

Pacific Northwest Labor History Association



PNW Labor History Quarterly

Spring 2025

PNLHA Labor History Conference Offers a Lot of Hope

By Michael Honey, Emeritus University of Washington Professor and Harvard Radcliffe Fellow

<https://faculty.washington.edu/mhoney/>

I thought this was one of the PNLHA's most animated and well attended conferences over these many years, perhaps 150-200 people including from Canada and the US and all parts of the Pacific NW. The diverse and intergenerational audience had great energy and were fighting mad.

I would like to highlight among the many excellent speakers and panels (really, everyone was great) a dominant message spelled out by Washington State Labor Council President April Sims: like the people themselves, we are intersectional, intergenerational supporters and



participants in solidarity. Unity the key to resistance in our current climate, "an injury to one is an injury to all." The Oregon AFL-CIO, LERC, and Labor Studies Eugene provided great hosts for this event, and the AFL-CIO Hall and the IBEW Training Center provided wonderful facilities.

As historian Will Jones emphasized, organizing workers are the key to resisting the onrushing tide of authoritarian rule and attacks on unions, immigrants, education, and equal rights for all.

I just want to say this conference offered a lot of hope, that we are not without power and with solidarity and purpose we are ready to continue the fight. Solidarity.

All Conference Photos by Gareth Munger.



PNW Labor History Quarterly is published for PNLHA members four times a year. Contributors this quarter are: Tom Lux, Michael Honey, Ron Verzuh (Canadian correspondent), Brian Charlton, Don McIntosh
Excerpts: *The Stand*, *NW Labor Press*, *Portside*, and as noted

Honors for Recording Our Labor History

By Don McIntosh, *Northwest Labor Press*

Meeting at the NECA-IBEW Training Center in Portland for its annual conference April 26-27, Pacific Northwest Labor History Association honored Jim Strassmaier with its Lifetime Achievement Award. Strassmaier — a longtime oral history specialist at the Oregon Historical Society — worked to curate an archive of recorded interviews of prominent labor leaders and activists. It was a labor of love, so even after he retired in 2001, he kept contributing to the Oregon Labor Oral History archive for another decade. Originally recorded on cassette tape, many are now digitized and can be downloaded or listened to online.



Trump at war with Canada

Canadian workers are fighting back

By Ron Verzuh

Donald Trump has declared economic war on Canada and Canadian workers. He pompously claimed Canada should be the 51st state and slapped tariffs on steel, aluminum and other trade materials. He called April 2 “Liberation Day” and imposed 25 per cent tariffs on Canadian goods shipped to the United States. Canadian unions condemned the measures, pointing to the potentially devastating impact on manufacturing, mining, forestry, energy and agriculture.

The Canadian Labour Congress warned of a “ripple effect” that would jeopardize families and communities that rely on those industries. The CLC is developing a strategy to protect families and communities from the anticipated economic fallout. Historically its arsenal has included boycotts and national days of action like the one that occurred against wage controls in the early 1970s.

The United Steelworkers called the tariffs “unjustified” and argued they would disrupt supply chains and undermine decades of economic cooperation. The International Association of Machinists issued a joint statement from its U.S. and Canadian leaders warning the tariffs would harm workers in both countries.

In March, 500 members of the Canadian Union of Public Employees, Canada’s largest union, signed the Montreal Declaration, a response to “the existential crisis posed by Donald Trump’s

assault on Canadian workers.” The declaration states that “CUPE members and the labour movement have always risen to the occasion during challenging times...Let no one underestimate our determination to defend what must be defended.” The public sector union urged the federal government “to preserve protections for workers, industries and public services.”

Canadian auto workers, represented by Unifor, are strongly opposed to the tariffs. In the U.S., however, the United Auto Workers stood out with UAW president Shawn Fain announcing his support for Trump’s tariffs but has called for more changes. “These tariffs are not just an attack on Canada,” Teamsters Canada president Francois Laporte said. “They are an attack on all workers.” His American counterpart Sean O’Brien has supported Trump.

