

First Secretary of Labor (William B. Wilson) Appointed (1913)

William B. Wilson

Tenure: March 6, 1913 to March 4, 1921

Born in Scotland; emigrated with coal miner father to Pennsylvania. When nine years old, went to work as a breaker boy in the mines; continued as a coal miner. Active in the union; became Secretary-Treasurer of United Mine Workers; served in Congress. He was a talented amateur poet.

Appointed by Woodrow Wilson (no relation). Secretary of Labor when there were 2,000 Department of Labor (DOL) employees, and when there were four bureaus: Children, Immigration, Naturalization, and Labor Statistics □ and a Division of Conciliation. With World War I, he put the DOL on the map. Many current DOL activities, except the regulatory work that later became so important, trace back to that period □ employment services, employment of women, fair employment for minorities, labor-management relations. DOL helped much in winning the war by mobilizing an effective workforce for defense production.