

SECTION 5

Labor History Glossary

AFL-CIO The American Federation of Labor, a national craft union federation established in 1886, joined by the CIO in 1955 to represent nearly three-fourths of all workers.

apprentice A trainee worker bound to a skilled worker for a learning period.

arbitration A formal process of resolving a dispute between two parties, usually a union and management, by a neutral third party following a hearing of the issue.

assembly line A work process emphasizing continuous repetitive tasks performed by workers as the unfinished product moves along on a conveyor belt.

bargaining A process of settling what each party will give and take or perform and receive during a specific contract period.

bargaining agent A worker organization authorized and certified to represent employees in a bargaining unit or firm.

bargaining unit A group of workers combined for purposes of employee representation.

blacklist A list, maintained by management, of workers to be denied employment on the basis of union or other censured activity; currently outlawed.

capitalism An economic system of production and distribution for profit by private enterprise

Cesar Chavez A migrant California farmworker who founded the National Farm Workers Association (later the United Farmworkers) to work for union recognition and improved working conditions for predominantly Mexican American farm laborers. Chavez succeeded in combining ethnic heritage, religion, and militant unionism to achieve union recognition and economic advances for some of the nation's most exploited workers.

child labor The employment of children under the age of 14.

Harold Christoffel President of United Automobile Workers Local 248 at the West Allis Allis-Chalmers plant. A leader in the young Wisconsin CIO, Christoffel was accused of Communist Party affiliation and heavily red baited during the divisive Allis-Chalmers strikes. He supplied aggressive leadership for the proponents of Milwaukee area industrial unionism in the 1930s and 1940s.

CIO The Congress of Industrial Organizations, a national industrial union established in 1938; joined AFL in 1955.

Civil Rights Act Federal legislation that outlaws discrimination in public accommodations and employment on the basis of race, color, sex, religion, or national origin.

closed shop A plant or business establishment in which employers by agreement hire only labor union members.

collective bargaining Negotiation between employer representatives and a labor union over wages, hours, working conditions, or other disputed issues.

company town A community dominated by a single employer that owns and rents or sells all housing, food, and other supplies to employees, thereby exerting near total control over the workforce.

company union A labor organization controlled by management.

Catherine Conroy An early advocate of union organization among telephone workers, she was active in the founding of the Communication Workers of America (CWA) in 1949. A leading spokeswoman for women's rights in the workforce, Conroy was a founder of the Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW), the National Organization of Women (NOW), and the Wisconsin Women's Network. A union president and CWA staff representative, she later served on the Department of Natural Resources Board and the University of Wisconsin Board of Regents.

conspiracy An evil, unlawful, treacherous, or surreptitious plan formulated in secret by two or more persons or a combination of persons for a secret, unlawful, or evil purpose; early unions were often charged with conspiracy in order to inhibit their growth and development.

contract A binding, enforceable agreement between two parties; for example, labor and management.

corporation A form of business organization created by a group of investors or stock holders to share risk and profit, with limited individual liability.

craft A skill or trade; for example, plumbing and carpentry.

craft union A labor organization based on members' possession of a common skill; for example, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW).

eight-hour movement An 1880s workers' campaign to gain the eight-hour work day as the standard; eight-hour day finally established in 1930s.

Fair Labor Standards Act Legislation enacted in 1938 establishing minimum-wage and maximum-hour protection.

Jacob F. Frederick A Machinist Union and early Socialist Party member who became general secretary of the Milwaukee Federated Trades Council. From his AFL position Frederick also championed the early effort to introduce industrial unionism in the 1930s through the organization of federal unions. Frederick also served on the Wisconsin Industrial Commission and assisted with the implementation of important Progressive labor legislation, including Wisconsin's landmark unemployment compensation law of 1932.

Samuel Gompers The president of the Cigar Makers Union and one of the major figures in the organization of the AFL. Gompers became the AFL's first president and served in that capacity until his death in 1924. Long the acknowledged head of the American labor movement, Gompers emphasized "pure and simple" unionism based on the organization of skilled workers.

grievance A complaint against an unjust act or practice, actual or perceived, presented for adjudication through union procedures.

