

Newsletter

(Affiliated with the Wisconsin Historical Society)

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- **WISCONSIN LABOR ACTIVISTS DEATHS REPORTED. SEE PAGE 6.**

Quotable:

Martin Luther King Jr.:
 "Our needs are identical with labor's needs: Decent wages, fair working conditions, livable housing, old-age security, health and welfare measures, conditions in which families can grow, have education for their children, and respect in the community."

LOOKING FOR WORKERS WHO BUILT MILWAUKEE CITY HALL, ONCE TALLEST

A two-year remodeling project of Milwaukee's historic City Hall was completed in December and the Wisconsin Labor History Society is looking to learn more about the workers who built the structure from 1893 to 1895.

When it was completed, it was the tallest structure in the world until 1899.

According to Chuck Baumbach, a San Francisco area attorney whose grandfather worked as a bricklayer on the project, the City Hall project had its seeds planted in the Bay View Tragedy of May 5, 1886. Baumbach has written:



From an old postcard

HERE'S WHAT YOU CAN DO:

- Participate in further planning for this project.
- If you know of any artifacts, letters, newspaper articles or family histories involving workers on the project, let us know.

(To assist us, please contact: Ken Germanson, WLHS, President at 414-771-0700 x20 or at info@wisconsinlaborhistory.org.)

"The Milwaukee City Hall was born during an unstable period between 1886 and 1910, during which the local Labor Movement took form, and after which a long period of relative local government stability ensued. The City Hall represents the first dramatic expression of the idealism and many good qualities which made Milwaukee famous."

Baumbach, now 76, returned in December to his Milwaukee area roots to suggest further action on tracing the roots of the workers who engaged in building this major structure.

Discussions for fitting recognition of the workers have been continuing with Baumbach, the WLHS, the Milwaukee County Historical Society, the City of Milwaukee Department of Public Works, Bricklayers Local No. 8 and others.

On Labor Day last year, before the project was completed, Mayor Tom Barrett celebrated the City Hall Restoration Project by honoring Milwaukee laborers with the dedication of the American flag over City Hall.

THE EFCA AND THE WAGNER ACT OF 1935: PARALLELS IN HISTORY

BY WILLIAM P. JONES



William P. Jones is an associate professor of history at UW-Madison and a member of the board of the Wisconsin Labor History Society. This column appeared in the Dec. 13, 2008, issue of the Wisconsin State Journal.



Franklin D. Roosevelt signing into law the Wagner Act, the National Labor Relations Act, on July 5, 1935 with Labor Secretary Francis Perkins looking on.

In these economic hard times, it is more important than ever that workers have the freedom to organize and choose their representatives.

That was the original intention of the National Labor Relations Act, which Congress adopted in 1935, although a series of amendments and policy changes have made it easier for employers to intervene in the unionization process. That is why Wisconsin U.S. Sens. Russ Feingold and Herb Kohl have co-sponsored the Employee Free Choice Act.

The Employee Free Choice Act has three major provisions, each of which further the NLRA's mandate to encourage collective bargaining and protect workers' rights to "freedom of association, self-organization, and designation of representatives of their own choosing."

The most controversial allows the National Labor Relations Board to certify a union after a majority of workers sign "valid authorizations" indicating their desire to be represented by that union.

This has been an accepted method of forming unions since 1935, but the current law allows employers to override those authorizations by demanding that the NLRB conduct an election.

Under the proposed law, workers could still petition for an election and the NLRB would still ensure that authorizations were not coerced. But employers would lose the ability to determine how workers expressed their opinion.

The remaining sections of the proposed law allow either side to request mediation in protracted labor disputes and increase penalties for employers who violate workers' rights to organize and bargain collectively.

Those measures are necessary because the election process has been undermined to the point of being ineffective.

Recent studies show that 75 percent of em-

ployers hire consultants to conduct anti-union campaigns during NLRB elections and that over 90 percent require workers to attend meetings where they are warned that negative consequences would result from unionization.

While technically legal, such actions violate the spirit of the NLRA. More direct violations of the law include firing union supporters (25 percent of elections) and refusing to sign a contract after workers have chosen a union (44 percent of elections).

