

Walter P. Reuther Library

Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs • University Archives

Fall 1997

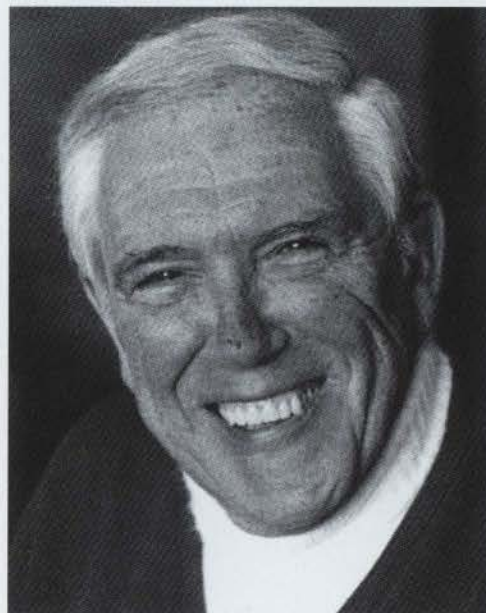


Fraser Center for Workplace Issues Debuts

The Walter P. Reuther Library is honored to join Wayne State University's College of Urban, Labor and Metropolitan Affairs (CULMA) and others in announcing the creation of the Douglas A. Fraser Center for Workplace Issues at a dinner celebration November 12th. The event also signals the start of a fund-raising campaign to support the endowed center which will pay tribute to the former UAW president's lifelong commitment to justice and equity in the American workplace and his service to Wayne State University and the larger community.

A national advisory board composed of civic leaders and representatives of labor, management, and academe will direct the work of the Fraser Center, conceived as a forum for employers, workers, and scholars to discuss a multiplicity of issues affecting the modern workplace. CULMA, a non-traditional college whose approach is interdisciplinary and issue-oriented, provides the perfect venue for formulating and implementing policies and practical programs relating to the workplace as a social, political, and economic setting.

The Center will be involved in a number of activities, including technical assistance; research and publication; workshops, seminars, and conferences; and training in



Photograph by Patricia Beck

Douglas Fraser

workplace relations and leadership skills for personnel at all levels. These and other programs will focus on an array of core issues within the workplace, such as collective bargaining, ethical behavior, the impact of technology, labor-management cooperation, employment security, and family needs.

Reuther Library Web Site

Calling all Internet surfers! If you haven't checked out our Web site yet, you should. The Reuther Library Web site has been up and running for almost two years and it just keeps getting better. Tune in and you'll find important information on our services and programs, feature stories on topics in labor, urban, and Wayne State University history, subject area reference tools, and a complete list of collections. Especially useful are e-mail links to all staff members and a "Hot Links" page that provides quick access to most labor archives in North America and to the home pages of our major union donors. The Reuther Library Web site is continually enhancing its offerings, so set your favorite Web browser for www.reuther.wayne.edu and enjoy!



Wayne State University
College of Urban, Labor and
Metropolitan Affairs

Douglas Fraser Exhibit Opens

To mark the occasion of the Fraser Center announcement, the Reuther Library will open a major exhibit tracing the life and career of Douglas Fraser. Respected by his adversaries as a man of honesty and integrity, Doug Fraser's lack of pretension, natural camaraderie, and energetic advocacy on their behalf have endeared him to the rank and file as well. Heart and soul a union man, his work was and is his life.



UAW Local 227 election flyer, 1944

Born the son of an electrician in a working class district of Glasgow, Scotland in 1916, Doug came to Detroit with his family at the age of six. He dropped out of high school at 17, after a serious bout with rheumatic fever. A few years later he got a job at Chrysler's DeSoto plant as a "dingman," smoothing out wrinkled sheet metal, and he joined the fledgling UAW. Over the next forty years, he worked his way up the union ranks, first as president of DeSoto Local 227 and then on the staff of the Chrysler Department, where, during the long 1950 strike,

Walter Reuther recognized his negotiating skills and made him an administrative assistant. Later he was elected co-director of Region 1A.

