

SOME IDEAS FOR PUBLICIZING MAY DAY / LABOR HISTORY MONTH

This packet contains:

1. A two-page news release about Labor History Month with a listing of some of the events and collections at various labor archives, both those archives represented at the Labor Archives Retreat on Feb. 22-24 and a few others that responded to an appeal for Labor History Month items. The release can be sent to media in your area, or you can write your own release using parts of this one or from scratch. The fifth paragraph in this release is boldface, italic type. It is a paragraph you can use to insert details of any May Day or Labor History Month event or exhibit that you are sponsoring. If you have no events, just strike the paragraph and send the release without it.

2. A sample of a shorter news release with a first paragraph that you could tailor to announce events you have scheduled at your institution. Most media prefer to emphasize events in their coverage or circulation area because that is the primary interest of their viewers, listeners or readers. So if you are planning an event in May make it the lead of your news release. After you have talked about that, then throw in some details about Labor History Month nationwide. And always be sure to include your name and phone at the bottom of the release with an offer to provide any information they need about Labor History Month.

3. A sample of a public service announcement. These are frequently used by radio stations as fillers, and are meant to be read taking 30 seconds or a minute.

4. A two-page sample "op-ed" piece of about 750 words. Many newspapers like to fill out their editorial page with opinion pieces on timely topics from experts in their circulation area. Some papers might be interested in an opinion article about May Day and Labor History Month from the director or an archivist at a nearby labor history archive. The article here can be sent in under your name or it can be rewritten as you see fit. Or you can compose an entirely new op-ed piece. Just make sure it contains some strong opinions well stated and that it fits the occasion. You may not be able to work anything into it about your institution, but at the end of the piece the newspaper usually identifies who wrote it and your institution will get mentioned – and that exposure may be just as valuable or better than any release you could write about your collections.

Couple suggestions:

1. Pictures: If you have pictures from your archive to illustrate your events and collection, by all means send samples of them with your press release. The media are always scratching for artwork to illustrate their stories and you increase your chances generally if you can provide a photo or give them ideas for a photo op. But do avoid handshake pictures and/or pictures of check presentations.

2. Follow-up: Whatever you send to the media follow up with a phone call a few days later. This reminds them in case your release has gone on a pile with a lot of other releases, and also gives you a chance to introduce yourself and offer to help them out on any kind of a labor story they might be doing.

PRESS RELEASE FOR MAY DAY / LABOR HISTORY MONTH

Archives tell stories of workers' struggles *May Day opens month-long celebration of labor history*

Labor History Month begins on a day filled with significance for American working men and women. It was on May 1, 1886 — 120 years ago this year — that American workers nationwide went on strike for a dream which at the time was considered by many to be impractical, outrageous and even un-American. Today, the dream of an eight-hour work day has become a reality accepted almost universally as benefiting workers, children, families and society as a whole.

During Labor History Month each May, American workers commemorate not only the decades-long crusade for the eight-hour day, but also the many other campaigns of laboring people to secure their rights to form unions, to bargain collectively, to file grievances over unfair work practices, to work in safe and sanitary conditions.

Precious collections of photographs, letters, diaries and eyewitnesses accounts of these momentous events are scattered in universities and labor history libraries and archives across the nation. Many of them open their collections to public viewing and sponsor special exhibits and events as part of their Labor History Month observance.

In the (your city) area, the (name of your labor history archives) holds the records of (name of unions or of labor heroes) and of (name of famous strikes, disputes, victories, other incidents). Visitors are welcome at the (name of you archives) on (hours and days). The (name of your archives) will sponsor the following special events in honor of Labor History Month: (name of events). Call (contact's name) at (phone number) for more information.

Below is a sampling of the fascinating and historically important collections throughout the nation. Staff members at each of these archives will be happy to answer questions and provide information about how researchers can gain access to these collections.

University of Maryland: Archives of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America, which was a major force in the eight-hour day movement. The union's founder, P.J. McGuire, is credited with suggesting May Day 1886 as the date for the nationwide strike. Hornbake Library, University of Maryland, College Park, MD 20742. (301) 314-2712; www.lib.umd.edu/archivesum/rguide/labor/jsp.

Holt Labor Library: Collection of May Day papers and books. Labor History Month exhibit of eight-hour day posters, sheet music, pamphlets and cartoons. Located at 50 Fell St., San Francisco, CA 94104; (415) 241-1370; www.holtlaborlibrary.org.

National Labor College: The George Meany Memorial Archives hold the records of the AFL-CIO from 1881 to the present. Within the collection are numerous documents about workers' perseverance in fighting for an eight-hour working day. In the collection, for example, is correspondence from June 1938 — more than 50 years after the 1886 strike — regarding efforts to convince Congress to legislate an eight-hour day for crewmen on tugboats in the Great Lakes. National Labor College, 10000 New Hampshire Ave., Silver Spring, MD 20903; (301) 431-5443; www.nationallaborcollege.edu.

