



Looking Back Moving Forward

SUMMER 2004

A NEWSLETTER OF THE MICHIGAN LABOR HISTORY SOCIETY

MOBILIZING FOR LABOR'S DAYS

Annual Luncheon Set for August 24

Hundreds of labor activists, retirees, and rank-and-file union members are expected to fill Cobo Hall's Riverside Ballroom Tuesday, August 24, in a demonstration of labor solidarity as the Michigan Labor History Society holds its annual Labor Mobilization Luncheon.

The event will herald a week of labor activities in the metro area, starting with a Labor Day Parade on Monday, September 6, and ending with Laborfest on Sunday, September 12. During that week, unions and other groups are planning several other labor-oriented events.

William Serrin Keynote Speaker

Keynote speaker at the luncheon will be William Serrin, a native of Saginaw and a keen observer of labor who worked as a journalist in both Detroit and New York for many years. He is now an associate professor of journalism at New York University. Serrin will talk about Detroit's rich labor heritage and look at the challenges labor faces today. It's those challenges that organizers of the Labor Day Parade and Laborfest hope will bring tens of thousands of workers out for September's events.

Also on the program will be a group of Detroit-area high-school students who recently visited Mexican *maquiladora* workers as part of a year-long program on social-justice issues.

Serrin was a reporter and editor for the *Detroit Free Press* in the 1960s and 1970s, and in the 1980s was the labor correspondent for the *New York Times*. A member of The Newspaper Guild at both papers, he shared the Pulitzer Prize as part of the *Free Press* team that covered the 1967 Detroit civil disturbances.

In 1984, the *New York Times* nominated him for a Pulitzer for his coverage of American industrial decline. His alma mater, Central Michigan University, gave Serrin its

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©Shawn D. Ellis

Lynn Marie Smith (HERE Local 24) and Mitch McMurren as Rosie and Allen Johnson in a scene from *Forgotten* depicting the 1937 Battle of the Overpass.

Sold-Out Audiences Enjoy 'Forgotten'

More than 1,200 Detroiters packed Marygrove College Theatre for three sold-out performances of *Forgotten: The Murder at the Ford Rouge Plant* March 5-7.

The world premiere of the jazz opera, loosely based on the life of The Rev. Lewis Bradford and the struggles of Detroit workers in the 1930s, drew standing ovations and rave reviews from audience members, and was widely featured in both local and national media. (See review, page 4).

Sponsored by the Michigan Labor History Society in cooperation with

the Matrix Theatre Co., *Forgotten* includes 29 songs in jazz, blues, and pop idioms composed by Steve Jones, a Maryland musician. Elise Bryant, a native Detroiter and daughter of a UAW-Ford worker, directed the production here. Jazz artist Bill Meyer was music director.

Jones researched the life of Lewis Bradford whose wife, Ella, was married to Jones' grandfather, after having heard for years family stories about Bradford.

The Detroit production included
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Labor's Days

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Centennial Award in 1993.

Serrin is the author of *Homestead: The Glory and Tragedy of an American Steel Town*, a study of what happened to people and the town of Homestead, Pennsylvania, when their steel mill, once the greatest in the nation, was closed by its owner, US Steel.

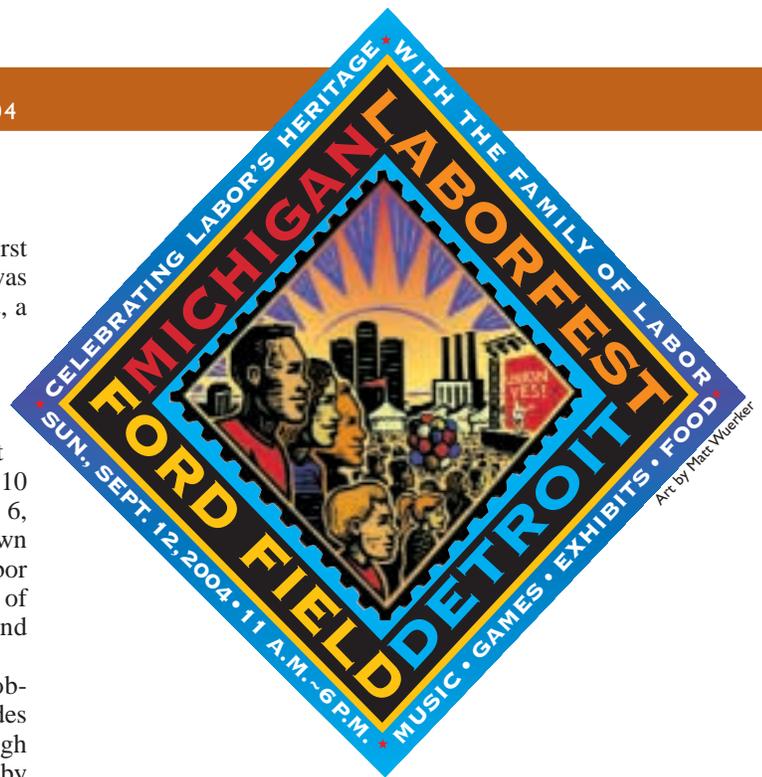
He also edited, with his wife, Judith Serrin, *Muckraking! The Journalism That Changed America*, a collection of journalism pieces throughout U.S. history, and edited *The Business of Journalism*, a collection of essays on how business dominates

