

USWA Dedicates Memorial to the Massacre of 1937



Among those attending the dedication were l to r: Alfredo Martinez, Staff Rep., USW Sub-District 1, and his son Baldwin; Int'l. President, USWA Leo Gerard; Ramon Becerra, Illinois AFL-CIO; L.E. Garcia, Women of Steel; Bill Gibbons, SOAR; Jim Robinson, USWA District 7 Director; Ed Sadlowski, SOAR; Jose Gudino, Sub-District 1 Sub-Director.
Courtesy Rod Sellers

The Chicago Organization of Retired Steelworkers (SOAR) commemorated the anniversary of the Memorial Day Massacre of 1937 with an unusually dramatic program. The event was held at Local 1033's old hall on Avenue O on Sunday, May 25th, and culminated with the dedication of a sculptural monument just across the street from the north end of the parking lot. Adjacent to a Chicago Fire Department facility, the sculpture consists of ten shining pipes which can be imagined to represent both steel mills which have been closed over the last few years and the ten demonstrators who were slain on the field by Chicago police on that dreadful and unforgettable date in 1937.

Present for the occasion was the creator of the sculpture, Ed Blazak, a former employee of Republic Steel. The sculpture was originally located on a corner of the open prairie across which the demonstrators walked on their way to the picket line at Republic Steel. Their peaceful march was blocked by Chicago police at Burley Avenue. The police soon opened fire resulting in deaths of ten and injuries of scores of others.

The sculpture was on Republic Steel property, more or less hidden from public view, and had fallen into disrepair over the years. At the initiative of former District Director Ed Sadlowski, 10th Ward Alderman John Pope arranged to have the monument

Gerard Calls for Change



Above : USWA President Leo Gerard; Former President Local 1033, Victor Storino.

refurbished and moved to its new location on Avenue O where a constant stream of vehicles passes by. The popular Catholic priest of the East Side community, Father Leonard Dubi, blessed the monument with a sprinkling of holy water.

The Commemoration Ceremony proved to be the most dramatic ever. The Women of Steel unit at Inland Steel Local 1010 dramatized the tragedy which took the lives of ten men with a dramatic presentation in which either the mother or the widow of each victim was given a personal voice. One by one each voice poured out her anguish over the unprovoked loss of life as she described the graphic moments of her loved one's death.

The event climaxed with the speech of USWA President Leo Gerard, whose hard hitting talk explored the situation in which America's working men and women now find themselves as manufacturing jobs migrate overseas and the ghost of the Great Depression appears across the landscape.

Disappearing too are the pensions and other benefits on which every retiree family depends! Beyond decrying the situation, President Gerard proceeded to analyze the economic and political factors abetted by political forces that have bowed to the class interests of the corporate world. This situation developed, he noted, as more and more of America's working people began to unthinkingly accept this flawed corporate philosophy.

As President Gerard suggested, the presidential election campaign supplies an opportunity for the public to change the direction of government.

Answering the call of the crowd, the IWW's famed songwriter Joe Hill (aka Joe Bella of AFSCME) showed up with brand new words to an old folk song, *Wagon Wheel*. Everybody joined in:

**"Rollin' on the Union like a wagon wheel;
Organize the workers at Little Steel.
Hey...Keep on fightin'!"**



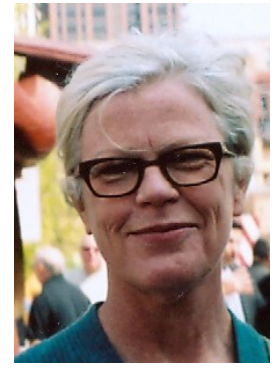
President Katie Jordan, Coalition of Labor Union Women, and ILHS Trustee calls for action on health care.



O.W. Neebe, Grandson of the Martyr Oscar Neebe



Jorge Ramirez, Secretary-Treasurer, Chicago Federation of Labor



Mary Brogger, Sculptor, Haymarket Memorial

Chicago Labor Unions Rally on May Day in Haymarket Square

May Day in Chicago's Haymarket Square rang out with angry and determined speeches by leaders of the labor movement as they denounced the nationwide corporate attack on the living standards of American working families.

They were speaking in the shadow of the city's Memorial to the tragic event of May 4, 1886 which led to the adoption by the world labor movement of May Day as the international labor holiday. The sculpture is a tribute to the First Amendment's guarantee of Free Speech, Assembly, and Redress of Grievances. The list of speakers was headed by Jorge Ramirez of the Chicago Federation of Labor. It included Tom Balanoff, president of SEIU Local One; Jorge Mujica, Mexican community activist; Noel Beasley, manager of the UNITE HERE Chicago and Midwest Regional Joint Board; Katie Jordan, President of the Chicago chapter of the Coalition of Labor Union Women; James Thindwa, Executive Director of Chicago Jobs with Justice; and Larry Spivack of AFSCME Council 31 and President of the ILHS.

