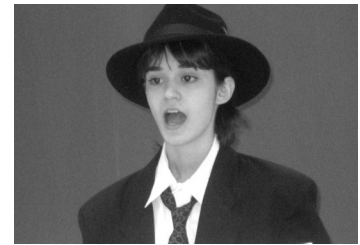




Testimony before the Senatorial Investigating Committee, July 1937

There were shots fired, and I saw people in front of me going down... It seemed as though they were going down, as though you would take a scythe... I looked to my right. I saw the officers on the right with their revolvers drawn, not shooting in the air, but pointing point blank into that crowd.

*Harry Harper*



Chelsea Farmer of Lincoln Park High School, Chicago portrays Senator LaFollette in her history fair performance. She placed sixth in the nation.

## When Ten Were Killed

# Remembering Memorial Day of 1937

It was 70 years ago on Memorial Day of 1937 when peaceful demonstrators were gassed and gunned near the gates of Republic Steel on Chicago's southeast side. Chicago police pulled their triggers on supporters of the striking workers who were fighting for union recognition and a contract. Ten died and another 82 men, women and children were injured, some severely, as they fled across an open field midst a hail of lead and billy clubs at the hands of pursuing police.

The biggest steel producer, U.S. Steel, had recently signed a contract with the Steelworkers Organizing Committee (SWOC), but President Tom Girdler of Republic Steel refused to go along. And several other companies including Inland Steel took the same position. So, the union felt forced to go on strike. They called for a big demonstration of support on Memorial Day of 1937. Steelworkers from the area and friends of the CIO came from all over the city. It was a family picnic occasion. After the speeches, they formed a procession, and chanted "C I O, CIO" as they headed across an open field toward the Republic Steel picket line a few blocks away. The police cut them off short of the mill, however, and the deadly fire soon began

The Massacre was a setback, but the organizational activity carried on, and a few years later the entire Little Steel group was under contract. Now, 70 years later, Chicago police have a union and a contract!

[For more information, go to the Labor History sites on our web site [www.illinoislaborhistory.org](http://www.illinoislaborhistory.org). Also, the ILHS has made a video containing the uncut newsreel footage of the carnage with commentary by a survivor, Sam Evett. It is available in our Book Store, also on the web.]

## 70th Anniversary Meeting Will Be Long Remembered

About 400 people gathered for the annual Memorial Day Observance on May 27, 2007 in the former union hall of USWA Local 1033. The speakers were great as usual; but the crowd gave its heart to the dramatic offerings of a Chicago schoolgirl and of the Women of Steel.

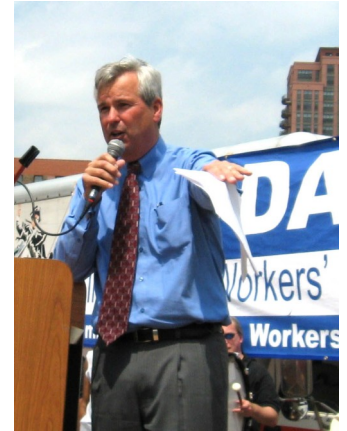
Young Chelsea Farmer, winner of an ILHS Labor History prize at the Metro Chicago History Fair, brought her performance project entitled "Memorial Day Massacre" to the event. Her solo performance began in the person of Senator Robert LaFollette telling about his Senatorial Committee's investigation into the Massacre of 1937.

When she removed her Senator's hat and coat, she put on a woman's hat and announced that she was Mollie West (the perennial Membership Secretary of ILHS). A roar of surprise and approval swept the hall. The crowd's response was a tribute to the woman whose story of her experience as one of the demonstrators on the field that fateful day was familiar to all.

As their contribution to the program, ten members from Women of Steel gave voice to each of the ten victims. One after the other they told the story of each victim's life which ended so tragically. We learned of their backgrounds, why they went to demonstrate, and how they died. Musical interludes intensified the

*continued p.2*

# Labor's May Day Rally at Haymarket



Left: James Thindwa, Director of Jobs with Justice and now a ILHS Board Member, speaks to the crowd. Center: Workers Rights was the principle theme of the day. Right: Dennis Gannon, President of the Chicago Federation of Labor, delivers his message.

## Souvenir Booklet, *The Fight Goes On*

*The Fight Goes On*, a most informative 40-page booklet, was produced by the Steelworkers Organization of Active Retirees (SOAR) for the 70th Anniversary Memorial Day Massacre observance. The cover for this 8x10" booklet is a full color reproduction of artwork by David Garza which also exists as a large poster announcing the Memorial event.

