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Communist delegates explore Chicago's labor history



By Blake Deppe

Some of the 300 delegates and guests of the Communist Party USA's 30th Convention kicked off their party's gathering here this weekend with a labor history tour of the Windy City.

They said the tour was an appropriate way of starting deliberations because Chicago is the place where May Day began, where the Communist Party was first founded, and it was the launching point for a nationwide strike for the eight hour day. The first stop on the tour was the exact place where the battle for that day came to a dramatic turning point - Haymarket Square, specifically, the memorial dedicated to the Haymarket martyrs.

Tour host Tim Yeager, a United Auto Workers union organizer and Episcopal priest at St. Andrew's parish, explained that the Federation of Organized Trades and Labor Unions (predecessor of the American Federation of Labor) called on May 1, 1886 for a nationwide movement for the eight-hour work day. "Eight hours for work, eight hours for rest, eight hours for what we will," went the slogan, according to Yeager. The rally that kicked off the movement went on to influence the history of labor worldwide, he said. "It started with German immigrant August Spies and his best friend Albert Parsons.

"On that day," said Yeager, "80,000 workers marched arm-in-arm down Chicago's Michigan Avenue, led by Albert and August. This was the first national flexing of power by people in the U.S. labor movement. The following day, Albert went to Ohio to organize rallies there while his wife Lucy organized a peaceful second march in Chicago of 35,000 workers."

The scene turned violent the following day, when Chicago police attacked and killed picket-

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ing workers at the McCormick plant at Western and Blue Island Avenues. The attack provoked a protest meeting at Haymarket Square on May 4. "Some 2,500 people showed up," he said. "The meeting was delayed somewhat, as Lucy Parsons had organized a separate meeting of sewing work-

Chicago was the launching point for a nationwide strike for the eight hour day.

ers in Geneva, Illinois. The last-minute speakers to arrive were Albert Parsons and English-born Samuel Fielden. The meeting was almost over when they were confronted by 176 policemen carrying Winchester repeater rifles.

“Suddenly, someone threw a bomb. The police panicked and shot at their own men in the ensuing confusion.” The next day, the Chicago incident was used as an excuse to crush local union movements. Chicago labor leaders were rounded up and arrested, houses were searched without warrants and progressive newspapers were shut down. But there was no attempt made to find the actual bomber. Eventually eight men, the Haymarket martyrs, were selected to be tried. Among them were Fielden and Parsons.

Labor historians note that during the trial, the jury was totally biased. Seven of the leaders were sentenced to die, and the other, Oscar Neebe, was sentenced to 15 years in prison.”

What came to be called the Haymarket Affair, or perhaps more appropriately, the Haymarket

Massacre, of course took on an international dimension in July 1889 when a delegate from the American Federation of Labor recommended at a labor conference in Paris that May 1 be set aside as International Labor Day, or “May Day,” in memory of the martyrs and the injustice they faced. As the history lesson continued, our tour next took a turn west, just outside of Chicago, to a cemetery in Forest Park lush with greenery and nature. In the peaceful and quiet surrounding tour goers browsed and explored the graves of people including the “Rebel Girl” Elizabeth Gurley Flynn and Emma Goldman. But the most important site in the cemetery was the centerpiece of the labor history embedded there: the Haymarket Martyrs’ Monument, which depicts a woman standing over the body of a fallen worker and marching onward to continue the fight. It was declared a national historic landmark in 1997.



Blake Deppe writes for Peoplesworld.org.

Labor movement – key link in chain of progress

By PW Editorial

We believe today is both more necessary and possible to be involved in the labor movement.

Necessary because the labor movement - while the country’s biggest, strongest, best organized progressive force - is far too small for the challenges confronting our nation’s working class and people.

Possible because - unlike the dogged anti-communism of yesteryears conditioned by the Cold War and McCarthyism - experience of recent years has shown today the doors are open for honest fighters with positive energy and progressive ideas. The AFL-CIO convention projected an agenda and a vision aimed to transform the labor movement, its partners and allies into a formidable 21st century people’s force for economic justice and democracy. Participating were delegations of the overwhelming majority of our country’s unions as well as representatives of progressive community-based groups and the nation’s main social With candor, leaders and rank and

filers recognized as AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka put it, “We have to change the way we’re doing business in a significant way to get out of the crisis we find ourselves in,” adding, “But, this crisis also offers us ample and tremendous opportunity.”

Perhaps the word “crisis” is too strong but otherwise this could be said about progressive people’s organizations generally. We must move to assist labor’s transformation with laser beam focus. That means working in and with the labor movement to fulfill the AFL-CIO convention’s ambitious but necessary agenda and vision. It means winning progressive social movements’ more fully to labor’s cause.

It means winning the left to this goal.

A much larger, stronger, more united labor movement around a progressive agenda and vision, rooted in the workplaces and communities, intricately intertwined with the nation’s core social movements is what the AFL-CIO convention set out to accomplish. Let’s help.

We must assist labor’s transformation with laser beam focus.

San Franciscans to vote on \$15 city minimum wage

By Mark Gruenberg

Following a June 10 agreement by unions, community groups, businesses and local political leaders, San Franciscans will vote this November on whether to gradually increase the city-wide minimum wage to \$15 an hour.

If they approve it, the California city will join its own suburb of Richmond, Calif., plus Seattle and Sea-Tac, Wash., as current municipalities with the \$15 minimum. San Francisco will reach that figure in 2018, more quickly than Seattle will, the agreement shows.

The San Francisco agreement and vote is part of a nationwide movement to raise the minimum wage without waiting for dysfunctional lawmakers in D.C. to do so for the whole U.S. The federal minimum, \$7.25 an hour, hasn't risen since the GOP Bush administration.

