesn't stop at all the stations on the route, in this express episode we're not going to stop for every possible detail.

Instead the main aim is to briefly clarify the main meanings of certain words or phrases that came up in the conversation, so that you can feel you understood this conversation more clearly, especially if you choose to listen to it a second time after listening to this.

I do recommend that by the way. Listen to 868, then listen to this, then listen to 868 again.

If you want, you can try to use the language in this episode to describe changes in your country. Using new language is an important part of learning it.

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I've prepared samples of language from the first 30 minutes of my conversation with Lindsay in episode 868. The vocabulary which I'm focusing on is in bold.

There are 50 items in my list here, so I'm probably being unrealistic to expect to get through this in only one episode, but that's what I'm going to try. Also, I think I won't do a pronunciation episode for this. Again, because I'm trying to be lean and efficient here. Feel free to repeat the words after me as you hear me say them during this episode.

Since this is an express episode, all you will see on the PDF is the samples of language taken from the conversation.

My explanations are all going to be done spontaneously, as if I was just standing up in class and my students asked me to explain some things we have just read.

I've changed these samples slightly, just to make them a bit clearer here, for example I've removed things like false starts, incomplete sentences which are normal in spoken English.

### **Vocabulary extracts from 868 How the USA is changing with Lindsay McMahon**

1. I've seen a number of **shifts** in our culture in politics.
2. I'll just say it in two in three words, **unions** are hot.

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3. A **union** is an organization that workers for generally larger companies can join. Usually it's by choice. You can join it, you **pay dues** to this union and they fight for you.
4. We're in a **pro-labor moment** which is kind of rare for the US.  
Spelling: **Labor** (US) **Labour** (UK)
5. It's something we haven't seen since I guess you could say the days of the **car boom** in the **Rust Belt** of the United States where unions dominated the car world.
6. Detroit Michigan, the whole Midwest was a major car industry and unions **dominated** at that time.
7. And then when we went into the Reagan **era** and the Bush **era** we really went into more of a big business **era**. Unions were weak. People didn't like unions.
8. People are still **skeptical**. I'm still somewhat **skeptical** of unions as well depending on what's going on but I think overall this is a positive thing because people in the US are able to negotiate for **raises**. UK: **pay rises**
9. I mean there's been very high-profile events that have gone on like the Hollywood **strike**, the writers' **strike**.
10. So it's a **collective bargaining** thing where usually there's a president of the union and they will at certain times when things aren't right for you as a worker they will **go to bat for you** and negotiate for **raises**, negotiate for **time off** things like that.

Also: wages & salaries, healthcare benefits, retirement

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benefits, working hours, workplace safety, job security -  
protections against **layoffs** or **redundancies**, grievance  
procedures, training.

11. You mentioned the **car manufacturing industry** which in the US was such an important industry.
12. You're talking about the **manufacturing** center of the country. Centre (UK)
13. In the UK ... the unions were **a huge presence** in the country especially in the 1970s when things really **came to a head**, where the unions really had a lot of power and they were really **putting their foot down** and negotiating hard with the government, especially **the steel industry** and **the coal mines**.
14. Okay so we've moved **in parallel** politically somewhat.
15. Thatcher fought hard with the unions and almost **obliterated** the union movement in the UK and she changed the country. She **liberalized** the economy. We moved away from **a manufacturing based economy** and towards **a financial services based economy**.
16. Bill Clinton who actually **made some conservative leaning moves** even though he was a Democrat.
17. We're now seeing the result of this more **conservative economy**.
18. We've had a lot of **billionaires** being created in the last 20 years due to this but we've also got a lot of **poverty** in the US.

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19. Poverty is a **relative term**, right? I have to be careful using that word. It's different around the world.
20. The result is that workers have fewer **rights**.
21. Exactly, less **bargaining power** than they used to.
22. These days you talk about you know the the 1% or the 0.1% where something like 99% of **the wealth**, 99% of of all of the **money and capital and ownership** is in the hands of 1% of the nation then you know that's not a very healthy situation.
23. We're seeing this **shake out** now and so we're seeing a massive increase in **homelessness**.
24. In cities like Phoenix Arizona there's entire homeless **rows** where you'll see streets and streets where businesses have **gone out of business** because there's so many **homeless people** on the streets.
25. We've had some **major high-profile wins** like the Hollywood strike and I think what **tipped** that one is that the actors **got involved**.
26. So it was the writers that went first and then finally the actors **tipped it into a win** for them.
27. I hadn't actually realized that the unions were **rallying** in this way in the United States.
28. In the United Kingdom we don't have a **nationalized** rail Network anymore. It was sold under Margaret Thatcher to private companies, the understanding being that the

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**competitiveness** of the market would make sure that services would be as good as they can be.