Haymarket Incident, 1886 The violent confrontation in Chicago's Haymarket Square where workers had gathered to protest the police shooting of strikers who were calling for the eight-hour day at McCormick reaper works. After a bomb explosion of undetermined origin, police fired on the crowd during the ensuing confusion. The incident resulted in the arrest and execution of several strike leaders.

industrial union A labor union organized on basis of common employment in a single industry, regardless of skill.

injunction A court order requiring or prohibiting a particular action, often used against labor unions to order striking workers back to work.

IWW The Industrial Workers of the World, a national industrial union dedicated to the creation of one big union and hostile to capitalism; most influential in the early 1900s; often referred to as the "Wobblies" and regarded as radical.

Knights of Labor An early industrial union founded in 1869.

labor Productive activity, especially for the sake of economic gain; work, toil; the body, class, or organizations of persons engaged in such activity, especially as distinguished from management and capital; of or pertaining to workers, their associations, or working conditions.

labor council A citywide coalition of labor unions providing a unified voice for the worker community.

labor movement Organized labor, or its programs and policies.

labor relations Labor-management relationship within a particular firm.

labor spy A management-paid informer in plants and within labor unions or organizations.

laissez-faire An economic system in which the natural forces of the marketplace determine outcomes, with no government intervention in the economy.

John L. Lewis The charismatic leader of the United Mine Workers Union who in 1935 led in the formation of the Committee for Industrial Organization (later the Congress of Industrial Organizations). Under his leadership, the CIO became the voice of millions of unskilled and semiskilled workers, as industrial unionism complemented and competed with the long-established AFL craft organizations.

lockout The withholding of employment by an employer or closure of a plant in order to gain concessions from employees.

Lowell system A paternalistic, early- to mid-nineteenth-century manufacturing system in which large numbers of segmented workers, typically young women, are employed, housed, and provided limited opportunity for cultural improvement in return for minimal compensation.

George Meany The first president of the newly created AFL-CIO in 1955; held office until retirement in 1979. A New York plumber by trade, Meany was president of the New York Federation of Labor from 1934 to 1939, becoming secretary-treasurer of the American Federation of Labor (AFL) from 1940 to 1952 and AFL president from 1952 until the merger.

minimum wage The lowest wage, determined by law or contract, that an employer may pay an employee for a specific job.

monopoly Exclusive ownership or control of the market for a commodity by a single firm or corporation.

Phillip Murray The longtime union leader and organizer who became the first president of the United Steelworkers, serving from 1942 until 1952. He led many key labor struggles in the 1930s and 1940s. Murray was president of the Congress of Industrial Organization (CIO) from 1940 until his death in 1952.

NAFTA The North American Free Trade Agreement of 1993 was a treaty creating a free-trade zone in the Western Hemisphere, thereby increasing foreign competition for products created by American workers.

negotiation Discussion among parties to a dispute in order to arrive at a settlement; the process of coming to agreement on the terms of a union contract.

Pauline Newman An early organizer for the International Ladies Garment Workers Union who became an activist for women's causes within the labor movement as a member of the Women's Trade Union League.

Norris-LaGuardia Act A 1932 federal anti-injunction law prohibiting "yellow dog contracts" that required American laborers to sign pledges not to join unions.

Henry Ohl The president of the Wisconsin State Federation of Labor (WSFL) from 1917 to 1940 who in the 1930s became the leading proponent of labor political activism in cooperation with Wisconsin Progressives. As its president, Ohl led the WSFL into the Farmer-Labor Progressive Federation, which became the political arm of labor and its vehicle for collaboration with Phil and Robert LaFollette Jr. in the advancement of workers' rights in Depression-era Wisconsin.

open shop A plant or business establishment in which eligibility for employment is not determined by membership or nonmembership in a labor union.

OSHA The Occupational Safety and Health Administration, a federal agency responsible for monitoring safety in the workplace.