American journalism. His first book, published in 1973, was *The Company and the Union*, a study of GM and the UAW.

Labor Day Parade

This year's Labor Day Parade will get underway at Michigan and Trumbull at 10 a.m. on Monday, September 6, and march through downtown Detroit for a rally at the Labor Legacy Landmark in front of Hart Plaza at Jefferson and Woodward.

Detroit workers have observed Labor Day with parades since at least 1885, although there were earlier parades by groups of workers, including one by journeymen carpenters



**“‘Each for himself’ is the bosses’ plea.
A union of all will make you free.”**

“Divided we can beg. United we can demand.”

– Early Detroit Labor Day Parade slogans

‘Transcending’ to be Featured at Labor History Conference

The Michigan Labor History Society will present a panel discussion, “‘Transcending’: Honoring Workers with Public Art,” at the 26th annual North American Labor History Conference from 9 a.m.-11 a.m. on Saturday, Oct. 23.

Panelists will include the artists who designed and built the Labor Legacy Landmark in downtown Detroit as well as officers and coordinators of the project, and Marilyn Wheaton who, as director of the Detroit Department of Cultural Affairs while the project was being planned, gave strong support to the effort.

On Friday afternoon, October 22, MLHS will take conference participants on a bus tour to the Landmark, where they will have a chance to tour the site.

“Class, Work, and Revolution” is the theme of this year’s conference, which runs from October 21 through the 23rd at Wayne State University’s McGregor Conference Center.

For registration information, contact Conference coordinator Janine Lanza at 313-577-6094 or via e-mail at JMLanza@wayne.edu.



Sculptors David Barr and Sergio De Giusti, designers and builders of the Labor Legacy Landmark.

as early as 1837, according to the book *Working Detroit*. The traditional parade, which was discontinued for part of the 1970s, resumed in its present form in 1982 and has drawn as many as 50,000 marchers in recent years. For many years, labor-backed Presidential candidates kicked off their campaign at Detroit’s celebrations.

Information on the parade will be available at www.DetroitAFLCIO.org.

Laborfest

Detroit’s eighth annual Laborfest is expected to draw tens of thousands to Ford Field on Sunday, September 12, for exhibits, entertainment, and speakers celebrating labor’s contributions to the community.

Laborfest is Detroit’s newest labor tradition. Started in 1997,

it has outgrown its smaller outdoor venues and, for the second year in a row, will fill the course at Detroit’s football stadium with hands-on exhibits from unions, labor-friendly organizations, and companies with union contracts. Among the most popular exhibits are the new vehicles produced by UAW members at the Big 3 auto companies. Special activities are planned for families and children, and food and beverages will be available.

The Michigan Labor History Society plans to set up a display of historical photos and will have members on hand to provide information on this area’s rich labor heritage.

Information and registration forms for exhibits, floats, and bands will be available at www.LaborfestDetroit.org.

TICKETS AVAILABLE NOW

Don’t miss out on the Michigan Labor History Society’s Labor Mobilization Luncheon. Tickets are available from the Michigan Labor History Society at 313-577-4003, or from the Metro Detroit AFL-CIO, 313-961-0800, UAW Region I, 586-427-9200, or UAW Region IA, 313-291-2750. An order coupon is on the back page.



