

## Preserving Labor's Heritage

The Archives of Labor History and Urban Affairs was established in 1960 to collect and preserve the records and papers of organizations and individuals involved in the American labor movement. The upsurge of interest in labor history, evident in the publication of many new books and articles and the establishing of labor history courses in colleges and universities, plus the unwitting destruction of union records, prompted the Archives program.

The action of the members of the United Automobile, Aerospace, and Agricultural Implement Workers (UAW) in designating Wayne State University as their official depository in 1962 helped to establish the growing Archives program. In subsequent years, the Archives has been named the depository for a number of labor organizations, including the United Farm Workers Organizing Committee, Industrial Workers of the World, Air Line Pilots Association, American Newspaper Guild, American Federation of Teachers, and Congress of Industrial Organizations.

The Archives also collects the personal papers of individuals associated with the labor movement, particularly those active in the organizations which have deposited records in the Archives. Collections from Al Barbour, Selma M. Borchardt, James Carey, Cesar Chavez, Irwin DeShetler, John Edelman, Arthur Elder, Katherine Pollak Ellickson, Richard Frankenstein, Henry R. Linville, Homer Martin, Carl Person, Victor Reuther, Walter P. Reuther, Clarence Sayen, R. J. Thomas, Hugh Thompson, Mary Heaton Vorse, Edward Wieck, and others are now preserved in the Archives.

## Urban and Political History Collections

For almost a decade, the Archives concentrated its efforts in gathering important materials related to labor history, until it became apparent that the involvement of unions and their leaders in urban, social, and political issues necessitated a broadening of the collecting program. Also, Wayne State University's commitment to Detroit and its environs required that an effort be made to preserve historical records documenting the impact of pressing issues and problems affecting the quality of life in an urban setting. Among the important political and urban collections placed in the Archives are the papers of the Citizens' Crusade Against Poverty, Detroit Council of Churches, Detroit NAACP, Michigan Civil Rights Congress, Michigan Welfare League, former Detroit Mayor Jerome Cavanagh, Charles Chiakulas, Congressman Charles Diggs, Ofield Dukes, Aaron Henry, Harvey O'Connor, and United States Senator Patrick V. McNamara.

Forthcoming issues of this newsletter will feature information concerning the quantity and quality of the organizational and personal collections housed in the Archives.

## The United Automobile, Aerospace, and Agricultural Implement Workers Collection

The records of the United Auto Workers (UAW) form the largest and most important collection in the Archives. The interest of officers, staff members, and rank and file members in the UAW's history added great impetus to the Archives program and resulted in the preservation of one of the finest labor research collections in the country. The interest in UAW history has extended to its members on the regional and local levels, so that the records of these offices and papers of individuals have been placed in the Archives. The records of twenty-one UAW departments, five regional offices, and over fifty locals are now preserved. These include:

### UAW Departments

Accounting Department  
Agricultural Implement Department  
Chrysler Department  
Community Relations  
Education Department  
Education Department, Edward Coffey Files  
Education Department, Victor Reuther Files  
Ford Department  
General Motors Department  
International Executive Board  
Public Relations Department  
Public Relations Department, Ford Motor Company Series  
Public Relations Department, Frank Winn Files  
Public Review Board  
Radio Department  
Recreation Department  
Research and Engineering Department  
Secretary-Treasurer's Office  
Social Security Department  
Studebaker-Packard Department  
Unemployment Compensation Department  
Veterans Department  
War Policy Division

### UAW Regional and Sub-regional Offices

Region 1-D  
Region 1-E  
Region 7 (Canada)  
Region 9  
Toronto Sub-regional Collection