Oshkosh Woodworkers Strike A labor struggle in 1898 precipitated by wage cuts imposed on the city's woodworkers. The strike resulted in the political trial of the strike leader and picket captains on conspiracy charges. After an eloquent defense by acclaimed defense lawyer Clarence Darrow, the labor leaders were acquitted, thus invalidating the conspiracy charges.

outwork The distribution by large plants or businesses of fabrication tasks to external manufacturers through subcontracting agreements. For example, the manufacture of various automobile parts.

overtime Payment at time-and-a-half for hourly labor in excess of a 40-hour week.

PATCO Strike The 1981 labor action by the Professional Air Traffic Controllers organization during which President Ronald Reagan fired 10,000 union members who were protesting the enormous mental and physical strain of air traffic control work. The federal employment of inadequately trained replacement workers resulted in the destruction of the union and set a pattern frequently followed in private-sector labor relations.

Rose Pesotta A longtime member of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union (ILGWU), she was the only woman on its executive board from 1934 to 1944. Dedicated to organizing among women, Pesotta conducted many union campaigns in the 1930s, including the effort to establish ILGWU in Milwaukee.

picket A person stationed in front of a business establishment in order to dissuade workers or shoppers from entering the premises during a strike.

picket line A line of strikers or other demonstrators.

Allan Pinkerton, Pinkerton Agency The founder of modern industrial spying. His agency, still in existence today, grew larger and larger as strikes in the 1880s and 1890s made the hiring of labor spies big business. Often armed thugs were hired as Pinkertons to incite violence among striking workers.

Plant Closing Legislation, 1975 The Wisconsin law providing for mandatory 60-day notice to communities and unions before the closure of plants and business establishments operating in Wisconsin or mass layoffs therein.

Populists A farmer-labor political party created in 1892 as an alternative to the two

Terence Powderly A skilled machinist who became president of the Machinists and Blacksmiths National Union in 1872 and assumed leadership of the Knights of Labor as its Grand Master Workman in 1879. Powderly led the Knights during their most active period of national growth.

A. Philip Randolph The African American leader of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, an important African American union organized in 1925. A committed Socialist, Randolph and his union became leaders in the civil rights movement and were instrumental in the creation of the World War II Fair Employment Practices Commission in 1941, as well as the civil rights legislation of the 1960s.

Walter Reuther A labor organizer in Michigan instrumental in the organization of the United Automobile Workers (UAW) union. President of UAW after 1945, Reuther later headed the AFL-CIO Industrial Union department after 1955. Originally a Socialist, Reuther's industrial unionism always stressed the concept of the union as a means of achieving progressive social change.

Right-to-work law Legislation, viewed as anti-union by many, calling for a prohibition on requirements that a worker must join the union in a workplace as a condition of employment.

scab A term of derision used by unionists and their supporters for nonunion replacement workers employed to perform labor tasks normally carried out by the striking laborers.

Robert Schilling A Wisconsin Knights of Labor organizer who became a leader of the state's Populist Party in the 1890s.

scrip Payment of wages in the form of certificates exchangeable for commodities at a company store. seniority Job security attained by length of continuous service with an employer.

sit-down strike Work stoppage achieved by employees occupying employers' property.

slowdown Conscious withholding of maximum effort in the workplace by workers.

socialism A social order based on public ownership of industry and utilities and production governed by demand.

Social Security Act Landmark federal legislation enacted in 1935 to create an old age and survivors insurance program, aid to dependent children, federally mandated

unemployment insurance, and assistance to blind and otherwise disabled workers and their families. This legislation marks the foundation of the modern American social welfare system.

steward A union member elected as the union representative in a shop or department workplace.

strike Worker or union work stoppage to compel an employer to comply with demands or negotiate differences.

sweatshop A small, poorly ventilated shop or workplace filled with exploited workers who piece together garments or fabricate other products.