Given the lengths to which employers go to prevent unionization, it is no wonder that only 12 percent of workers currently belong to unions while nearly 60 percent report that they would join one if given the chance.

Particularly during a recession, society has an interest in ensuring that workers can bargain collectively for better wages, benefits and working conditions.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that union members earn 28 percent more than non-union workers, in addition to gaining far greater benefits, safety, and protection from unfair treatment on the job.

The benefits of unionization extend far beyond union members and their families, as non-union employers tend to raise wages to avoid unionization. Historically, unions have played critical roles in supporting social reforms that benefit all workers, such as pensions, workplace safety, overtime pay and health care.

By allowing workers to express their interests collectively, unions counteract the hyper-competitive impulse to take several jobs and work longer hours at lower pay; which is why Congress viewed the National Labor Relations Act as a critical part of its plan to stabilize the economy during the Great Depression.

Our senators should be applauded for defending the democratic principles of that law as we face the current economic crisis.

Were there ever more "hard times" for working people than the years of the Great Depression?

Yet, when times were the bleakest, in the summer of 1933 with more than a third of workers out of jobs, many of our unions were formed.

The late Robert H. Schultz, Jr., recalled at a Wisconsin Labor History Society annual conference in 1984 that workers at the Oscar Mayer meatpacking plant in Madison formed Local 538 and received their charter from the old Amalgamated Meat Cutters Union on Aug. 7, 1933. (Local 538 lives on today at Oscar Mayer under the banner of the United Food and Commercial Workers.)

Jobs were never harder to come by than in those years; wages were 28 cents an hour for men and 25 cents for women. Company spies, termed stoolpigeons, were everywhere and nine of ten early organizers were fired, he recalled.

Yet, many of the workers at Oscar Mayer struck on May 30, 1934 to win recognition, gain seniority rights and protect jobs of the strikers. They failed at the time, but sowed the seeds for eventual unionization at the plant.

Workers throughout the state in the 1930s organized unions, even in the face of terrible anti-union and thuggish behavior by employers which meant almost instant firing for known union sympathizers. Sitdown strikes (following the example of the famous Flint UAW sitdown) broke out in Wisconsin in 1937 and 1938 as unions organized.

WHEN TIMES ARE TOUGH, IT'S TIME TO ORGANIZE

28TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF WLHS TO LOOK
AT ORGANIZING FROM 1930'S TO PRESENT DAY

The huge General Motors plant in Janesville (which closed in December last year) organized into the UAW during these difficult years; as did Seaman Body in Milwaukee (later to be the old American Motors body plant) and Allen-Bradley and Kohler Co. and others.

Why did workers struggle to organize their unions at the very real risk of loss of jobs in the 1930s, when they literally had trouble putting milk on the table for their children? And, can workers today gain any heart from the workers of two and three generations earlier and find ways — old or new ways — to again organize unions so that working people can regain equity in the workplace and a decent standard of living?

These are the questions that will be considered at the Wisconsin Labor History Society's 28th Annual Conference, entitled: "Organizing in Hard Times: Problems and Opportunities," to be held Saturday, May 9, 2009 at the Neenah-Menasha Labor Temple, 157 Green Bay Rd., Neenah.

The conference will also look at the struggles emanating from the Reagan years and the firing of the Air Traffic Controllers which brought about the widespread de-unionization era. And, a final closing session will be entitled: "Re-unionization in Our Own Hard Times," offering hope for new spirit. Examples of recent union wins will be discussed.

ORGANIZING IN HARD TIMES: *PROBLEMS AND OPPORTUNITIES*

28th Annual Conference of Wisconsin Labor History Society
Neenah-Menasha Labor Temple, 157 S. Green Bay Rd. Neenah

9:00 - Registration/Refreshments

9:15 - Welcome

9:30-10:40 - Organizing in Hard Times

Film: WITH BABIES AND BANNERS

Panelists: James J. Lorence - University of Wisconsin-Marathon County; Rosemary Feurer - Northern Illinois University.