## UAW Locals

Local 5, South Bend, Indiana  
Local 6, Melrose Park, Illinois  
Local 7, Detroit, Michigan  
Local 9, South Bend, Indiana  
Local 14, Toledo, Ohio  
Local 27, London, Ontario  
Local 51, Detroit, Michigan  
Local 53, Chicago, Illinois  
Local 57, Fort Wayne, Indiana  
Local 80, Detroit, Michigan  
Local 133, New Britain, Connecticut  
Local 135, Grand Rapids, Michigan  
Local 142, Willow Run, Michigan  
Local 154, Detroit, Michigan  
Local 157, Detroit, Michigan  
Local 174, Detroit, Michigan  
Local 190, Detroit, Michigan  
Local 199, St. Catharines, Ontario  
Local 200, Windsor, Ontario  
Local 212, Detroit, Michigan  
Local 216, South Gate, California  
Local 230, Los Angeles, California  
Local 239, Baltimore, Maryland  
Local 240, Windsor, Ontario  
Local 280, Detroit, Michigan  
Local 341, Indianapolis, Indiana  
Local 397, Brantford, Ontario  
Local 399, New Toronto, Ontario  
Local 400, Highland Park, Michigan  
Local 410, Detroit, Michigan  
Local 444, Windsor, Ontario  
Local 560, Milpitas, California  
Local 595, Linden, New Jersey  
Local 599, Flint, Michigan  
Local 600, Dearborn, Michigan  
Local 602, Lansing, Michigan  
Local 650, Lansing, Michigan  
Local 662, Anderson, Indiana  
Local 664, North Tarrytown, New York  
Local 742, Detroit, Michigan  
Local 833, Sheboygan, Wisconsin  
Local 887, Los Angeles, California  
Local 889, Warren, Michigan  
Local 932, Minneapolis, Minnesota  
Local 988, Memphis, Tennessee

## Oral History of the UAW

In 1962, the Archives was the recipient of over one hundred and fifty transcribed oral interviews concerning the development of unionism in the automobile industry. In 1959, the Institute of Labor and Industrial Relations at the University of Michigan and Wayne State University embarked on this project under the direction of Jack W. Skeels. Cooperation between faculty members from the University of Michigan and Wayne State University and members of the UAW contributed immeasurably to the success of this project.

The scope of the project included organizing efforts in the automobile industry prior to the formation of the UAW-CIO. During the period, 1918-1932, the activities of the Vehicle Workers Union and Auto Workers Union were discussed, as well as the efforts of the American Federation of Labor, 1933-36. The major focus of the project was the UAW-CIO since 1936.

Among the topics covered in the interviews are working conditions, management's reactions to collective bargaining, union strategy, sit-down strikes, participation of left-wing organizations, factional fights, workers education, production

techniques, political action, conversion to wartime production, present day contracts, and Canadian labor relations.

Since these oral histories are available only to qualified researchers under restrictive conditions, interested scholars and students should contact the Archives for further information. A complete list of participants in the oral history project will be provided upon request.

## Personal Papers

Through contacts made with the assistance of UAW officers and members, the Archives has succeeded in acquiring the personal papers of more than one hundred UAW leaders. Important and interesting collections related to the early history of the UAW include those of Henry Kraus, R. J. Thomas, and Nick DiGaetano.

### THE HENRY KRAUS COLLECTION

Henry Kraus, a graduate of Western Reserve University, started a newspaper for automobile workers in Cleveland during the days of the NRA. The paper, *The United Auto Worker*, served as the official journal for auto workers across the country. After formation of the UAW-CIO, Kraus was appointed first editor of the union's paper, also titled *The United Auto Worker*. Kraus' union duties also extended to organizing for the UAW, and in this capacity he was particularly active in the Flint sit-down strikes of 1936-37.

The Kraus Collection, consisting of sixteen manuscript boxes, covers the period from 1926 to 1940. Among the important subjects and events included in the material are the Murray Body Strike in 1929, the Ford Hunger March in 1932, the threatened auto strike in 1934, the first UAW-AFL convention in 1935, the Black Legion, Flint sit-down strikes, the trial of the UAW officers in 1938, Ford organizing attempts in 1933-39, and Michigan elections of 1938.

The diary of Harry Van Nocker, secretary of the Strike Committee of Fisher Body Plant No. 1 during the Flint sit-down strike, is preserved in the Kraus Collection. The diary provides a detailed, graphic account of the strikers' life in the plants during the sit-downs. On the day of the battle at Fisher Plant No. 2, Van Nocker recorded,

"Every few feet were piles of door hinges—at one of these piles a group of men were working busily. I asked them what they were doing and was told that they were drawing the pin and making single hinges out of them for as they said they were lighter and carried further and were just as effective as ammunition. Everywhere there were stretched fire hoses, I inquired as to these and was told that water was the most effective means of combating tear gas. . . . Everywhere were groups of men some of them old, others middle-aged while still others were mere boys but all with determination written on every line of their features. A determination that in this desperate struggle between capital and labor they should not lose nor retreat till every man was either dead or unable to fight anymore."

