



Leon Despres
Attorney

At the Union Hall of Honor, 08

The Inductees



Betty Balanoff
Prof. Roosevelt University

FDR's New Deal Was Dinner Theme

The babble of over 200 dinner guests fell silent as an unaccompanied male voice sounded the first notes of ***Brother, Can you spare a dime***. The history lesson had begun, and a gripping story it was!

The occasion was the annual Union Hall of Honor Awards Dinner of the Illinois Labor History Society. It was December 5, well into the ongoing era of layoffs, foreclosures, and corporate bailouts. A labor-backed president had recently been elected. "Change" was in the air. It was plain to see that there were strong parallels between current events and the situation of the nation 75 years ago as President Franklin D. Roosevelt took the oath of office on March 4, 1933.

As the song concluded, all eyes turned to a man seated at a table, a microphone before him. Our stage director, Alma Washington, informed us that the President would report to the nation from the White House. Sure enough FDR's voice was clearly recognizable, as the guests were treated to a series of actual quotes from the first "Fireside Chat."

He pointed out that the people's bank deposits were now insured; young men would be going to do constructive work in the state and national parks; relief funds were going to the local governments for distribution to needy families; rural electrification would soon be underway; much needed roads, bridges, and schools would be built; and so on.

Clearly, the Government would create jobs, there would be pay in the people's pockets, their money would be safe, good things were happening.

Many thanks to the radio cast: Singer, Don Stroup; FDR, Ernie Lane; Readers, Mercita DeMonk and Alma Washington.

U.S. Rep. Phil Hare a Huge Hit!

The surprise speaker at the Union Hall of Honor Dinner was Representative Phil Hare of the Illinois 17th District, based in the Quad City area of Western Illinois. It was immediately apparent that Phil Hare is a true and powerful advocate for working folks, and he deserves close attention and support from one and all.

Phil was warmly introduced by President Mike Carrigan of the Illinois AFL-CIO. Many years ago, Hare was a worker in a clothing factory in Rock Island. Soon he was elected president of the local union. He switched careers to become an aide to Representative Lane Evans. When Evans recently retired, Phil ran for the seat and won handily.

From his first words to the dinner guests, it was a rousing talk, full of energy and common sense. His final point brought everyone to their feet with cheers and applause. He told about the advice he got from the old-timers in Congress about not sticking your neck out over controversial issues. Citing one such "risky" vote which he had made because it was right, he discovered that when he returned home and explained to the voters why he had done so, they gave their hearty approval.

Note: Representative Jan Schakowsky should be thanked for the excellent substitute which she lined up for the engagement she had to forego due to her official duties in Washington!

The entire dinner event was videotaped by Chicago Access Network (CAN TV) for cablecast in Chicago on January 18 and 20. There will be subsequent dates. Also cable access stations in other cities may access the program for their own distribution.

For more Dinner coverage, look inside.

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Dinner was interrupted as Rev. C. J. Hawking of the Chicago Interfaith Committee on Worker Issues announced that workers of a Chicago window factory were occupying their building which had closed down that day. Their demand was for payment of severance money due them by law. Rev Hawking invited all Dinner guests to demonstrate their support.

President Larry Spivack, an AFSCME staff member, did so that very night. He spoke of the historic aspects of their bold action. The last sit-down in the Chicago area was in 1937 at Fansteel Corp. in North Chicago, a suburban community north of the city limits.

We Will Not be Moved



It's a Win for Window Workers

The dramatic occupation of their plant by UE workers at Republic Windows and Doors rallied widespread public support from Labor, political and community organizations, resulting in victory on all fronts.

The employer had closed the plant and dismissed its almost 300 workers as of the end of the day, a clear violation of federal law. The explanation was that Bank of America had refused to renew its previous financial support. The workers had sensed what was coming and had prepared a response. It was to occupy the plant until the employer

Continued next column

A Good Time Was Had By All



Our Union Hall of Honor Gains Two Great Members



Inductee Leon Despres responds to the Union Hall award.



Vice President Adelman reads text of citation to Betty Balanoff.

*Atty Leon Despres
Always at the frontlines
for social justice, civil
rights, and labor rights*

*Betty Balanoff
Beloved professor of labor
history and successful
defender of the environment*

would agree to meet all its obligations to the workers.

Congressman Luis Gutierrez immediately denounced both the company and the bank, as did numerous labor leaders and President-elect Obama.

After a week of intense negotiation, the bank agreed to extend a loan to cover the obligations to the workers, and the company agreed to pay up.