President Obama, congressional Democrats, organized labor, community groups and religious organizations have all campaigned for a hike to \$10.10 by 2016. The GOP U.S. House majority and GOP Senate filibusters beat those efforts, so far.

The San Francisco agreement came the same day Obama's Labor Department proposed regulations to impose a \$10.10 minimum for employees of future federal contractors (see separate story). Both hikes would help tens of thousands of low-wage workers, especially in the fast-food industry.

"The San Francisco Labor Council is proud to be part of an historic agreement reached yesterday with the Mayor and the San Francisco Board of Supervisors that puts a consensus minimum wage measure on the November ballot that gets all workers to \$15 with the cleanest non-exemption path in the United States," the council said in a statement.

"It wasn't easy," San Francisco Labor Council Executive Director Tim Hudson said of the \$15



minimum wage referendum pact. "The organizing was difficult, the negotiating intense, but the coalition was unique, historic and dedicated - labor and community partners fighting to increase the power of San Francisco workers.

"This was more than just an agreement to get \$15 on the ballot, but also changed the culture of how labor unions and community organizations can fight together for equity, fair wages, and a voice at work. And yesterday didn't end with only the minimum wage deal. There is more," he added, without being specific. San Franciscans rallied June 14 to support the increase.

Unlike Seattle's \$15 minimum, there will be no different time lines in San Francisco depending on a business' size, he added. Business agreed to that. "All workers will be covered equally," Hudson said.

"Our coalition will also advocate for full enforcement. We are proud that San Francisco is the first city to have an Office of Labor Standards Enforcement to monitor and enforce our worker laws and we will continue to fight for resources to empower this valuable department."

San Francisco's minimum wage is now \$10.74 an hour and California's is scheduled to rise in July, to just below that figure.

The San Francisco agreement and vote is part of a nationwide movement.

Union leaders arrested at Moral Monday protest

Special to Peoplesworld.org

Some 20 leaders of labor unions and allied organizations were arrested in Raleigh on Monday while protesting right wing policies passed by the North Carolina state legislature that have targeted the state's poorest and most vulnerable citizens.

More than 800 activists converged at the N.C. State Capitol Monday afternoon as part of the ongoing series of demonstrations known as Moral Monday.

AFGE National President J. David Cox Sr. was among those arrested after refusing to leave the Capitol building shortly after the State Senate went into session.

A native of North Carolina, Cox participated in the Monday protest to show solidarity for the plight of working men and women in the state who have been harmed by laws recently enacted by the legislature.

"Many of these lawmakers have lost touch with the average citizen. Their laws are denying benefits to unemployed workers, denying health care coverage to low-income workers, and pushing out experienced teachers by suppressing their wages," Cox said. "These policies are wrong for North Carolina and they are wrong for America."

Inside the Capitol rotunda, Cox locked arms with fellow protesters and chanted the familiar call and response, "Tell me what democracy looks like. This is what democracy looks like." The protesters were arrested after supposedly getting complaints about the noise.

Suecia devolvió a Perú tejidos de hace 2 mil años

Por Telesur

El gobierno peruano recibió cuatro tejidos hechos con espinas de cactus, una técnica de los Paracas para realizar bordados completamente reversibles, así como tintes vegetales y animales. Estos artesanos pintaban con alrededor de 190 matices naturales sus textiles.

Cuatro mantos con más de 2 mil años de antigüedad que reafirman la existencia y cultura de los artesanos Paracas, recibió Perú de parte de Suecia, informó el gobierno este lunes.

Estas cuatro piezas pertenecen a un lote de 89 tejidos que estaban en Suecia desde los años 30 y que fueron devueltas al despacho de cultura del país andino, tras un acuerdo entre Cancillerías la semana pasada, financiada por el gobierno sueco.

La ministra peruana de Cultura, Diana Álvarez Calderón, explicó que se trata "del manto calendario, que es muy singular porque cada una de las figuras es distinta que la otra y el trabajo que se ha realizado es complejo".

Esta tejido en forma rectangular con 32 figuras zoomorfas, de personajes alados, aves, ranas, camarones y peces totalmente bordados en relieve, de ambos lados, y en colores rosado, rojo, negro, verde, ocre, azul y morado. La pieza fue construida con espinas de cactus. También una esclavina o poncho pequeño con diseños de aves, tiene figuras de aves y un fragmento dañado de un tejido usado para cubrir la cabeza.

La jefa del área de textiles del Museo Nacional de Arqueología, Antropología e Historia del Perú, Carmen Thais, afirmó que estos tejidos fueron elaborados en un periodo entre los 50 años antes de nuestra era hasta el siglo primero, es decir entre 1925 y 1929. "Este material ha sido probablemente saqueado antes del trabajo del arqueólogo Julio C. Tello en el cementerio Arena Blanca o parte del cementerio Wari Kayan en la península de Paracas, donde encontró 451 fardos Paracas", dijo Thais.

Trabajar con espinas de cactus es una técnica de los Paracas para realizar bordados que, en este caso, resultaban en un tipo de acabado magistral y completamente reversible. Estos artesanos utilizaron tintes vegetales y animales para obtener alrededor de 190 matices en sus textiles.

Paracas fue una importante civilización precolombina del Antiguo Perú, del periodo denominado Formativo Superior u Horizonte Temprano, que se desarrolló en la península de Paracas, provincia de Pisco, región Ica, entre los años 700 a. C. y 200 d. C.

Los paracas practicaban una textilera de alta calidad, en lana y algodón, así como una cerámica decorada y una cestería muy elaborada. La cultura paracas es la antecesora de la cultura nazca con la que tiene una evidente afinidad cultural; de hecho, para muchos especialistas, la fase final de Paracas es en realidad la fase inicial de la cultura nazca.

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