Given the reins of the Chrysler Department with his election to the UAW international executive board in 1962, Fraser helped negotiate a number of historic contract gains, including early retirement, U. S.-Canada wage parity, restrictions on compulsory overtime, a comprehensive health and safety program, accelerated arbitration, pension benefit increases, and improvements in the cost of living

allowance. He was elected a vice-president in 1970 and president in 1977, as the American auto industry was losing market share to the Japanese and the union was losing membership.

An early adherent of the UAW's "left wing," Fraser nonetheless quickly adopted the pragmatic style of his hero and mentor, Walter Reuther, who viewed workers as consumers fueling the economy that employed them.

During his presidency, he continued to whittle away at managerial prerogatives and fashioned programs like trade assistance allowances for job retraining to help workers adjust to competition and save their jobs. In return for contract concessions, Chrysler gave him a seat on its board of directors in 1980, the first time a union leader sat on the board of a major corporation.

Fraser early on imbibed his father's socialist politics and moral outrage at the indignities suffered by workers and, like Reuther, engaged the UAW in the struggle for social justice.

That struggle required him and his union to become part of the debate on a wide range of issues not traditionally the preserve of the labor movement, like health care, social welfare, civil rights, housing, education, and the environment.

He also understood that to solve workers' problems, the union must move outside the bargaining room into the political arena where international trade and national economic policies are decided.

Doug Fraser retired from the UAW in 1983 and joined the faculty of Wayne State University with what he describes, in typically self-effacing fashion, as the "concocted" title of University Professor of Labor Studies. A member of the UAW executive board that gave unanimous approval to the funding of the original building housing the Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs, "Professor" Fraser's office in that building's Woodcock Wing makes him a member of the Reuther Library family.



Doug Fraser (second from left) and Chrysler negotiating team discussing strategy with UAW president, Walter Reuther (right), 1958

Fraser and longtime friend and colleague, UAW vice-president and GM director, Irving Bluestone, at a demonstration outside GM headquarters during 1979 contract talks



From the Director ...

It has been several years since the last issue of the Reuther Library newsletter appeared. During that time, much has been accomplished—so much, in fact, that space permits only a brief mention of some major initiatives.

Certainly, joining the technological revolution in information services ranked high on our list of priorities. The first step in our automation effort was to ensure access of the entire staff to computers, and to link those computers to each other and to the incredible resources of the Internet. As part of our continuing effort to incorporate computers into the everyday work of serving our patrons, we spent a year creating an automated shelf list of our holdings and recently installed a computerized log to track reference requests.

We have also made substantial progress in cataloging our manuscript collections, oral histories, books, and serials for retrieval via the national on-line catalogs, making remote access possible. And a three-year project to reduce the backlog of unprocessed collections dramatically increased the amount of textual and audiovisual material available to researchers.

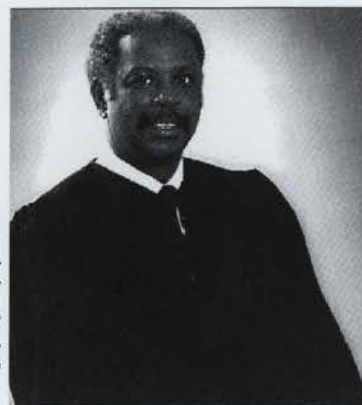
Recognizing that conserving the past is labor intensive, we have sought and received the invaluable help of the Service Employees International Union and the American Federation of Teachers in providing professional archivists to care for their collections. Finally, we have continued to enrich the holdings of the archives. Perhaps the most notable recent acquisition is the Detroit News photographic negative collection, consisting of several hundred thousand images of Detroit over the last century.

Our expanded outreach effort includes this newsletter and the Reuther Library Web site, profiled on the front page. We are also undertaking a series of major exhibitions, both in the Reuther Library Gallery and at other sites. This summer, we installed a permanent exhibition on UAW presidents from Reuther to Yokich at the union's Family Education Center in northern Michigan. In November, an exhibit celebrating the life and career of former UAW President Douglas Fraser opens in our gallery to coincide with the start of the campaign to raise funds for the Fraser Center for Workplace Issues at Wayne State University.