Since then, a California maker of "green" windows has offered to buy and reopen the factory and to reemploy the workers. This offer is now in the hands of the Bankruptcy Court.



Singing *Solidarity* are:
Mercita DeMonk,
Alma Washington,
Ernie Lane, and
Don Stroup.

Labor Shows Flag at the Inauguration



One of the largest contingents in the Obama Inaugural Parade was from organized labor. Participants were from AFL-CIO, Change to Win, and the National Education Association (NEA). Picture credit: James Parks on, <http://blog.aflcio.org>

Organized Labor's presence in the Obama coalition was visibly demonstrated in the great Inaugural Parade by an impressive float escorted by some 250 marchers. They carried signs featuring a variety of public policy issues ranging from jobs for everyone to health care available to all. Pictures displayed on the float expressed the ethnic diversity of union members. Made by union labor, the float was more than 17 feet high and 24 feet long.

Fifteen riders on the float were representatives of different identity groups associated with the AFL-CIO, such as the Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance.

Behind the banner declaring "America's Workers: United for Change," the marchers were from unions drawn from neighboring cities, brought together by Fred Mason, president of the Maryland and D.C. AFL-CIO. Inauguration authorities received some 1,500 requests for participation in the parade. One hundred were invited. The labor contingent was among the largest in the parade.

Labor's Diversity Float



Presidential Quotes to Ponder

Labor is prior to, and independent of, capital. Capital is only the fruit of labor, and could never have existed if labor had not first existed. Labor is the superior of capital, and deserves much the higher consideration.

—Abraham Lincoln, First Annual Message to Congress, December 3, 1861

Thank God we have a system of labor where there can be a strike. Whatever the pressure, there is a point where the working man may stop.

—Abraham Lincoln, March 5, 1860, Hartford, Connecticut

* * * *

...there must be a strict supervision of all banking and credits and investments; there must be an end to speculation with other people's money...

Restoration calls, however, not for changes in ethics alone. The Nation asks for action, and action now. Our greatest primary task is to put people to work.

—Franklin D. Roosevelt, First Inaugural Address, 1933

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A Glorious Labor Day Celebration in Pullman



Larry Spivack, President of the ILHS, welcomes President Franklin D. Roosevelt to the Labor Day event at Pullman.

Close to 350 people from around the city turned out for the Labor Day Celebration in Pullman. They gathered in the restored factory building behind the Clock Tower, a vast space where sleeping cars were completed.

Lieutenant Governor Pat Quinn and State Representative Connie Howard came in person with their messages. ILHS President Larry Spivack presented the historical program for the event.

It featured actors appearing as Eugene V. Debs, Jennie Curtis, and A. Philip Randolph. They were played respectively by Mike Wolf, a former steelworker; Meghan Murphy; and D.J. Howard. This part of the program was produced by Alma Washington. All received a warm response, but the headliner of the afternoon was President Franklin D. Roosevelt speaking about the Great Depression and the first years of the New Deal. It was a memorable moment, and most timely.

A member of Actors Equity, R.J. Lindsay has honed the Roosevelt role to perfection through performances all over the state. One of those appearances was at the Mother Jones Dinner in Springfield, in October.

The Labor Day event was organized by the Pullman Civic Association, under its president Tom Shepherd. Co-sponsors were many, including the ILHS, the Pullman State Historic Site, Historic Pullman Foundation, the Illinois AFL-CIO.

The entire event was videotaped for later cablecast by Chicago's Public Access channel CAN-TV.

End of the Year Reflections by ILHS President Spivack

Was 2008 a good year or what? Imagine us doubling our institutional membership. Consider the possibility that the future Governor of Illinois would be a keynote speaker at the Labor Day event in Pullman. That one of the country's leading labor friendly Congressmen would be a keynote speaker at the ILHS Union Hall of Honor Dinner and speak about the movie "The Inheritance"; that over 120 people would attend our film screening at the Mexican Museum of Fine Arts and the Director would fly in from Seattle to participate; that the Illinois AFL-CIO would invite the ILHS to address the general session of its convention and ask us to present several workshops; that the National Association of Letter Carriers here in Illinois would seek us out to address its convention; that our display on the History of Chicago Labor would be featured at the American Federation of Teacher's national convention. Shall I go on? How about the election of a labor friendly President of the United States!!! All those things happened and more!