29. The train companies similar to the water companies and other ones, basically **their bottom line** was the most important thing and so the **shareholders** got their **profits** and not enough money was being **invested** in the the train networks.
30. I think it's normal that societies **flip** from one side to the other. There's always **a backlash** no matter what direction you're going.
31. Their focus is on making sure that the **shareholders** get their big **dividends** you know and that the **company directors** get their **bonuses**. I'm sorry but the idea that **competition** results in the best service for **customers** isn't always true.
32. When companies, their main objective is to essentially **scrape profit out of the whole enterprise**.
33. [you see] large companies doing a round of **layoffs** and you see their **stock surge**. Something is **out of whack**.
34. That's the biggest **shift** that we've seen and it'll be really interesting to see what **Gen Z** does, because this **translates down** in the US to a new generation of workers entering the workforce that never really went to the office.

They're **working from home** because they graduated into the pandemic and they're asking for for more money they're asking for what **they're worth**.



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35. Baby boomers, Gen X, millennials, Gen Z.
36. There's a shift from being **loyal to** a company and now being **loyal to** one's own career and oneself.

That's the shift I've seen on the individual level. We don't stay at companies for a lifetime and that was before the pandemic that had changed but that's even more **amplified** now.

37. There's a very sort of **fluid workforce** in terms of changing from one job to another maybe a bit more regularly but also in terms of location.
38. It forced everyone to **work from home** and that's kind of **stuck with us** hasn't it.
39. It's really interesting and it's like WFH **work from home**, versus WFA **work from anywhere**. I'm seeing a lot of people **in my circle** kind of taking their **laptops** and having a **well-paying full-time job** in tech **with benefits and** everything but taking the laptop.
40. Cities were kind of **coming back**, they were **getting safer**, they were having **a boom** and now they're having **a bust**. They're becoming more **sparse**. You don't see people **downtown** as much anymore on certain days.
41. It makes me wonder how are things going to change within the US **demographically**.
42. Downtown areas become almost like a city **theme park**. They're places where you go for the day to have a shopping experience or something or a **leisure** experience rather than a place that you go to do your job.

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43. I just **pulled a stat from Forbes** that they're saying now **as of June** there was **50% occupancy** in Midtown Manhattan, like downtown New York City for the office buildings.
44. It might **be edging up to 60/65** now but the question to me is, is it always going to be less than before or is it going to fully come back.
45. The **vendors**, those **lunch spots**, **delies** just don't have the business they need...
46. We saw people **relocate**. Did you see that in the UK? Did people buy second homes or move out of London?
47. We're seeing **second tier**, **third tier** cities become more popular and this **collides with** the price of **the cost of living**. Even though New York City is **half empty** or **three quarters empty** it's still really expensive to live there. So people are ... the **math is just not making sense for people anymore**.
48. They want a cheaper cost of living and that's another big **trend** like our **housing costs** are up 50% since 2019.
49. 50% oh my god and and **not to mention energy costs as well** because I don't know if in the States it's the same but in the UK there's been a huge energy crisis, even though the energy companies **recorded record profits** where literally all the consumers their energy bills **doubled**, some people just **couldn't afford to** heat their homes.
50. People who previously lived in cities are going out to more **rural** places. Then it's interesting what happens in those **rural** areas because in the States in the past there's been quite a

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large cultural **divide** between the sort of **metropolitan** side of things and the **rural** side of things.