Wisconsin Historical Society: Collection of reports, recollections and photographs of the 1886 eight-hour day

strike in Milwaukee where five workers were slain when militiamen fired upon strikers at the North Chicago Rolling Mills Steel Foundry. Collection also has a lesson plan developed by teacher Michael Edmunds about that incident, which came to be known as the Bay View Tragedy. 816 State St., Madison, WI 53706; www.wisconsinhistory.org.

Chicago Historical Society: Sponsors two remarkable on-line exhibits having to do with the Haymarket Tragedy. The Haymarket Affair Digital Collection provides on-line access to primary source materials about the tragedy which occurred during the eight-hour strike of May 1886. When a bomb, thrown by an assassin who was never identified, killed seven police officers and injured 60 other persons, a large number of socialists and anarchists were rounded up and thrown in jail. Four of them were hanged, while the death sentences of three others were granted full pardons in 1893 by Gov. John P. Altgeld who ruled that the judge in the case was so prejudiced that a fair trial for the defendants was impossible. The Dramas of Haymarket is an on-line exhibit co-sponsored by the historical society and Northwestern University. The exhibit examines materials selected from the digital collection and draws on other Chicago historical materials to give context and perspective to the tragic events. CHS, Clark Street at North Avenue, Chicago; (312) 642-4600; www.chicagohistory.org.

Southern Labor Archives at Georgia State University: Collections include, among other things, a complete set, from 1889 to 1956, of the Machinists Monthly Journal, the magazine of the International Association of Machinists; transcripts of oral history interviews with coal miners, autoworkers, and union and civil rights activists. Located in the GSU Library, 100 Decatur St., SE, 8th floor, Atlanta, GA 30303-3202; (404) 651-2477; www.library.gsu.edu/spcoll/labor.

Walter P. Reuther Library at Wayne State University: Repository for records of, among others, United Automobile Workers, United Farm Workers, American Federation of Teachers, National Association of Letter Carriers. On-line exhibits include: Brown vs. Board of Ed. 50th Anniversary; Sit-Down: A Brief History of the Flint sit-down strike; I AM A MAN, Honoring the 1968 Memphis Sanitation Workers Strike. 5401 Cass Ave., Detroit, MI 48202; (315) 577-4024. www.reuther.wayne.edu.

Catholic University: On-line exhibits about "Mother" Jones, a woman who became a legendary national advocate for workers' causes, and about Monsignor George C. Higgins, a Chicago-born priest who earned the title, "the labor movement's parish priest." Higgins was instrumental in the National Conference of Catholic Bishops taking on the role of mediator between California grape growers and the United Farm Workers Union led by Cesar Chavez. American Catholic History Research Center & University Archives, Washington, DC 20064. (202) 319-5065. [Http://libraries.cua.edu/achrcua/archives.html](http://libraries.cua.edu/achrcua/archives.html)

Rutgers University: The archives of the International Union of Electronic, Electrical, Salaried, Machine and Furniture Workers, or IUE, constitutes one of the most significant and comprehensive labor history collections in the nation. The IUE collection is the cornerstone of the Rutgers' labor history archives. Special Collections and University Archives, 169 College Ave., New Brunswick, NJ; (732) 445-5688; email, bgolon@rci.rutgers.edu.

New York Labor History Association — A calendar of numerous Labor History Month events in the New York, New Jersey area is available each year at the association's website: www.ilr.cornell.edu/nylha.

Contact: (your name) (your institution) (your phone and/or email)

SHORT PRESS RELEASE FOR MAY DAY / LABOR HISTORY MONTH

Labor History Month kickoff on May 1

On May *(date)*, the *(name of archives/institution)* will begin its celebration of Labor History Month with a *(concert, lecture, exhibit, open house)*. The event, at *(time)* in the *(place, building, auditorium)*, will feature *(speaker, performers, etc.)*. The program will include *(details)*. The event is open to the public. Admission will be *(free, \$10, whatever)*. Reservations may be made by calling *(phone)*.

Other events scheduled during Labor History Month include: *(details with time and place)*.

Labor History Month begins on May 1, a date filled with significance for American working men and women. It was on May 1, 1886 — 120 years ago this year — that American workers went on strike nationwide for a dream which at the time was reviled as an outrageous and even un-American suggestion. Today, the dream of an eight-hour work day is accepted almost universally as an essential element of a civilized workplace.