Labor Law Reform

In this new year, the first real labor law reform since Taft-Hartley may be passed. (This time good legislation.) The potential for organizing hundreds of thousands or even millions of workers in a short period of time is realistic. Labor history buffs know that the National Labor Relations Act was the vehicle through which millions of workers joined unions in the 1930s. Perhaps legislators are finally learning some labor history! Perhaps they now know that organized labor is what put Democrats over the top, and that stronger labor laws are a plus. At the same time, with most workers unorganized, the corporate agenda has driven our economy into the ground and millions upon millions of workers are jobless, not unlike the 1930s-- before intense organizing transformed America into a prosperous society.

As if the 1930s is being revisited, the recent occupation by workers at the Republic Windows and Doors factory harkened back to a time when sit-downs helped inspire the entire working class to organize. Sadly, the Republic sit down was to win pay and benefits stolen by a greedy owner before the company ran out of town to escape union labor. We need to create the conditions where owners of companies small or large would never think of doing this.

Tell Our Labor History

With your help the ILHS can continue to be a part of the educational link missing from schools and many unions. If every ILHS member signed up just one more person to join our ranks, we could do still more quality programming. Please help in 2009.

Let the ILHS continue to tell our history. Recent visits by Japanese, Mexican, Iraqi and Indian trade union leaders to the ILHS and Haymarket sites attest to the ongoing interest of workers around the world discovering their roots. Let's continue to help Americans learn our history, too.

Solidarity Forever!

At the AFT National Convention



The ILHS Exhibition on Labor History was on display at the national convention of the American Federation of Teachers held at Navy Pier. It attracted much attention, including a stop by (l.to r) Dennis Gannon, President of the Chicago Federation of Labor, and Ed Gephert, President of the Illinois Federation of Teachers.

Chicago Italians at Work

An illustrated book on the Italian workers of Chicago has been published by Arcadia Publishing in its *Images of America* series. Authored by an ILHS founding member, Peter Pero, *Chicago Italians at Work* contains 200 photographs in 128 pages. It describes industrial work life and the many trades common to the Italian immigrants as they made their way in the new land during the period from 1890 to 1970. Many of its pictures came from the ILHS archives.

The book is available at our Website Bookstore for \$22.00 plus shipping.

Recent Additions to our Collection

Our growing collection of interesting labor history “ephemera” now has a set of dues buttons from various locals of the Waitress Union. They are dated from 1952 to 1957 and are from St. Louis, Los Angeles, and Chicago. They once belonged to Katie Vito, the aunt of Steven Harris who sent them to us. A group of buttons are from the Chicago Waitress Union Local 484. Organized in 1902, this well-known union led by Elizabeth Maloney, held the famous Henrick Strike of 1914 which occupied newspaper headlines and resulted in numerous arrests. The issue was weekends off. This strike tested the right to picket in front of establishments.



Peoria's Labor Marks 50th Anniversary of State AFL-CIO

On September 19th, Peoria Labor celebrated the 50th Anniversary of the merger between the 850,000 member Illinois State Federation of Labor (AFL) and the 350,000 member Illinois Industrial Union Council (CIO). The new organization became the Illinois AFL-CIO.

President John Sweeney came to Peoria for the event, as did Mark Ayers, president of the National Building and Construction Trades. It was also attended by Mike Carrigan, president of the Illinois AFL-CIO, and Carl Soderstrom, Sr., who brought with him the gavel with which his father Reuben had presided over the merger convention. Reuben remained the president until his death in 1970 at the age of 82.

The proceeds from the dinner were dedicated to the Peoria Labor Temple. Last renovated in 1975, the Temple was originally dedicated on Labor Day in 1925.

Speaking about the Labor Temple, Mike Everett, president of IBEW Local 34 declared, “The temple is more than a building. It is labor’s foundation in central Illinois. ...It is our rock and our fortress, from which we continue labor’s endless struggles.... Let’s pledge tonight to never ever let the old temple go.”



Above: At the Chicago Union Stockyards Gate, l to r: Rich Trumka, Larry Spivack and Bob Bruno listen to Les Orear’s stories of the packinghouse industry where he worked during the 1930’s.

Rich Trumka Visits Chicago Sites

Chicago’s rich labor history sites are an ongoing source of inspiration, especially when a knowledgeable guide from the ILHS is available. That’s a lesson learned by AFL Secretary-Treasurer Richard Trumka during a period he spent with the labor education program at the University of Illinois. His tour with the ILHS was led by Larry Spivack and took him to the Stockyard area, and to Haymarket Square, the Martyrs Monument, the mural at Teamster City and the exterior mural at the Charles Hayes Center, *The Worker*, at 49th and Wabash.

Recently, we had the pleasure of guiding a party from Osaka, Japan. They were librarians from the Library of Labor and Social Movements, and had found us on the Internet.