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## **Memory Exercise**

**Just try to put the target vocabulary back into the extracts from episode 868. Check the list above for the answers.**

1. I've seen a number of **s\_\_\_\_\_s** in our culture in politics.
2. I'll just say it in two in three words, **u\_\_\_\_\_s** are hot.
3. A **u\_\_\_\_\_n** is an organization that workers for generally larger companies can join. Usually it's by choice. You can join it, you **p\_\_\_\_y d\_\_\_\_\_s** to this union and they fight for you.
4. We're in a **pro-l\_\_\_\_\_r moment** which is kind of rare for the US. Spelling: **L\_\_\_\_\_r** (US) **L\_\_\_\_\_r** (UK)
5. It's something we haven't seen since I guess you could say the days of the **car b\_\_\_\_\_m** in the **R\_\_\_\_t B\_\_\_\_t** of the United States where unions dominated car the car world.
6. Detroit Michigan, the whole Midwest was a major car industry and unions **d\_\_\_\_\_d** at that time.
7. And then when we went into the Reagan **e\_\_\_\_a** and the Bush **e\_\_\_\_a** we really went into more of a big business **e\_\_\_\_a**. Unions were weak. People didn't like unions.
8. People are still **s\_\_\_\_\_l**. I'm still somewhat **s\_\_\_\_\_l** of unions as well depending on what's going on but I think overall this is a positive thing because people in the US are able to negotiate for **r\_\_\_\_\_s**. UK: **p\_\_\_\_y r\_\_\_\_\_s**

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9. I mean there's been very high-profile events that have gone on like the Hollywood **s\_\_\_\_\_e**, the writers' **s\_\_\_\_\_e**.
10. So it's a **c\_\_\_\_\_e b\_\_\_\_\_g** thing where usually there's a president of the union and they will at certain times when things aren't right for you as a worker they will **g\_\_ to b\_\_t f\_\_r you** and negotiate for **r\_\_\_\_\_s**, negotiate for **t\_\_\_\_\_e o\_\_\_\_\_** things like that.  
Also: wages & salaries, healthcare benefits, retirement benefits, working hours, workplace safety, job security - protections against layoffs or redundancies, grievance procedures, training
11. You mentioned the **car m\_\_\_\_\_g industry** which in the US was such an important industry.
12. You're talking about the **m\_\_\_\_\_g** center of the country
13. In the UK ... the unions were **a huge presence** in the country especially in the 1970s when things really **came to a head**, where the unions really had a lot of power and they were really **p\_\_\_\_\_g their f\_\_\_\_\_t d\_\_\_\_\_n** and negotiating hard with the government, especially **the steel i\_\_\_\_\_y** and **the c\_\_\_\_\_l m\_\_\_\_\_s**.
14. Okay so we've moved **i\_\_ p\_\_\_\_\_l** politically somewhat.
15. Thatcher fought hard with the unions and almost **o\_\_\_\_\_d** the union movement in the UK and she changed the country. She **l\_\_\_\_\_d** the economy. We moved away from **a m\_\_\_\_\_g based economy** and towards **a financial s\_\_\_\_\_s based economy**.

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16. Bill Clinton who actually **made some conservative** **l\_\_\_\_\_g moves** even though he was a Democrat.
17. We're now seeing the result of this more **conservative** **e\_\_\_\_\_y**.
18. We've had a lot of **b\_\_\_\_\_s** being created in the last 20 years due to this but we've also got a lot of **p\_\_\_\_\_y** in the US.
19. Poverty is a **r\_\_\_\_\_e t\_\_\_\_\_m**, right? I have to be careful using that word. It's different around the world.
20. The result is that workers have fewer **r\_\_\_\_\_s**.
21. Exactly, less **b\_\_\_\_\_g power** than they used to.
22. These days you talk about you know the the 1% or the 0.1% where something like 99% of **the w\_\_\_\_\_h**, 99% of all of the **money and c\_\_\_\_\_l and ownership** is in the hands of 1% of the nation then you know that's not a very healthy situation.
23. We're seeing this **s\_\_\_\_\_e o\_\_\_\_\_t** now and so we're seeing a massive increase in **h\_\_\_\_\_s**.
24. In cities like Phoenix Arizona there's entire homeless **rows** where you'll see streets and streets where businesses have **g\_\_\_\_\_e o\_\_\_\_\_t of b\_\_\_\_\_s** because there's so many **h\_\_\_\_\_s people** on the streets.
25. We've had some **major h\_\_\_\_\_h-p\_\_\_\_\_e w\_\_\_\_\_s** like the Hollywood strike and I think what **t\_\_\_\_\_d** that one is that the actors **got involved**.