Trump’s 25 per cent tariffs “would cause historic job losses across the full range of export industries,” Canadian economist Jim Stanford explained. The tariffs “pose an unprecedented threat to Canada’s economic stability.” He called for a new national economic plan (<https://centreforfuturework.ca/2025/02/03/canada-needs-a-new-national-policy/>).

With Canada in the midst of a federal election campaign, all political parties focused on the Trump threats. Prime minister Mark Carney, a former Bank of Canada governor, pledged to create a new national economy that is no longer reliant on the U.S. Opposition leader Pierre Poilievre, who has often supported Trump-type initiatives, wants to renegotiate Canadian-U.S. trade agreements.

On March 7, the federal government stepped up with a clear pledge to protect Canada from Trump’s “unjustified tariffs.” The government’s statement added, “We will use every tool at our disposal so Canadian businesses and workers can weather this storm. We will defend Canadian jobs.”

For those with long memories, the new tariff dispute recalls earlier conflicts between the U.S. and Canada over trade. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the labour movement strongly opposed the free-trade deal that prime minister Brian Mulroney signed. Back then, Canadian unions fought against the trade agreement, saying it would undermine workers’ rights, gut collective agreements and begin a “race to the bottom” with lower wages and massive job losses.

Canadians and their unions again appear prepared to mount a unified fightback while American unions are more divided in their response. If the economists are right and the tariffs hurt workers on both sides of the border, all unions have an interest in practicing the international solidarity they espouse on convention floors.

For a more detailed news analysis, see <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/windsor/uaw-trump-tariffs-canada-unifor-why-1.7483459>. See also, <https://www.canada.ca/en/departement-finance/news/2025/03/fighting-for-canadian-workers-and-businesses.html>.



Best Labor Song

This Land is Your Land - Pete Seeger, Bruce Springsteen (& tens of thousands of friends) at the 2014 Obama Inauguration. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wnvCPQqQWds>

Oregon's new Democratic Party chair brings union background

By Anna Del Savio, *Northwest Labor Press*

The new chair of the Democratic Party of Oregon (DPO) wants to build on the party's relationship with organized labor.

Nathan Soltz was elected chair by the DPO's State Central Committee on March 16, becoming the youngest chair in the group's history at 27 years old.

Soltz has worked in the state legislature for a decade, serving as chief of staff to State Senator Lew Frederick (D-Portland) for the past five years.



Soltz was one of the initial leaders of an effort to unionize among Oregon legislative staffers, who voted to join IBEW Local 89 in 2021. As a high school student in 2014, he joined his teachers out on the picket line during the 16-day Medford teachers strike.

Soltz has also served as DPO secretary and chair of the state party's Jewish Caucus and Latino Caucus.

Soltz said the DPO already has a strong relationship with labor. DPO staff are unionized. The party uses union printers and event spaces. Around one-third of its delegation to the 2024 Democratic National Convention was union-affiliated. And the DPO's labor caucus is a strong component of the state party, Soltz said. The state party also supported the UFCW strike at Fred Meyer in 2024 and the nurses strike at Providence earlier this year.

"The DPO does have a good relationship with unions, but that doesn't mean that there's not room for us to strengthen and foster stronger relationships in an active and organized way," Soltz told the Labor Press. "I want to be sure that labor knows that we're there with them for more than just when it comes to elections, and that whenever they need us there, we'll be there."

In his new role, Soltz said he intends to meet with unions to learn what issues they want DPO support on, and what that support should look like.

Steel Elevates Another Canadian

Myles Sullivan, former director of Steelworker District 6 covering Canada, has been elevated to secretary-treasurer of the international office in keeping with a long-held tradition. The position puts him in line for the president's job as was the case with retired president Leo Gerard. Both men hail from Sudbury, Ontario. Sullivan previously held the job of assistant to president David McCall. The *Sudbury Star* described him as "a labour, political and social activist." He has been a Steelworker for more than 25 years.



For more, <https://usw.org/leadership/myles-sullivan/>.

Exec getting raises? We get one too!