John Sweeney President of the AFL-CIO since 1994, he has been generally credited with reviving the labor federation with greater concentration on organizing the building coalitions with other organizations and strong emphasis on political action. He began as a custodial worker in New York City, eventually becoming president of the Service Employees International Union.

Taft-Hartley Act Federal legislation in 1947 curtailing rights of organized labor by substantially limiting the tools available to unions in organizational and labor-management

disputes. This law emphasizes the rights of workers *not* to join unions and *not* to participate in collective bargaining.

time clock A clock that stamps an employee's starting and quitting time on a time card, thus encouraging discipline in the workplace.

Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire, 1911 A tragic industrial fire at Triangle Shirtwaist Factory in New York, resulting in the deaths of 146 immigrant workers and prompting outrage and public disapproval of management practices and unsafe working conditions that led to remedial legislation.

unemployment compensation insurance Short-term government- and management - subsidized insurance payments, pioneered in Wisconsin in 1932, to offset the financial impact of joblessness on workers.

unfair labor practice Management practices in labor relations and workplace ,management prohibited by federal law.

union A labor organization formed when workers enter an association to pool their interests and resources for purposes of collective bargaining with management over wages, hours, and conditions of employment.

union card A card certifying personal membership in good standing in a labor union.

union label A label or mark identifying a product as union-made; the notion of looking for the union label was popularized by a musical commercial for the International Ladies Garment Workers Union.

union shop A plant or business establishment in which management may hire nonunion workers or union members, but may maintain nonunion workers on payroll only on condition of their becoming union members within a specified period of time.

Wagner Act, 1935 Federal legislation, also known as the National Labor Relations Act, that provided strong government support for organized labor and guaranteed workers' rights to organize unions and bargain collectively. This law, which created the National Labor Relations Board, is significant as the foundation of the modern collective bargaining system.

Frank Weber A Milwaukee Socialist and labor leader who became a Knights of Labor and later Carpenters Union member. Active in the Wisconsin eight-hour movement in 1886, Weber later served for 23 years as President and state organizer for the young Wisconsin State Federation of Labor. Long an activist for workers' rights, he served for 12 years as Socialist state assemblyman from Milwaukee and introduced important labor and progressive legislation.

Nellie Wilson An African American labor organizer at Milwaukee's A.a. Smith plant, where she became the first black woman to serve on the executive board of the A.O. Smith Steelworkers Local 19806 from 1964 to 1969. Wilson was a delegate to the Milwaukee County Labor Council and compiled a distinguished record as an advocate for civil rights and gender equity both within and beyond the labor movement.

Wisconsin Child Labor Law, 1911 Wisconsin legislation prohibiting the employment of children under the age of 14, except during school vacations, and requiring work permits for the employment of workers aged 14 to 16. The law also limits the working hours of children.

Wisconsin Labor Relations Act, 1937 Wisconsin legislation, known as the "little Wagner Act," intended to promote industrial peace by replicating the federal labor relations system at the state level. The law created the Wisconsin Employment Relations Board, which was intended to encourage mediation of industrial disputes and included an extensive list of unfair labor practices by employers.

workers' compensation Insurance programs, pioneered in Wisconsin in 1911, protecting workers against the financial burden of workplace injury.

World Trade Organization Demonstrations Demonstrations in 1999 and 2000 by labor and environmental organizations against American participation in the World Trade Organization, as well as the admission of China as a full member. Protests were sparked by labor concerns over unfair competition resulting from the exploitation of low-wage workers in nations participating in free-trade agreements.

WTUL The Women's Trade Union League, a cross-class organization formed in 1903 to encourage greater women's involvement in the labor union movement.

yellow dog contract An agreement signed by workers at their time of hiring, stipulating their intention not to engage in union activity or join a labor union.

Arnold Zander A founder in 1935 in Madison of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees Union, which has become one of the nation's largest unions with more than 1.2 million members. Zander and others sought to preserve the protections of a state civil service system from a political "spoils system." Zander was president until 1965; the union's headquarters was in Madison until 1955, when it relocated to Washington, D.C.

SECTION 6

Resources and Materials

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