Walter P. Reuther Library/Wayne State University

'Make Detroit a Union Town:' One of the images to be included in the Motor City Century, an auditorium show now under development at the Detroit Historical Museum.

COMING SOON:

'The Motor City Century: A DETROIT AUTO HERITAGE TOUR'

Work is underway on *The Motor City Century: A Detroit Auto Heritage Tour*, a project by Detroit Labor History Tours (DLHT) for the Detroit Historical Museum. This computer Power Point presentation, which will be available for screening early in 2005, focuses on historic landmarks that shaped Detroit's first auto century.

Its "focus on individual landmarks provides a fresh and exciting perspective for highlighting Detroit's auto heritage," says Detroit Historical Museum Director Dr. Dennis Zembala. "We believe that this is also a wonderful opportunity to strengthen the manner in which the UAW and labor history are highlighted in Museum programs and exhibits."

"Detroit Labor History Tours has conducted tours for thousands of auto buffs, union activists, students, and tourists over the years," says Project Coordinator Ron Alpern. "But time constraints and geogra-

phy often cut tours short — only allowing for part of the story to be told. This program's computer technology will allow for video, historic photos, and graphics to help recount the saga of each landmark."

The tour will track the craft roots of the auto industry in Detroit at the Detroit Shipbuilding Docks and the Detroit riverfront, and will document the emergence of mass production at the Cadillac Amsterdam plant as well as Ford's Piquette, Highland Park, and River Rouge plants. It will also chronicle the emergence of the UAW by focusing on sites like Kelsey-Hayes, Federal Screw, and the Rouge. Other landmarks to be featured include Dodge Main, original General Motors World Headquarters, and GM's Hamtramck plant.

This initiative draws upon earlier DLHT efforts including Steve Babson's book *Working Detroit* and the Rivera's Labor Legacy — *The Detroit Murals* public tele-

vision special. This project relies on a recent DLHT research effort undertaken in cooperation with the Walter P. Reuther Library at Wayne State University's College of Labor and Urban Affairs and with the financial support of the UAW International Union, the UAW-Ford National Programs Center, and the UAW-Daimler Chrysler National Training Center.

TO LEARN MORE ...

Additional information about the Detroit Auto Heritage Tour, DLHT guided tours or other projects is available from Henry Amick, Detroit Historical Museum, 313-833-1419, e-mail: AmickH@hist.ci.detroit.mi.us, or Ron Alpern, Detroit Labor History Tours, 859-293-9355, e-mail: ronalp@aol.com.



Left to right, clockwise:
Henry Nelson as Harry
Bennett.

The cast of *Forgotten* in
the rousing number,
“When You Organize.”

Stephanie Pascaris and
Jason Landis as Ella and
Lewis Bradford contrast
their message with that of
Father Charles Coughlin,
played by Davis Goff.



Photos by ©Shawn D. Ellis



‘FORGOTTEN’ Delivers a Memorable Experience

BY SHAWN D. ELLIS

I found myself sitting in a dark theater and crying and laughing (mostly crying) on a cold, wet March weekend.

Okay, I’m too old for this emotional roller-coaster stuff, but realize that if you didn’t become emotional during this production, then you really missed the point. For three sold-out shows, this play, *Forgotten: The Murder at the Ford Rouge Plant*, touched many lives.

Billed as a jazz opera, the musical score had many beats including hints of Motown, pop, rhythm and blues, gospel, and jazz during its 29-song set. The play is based on the true story of a Methodist min-

ister, Lewis Bradford (played by Jason Landis), who came to Detroit during the Depression of the 1930s.

Bradford, the great uncle of the composer of *Forgotten*, Steve Jones, found himself working on the shop floor of an increasingly brutal worksite in the form of the Ford Rouge plant in Dearborn.