Moderated by David Nack, School for Workers, University of Wisconsin-Extension

10:50-12:15 - Struggling with De-Unionization

Panelists: Peter Rachleff - Macalester College; Michael Gordon - University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.

Moderated by Andrew Kersten, University of Wisconsin—Green Bay

12:15 - Lunch

1:00 - Awards Ceremony

1:30-2:45 - Re-Unionization in Our Own Hard Times

Panelists: Carl Rosen, Midwest Dir. United Electrical Workers (UE); Rosemary Feurer - Northern Illinois Univ.; Others TBA.

Moderated by David Newby - President, Wisconsin State AFL-CIO

3:00 - Business Meeting

Issue Check to: Wisconsin Labor History Society. Mail by May 1, 2009 to: Wisconsin Labor History Society, 6333 W. Blue Mound Rd., Milwaukee WI 53213. (Include name, organization, address, phone number, email address.)

Reservations may be made by email. See website for registration form: <http://wisconsinlaborhistory.org>

Book Review: Mystery continues: Who built bomb that killed 9 police?



Anarchy in Bay View's
Little Italy September 9, 1917
And the
Shocking Aftermath



by Anna M. Passante

The 77-page paperback volume sells for \$9.99 and is available at Harry W. Schwartz bookstores in Milwaukee or from the author at

elxday@yahoo.com.

Anarchy in Bay View's Little Italy September 9, 1917 and the Shocking Aftermath. By Anna M. Passante. ElexDay Publications. 77 pg. \$9.99. If you were a trade union activist or socialist early in the 20th Century your opponents often called you an "anarchist," which categorized you in the same box with "terrorists" of the early 21st Century.

That's what makes a little known incident that occurred in Milwaukee's Bay View area on Sept. 9, 1917 — during the height of World War I — so fitting a read today. As related in this small but revealing volume by Bay View resident Anna M. Passante, a group of immigrants in the section known then as "Little Italy" formed a small Italian Society espousing socialism and free speech.

The group tried to break up a Sept. 17 rally by Rev. August Giuliani an Evangelical Methodist minister, and it turned into a bloody riot, leaving two Italians mortally wounded and two police officers slightly injured. Two months later, on Nov. 24, a bomb was found outside Rev. Giuliani's church in Milwaukee's lower third ward; it was taken to the Central Police Station, and exploded, killing nine police officers and a civilian.

That tragic incident (it killed the greatest number of police officers in a single incident in U.S. history until Sept. 11, 2001) became national news; blame quickly spread to the Bay View social group, and police rounded over 50 Italians before finally accusing 11 of them for the incident.

In a trial that began only 4 days later, the 11 were quickly convicted, convincing their sympathizers that they did not get a fair trial. All were eventually deported.

To this day, there is no proof as to who built the bomb and had it sent to the church. Interesting, too, is the fact that the Sept. 17 incident occurred within blocks of the May 5, 1886 Bay View Tragedy.

Author Passante has researched newspaper accounts from the period as well as a 1932 article from a popular magazine of the period, *True Detective*, and reproduced more than three dozen photos from those publications, showing the police victims and the Italian immigrants, as well as the photos of the sites of the incidents. The photos tend to be fuzzy, but they are fascinating. The author is to be commended for this factual, interesting history which offers lessons for today. K.G.

FROM THE ARCHIVES . . .

Lending support for the members of UAW Local 833 during the strike at the Kohler Co. in 1954 are the wives, mothers and daughters who showed up on "Women's Day" on the picketline.

Local 833 had two prolonged strikes until final settlement in 1965. The role of women has changed through the years, along with their clothing.



BORN-AGAIN AMERICAN EVENING
JAN. 18, 2009

Citizens, not subjects. No need for monarchs and aristocrats. Citizens, arguing, resolving, and volunteering. Citizens making and repairing. Citizens, the promise of America.

“The sun never shined on a cause of greater worth.”

So wrote Thomas Paine in 1776 – not simply of independence, but also of freedom, equality, and democracy.