We have just completed development of a strategic plan that will guide us into the next century. Our accomplishments over the past five years—in automating archives operations, in improving research access to our collections, in promoting the Reuther Library's holdings and programs among old friends and new constituencies—should provide firm ground for future successes.

Les Hough

Photograph by Tony Spina



Judge Damon Keith

Damon J. Keith Law Collection Established

The seeds of the Damon J. Keith Law Collection were planted at a November, 1993 reception announcing the start of a national campaign to raise funds to support the collection and its programs. Supporters used the occasion to articulate Wayne State University Emeritus Professor of Law, Edward J. Littlejohn's dream of a central repository documenting the substantial historical accomplishments of African-American lawyers, judges, and other individuals and organizations prominent in the legal struggle for racial justice. With the search for a project director currently under way, that dream edges closer to reality.

Professor Littlejohn began collecting source material on African-American legal history while researching an article (later expanded to a book) on Michigan's black lawyers and judges. Those documents, oral histories, photographs, and memorabilia, as well as the papers of project namesake, Judge Damon J. Keith, will form the nucleus of the collection.

During a thirty-year career on the U. S. District and Appeals Courts, Judge Keith, a legendary figure in the struggle for racial equality, has delivered landmark decisions on busing, housing discrimination,

government wiretapping, and affirmative action.

The project, jointly sponsored by the Law School, CULMA, and the Reuther Library, encompasses not only the establishment of a national archive of African-American legal history, but also the preparation of instructional materials and exhibits for educational outreach, an oral history component, a visiting lectureship, and a research grant program.

To learn more about the Collection and Judge Keith, visit the Damon J. Keith Law Collection Web site at www.reuther.wayne.edu/damonkeith.html.

The
Nation
That Works

The Reuther Library, in partnership with the Detroit Public Library and the Detroit Historical Museum, hosted a series of six public "conversations on American pluralism and identity" this past winter, designed to explore how our attitudes about work both define and are shaped by the diversity that characterizes American society. Part of "The Nation That Works" project organized by the American Library Association and funded by a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities, the programs used text, film, music, poetry, and oral history focused on the themes of gender, immigration/migration, race/ethnicity, and age to promote a discussion of the central role of work in our national culture. Detroit was also fortunate to be chosen as the site to celebrate the kickoff of "The Nation That Works," featuring NEH chair, Sheldon Hackney, leading the first "conversation."

Spotlight on Research

I first came to the Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs a decade ago, when I began work on my doctoral dissertation. Like many labor historians, I suspect, I thought of the archives as a wonderful source for writing the institutional history of the modern labor movement. Over the last few years, though, I have realized that the Archives is much more than that. Tucked away in its collections, scholars can find extraordinary data on the social history of the mid-twentieth century working class.

I was hardly the first person to realize this. Take just two examples. Pamela Sugiman's fine book on women in Canadian automobile factories draws heavily on union records to reconstruct workers' everyday experiences. And Tom Sgrue's scintillating study of post-World War II Detroit uses the records of community organizations to create a dramatic portrait of the city's neighborhoods as they underwent racial change.

My path into the Archives' social history holdings followed a slightly different route than those of Sugiman and Sgrue. I began researching the highest levels of American politics in the 1950s and 1960s, trying to place the United Automobile Workers (UAW) within the postwar liberal community. That research led me to explore the racial dynamics within the UAW. To that end, I turned to the UAW Fair Practices Department Collection, some fifty boxes of material detailing UAW racial practices during the period. There I found traces of a postwar civil rights movement that has remained largely hidden from history. I found stories of African-American auto workers, north and south, risking their livelihoods and at times their



Kevin Boyle, Associate Professor of History, University of Massachusetts at Amherst, working in the Reuther Library Reading Room

lives to challenge racial discrimination. I found stories of white auto workers clinging to shop floor traditions that subordinated black workers. And I found documents describing the borderlands where white and black auto workers came together, to share a smoke, to tell a joke, to test the racial rules.