Struggling on many fronts

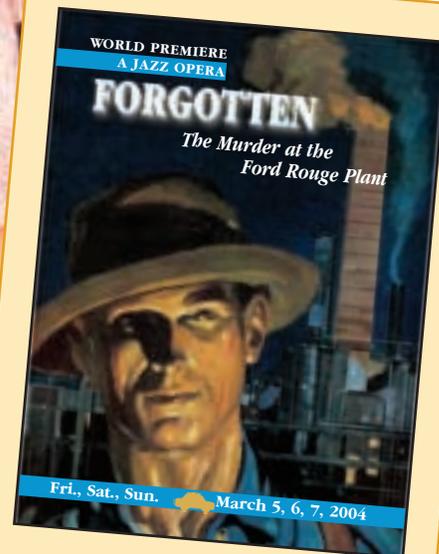
The minister struggles with the ethics and teachings of his religion. He struggles to raise a growing family that he loves and desperately tries to support both financially and emotionally. He also struggles to help fellow workers — many of whom are his friends, including Rosie Johnson (Lynn

Marie Smith) and Allen Johnson (Mitch McMurren).

A complicated man torn in many directions, Bradford was ultimately found fatally injured in the plant. After years of research by Jones during the last decade, Bradford’s death was determined to be suspicious by a local coroner official.

Bradford’s Depression-era story, and that of the tens of thousands of people who also suffered, is told in a way that will forever change my view of that decade. This was no ordinary stage production; the music, the words, and the presentation by the cast were enough to move some to tears.

Yes. *Forgotten* is tied to the labor community, and hence it may have more of an



PROGRAM, POSTER AVAILABLE

A 16-page tabloid newspaper, fashioned after a 1930s Detroit labor publication, served as the program for *Forgotten*. A limited number of copies are available at \$2 each. Full-color souvenir posters suitable for framing are also available at \$5.

To order: send payment to *Forgotten*, c/o Michigan Labor History Society, 600 W. Lafayette, Detroit MI 48226, attention: Richard Berlin.

effect on those who have a close connection to organized labor. But I dare anyone, no matter what his or her political beliefs are, to sit through a song recalling the Hunger March of 1932 and not become emotionally touched.

Impact of the Hunger March

In this song, Rosie introduces three of the marchers. First is the loving husband, who is about to participate in the march on Miller Road, being hugged by his wife and told to come home safely. Next is the proud dad listening to his son expressing outrage over a system that allows hunger to exist. Finally, it's a mother not sure what to make of all this, yet doting on her son and making sure he is warm before heading outside into the bitter, cold world.

It is hard not to be angered or moved after listening to the story of these three, and two others, as they are later murdered during a demonstration about jobs and hunger.

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Sold-out

Continued from page 1

cast, crew, and musicians from Actors Equity and the Detroit Federation of Musicians, as well as more than a dozen rank-and-file workers from the UAW, UNITE!, Service Employees, Teachers, and other unions. The stagehands and theatrical wardrobe attendants union provided major in-kind support, helping to make this a union production. The Michigan Labor History Society, the UAW-Ford National Programs Center, the Detroit Dept. of Cultural Affairs, and Health Alliance Plan provided financial underwriting.

Forgotten has since been produced in Minneapolis, and there are hopes that it will return for a Detroit run at a future date if funding is found.

'Hear Me Roar' Coming to Reuther

An exhibit on women workers, "Hear Me Roar: Women and Social Justice," will open September 24 at the Walter P. Reuther Library, 5401 Cass, Detroit.

The exhibit includes display panels and photos about issues affecting working women, and explores women's roles in the feminist, civil rights, peace, and other social movements.

Now at the Reuther is "I Am A Man," an exhibit about the 1968 Memphis Sanitation Workers Strike.

Hours are 9 a.m.-4:45 p.m., Monday-Friday.



PHASE II OF THE LABOR LANDMARK NEEDS YOUR HELP!

The Michigan Labor Legacy Landmark has already been visited by thousands and been seen by millions on nationwide TV broadcasts. There's no doubt about it – it's a major work of public art that is informing and inspiring people about the men and women who built our city.

But our work isn't finished. We want to place informational signage at the Landmark, finish all the artwork, and prepare and print educational materials for students and other visitors. All this requires us to raise \$100,000.

You can help in this important endeavor to keep labor's legacy alive for this and future generations. There is still room to put your name or the name of your union or organization on the Wall of Honor at the Legacy site.

A \$100 or higher tax-deductible contribution will engrave your name or the name of a friend or mentor on the wall.

A \$1,000 or higher contribution will provide your union or organization with a separate plaque acknowledging your contribution.

Please help by returning this contribution form today.