Among the issues emphasized were: passage of the federal Employee Free Choice Act, universal health care, fair trade agreements, and the right to earn a living wage. Labor songs were led by Bucky Halker. This year's commemoration drew more than 120 people.

The memorial sculpture by Chicago artist Mary Brogger suggests the speaker's platform (a haywagon in the Tragedy of 1886) as it explodes into many pieces. At the same time a worker is seen restoring the wagon while a speaker continues to deliver the message.

ILHS Holds Annual Meeting

Two new trustees were elected at the Annual Meeting on May 1, 2008. Replacing retiring Trustees Leon Fink and Jamie Daniel, are Richard Rowe, Business Agent of Iron Workers Local 63, and Lisle Orenic, Assistant Professor of History at Dominican University, River Forest, IL.

Earlier this year President Michael Carrigan, Illinois AFL-CIO, and President Dennis Gannon, Chicago Federation of Labor did a mailing to local unions urging their financial support of the ILHS. Thanks to their effort our statewide union membership has reached an all-time high of 130. As of May 1 our total membership in good standing including individuals is now approximately 400.

The Annual Meeting was held at the Newberry Library. On adjournment all present moved to the Newberry's main hall, where the IWW program was in progress.

Newberry Library Sponsors IWW Program

Chicago's Newberry Library marked its acquisition of Franklin and Penelope Rosemont's collection of materials from the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) with a public program in the main hall. It featured the Rosemonts and Prof. David Roediger,



U of I, Champaign, on the historic role played by the IWW in Chicago. They spoke about the many interesting characters within the IWW. These included Fred Thompson, long the editor of the organization's newspaper.

The full house audience also heard IWW recollections from Attorney Leon Despres who is now 100 years old. Despres had been a lawyer with an active practice in socialist organizations of the period.

ILHS President Larry Spivack took the occasion to present the Rosemonts with a newly published biography of George Andreytchine, a Bulgarian immigrant in the 1910s. In 1916 he became co-editor with renowned poet Ralph Chaplin of two IWW papers in Chicago. Andreytchine was a good friend of Bill Haywood, and testified in his defense at his murder trial.

The book was a gift to the ILHS from its author, Dr. Jordan Baev of the Bulgarian Association of Military History in Sofia, Bulgaria. The Rosemonts then passed it on to the Newberry for its IWW collection. Unfortunately for American readers, the book is written in Bulgarian. There is, however, a short summary translated into English.



Filmmaker Jill Freidberg at screening of her film about the long strike in Oaxaca.

ILHS Sponsors Public Screening of Powerful Documentary Film

The ILHS presentation of the acclaimed documentary *Un Poquito de Tanta Verdad (A Little Bit of So Much Truth)* attracted an audience of well over 100 enthusiastic viewers.

A project of the ILHS program committee and supported with a grant from the Illinois Arts Council, the film recounts the story of a community-wide strike in the Mexican state of Oaxaca in the summer of 2006. The strike united the area's teachers, farmers, and indigenous peoples in a demand for more state resources directed to the public school system.

The screening presented the filmmaker, Jill Irene Freidberg, who spoke about the making of the documentary and the months of confrontation between the strikers, their community supporters, and the state authorities.

During the conflict the strikers took over one television and fourteen radio stations in order to present a truthful account of the issues to the public and mobilize community response to the attempts of police and military to suppress the strike.

The film was screened on April 27 at the National Museum of Mexican Arts located in the Pilsen neighborhood of Chicago.

Les Orear is Honored at DSA Event

President Emeritus Les Orear joined the distinguished list of honorees at the annual Debs-Thomas-Harrington dinner of the DSA at its 2008 event. Les was honored for a lifetime of service to the labor movement. He began his career in 1933 as a Chicago packinghouse worker, where he helped establish the United Packinghouse Workers, CIO.

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 Debby Pope, Secretary
 Robert Bionaz, Treasurer
 Leslie Orear, President Emeritus

Teacher Touring Party Visits Haymarket and the Old Stone Gate

On Saturday, May 17th the Illinois Labor History Society led a half day tour of key labor sites for a group of Illinois public school teachers. The teachers were in town for a statewide social studies conference hosted by the Connecting with American History Project, directed by Dr. Alice M. Crawford. Approximately thirty teachers and other educators from Chicago and downstate traveled to sites including the Haymarket Martyrs Monument, the Forest Home Cemetery and the Stockyards Gate for a first hand look at some of the pivotal locations in the struggle of Illinois workers for decent wages and working conditions. The tour, coordinated by ILHS Secretary Debby Pope and ably led by President Larry Spivack lasted about four hours. A special feature was a "ghost appearance" by the spirit of Joe Hill portrayed in song by Board member Joe Bella. Participants found the tour stimulating and informative, and they had fun too!