The traces of this hidden history needed to be expanded. So I pushed outward from the UAW Fair Practices Department Collection. I followed the trail into the collections of UAW locals, where extensive grievance records offer details of auto workers' concerns and complaints. I turned to the massive, and under-utilized, collections of the UAW regional offices. And I dug into the collection of the UAW Research Department, whose staffers pursued study after study of the union rank and file. In those collections I found more hints of postwar race relations on the factory floor. Put together, those hints began to tell more fully the history I was pursuing.

Though the documents have started to pile up, I still have a long way to go before I can begin to understand the tangled history of race relations among blue collar Americans. But I have no doubt that there is much more information squirreled away in the Archives' collections, information that will open up the secret places—the factory stairwells, the lunch wagons, the neighborhood bars—of the postwar working class.

Kevin Boyle

SEMCOG, Newspaper Guild Records Management Projects Under Way

The Reuther Library, which houses the voluminous record of twentieth-century industrial unionism and urban growth, increasingly uses records management as an essential part of the process of appraising records for permanent preservation. At the same time, our large organizational donors benefit from the cost savings and improved efficiency that professional records management can deliver.

The Southeast Michigan Council of Governments [SEMCOG] has been depositing its inactive historically valuable records in the Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs since 1980. Formed in 1968 as a voluntary association of governments to coordinate planning programs in the heavily populated industrial counties of southeastern Michigan, SEMCOG surveys economic and industrial development, demographic trends, land and water use patterns, and the delivery of health care, public safety, and educational services to the region's residents, collecting the kind of data prized by social science researchers.

(continued next page)

Project team members, Paula Montgomery (seated) and Greta Krapac, reviewing the SEMCOG records inventory





Members of SEIU Local 399, Los Angeles Hospital and Service Employees Union, picket hospital site, 1960s

SEMCOG, continued

Last January SEMCOG contracted with the Reuther Library to manage a one-year pilot project to survey all department records, develop a disaster plan, and establish a comprehensive records management program for the organization. The project team spent two months inventorying records on site at SEMCOG headquarters in Detroit and feeding that information into an electronic database specially created for the project.

The team then met with SEMCOG professional and support staff to discuss ways to improve inadequate filing systems and to determine the legal, administrative, or research value of different types of records as the preliminary step in preparing retention and disposal schedules for each office and department. The discussions also addressed issues related to implementation of a disaster preparedness and recovery plan to be designed by the Reuther Library in collaboration with SEMCOG.

The pilot project will terminate in November with staff training sessions, but both organizations are committed to the maintenance of the records management program put in place during the past year. Over the summer, Reuther Library staff also offered its records management expertise to the national offices of The Newspaper Guild, another of our donors.

Organizing Service Employees

The historical record of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) is a relatively new addition to the Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs and further strengthens our important non-industrial union holdings. One of the largest and fastest growing unions in the United States, SEIU owes its success principally to hard-hitting and innovative organizing strategies developed in the post-World War II era.

From its earliest days, the union's membership has been characterized by extraordinary occupational diversity that cuts across ethnic, racial, and gender lines. By the postwar era, the union was organizing over a hundred different occupations, including janitors, window washers, elevator operators, bowling alley pinsetters, stadium employees, and non-professional health care workers from both the public and private sectors. Organizing such a diverse work force presented many difficulties, but SEIU met the challenge, while contending with all the usual impediments to organizing campaigns—anti-union employers, political opposition, apathetic and intimidated workers, and competition from other unions.

In the 1950s and '60s, under the leadership of William McFetridge and David Sullivan, SEIU saw many of its members lose their jobs to automation. The international reacted with an aggressive campaign on the local level to organize health care and other underrepresented service workers. During the same period, SEIU and other unions lobbied successfully for the enactment of federal laws permitting public employees to bargain collectively, thus creating a large pool of potential

new members.