“The independence of America would have added little to the country’s own happiness, and been of no benefit to the world if her government had been formed on the corrupt models of the old world. It was the opportunity of beginning the world anew... Of bringing forward a new system of government in which the rights of all men should be preserved that gave value to independence.”

Citizens, not subjects.

“All men are created equal... endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights... among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.”

Citizens not subjects.

“We, the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect Union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish...”

Citizens, not subjects.

And as Tocqueville observed, we needed few instructions:

“No sooner do you set foot upon American ground than you are stunned by a kind of tumult; a confused clamor is heard on every side, and a thousand simultaneous voices demand the satisfaction of their social wants. Everything is in motion around you; here the people of one quarter of a town are met to decide upon the building of a church; there the election of a representative is going on; a little farther out, the delegates of a district are hastening to the town in order to consult upon some local improvements; in another place, the laborers of a village quit their plows to deliberate upon the project of building a road or a public school.”

Citizens, not subjects.

And the promise was progressive and expansive.

“There must be continual additions to our great experiment of how much liberty society will bear,” Walt Whitman contended.

“If women really want security, real representation, honesty, wise and just legislation, happier and more comfortable condi-



Harvey Kaye, member of the WLHS Board and professor of history and social change at University of Wisconsin—Green Bay, composed the remarks here for presentation at the Born-Again American Pre-Inaugural Party sponsored by Norman Lear’s DECLARE YOURSELF

tions of living,” Eleanor Roosevelt urged her sisters, “they must bestir themselves.”

“Freedom and democracy are never given,” A. Philip Randolph reminded his black union brothers, “They are won.”

“We are a choosing people, not a chosen people,” Lewis Mumford wrote; and “We draw our strength from all the nations that have helped make us.”

Citizens, not subjects. But not for ourselves alone.

“To be a good husband and a good father,” Jefferson declared, “you must also be a good citizen.”

“A true patriotism,” FDR insisted, “urges us to build an even more substantial America where the good things of life are shared by more of us, where social injustices are not encouraged to flourish.”

Citizens, not subjects. Confronting challenges and crises – then and now.

“Never were we more aware of America [and] that we have in our hands the magnificent makings of a new society, a really new economic era. It waits only for the liquidation of our biggest frozen asset, the active and responsible citizen,” Anne O’Hare McCormick wrote in 1932.

Citizens, not subjects – then and today.

“Now, more than ever,” Barack Obama averred, “we must re-dedicate ourselves to the notion that we share a common destiny as Americans -- that I am my brother’s keeper, I am my sister’s keeper. Now, we must all do our part to serve one another, to seek new ideas and new innovation, and to start a new chapter for our great country... After all, that’s what Americans have always done.”

As citizens, not subjects, Paine announced, “We have it in our power to begin the world over again... The birthday of a new world is at hand.”

WAR STORIES AS TOLD TO LARRY PENN

Wisconsin’s labor folksinger Larry Penn also has another history to sing and tell about in this recently released CD. An Army veteran of World War II, Larry has put together 14 ditties of his own stories and song along with some traditional favorites like “Tramp, Tramp, Tramp” from World War II and Woody Guthrie’s “Reuben James.” It’s the war as told from the GI Joe view and worth a listen. Available directly from Larry Penn, at 414-483-7306 or cookeman@execpc.com.

O B I T U A R I E S :

M C N A M A R A , W Y M A N , S H O O K , L E P P

Bertram N. McNamara, longtime Wisconsin labor leader, died Jan. 2 of natural causes. He was 95.

A budding art student in his youth, McNamara became a steelworker during the Great Depression, and later, director of the Steelworkers Union in Wisconsin. He went on to serve with the old Wisconsin State Universities Board of Regents and then with the board of the merged University of Wisconsin System.

After retirement, he returned to the classroom. McNamara taught industrial relations at UW-Milwaukee - and went back to art school.

Life began in Fort Wayne, Ind., where he dreamed of becoming a sculptor. Scholarships took him to New York City.

"But that was during the Depression, and I was broke," he said in a 1981 interview.

By 1935, he was back home and working at a steel mill. He later joined the staff of the Steel Workers Organizing Committee, a forerunner of the United Steelworkers of America, for which he served as director for a district covering Wisconsin and part of Illinois.