The contents begin with words from Leo Gerard, International President of USWA, followed by short articles from union leaders such as District Director Jim Robinson, former District Director Ed Sadlowski, local presidents Victor Storino and Tom Hargrove. Additional memories and reflections are contributed by such luminaries as Leon Despres, Betty Balanoff, Bea Lumpkin, and Bob Bruno.

Research for the booklet uncovered interesting photographs from unexpected sources which further illuminate the tragic events of the day.

ILHS has acquired a supply of the booklets for our bookstore. They are available for \$10.00 including tax.

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*Continued from page 1*

profoundly emotional experience that affected all who were present.

The meeting was chaired by former District Director Ed Sadlowski, who is now a most active member of SOAR. International Vice President Fred Redmond ably substituted for President Leo Gerard who was stuck in an airport. Current District Director Jim Robinson reported on the status of an alliance between USWA and the major British manufacturing union.

President Tom Hargrove of Local 1010 at Inland Steel announced that a memorial plaque will be placed at the Tourist Information Center in Hammond, Indiana. Four of the ten martyrs were from Local 1010. There are also plans for a small memorial park in the former Republic Steel area.

## ILHS Holds its Annual Meeting

This year's Annual Meeting took place in Musicians Hall located in Chicago's famed Haymarket Square. All sitting officers were re-elected without opposition. Trustees Ed Sadlowski and Emily Rosenberg, whose terms had expired, were thanked for their good services.

Elected as Trustees for three-year terms were: Rosemary Feurer, Joe Bella, and James Thindwa. Feurer teaches History at Northern Illinois University; Bella is a staff member at AFSCME Council 31; James Thindwa is Executive Director of Jobs with Justice in Chicago.

At the conclusion of the meeting, an enthusiastic audience viewed the newly completed video, *Mother Jones: America's Most Dangerous Woman*. Produced and directed by Rosemary Feurer and Laura Vazquez, the video features commentary by Prof. Elliott Gorn, author of the most recent biography of Mother Jones. It contains the only existing example of her voice as she declares at her 100<sup>th</sup> birthday party that she is still a "radical" and longs for the day working people take their destiny into their own hands. The 23-minute program is recorded on DVD and is available at the price of \$10.00.

The Illinois Valley Federation has already purchased twenty copies plus 20 copies of our book *Mother Jones and the Union Miners Cemetery* for presentation to high schools in their area.

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Robert Bionaz, Treasurer  
Leslie Orear, President Emeritus  
Mollie L. West, Secretary Emeritus

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Chelsea Farmer of Lincoln High School, Chicago, plays Mollie West, the young demonstrator in the Memorial Day march of 1937 at Republic Steel.

## Five Student Labor Projects Advance to Washington National History Day

Making the cut to become finalists at the National History Day competition were two projects on Memorial Day 1937, Chelsea Farmer's performance and an exhibit by Elise Croteau-Chonka, Rebecca Kuhn, and Sandra Peters, all students at Lincoln Park High School, Chicago. Both projects had received local prizes from ILHS. Other labor history projects advanced to the National competition were by Emily Wills of Hawthorne Academy on child labor, and by the team of Emmanuel Istael, Noa Rosen, Jasmine Kirby and Kinjal Shah from Lincoln Elementary also on child labor. A third project about James Petrillo of the Musicians was by the Niles H. S. team of Tess Busch, John Hickey, Uriel Rotstein, and Meghan Wood.

Other ILHS award winners were Rebecca Weiss of DesPlaines for a documentary on Florence Kelley, and Mayra Monnarez of East Aurora for an exhibit on the Cherry Mine Disaster.

## New Acquisitions to the ILHS Archives

We have added some interesting items to our archive acquired from the collection of the late Georgia Lloyd of Winnetka, Ill. One is a pocket booklet by Oscar Ameringer, *The Life and Deeds of Uncle Sam*. It was published in 1912 and is a satirical look at some of America's "misdeeds" from a socialist perspective.

From a different point of view, we also have a 1936 issue of Fortune magazine which reports in detail on the expulsion of the industrial unions belonging to the Committee on Industrial Organization (CIO). For a bonus there is another article on John L. Lewis, President of the United Mine Workers who headed the CIO.

Tucked between the pages of a 1929 magazine from Mexico was a silk badge in honor of the First of May and the Martyrs of Chicago.