Prizes Awarded to Illinois Students for Their Labor History Projects



At the State History Expo in Springfield, ILHS Trustee Amy Girardi reviewed the student labor history projects and awarded three prizes. In the Junior Category for Display, a team of Jalissa Argulies and Diana Bandera from Prussing Elementary in Chicago won \$75 for their exhibit on the Garment Workers Strike. Ishmael L. Smith from Mount Carmel H.S., whose exhibit on the Pullman Porters won the Senior Display

Award, went on to show his project at the national competition in Washington D.C. For the Best Labor History Performance, Lydia Landor from the William Taft Academic Center received a \$50 prize for her project entitled "Industrial Monarch vs. the Locomotive Fireman".

Reem Khondakar, a junior high student from the Catherine Cook School in Chicago, also took her documentary on Haymarket to Washington.

ILHS Attracts International Attention

In the first six months of the year ILHS has provided visitor service for labor officials from many lands. We have provided guide service to the following: B. Vijay Kumar, secretary of the World Federation of Teachers' Unions (FISE) located in Hyderabad, India; Dr. M. K. Pandhe, President of the Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU) located in New Delhi, India; a Korean delegation composed of Chung Moon Ju of the Federation of Korean Metal Workers Trade Union, Kwon Soon Hwan of the Migrant Workers Center of Korea, and Kang Byung Lyul of the Korea Employers Federation; and from Butte, Montana, Bob Brock of the IBEW. Brock has presented us with an amazing "Rustling Card." The Anaconda copper mining company issued these cards to workers certified to be non-union. They were used as IDs required of applicants seeking employment, thus in effect creating a blacklist.

Most recently we were invited to speak at length to a touring party of social studies teachers from Amarillo, Texas at the Florence Hotel Historic Site at Pullman.

Pullman Community Is the Place to Be for Labor Day 2008

Chicago's Pullman neighborhood is shaping up to become the greatest place in the city to celebrate Labor Day in 2008.

The storm center of perhaps the most famous industrial conflict of the 19th century was the charming and wholly owned planned community where industrialist George Pullman manufactured the sleeping cars.

The community with its unique architecture and design remains unchanged to this day. A centrally located neighborhood park and garden will welcome your family picnic. A Visitor's Center offers artifacts to view and mementoes for sale. The Florence Hotel with its spacious verandah provides an elegant physical and emotional centerpiece to the area. Although the factory is gone, the dramatic Clock Tower remains and industrial artifacts from the vanished steel industry are on display. The Hotel and factory property belong now to the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency and can be toured by appointment.

This year's Labor Day celebration begins at 2:00 p.m. at the Florence Hotel in Arcade Park at 111th and Cottage Grove Ave. Labor Day visitors will have the unexpected pleasure of hearing from historic personalities associated with labor struggles throughout the years. These will include young Jennie Curtis, who headed the "girls" local union in 1894, and Eugene V. Debs, President of the American Railway Union during the Pullman Strike of 1894. There will be major appearances by A. Philip Randolph, President of the Sleeping Car Porters Union, and no less than President Franklin D. Roosevelt, who will remind everyone that this is the 75th anniversary of the New Deal. During that time, the Pullman plant employees were organized once again, this time by the newly formed United Steelworkers of the CIO.

The program is sponsored by the Pullman Civic Organization, the Pullman Historic Foundation, the Illinois Labor History Society, Illinois AFL-CIO, the Bronzeville/Chicago Black History Society and other organizations.

For more information contact Tom Shepherd, President of the Pullman Civic Organization at 773-928-3040 or the ILHS at 312-663-4107.



With its classic 19th Century verandah, the Florence Hotel becomes the welcoming heart of the Pullman neighborhood.

Our History Exhibit Goes to the Pier

The Convention of the American Federation of Teachers will open in Chicago's Navy Pier convention center on July 11th and ILHS will present its enthralling exhibition, *History of Chicago Labor*. It was originally developed at the invitation of the Chicago Commission on Cultural Affairs for lengthy display in the underground Pedway linking City Hall with public transportation platforms.

The historical images sweep from the formative post Civil War period to the present challenges facing contemporary Labor. One element of the Chicago story features the nineteenth Century appearance of teacher unionism under Haley and Goggins and reaches to the current organization under Marilyn Stewart.

Containing almost 100 images, the exhibition is arranged along thematic lines such as *Collective Bargaining; Delivering the Message; Builders of Chicago*.

Note: Pullman is located in the South East section of Chicago. It can be reached by public transportation. Take the Red Line south to the end of the line and transfer to CTA route #111 Pullman Southbound, which will take you directly to 111th and Cottage Grove. The Florence Hotel will be in plain sight.