"It was a year when ferment for industrial unions was very strong," a time of no paid vacations or holidays, no insurance, no workers' rights and no protection against discharge, he said.

"At first, we had a hard time signing people up because of fear," he said. "When the Wagner Act was signed, I would sign up 1,000 a week."

McNamara also served on arts boards, including for the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra.

A private family service was held. A memorial service will be held this spring.

Donel H. Wyman, 82, an Oshkosh labor leader, died Jan. 14.

He was a carpenter by trade, and a member of Carpenters Local 252 (now Local 955) since June, 1956. and served in many leadership posi-

tions. He was instrumental in founding the Fox River Valley Building Trades Council and became the council's business manager.

From 1979 to 2000, he was president of the Winnebago County Labor Council.

A lifelong Democrat, he was active in the Winnebago Democratic Party, serving many leadership positions.



In 1998, the Wisconsin Labor History Society presented Wyman with an "Award of Merit," for his support of the cause of labor history.

labor history.

He is survived by his wife, Joan Kaeding, a member of AFSCME and longtime member of the executive board of the State AFL-CIO, plus other relatives.

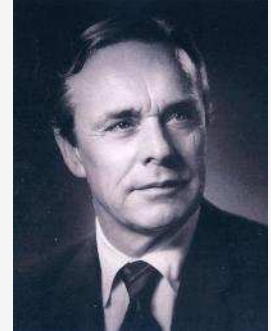
Wyman was a decorated U.S. Navy veteran, serving in the Pacific Theater during World War II, winning the Navy Cross and the Purple Heart.

Ernst F. Schnook, president of the American Federation of Teachers Local 212, from 1991 to 1997, died Dec. 31, less than two weeks after being diagnosed with advanced cancer. He was 68.

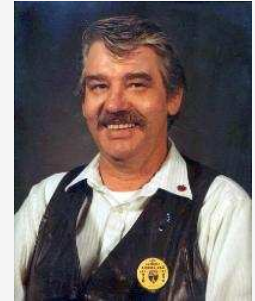
Schnook earned bachelor's and master's degrees at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. He began teaching sociology at MATC as foundry jobs headed overseas and the foundry program closed.

Schnook grew up in Germany during World War II, coming to the United States with his family at age 10. He served with the U.S. Army. He used the G.I. Bill to attend MATC, and completed an apprentice program at Falk.

Schnook later knew that most of his students came from poor families. He always made sure there was food - maybe a pot of soup on a hot plate or instant oatmeal - for his students.



**Bertram
McNamara**



Ernie Schnook

Earl Lepp, former secretary-treasurer of the Milwaukee County Labor Council, died at 81 of pancreatic cancer in Johnston, Iowa. He was 21 years old when he joined Milwaukee Mailers Local 23, then part of the Typographers Union, when he worked at the old Milwaukee Sentinel. Lepp was strong on community work and supported the efforts of the Wisconsin Labor History Society.

LETTERS

Thanks for the e-newsletter. Great job. Annual conference looks fascinating as well as timely.

Last fall, I started doing some part-time on-line adjunct teaching for a state university labor studies program. On-line teaching's different but interesting, and the class is important. The students are all on-campus undergrads and it's amazing (well, actually not so amazing) how little they know about unions and working people. It shows the importance of the labor in the schools work that the WLHS does and of projects like the superb school-to-work program that the IBEW did at Verizon in New England several years ago. In the IBEW's summer internship program, kids worked with the tools with mentors, joined the locals, and also took part in a labor history day along with their union mentors at Lowell's National Historical Park.

I'm close to finishing an academic article on the Immigration Bureau's use of its deportation power to attack left-led strikes in the early 1930s. I'm also thinking about how I would have to change the dissertation to make it publishable (my work's on New England textiles, especially Lawrence, so I'm spurred on by the 100th anniversary of the 1912 Bread and Roses strike).

When I got back here, I went to Lawrence's huge Catholic cemetery looking for the graves of the three workers killed in 1912.