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26. So it was the writers that went first and then finally the actors **t\_\_\_\_\_d it into a w\_\_\_\_\_n** for them.
27. I hadn't actually realized that the unions were **r\_\_\_\_\_g** in this way in the United States
28. In the United Kingdom we don't have a **n\_\_\_\_\_d rail Network** anymore. It was sold under Margaret Thatcher to private companies, the understanding being that the **c\_\_\_\_\_s** of the market would make sure that services would be as good as they can be.
29. The train companies similar to the water companies and other ones, basically **their b\_\_\_\_\_m l\_\_\_\_\_e** was the most important thing and so the **s\_\_\_\_\_s** got their **p\_\_\_\_\_s** and not enough money was being **i\_\_\_\_\_d** in the the train networks.
30. I think it's normal that societies **f\_\_\_\_\_p** from one side to the other. There's always **a b\_\_\_\_\_h** no matter what direction you're going.
31. Their focus is on making sure that the **s\_\_\_\_\_s** get their big **d\_\_\_\_\_s** you know and that the **company d\_\_\_\_\_s** get their **b\_\_\_\_\_s**. I'm sorry but the idea that **c\_\_\_\_\_n** results in the best service for **customers** isn't always true.
32. When companies, their main objective is to essentially **s\_\_\_\_\_e profit out of the whole e\_\_\_\_\_e**.
33. [you see] large companies doing a round of **l\_\_\_\_\_s** and you see their **s\_\_\_\_\_k s\_\_\_\_\_e**. Something is **o\_\_\_\_\_t of w\_\_\_\_\_k**.

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34. That's the biggest **s**\_\_\_\_\_ **t** that we've seen and it'll be really interesting to see what **Gen Z** does, because this **t**\_\_\_\_\_ **s** **d**\_\_\_\_\_ **n** in the US to a new generation of workers entering the workforce that never really went to the office. They're **w**\_\_\_\_\_ **g** **f**\_\_\_\_\_ **m** **h**\_\_\_\_\_ **e** because they graduated into the pandemic and they're asking for for more money they're asking for what **they're w**\_\_\_\_\_ **h**.
35. Baby boomers, Gen X, millennials, Gen z
36. There's a shift from being **I**\_\_\_\_\_ **I to** a company and now being **I**\_\_\_\_\_ **I to** one's own career and oneself. That's the shift I've seen on the individual level. We don't stay at companies for a lifetime and that was before the pandemic that had changed but that's even more **a**\_\_\_\_\_ **d** now.
37. There's a very sort of **f**\_\_\_\_\_ **d w**\_\_\_\_\_ **e** in terms of changing from one job to another maybe a bit more regularly but also in terms of location.
38. It forced everyone to **w**\_\_\_\_\_ **k f**\_\_\_\_\_ **m h**\_\_\_\_\_ **e** and that's kind of **s**\_\_\_\_\_ **k with us** hasn't it.
39. It's really interesting and it's like WFH **w**\_\_\_\_\_ **k f**\_\_\_\_\_ **m** **h**\_\_\_\_\_ **e**, versus WFA **w**\_\_\_\_\_ **k f**\_\_\_\_\_ **m a**\_\_\_\_\_ **e**. I'm seeing a lot of people **in my c**\_\_\_\_\_ **e** kind of taking their **I**\_\_\_\_\_ **s** and having a **well-paying full-time job** in tech **with b**\_\_\_\_\_ **s** everything but taking the laptop.
40. Cities were kind of **c**\_\_\_\_\_ **g b**\_\_\_\_\_ **k**, they were **getting s**\_\_\_\_\_ **r**, they were having **a b**\_\_\_\_\_ **m** and now they're having **a b**\_\_\_\_\_ **t**. They're becoming more **s**\_\_\_\_\_ **e**. You don't see people **d**\_\_\_\_\_ **n** as much anymore on certain days.