Photographer/artist Lloyd Schoenbach created this impressionistic view of the Labor Legacy Landmark in downtown Detroit. Phase II of the Landmark will create educational signage and literature for use by students and teachers.



Lloyd Schoenbach

To: **MICHIGAN LABOR LEGACY LANDMARK**

c/o Michigan Labor History Society • 5401 Cass, Detroit MI 48202

YES! I would like to help Phase II of the Michigan Labor Legacy Landmark by placing my name or the name of my family or friend or mentor on the wall. Enclosed is my tax-deductible contribution of _____ (\$100 minimum). The name to place on the wall is [limit: 24 characters including spaces and punctuation marks; individual or family name only, i.e. James Jones or James Jones Family]:

YES! Our organization would like to contribute \$1,000 or more to Phase II of the Labor Legacy Landmark, and understand that an appropriate plaque will be placed at the site acknowledging our contribution. Please have your representative call to make arrangements.

Name _____
No. and Street _____ City _____
State _____ ZIP _____ Telephone _____
Organization _____ E-mail _____

'Forgotten'

Continued from page 5

"Must we starve?" they ask.

I quickly understood that their sacrifice is a significant reason why organized labor exists today, and I was hit by the enormity and social impact of the song. Not only was I reminded of the economic issues of the era, but also of the extreme racism of those days.

I had fun (although with a conscious tinge of irritation) with Henry Ford (Mark Moultrup) and the song "Auto Love," while I was agitated with Harry Bennett (Henry Nelson) and his love for the use of guns in a labor dispute. And I couldn't help but think, "you go girl" when Clara Ford (D. Yarrow Halstead), threatens to relegate Henry Ford to the living-room couch if he dares to "sleep with the devil" — a reference to Bennett's plans to attack workers.

Religion also is a driving force within this extraordinary tale. It was tough to understand if Jones was giving off signals

on his own religious beliefs. Those in the Catholic community could discern the troublesome nature — even if they didn't agree with the severity delivered by the production — of the messages of Fr. Charles Coughlin (exceptionally performed by Davis Goff) on his prominent radio talk show.

Although ill for the week prior to production, Landis portrayed the lead as well as any character actor I've seen on stage. Ella Bradford, his wife, was played masterfully by Stephanie Pascaris, who held the theater in silence during an emotional scene when she sees her husband after the murder.

'We Remember You'

The musical's last number, "We Remember You," ties the evening together and had me reminiscing about family. As the cast sings and lines the aisle with lit candles, I could remember my grandmother taking the Livernois bus to work at Fisher Body while my grandfather walked home across town from Dodge

Main every night after midnight because he didn't drive.

I remembered my father who drove a truck for a rendering company, picking up fat and bones from meat coolers around the city (the effects of which gave him a pulmonary disease that killed him less than two years after retirement). And I remembered my mother who toiled as a keypunch operator and later as a school lunch mother while struggling to put meals on the table.

I think everyone will remember the characters who performed for two hours and maybe even moved them to tears. Because I found that if you don't accept the emotion that compels you to remember, then frankly you missed the point of *Forgotten*.

Now the question is when does this production return for others to experience?

Shawn D. Ellis is editor of the Metro Detroit Labor News, where this review originally appeared.

TELLING OUR STORY:

Detroit's Role in the Arsenal of Democracy

Plans are now underway to create a Veterans Memorial Park at the northwest corner of Woodward and Temple in Detroit.

Park developers want to establish a permanent memorial honoring all Michigan war veterans who have served in the Armed Forces from the Civil War to the present and to serve as an educational resource where visitors can learn historic facts about the different conflicts and the pivotal role Detroit's manufacturing industry performed to support those conflicts.

Among the envisioned educational aspects of the park will be information about the role of labor, including the UAW's efforts to convert auto plants to defense production in the early days of World War II, and its efforts to reconvert those same plants to civilian production after the war. The following information was supplied by the park's organizers:

Prior to the United States entering World War II, Michigan and particularly Detroit, were producing weapons and supplies to countries engaged in combat with Germany and Japan. Following the bombing of Pearl Harbor, President Franklin D. Roosevelt ordered auto manufacturers to stop producing cars for domestic use, and the last cars rolled off the assembly lines in early 1942. Michigan automakers converted their factories to make war products including ambulances, tanks, trucks, Jeeps, bombers, guns, engines, life preservers, and ammunition, much of it built by UAW members.