By Anna Del Savio, *Northwest Labor Press*

When union members employed by Clark County in Washington state agreed to raises of just 2% back in 2021, management promised that if other employees got bigger raises, the county would come back and give union members those bigger raises too. Then Clark County Council turned around and approved annual raises of 10%, 5%, and 5% for County Manager Kathleen Otto.



To protest the violation of the “me too” clause in their contracts, a coalition of four unions filed a grievance in February 2023. In July 2024, an arbitrator ruled that Clark County had indeed violated the “me too” clause and owed workers money.

That ruling is finally resulting in back pay checks for members of the four unions — Office and Professional Employees International Union (OPEIU) Local 11, Laborers Local 335, AFSCME Local 307, and PROTEC17. On March 18, Clark County councilors approved \$4 million in payments to 875 workers for raises they would have gotten in 2023 and 2024.

Back pay checks will range from about \$500 to \$20,000, said PROTEC17 union representative Rachel Whiteside, who called the settlement “a once-in-a-career type of win for us (and) for our members.”

A 2023 wage study conducted for the county resulted in additional raises for many positions that were underpaid. The arbitrator determined that those raises counted toward closing the gap between the raises given to coalition members and the county manager. In other words, workers who got big raises in 2023 as a result of that study won’t also get big lump sum payments from the arbitration award.

In addition to the lump sum payments, workers will also see their wages increase.

“The size of the payout is significant, but (so is) the fact that it was handled in a way that creates an ongoing benefit for members,” Whiteside said.

Workers who left the county since the start of 2024 will also get back pay.

OPEIU Local union representative Karyn Morrison said implementing the arbitrator’s decision was delayed because the coalition fought to get back pay for former employees.

The arbitrator said the county would also have to pay interest — 1% each month — if it took more than five months to pay up. But in negotiations for a new collective bargaining agreement, the coalition agreed to waive that interest and drop a grievance they filed over Otto's 2025 raise.

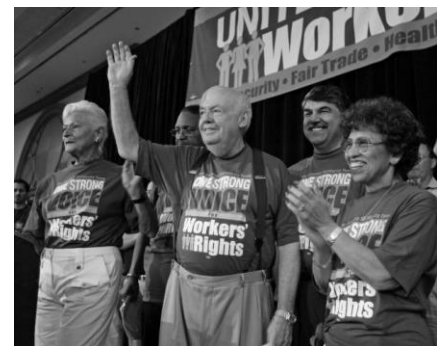
Machinists Local 1432 wasn't part of the coalition in the last round of negotiations, but joined for the latest round. Local 1432 also had a "me too" clause in their 2021 county contract. It filed its own "me too" grievance and was able to get the same as the coalition's award without a separate arbitration process.

Could Sisyphus Have Tried Harder?

Reflections on the Sweeney Administration's Efforts at Mass Organizing, Thirty Years Later

Is the purpose of organizing to increase union membership, or is it to rebuild a working-class movement that can effectively make life better for the vast majority of working people?

Read this interesting analysis by Lane Windham, *New Labor Forum*, in [Portside](#).



Newly Censored: Words and phrases Trump wants avoided

By Ron Verzuh

Since Donald Trump took office in January, several words and phrases often used by trade unions have been listed by government agencies as problematic. These words are to be avoided or limited in use, the *New York Times* reported in March. The *Quarterly* has compiled a handy selection of terms Trump apparently seeks to ban.

"A" words are activism, advocacy, all-inclusive, anti-racism. "B" words are bias, black and breastfeed. "C": climate crisis, community diversity, and cultural heritage. "D": DEI, disabilities, discrimination, disparity, diversity. "E": equal opportunity, equality, ethnicity, exclusion. "F": female, feminism, fostering inclusivity. "G": gender (various usages), Gulf of Mexico. "H": hate speech, health disparity, Hispanic minority, historically.



The list goes on. “I”: identity, immigrants, inclusion, indigenous community, inequality, injustice. “K”: key groups-people- populations. “L”: Latinx, LGBT, LGBTQ. “M”: marginalize, mental health, minorities, multicultural. “N”: Native American, non-binary. “O”: oppression, orientation. “P”: polarization, political, pollution, pregnant people, prejudice, pronoun, prostitute. “R”: race, racism, racial diversity. “S”: sex, segregation, social justice. “T”: they/them, trans, tribal. “U”: unconscious bias, underprivileged, undervalued. “V”: victim, vulnerable populations. “W”: women.