Kraus' account of the sit-downs appeared in his book, *The Many and The Few*. A more recent and complete analysis of the strike has been written by Sidney Fine, of the University of Michigan. In researching his book, *Sit-Down: The General Motors Strike of 1936-7* (University of Michigan Press, 1969), Dr. Fine made extensive use of the Kraus Papers and related collections in the Archives.

### THE ROLLAND J. THOMAS COLLECTION

The papers of the second elected UAW President, R. J. Thomas, were placed in the Archives in 1964. Thomas, a native of Ohio, joined the UAW in 1934 and served as a workers representative on the Wolman Election Board of the NRA. In 1936, he was elected President of Chrysler Local 7, and the next year was elected Vice-President of the UAW. In 1939, he

obtained the Presidency of the UAW-CIO. After his service with the UAW, Thomas became an assistant to Philip Murray in 1947 and to George Meany in 1956, before retiring in 1964.

The Thomas Collection contains a complete set of UAW Executive Board Minutes from March 1940 to September 1947, plus correspondence, scrapbooks and photographs covering the period from 1936 to 1964. The collection is important for the study of the early struggles of the UAW in organizing locals in various industries and overcoming factionalism within its ranks and the labor movement. Among the important subjects discussed in these papers are the Homer Martin factional controversy, the General Motors strike of 1945-46, the Allis-Chalmers strike of 1947, organization of the West Coast aircraft industry, and the UAW's participation in the war effort.



*R. J. Thomas, President of the UAW from 1939 to 1946, and his secretary, Mrs. Charles Laport, examine a portion of the collection of personal papers he presented to the Archives of Labor History and Urban Affairs in 1965.*



*Nick DiGaetano in 1960 when he presented the first of many installments of his newspaper collection to the Archives of Labor History and Urban Affairs.*

#### THE NICK DiGAETANO COLLECTION

Nick DiGaetano, a retired UAW Local 7 official, has shown an unusually perceptive sense of history by his work in preserving extensive files of labor newspapers. The collection, which he presented to the Archives in 1959, consists of over 200 bound volumes of union newspapers relating to 185 UAW locals and other unions. Included in the collection are the thirteen editions of *UAW Solidarity*; and twenty-two editions of its predecessor, *The United Automobile Worker*; sets of the *Michigan AFL-CIO News*, and its predecessor, the *Detroit Labor News*; plus the *Wage Earner* and other union newspapers.

At age 78 Nick DiGaetano is still working for the UAW and the Archives. At his home in Detroit, he continues to gather union newspapers which he binds, using equipment in the basement, labels, and sends to the Archives. Such dedication gives Wayne State the most comprehensive set of union newspapers in the country. Visiting researchers and students have made extensive use of the DiGaetano Collection.

## Use of Archives Collections

The organizational records and personal papers preserved in the Archives are available to persons with a serious scholarly interest in using them. In some instances, donor organizations have imposed conditions of accessibility and use upon the records and papers they have placed in the Archives.

The terms of the agreement with the United Automobile, Aerospace, and Agricultural Implement Workers states that:

All UAW files in the Archives, less than twenty years old, shall be closed to researchers except when written permission is obtained from the UAW official responsible for the files, e.g., department head, local union president, etc.

The terms of accessibility to other labor organization collections in the Archives vary considerably. The Air Line Pilots Association (ALPA) has closed all records less than ten years old, while the United Farm Workers Organizing Committee (UFWOC) has, for the time being, closed all of its records to researchers.

The personal papers of politicians, labor leaders, civil rights leaders and others are, in some cases, subject to restrictions. For example, the papers of Cesar Chavez of the UFWOC and former Detroit Mayor Jerome Cavanagh are temporarily closed, while all papers, excluding case files, of former United States Senator Patrick V. McNamara are opened to researchers. Interested researchers should contact the Archives to determine the status of particular collections. Also, a guide to opened collections will be made available upon request.

## Recent Acquisitions

The Archives has recently received two important collections concerning the history of the UAW. These records and papers have not yet been processed, but could be made available to interested researchers if necessary.