Two were unmarked. I talked with the local labor council president (an IBEW phone guy) who led the effort to put a stone on the grave of the first martyr. A couple years later, a local historian and Lithuanian community activist led the effort to mark the grave of a Lithuanian worker killed during the post-strike anti-IWW campaign. On Labor Day, 2008, a Bread and Roses stone was added to the family plot of the third martyr (a 16-year-old bayoneted in the back by the militia -- the young textile worker was a cornet player involved in a parade that the militia broke up). To my surprise, I was called up to speak at the ceremony. Now the guy who spearheaded the placing of the last two stones is working with cemetery officials to designate a Bread and Rose section of the cemetery.

I haven't read the new book on Ludlow. But do you know about Scott Martelle's 2007 book "Blood Passion: The Ludlow Massacre and Class War in the American West"? Martelle's a journalist (former Detroit newspaper striker) who wrote a very readable account based on serious archival research. Website's www.scottmartelle.com. — Dexter Arnold

(Arnold is a founding member of WLHS and is now located in New Hampshire)

HISTORIC HANDMADE POSTER
NOW IN STATE ARCHIVES

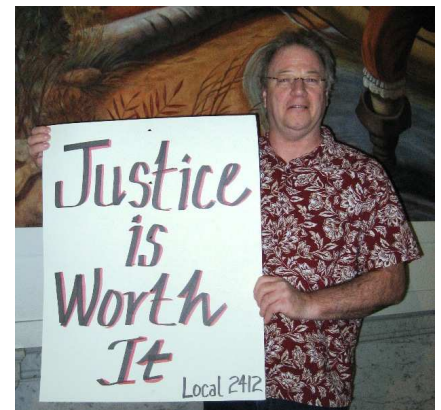
Gary Mitchell, current president of AFSCME Local 2412, University of Wisconsin Administrative Support Employees, holds a poster (*photo at right*) used at multiple rallies to win the fight for comparable worth for the female-dominated jobs in state government.

The fight continued during the mid-1980s, and at the time, most of these female-dominated job titles were represented by the Clerical and Related Unit of the Wisconsin State Employees Union (AFSCME Council 24). Later, the unit was re-named to be the Administrative Support Unit, rather than the Clerical and Related Unit.

Mitchell is shown standing in front of a mural in one of the stairwells in the State Historical Society's headquarters building at 816 State Street. The 2412 protest sign was accepted to be preserved in the Archives of the State Historical Society because Local 2412 had earlier set up collection of papers of the local with the Archives.

A companion comparable worth protest sign from AFSCME Local 68 was not accepted by the Archives because Local 68 has not yet made arrangements for any of their papers to be preserved there. AFSCME Local 68 represents the state employees at the Hill Farms Office Building and is an influential local within WSEU.

The fight to win comparable worth was one that took several years, but finally began to be implemented by the legislature during the Tony Earl administration.



Time to Pay Membership Dues for 2009

Annual Dues for Individuals:

- | | |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| \$20 for Individuals | \$10 for Students, Retirees |
| \$30 for Family Memberships | \$50 for Sustaining Memberships |
| \$100 for Solidarity Memberships | |

Dues for Organizations, Locals, Councils

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| \$50 for locals under 500, councils | \$100 for locals over 500 members |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|

Make check out to Wisconsin Labor History Society and mail to:
Wisconsin Labor History Society, 6333 W. Blue Mound Rd., Milwaukee
WI 53213. (Full Details, at <http://wisconsinlaborhistory.org>)

WE'RE ON THE WEB: [HTTP://
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**Dedicated to preserving the
history of Wisconsin workers
and their unions**

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NEWSLETTER
For Members
And Friends

Nonprofit
Organization
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Coming Events

**3 p.m., Sunday, May 3, Bay
View Tragedy Event.** S. Su-
perior and E. Russell St.,
Milwaukee.

**9 a.m.-3:30 p.m., Saturday,
May 9. 28th Annual WLHS
Conference: "Organizing in
Hard Times."** Neenah-
Menasha Labor Temple, 157
S. Green Bay Rd., Neenah