During the month, American workers commemorate the decades-long struggle for an eight-hour day, and many other struggles that their predecessors waged to secure the rights to form unions, to bargain collectively, to file grievances over unfair work practices, to work in safe and sanitary conditions.

The commemoration at *(your institution)* is but one of many events scheduled throughout our state (or nation) during Labor History Months. They include: *(details of events)*.

For information about these programs or about Labor History Month, contact *(your name and phone)*.

PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT FOR MAY DAY / LABOR HISTORY MONTH

Labor History Month Observance

In commemoration of Labor History Month, the *(name of your archives)* will sponsor a *(name of event, e.g. concert of workers' songs, lecture, exhibit, etc.)* at ... p.m. on Sunday, May in the ... auditorium on the campus of *(your institution)*. The *(concert, lecture, etc.)* will feature *(singers, speakers, etc.)*. The public is welcome and admission is *(\$\$)*. May is celebrated throughout the country and the world as Labor History Month. It was 120 years ago, on May Day 1886, that hundreds of thousands of American workers began a campaign that was to last a half century until something we all take very much for granted — an eight-hour working day — became the accepted standard in American workplaces. For information, call *(phone)*.

On May Day, thank unions for your eight-hour shift

Most American working men and women will put in just eight hours on the job on May Day — Monday, May 1. That will leave them enough time to enjoy some of the leisure activities associated with what has been a traditional springtime festival day for centuries.

Today's workers may not realize it, but if it weren't for a crusade waged by their predecessors during the 19th and early 20th centuries, they would be working 10, 12 or even 14 hours — not only on May 1, but six days a week. Worn down by their unrelenting job schedule, they would have neither time nor inclination to enjoy the festivities of May Day or any other day.

Agitation for an eight-hour day began as early as the 1830s in the United States. The fateful link with May Day was forged in 1884 when the Federation of Organized Trades and Labor Unions of the United States and Canada, at its convention in Chicago, adopted a resolution declaring "eight hours shall constitute a legal day's labor," and urged workers who were not granted that benefit by May 1, 1886, to go out on strike.

Their family life, their desire for leisure time and their very health devastated by 48-, 52- and even 72-hour work weeks, laborers responded enthusiastically. When May 1, 1886, dawned hundreds of thousands of them in Chicago, New York, Boston, Milwaukee, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Cincinnati and other cities either went on strike or vowed to do so unless companies promptly accepted their demand.

Their demonstrations were marked by strong language but little violence on May Day itself. Then, on May 4 and 5, lives were lost in both Chicago and Milwaukee. At a union rally in Chicago's Haymarket Square, an assailant, whose identity remains unknown to this day, detonated a bomb that killed seven police officers and four bystanders and injured dozens more. In Milwaukee, five people were killed and four wounded when troops broke up a crowd of striking workers outside the North Chicago Railroad Rolling Mills Steel Foundry.

Public officials and newspapers tarred all the strikers as anarchists and communists. Seven union leaders were sentenced to die in Chicago. Four were executed on Nov. 11, 1887. One committed suicide and the other two were granted unconditional pardons six years later. In the hysteria, leaders of the eight-hour demonstrations and strikes in other cities, including Milwaukee, Pittsburgh and New York, were jailed and charged with conspiracy.

The cause of a reasonable working day was set back for years by the May Day events of 1886. In the end, the eight-hour-day battle was fought out over many decades, union by union, industry by industry. It was 1898 before West Virginia, Pennsylvania and Ohio coal miners forced operators to accept the eight-hour day. It took a bitter contest in Congress and before the Supreme Court in 1916-17 for railroad management to come around, still longer for some steelworkers to finally be freed from the burden of 12-hour days six days a week. As late as 1938, labor leaders were pressing Congress to grant crew members on Great Lakes tugs the right to an eight-hour day.

The story of how American workers finally achieved that benefit, which we all take for granted today, is not an exception but the rule. The most basic rights and fundamental decencies have been won by employee determination, not by employer generosity. Such reasonable demands as the right to organize, the right to collective bargaining, vacations, sick days, overtime pay, safe and sanitary workplace conditions have been fought

tooth and nail by those who would allow laboring people only second-class citizenship.

Today, May Day remains a day of special memories for laboring men and women. Indeed, American workers of the 21st century designate the entire month of May as Labor History Month, a time to recall and honor the sacrifices and achievements of their 18th, 19th and 20th century predecessors.

In our city, the month is being observed by an (open house, concert, exhibit, etc.) at (name of your archives) on May (date) at (time). We would love to have you join us on that day(s) to celebrate our common labor history heritage.

(Usually newspapers will include a sentence at the end of opinion pieces identifying the writer such as, *(Your name) is director of the (name of your institution). Readers may contact (him or her) at (phone number of email)*)