The SEIU Microfilm Collection (1921-1955), which contains the earliest records of the union, and the executive office files for the McFetridge (1940-1960) and Sullivan (1960-1971) administrations, especially the activity reports of organizers and local union records, provide fertile ground for documenting the effectiveness of SEIU organizing campaigns. Additionally, SEIU serial publications (1941-) and Research Department records (1942-1979) are rich sources of information on organizing, membership growth, and related topics. Indeed, given the centrality of this subject to most union activities, relevant material may be found throughout SEIU collections.

As the fastest growing segment of the work force, service employees merit the same scholarly attention their more "glamorous" counterparts in the industrial sector have historically enjoyed. And the Archives anticipates increasing usage of SEIU collections as researchers become aware of the wide range of topics they cover and their salience, given the unusual diversity of the union's membership, for the "new" working class history.



Organizing Boston public employees, 1958

Library Acquires IWW Founder's Autobiography

The Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs recently acquired the unpublished autobiography of William E. Trautmann. Born in New Zealand of German-American parents in 1869, Trautmann emigrated to the United States from Germany in the late 1890s, eventually settling in Ohio, where he worked for the Brewery Workers Union (BWU) and served as a national committeeman to the Socialist Party.

His association with the BWU ended, however, over his involvement with the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), a radical group of unionists known popularly as the Wobblies, which he helped found in 1905 and which he served as secretary-treasurer and general executive board member. Elected a general organizer after Vincent St. John replaced him as secretary-treasurer in 1908, Trautmann led the Pressed Steel Car Company strike at McKees Rocks, Pennsylvania in 1909 and helped direct the famous Lawrence, Massachusetts textile strike in 1912.

The William E. Trautmann Collection consists of one volume of a projected three-volume autobiography. The manuscript traces the history of the IWW from 1905 to 1920, a tumultuous period in the development of the American labor movement. It captures the factional infighting that permeated the IWW while portraying the personal experiences of an important figure in one of the most dynamic and colorful unions that movement has produced.



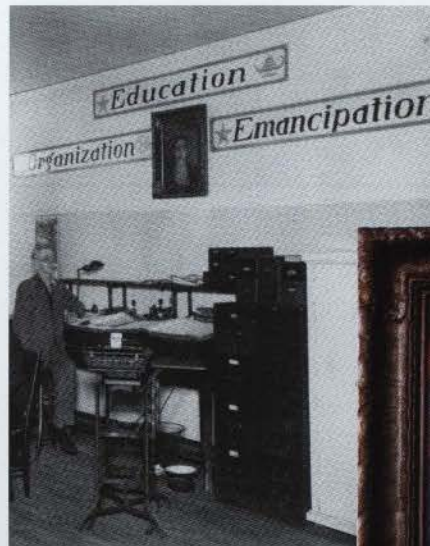
William Trautmann

To learn more about the history of the IWW and the Archives' IWW-related holdings, see *In the Shadow of the I.W.W.* on the Reuther Library Web site.

Treasures from the IWW Collections



Big Bill Haywood bought this addressograph platemaker in 1913. At 400 pounds, it was the only piece of furniture in the Chicago headquarters office to escape destruction during the Palmer Raids.



This portrait of Joe Hill under the union's motto watched over workers in the Chicago office. The artist copied his likeness from one of the few photographs of the labor martyr, his mug shot.



One of several hand-drawn postcards Joe Hill, an accomplished cartoonist, sent to his seaman friend, Charles Rudberg





Workers renovating the clock tower, 1996

WSU's Old Main Restored and Remembered

In April of this year, a 100-year-old, completely renovated Old Main was unveiled during a week of special events, drawing hundreds of alumni back to the Wayne State University campus. The Reuther Library, home of the University Archives, figured prominently in the activities leading up to the centennial celebration, documenting the restoration's progress over the past three years, hosting the ceremonial opening of the time capsule taken from the original cornerstone, and exhibiting the architectural and social history of the building with photographs and memorabilia from the Archives' collections.