Automakers dominated war production, and hundreds of other Michigan industries converted from peacetime to wartime manufacturing to support the war effort. Automakers and their suppliers produced \$30 billion worth of military equipment from 1942 to 1945. Detroit ranked number one in the nation in war production and the Detroit metropolitan area produced 70 percent of Michigan's total output.

Along with increased production, a worker shortage ensued providing more women, African Americans, and older workers the opportunity to enter the work-



Walter P. Reuther Library/Wayne State University

World War II workers helped make Detroit the "Arsenal of Democracy."

force to support war production. In the first 18 months followed the attack on Pearl Harbor, 350,000 people came to the city of Detroit to work in defense plants, many of them becoming union members.

In addition, unions also helped with the war effort by adopting no-strike pledges, although periodic disputes over wages, production rates and other issues, resulted in strikes and lockouts.

Detroit and Michigan's accomplishments during the Arsenal of Democracy include:

- Ford Motor Company's Willow Run plant produced 8,685 B-24 bombers.
- General Motors and Chrysler converted automobile plants to produce tanks and bombs. The Chrysler Tank Plant produced 10,000 tanks.
- Flint's Buick Motor Division produced 133,000 aircraft engines.
- Ford Motor Company and Ohio's Willys-Overland Company produced over 600,000 Jeeps
- Lansing's Oldsmobile organized the Wings, the company's female war workers to build cannon and aircraft parts.
- Pontiac's Fisher Body plant assembled artillery pieces.
- Ford Motor Company's Iron Mountain facility produced wooden gliders.
- Algonac's Chris-Craft plant made 36-foot-long landing craft.
- Gibson Refrigerator plants in Iron Mountain and Greenville produced gliders and bomb-shackles.

Detroit truly was the Arsenal of Democracy. As UAW leader Walter Reuther had observed, "Like England's battles were won on the playing fields of Eton, America's were won on the assembly lines of Detroit."



LOOKING BACK MOVING FORWARD

Summer 2004

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Get Your Tickets Now!

Don't Miss the Labor Mobilization Luncheon August 24

And get a free membership in the Michigan Labor History Society!

BILL SERRIN, author, labor journalist, Pulitzer Prize winner, will speak on Labor's Heritage, Labor's Challenges.

MOBILIZE for the Labor Day Parade Monday, September 6 and for Laborfest Sunday, September 12.

TO RESERVE your luncheon seat and obtain your free new or renewal membership in the Michigan Labor History Society, fill out and mail this form today:

To: **MICHIGAN LABOR LEGACY LANDMARK**

c/o Michigan Labor History Society • 5401 Cass, Detroit MI 48202

Please reserve ___ ticket(s) to the Michigan Labor History Society Labor Mobilization Luncheon on Tuesday, August 24, at 11:30 a.m. at Cobo Hall in Detroit. Enclosed is my check for _____. (Tickets are \$40 each, and include my new ___ or renewal ___ membership in the Michigan Labor History Society)

Name _____

No. and Street _____ City _____

State _____ ZIP _____ Telephone _____

Affiliation if any _____ E-mail _____

Help Bring Labor's Story to New Generations of Workers Join the Michigan Labor History Society Today

Our goals: The real heroes of Labor are the men and women whose devotion and sacrifice made it possible to win a better life. Too often, their contribution is not recorded and is forgotten. We believe that there is a dramatic story of dedication to be told in every workplace in this state.

Our purposes: To foster interest, understanding, and research in the contributions made by working women and men of Michigan. To disseminate labor history information and to arouse public interest. To support the endeavors of professional archival institutions in Michigan.

Clip and join or renew your membership today

To: Michigan Labor History Society, Walter P. Reuther Library, 5401 Cass, Detroit MI 48202

I wish to ___join ___renew my membership in the Michigan Labor History Society. Check one:

- Individual (\$10 per year)
- Student or Retired or Unemployed (each \$4 per year)
- Union (\$25 per year)
- Institution (\$50 per year)

Name _____ Date _____

Street _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____ Phone _____

E-mail _____ Organization (if any) _____

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3 IMPORTANT DATES

AUG. 24

Labor Mobilization Luncheon
with William Serrin

SEPT. 6

Labor Day Parade

SEPT. 12

Laborfest

Details inside this issue