*The Francis J. Dillon Collection.* Mr. Dillon, the first President of the UAW, was appointed to that post by William Green of the American Federation of Labor in 1935. Prior to serving as UAW President, Dillon worked as an AF of L organizer in the automobile industry around Detroit, Flint, and Pontiac, Michigan. The papers placed in the Archives by Mr. Dillon in January of 1971 consist of official communications (June 27, 1934 to April 24, 1936); minutes of the three meetings of the National Council of United Automobile Workers Federal Labor Unions (1934); newsletters (May 8, 1934 to October 3, 1934); press releases (October 15, 1934 to 1941); and seven scrapbooks of newspaper clippings, photographs, and correspondence.

*The Bill Williams Collection* of UAW Local 560. In December 1970, Mr. Williams, a retired officer of Local 560, placed the records of this local in the Archives. Mr. Williams had the foresight to "rescue and preserve" the material when the local moved its offices from Richmond to Milpitas, California. The material contains minute books (1937 to 1943); local newspapers (1944 to 1964); correspondence (1938 to 1950's), including that of UAW International Representative Frank Slaby; strike leaflets; photographs; and an unpublished history of Local 560 by David Goldberg.

## Research in the Archives

The number of historians, political scientists, and master and doctoral candidates utilizing collections in the Archives has increased significantly in the last few years. Professor Sidney Fine, of the University of Michigan, used several collections in his two books, *Sit-Down: The General Motors Strike of 1936-7* and *The Automobile Under the Blue Eagle*. Claude Hoffman, a UAW member from Anderson, Indiana, made extensive use of the records of Local 663 and other related collections in his study, *Sit-Down in Anderson*.

The authors of two recent studies of the Industrial Workers of the World have also utilized the manuscript and photographic collections of the Archives. These works are Patrick Renshaw's *The Wobblies, The Story of Syndicalism in the United States* and Melvyn Dubofsky's *We Shall Be All, A History of the Industrial Workers of the World*.

Graduate students from various universities in the United States, Canada, and foreign countries are engaged in research on such topics as "women in trade unions", "political activities of the UAW", "the Detroit faction of the IWW", "defeat of the right-to-work amendment in Ohio", "socialism in the American labor movement", "the 'red scare' in Detroit", "the role of the Catholic Church in the Delano Grape Strike", "the ideology of Homer Martin", "the politics of Walter P. Reuther", "the Detroit Newspaper Guild strikes", and "the southern AFT locals and Brown vs. the Board of Education".

## Bits and Pieces

A Guide to the Collections of the Archives of Labor History and Urban Affairs, edited by staff member Warner Pflug, is now in its final form and will be published by the Wayne State University Press this year.

Beverly Fodell of the staff completed her *Cesar Chavez and The United Farm Workers: A Selective Bibliography* in January of 1970. Several hundred copies of the bibliography have been distributed to libraries and researchers and to state and city boycott offices across the country by the Delano, California, office of the UFWOC. A limited number of copies are also available from the Archives upon request.

The Archives will again cooperate with the Burton Historical Collection of the Detroit Public Library, Detroit Historical Museum, Wayne State University History Department, and other interest related organizations in sponsoring Michigan Perspectives, A Conference in Local History in Detroit on April 16 and 17, 1971. Announcements of the program for this year's conference will be forthcoming in March of 1971.



UAW rank and file members have contributed several outstanding research collections to the Archives of Labor History and Urban Affairs. Among those who have visited the Archives to examine their collections are, seated left to right, George Lutzai, John Panzner, and Nickolas Hysbka, and, standing left to right, John Oneka and Nick DiGaetano.

## Obtaining the Newsletter

This and subsequent issues of the newsletter will be designed to provide information for researchers, donors, prospective donors, and the administration and faculty of Wayne State University about the Archives collections and programs. The newsletter will be issued three times a year. Individuals and institutions interested in receiving the newsletter on a continuing basis should contact:

Archives of Labor History and Urban Affairs  
Wayne State University  
Detroit, Michigan 48202

Archives of Labor History and Urban Affairs  
Wayne State University  
Detroit, Michigan 48202



NON-PROFIT ORG.  
U. S. POSTAGE

**Paid**

Detroit, Mich.  
Permit No. 3844