Dedicated in 1897 as Detroit Central High School, Old Main, the largest classroom building on campus, had gone through

several renovations and identity changes before the massive \$45.8 million effort that culminated in last spring's rededication. In 1917 Central High School began sharing its facilities with Detroit Junior College, the brainchild of Central's dedicated and innovative principal, David Mackenzie, and the forerunner of WSU's College of Liberal Arts. By 1926 the renamed College of the City of Detroit had taken sole possession of the imposing Romanesque revival structure at the corner of Cass and Warren.

WSU achieved university status in 1933, when CCD combined with the Teachers College, Medicine, Pharmacy and Law to form the Colleges of the City of Detroit, an unpopular name, changed within a matter of months to Wayne University, after Mad Anthony Wayne, the Revolutionary War general. The new university soon outgrew its lodgings, several departments spilling over into neighboring houses, but it wasn't until 1948 that WSU got another bona fide classroom building, State Hall. The campus continued to add buildings during the postwar years as returning veterans swelled the student ranks. To prevent confusion, what had been called the Main Building was formally renamed Old Main in 1950.

The new Old Main — both the refurbished old building and a newly-constructed wing — has become the home of the Colleges of Science and Fine, Performing and Communication Arts. It now houses an art gallery, recital hall, music practice rooms, art and dance studios, a planetarium, anthropology museum, general and specialty classrooms, and administrative offices. To probe deeper into the mysteries of Old Main past and present, visit the Reuther Library Web site at www.reuther.wayne.edu.



Old Main, 1933

UAW IEB Memories Preserved

The Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs began interviewing International Executive Board members several years ago as part of an ongoing project to collect and preserve the memories of this important part of the UAW leadership. To date, twelve interviews have been conducted, including those with former presidents, Leonard Woodcock, Douglas Fraser and Owen Bieber, vice-presidents, Irving Bluestone, Olga Madar and Ken Morris, and regional directors, George Burt and Joe Tomasi.

Oakland University Professor of History and UAW chronicler, Jack Barnard, recently videotaped interviews with Owen Bieber and Ken Morris in the television studios of Wayne State University. The videotape format, popular with documentary filmmakers using the Archives' collections, is rapidly becoming the preferred medium among oral history practitioners. When transcribed and bound, the UAW IEB oral histories will join Jack Skeels's interviews with UAW pioneers, Richard Feldman's with a later generation of UAW members, and scores of others in the Reuther Library's substantial collection of oral history sources on workers and the labor movement.

Biology classroom, 1935



Calendar

1997

1998

OCTOBER

- 9 "Tony Spina, Chief Photographer"
Exhibit opening
Hankins Gallery/
Elbinger Imaging
Lansing, Michigan
[through November 28]
- 23-25 North American Labor History Conference
McGregor Memorial Conference Center,
Wayne State University

NOVEMBER

- 8 Workers' Education Local 189 75th Anniversary meeting
Reuther Library
- 12 Fraser Center for Workplace Issues dinner celebration
Hyatt Regency Hotel
Dearborn, Michigan
- Doug Fraser Exhibit opening and reception
Reuther Library

APRIL

- 17-18 Michigan Conference on Local History
McGregor Memorial Conference Center,
Wayne State University
- 28 Rededication of Jewish Community Archives as Leonard N. Simons Jewish Community Archives
Wayne State University

MAY

- 21 Manuscript Society Annual Meeting visit
Reuther Library

SEPTEMBER

- United Farm Workers Exhibit opening and reception
Reuther Library

GENERAL INFORMATION

Reading Room hours:

Monday-Tuesday
11:00 a.m. -6:45 p.m.

Wednesday-Friday
9:00 a.m.-4:45 p.m.

Business hours:

Monday-Friday
8:30 a.m.-5:00 p.m.

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The Reuther Library newsletter is published each fall to inform those interested in the Library's work about collections, exhibits, and special projects. It is written by members of the library staff and the editor, Margaret Raucher, and designed by Sandy Kimberley with the assistance of Tom Featherstone.



Wayne State University

Walter P. Reuther Library
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