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41. It makes me wonder how are things going to change within the US **d\_\_\_\_\_y**.
42. Downtown areas become almost like a city **t\_\_\_\_\_e p\_\_\_\_\_k**. They're places where you go for the day to have a shopping experience or something or a **l\_\_\_\_\_e** experience rather than a place that you go to do your job.
43. I just I **p\_\_\_\_\_d a s\_\_\_\_\_t from Forbes** that they're saying now **a\_\_ o\_\_ June** there was **50% o\_\_\_\_\_y** in Midtown Manhattan, like downtown New York City for the office buildings.
44. It might **be e\_\_\_\_\_g up to 60/65** now but the question to me is is it always going to be less than before or is it going to fully come back.
45. The **v\_\_\_\_\_s**, those **lunch s\_\_\_\_\_s**, **delies** just don't have the business they need.
46. We saw people **r\_\_\_\_\_e**. Did you see that in the UK? Did people buy second homes or move out of London?
47. We're seeing **second t\_\_\_\_r, third t\_\_\_\_r** cities become more popular and this **c\_\_\_\_\_s with** the price of **the c\_\_\_\_t of l\_\_\_\_\_g**. Even though New York City is **h\_\_\_\_f-e\_\_\_\_\_y** or **t\_\_\_\_\_e q\_\_\_\_\_s empty** it's still really expensive to live there. So people are ... the **m\_\_\_\_\_h is just not m\_\_\_\_\_g s\_\_\_\_\_e for people anymore**.
48. They want a cheaper cost of living and that's another big **t\_\_\_\_\_d** like our **h\_\_\_\_\_g costs** are up 50% since 2019.



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49. 50% oh my god and and **not to mention energy costs as well** because I don't know if in the States it's the same but in the UK there's been a huge energy crisis, even though the energy companies **r\_\_\_\_\_d r\_\_\_\_\_d profits** where literally all the consumers their energy bills **d\_\_\_\_\_d**, some people just **c\_\_\_\_\_ 't a\_\_\_\_\_d to** heat their homes.
50. People who previously lived in cities are going out to more **r\_\_\_\_\_l** places. Then it's interesting what happens in those **r\_\_\_\_\_l** areas because in the States in the past there's been quite a large cultural **d\_\_\_\_\_e** between the sort of **m\_\_\_\_\_n** side of things and the **r\_\_\_\_\_l** side of things.

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## **Discussion Questions**

**These discussion questions are designed to help you practise your speaking and to use the vocabulary which came up in this episode.**

**They ask you to discuss the topics which Lindsay and I talked about.**

**But, they are quite difficult questions to answer! They require quite a lot of knowledge of the subject.**

**Nevertheless, you can try to answer these questions. It can really help you to use the vocabulary in this episode. Don't worry if you struggle to give full answers though. Just try to use the vocabulary in meaningful ways. Feel free to skip any questions that you don't really want to answer.**

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**Say your answers out loud, with your voice. Don't just write them.**

1. How have you noticed shifts in our culture impacting politics?
2. What are your thoughts on the recent surge in interest in unions? Do you believe unions are becoming more influential in today's society?
3. Can you explain the concept of a union and its role in advocating for workers' rights?
4. Why do you think there's currently a pro-labor sentiment in the US, and how does it compare to previous eras?
5. Reflecting on history, how did unions influence the car industry during the Rust Belt era?
6. In what ways did political leadership in the US, such as Reagan and Bush, affect the strength of unions?
7. Share your thoughts on the benefits and drawbacks of union membership. Are you personally supportive of unions?
8. How do collective bargaining and negotiation contribute to improving workers' conditions?
9. Discuss the significance of high-profile strikes, like the Hollywood and writers' strikes, in shaping labor movements.
10. How has the shift from a manufacturing to a service-based economy impacted workers' rights and income distribution?
11. What are the implications of wealth inequality and its effect on labor rights and social stability?

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12. How do homelessness and economic disparity reflect broader societal issues related to labor and wealth distribution?

13. What role did actors play in influencing the outcome of the Hollywood strike, and why was their involvement significant?

14. In what ways have changes in transportation infrastructure, such as privatization of rail networks, affected workers and consumers?

15. Do you agree that societal changes often result in a pendulum swing between different ideologies? Why or why not?

16. How does the pursuit of profit by corporations sometimes conflict with the interests of workers and consumers?

17. Discuss the impact of remote work on the dynamics of the labor market and individual career choices.

18. How has the pandemic accelerated trends of remote work and altered perceptions of loyalty to employers?

19. Reflect on the implications of a more transient workforce in terms of job stability and geographic mobility.

20. What are the economic and social consequences of urban depopulation and the rise of remote work?