A gift from Stanley Rosen, now living in New Mexico, is a 1926 book entitled *The Epic of Industry*. The final chapter, "Organized Labor In Industry" begins with a reproduction of an 1806 broadside: THE TRIAL OF BOOT & SHOEMAKERS OF PHILADELPHIA ON AN INDICTMENT FOR A COMBINATION AND CONSPIRACY TO RAISE THEIR WAGES.

## Emily, Meet Mollie



Our new computer is the gift of Mollie West and her son Steve. Emily Pope-Obeda is our summer intern. She is a student at Brandeis University and her mother is ILHS Secretary Debby Pope.

## Mollie West Has Retired

The perennial Administrative Secretary of ILHS has retired after 20 years of managing our office, all of it as a full time volunteer. She had become a member of the board of directors as far back as 1979. With the closing of her apartment, she and her son Steve presented the ILHS with seven boxes of her books. Even more welcome is the gift of a new computer to replace the aged model that she has used in her office since our computerized era began.

Mollie is a retired member of Chicago Typographical Union Local 16, and was for many years a member of its Executive Board. She was a delegate from her union to the Chicago Federation of Labor since the time of Bill Lee's presidency. While still a teenager she was one of a young people's group which heeded the call for a demonstration on Memorial Day of 1937 in support of the Steel Workers' strike at Republic Steel on the city's Southeast Side. She was among those who were driven away by police gunfire, and her account of that harrowing experience has been a feature at many Memorial Day observances.



Mollie West

Mollie was inducted into the ILHS Union Hall of Honor in 2002. She was one of the founding members of the Coalition of Labor Union Women and had been a major force in the decision by the Chicago Federation of Labor to create its Woman of the Year award.

When she came here as an immigrant from Poland in 1929, she knew no English. Nevertheless, she mastered the language, attended Loyola University, and became a topnotch proofreader, retiring from the Daily Racing Form in December 1986.

As a memento of Mollie, we have her 2029 page Webster's New Twentieth Century Dictionary of the English Language Unabridged.

## ***Gompers Statue to be Dedicated on Labor Day***

The Sam Gompers statue is on track to make it's Chicago debut on Labor Day of 2007. When unveiled shortly after 9:00 a.m. that morning, it will look across Pulaski to a Chicago park named after him in 1929. The life-sized statue will be located at the southeast corner of Foster and Pulaski. Everyone is invited to attend the dedication ceremony. Later, plan to invest some time exploring the park.



Alderman Margaret Laurino of the 39th ward guided this project through the various hoops required. Money came from government sources, plus substantial contributions from labor organizations and private donors.

## ***Labor Day at Pullman***

Our friends at the Pullman Historic District tell us that big plans are underway for a celebration of Labor Day at the Illinois State Historic Site (111th & Cottage Grove, Chicago) and you are all invited. The sponsorship includes the Illinois AFL-CIO, Calumet Heritage Partnership, Bronzeville/Chicago Black History Society, and the ILHS.

Professor Jim Barrett of the University of Illinois-Urbana has agreed to be the principal speaker. Musicians, performance artists, and other speakers are yet to be announced. (A former Illinois State Senator is on the invitation list!)

The Florence Hotel, where the State of Illinois has its headquarters, will be open to visitors.

The program takes place from 1 to 3 p.m. For more information, call Tom Shepherd, 773-370-3305.

## **Iraqi Labor Delegation Brings A Message to Haymarket**



**L to r: Les Orear, Larry Spivack, Faleh Abood Umara, Hashmeya Moshen al Hussein, James Thindwa, Nathan Mason, Tom Balanoff.**

Speaking for organized labor in Iraq with a call for peace and a quick return of U.S. troops to their own country, Hashmeya Mohsen al Hussein and Faleh Abood Umara took one of the "soapboxes" at the Haymarket Memorial to deliver their message.

Not even a rainy morning could dampen the enthusiasm with which Chicago unionists received their words. The Iraqi spokesmen, presidents of the two most important unions in Iraq, also left behind a permanent message for a plaque to join the growing collection attached to the Memorial.

**IN MEMORY OF THE MANY IRAQI TRADE UNIONISTS  
KILLED BY THE ENEMIES OF ORGANIZED LABOR**

**MAY THE BONDS OF INTERNATIONAL  
LABOR SOLIDARITY  
HELP US ALL AS WE STRUGGLE FOR  
JUSTICE, PEACE, DEMOCRACY,  
AND WORKERS' RIGHTS**

The words appear over the names: Iraqi Federation of Oil Unions; Electrical Utility Workers Union in Basra, General Federation of Iraqi Workers.