Larry’s latest tour party was a group of Mexican labor union leaders.

Left: Japanese visitors in Haymarket Square with Larry Spivack.



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The purpose of the Illinois Labor History Society is to promote and encourage the preservation and study of labor history of the Illinois Region, to arouse interest in the profound significance of the past to the present, and through these activities to support the growth of a vital labor movement.

In Union Park **Chicagoans Cheer New Monument to Famed Irish Patriot**

Years of effort by the Irish American Labor Council bore fruit October 23, 2008 as members of Iron Workers Local 63 installed a larger than life statue of famed Irish independence advocate and labor leader, James Connolly, in Chicago's Union Park. An immigrant to America in 1903, Connolly was soon drawn to labor unionism. He joined the newly formed Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) and became a full time organizer.

In 1910, he returned to Ireland where he became a labor leader with the Irish Transport and General Workers Union, and joined the struggle for independence from British rule. He was shot during the Easter Rebellion, tried for treason and executed in 1916, thus becoming the most famous of Irish martyrs.

The dedication was presided over by Mayor Richard M. Daley and attended by hundreds of union members.

Seeks Funds to Erect Memorial to Cherry Mine Disaster of 1909

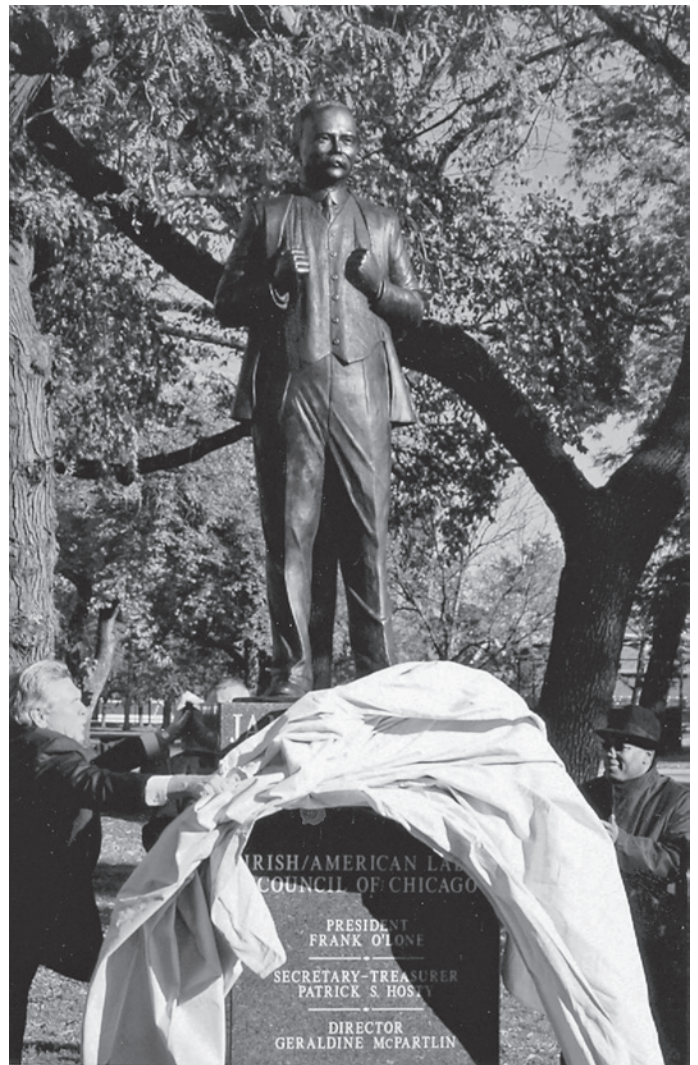
With the approaching Centennial of the Cherry Mine Disaster in which 259 men and boys lost their lives, members of the community have begun a fundraising campaign for a memorial to be located next to the town library. Exhibit material has long been on display at the library.

The Memorial will take the form, of two six-foot red granite mounds representing the slag piles of the mine. The names of the victims will be inscribed on the stone. The dedication will be on November 15, 2009.

The Cherry Booster Club is managing the project and seeks additional funds to complete it. Dan Carrico is the contact person for more information. He can be reached at State Bank of Cherry, 1-800-447-9138.

The small town of Cherry is located on Ill 89. It is a few miles north of the LaSalle intersection with I- 80, a main route to the West Coast and busy with tourist traffic.

Connolly Statue is Unveiled



The statue of James Connolly was unveiled by Frank O'Lone, Secretary of the Chicago Building Trades Council and President of the Irish American Labor Council and by Alderman Walter Burnett, Jr.