See the full list of the hundreds of banned or limited-use terms, visit “These Words Are Disappearing in the New Trump Administration,” *New York Times*, <https://www.nytimes.com>, March 7, 2025.

Labour Beat, on CVOX community radio

By Brian Charlton

We made it. Labour Beat, on CVOX community radio, will be broadcasting for one year as of May 1st. Co-hosted by Steve Harvey and Brian Charlton we put on a one-hour show every two weeks. We focus on issues facing working people and the Labour Movement with a mix of interviews, discussions, rants and music.

Every episode has music ranging from The Clash to Johnny Cash.

We are on CVOX radio every second Friday at 1pm You can find archived shows at the free app ‘mixcloud’ So learn more about the labour movement and listen to workers talk about their jobs and their lives.
Solidarity.

Labor Grammys and Oscars 2025

For those of you who missed this year’s Labour Grammys and Oscars awards ceremonies, here are the winners as judged by the Power at Work blogcast at the Burnes Centre for Social Change.

First, the Grammy winners, who received the “Guthrie” (<https://poweratwork.us/labor-grammys-2025-awards-ceremony>):

Best traditional worker power songs: Paul Robeson’s Joe Hill and Mavis Staples’s We Shall Not Be Moved;

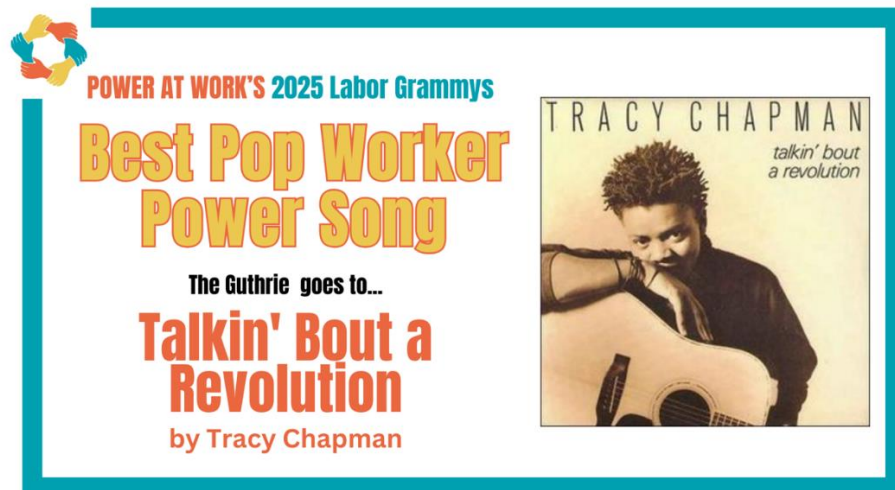
Best folk worker power: Hazel Dickens for They’ll Never Keep Us Down;

Best rock worker power song: Billy Bragg's All You Fascists and Bruce Springsteen's The Ghost of Tom Joad;
Best punk worker power song: Dropkick Murphy's We Got the Power;
Best pop worker power song: Tracy Chapman's Talkin' Bout a Revolution; and
Best "Solidarity Forever" Version: Pete Seeger.

Moving on to the Labour Oscar winners, who received the "Worker"
(<https://poweratwork.us/2025-labor-oscars-awards-ceremony>):

Best feature film: Norma Ray, 1979, Director Martin Ritt;
Best documentary: Harlan County, USA, 1976, Director Barbara Kopple;
Best international labor film: The Organizer, 1963, Director Mario Monicelli;
Best worker power profile (small group or individual: Cesar Chavex. 2014, Director Diego Luna
Worst labor film: Hoffa. 1992, Director Danny Devito.

The judging of the Guthries, named after singer-songwriter Woody Guthrie, and the Workers was done by a panel of experts with input from online subscribers.



MAKING LABOR HISTORY TODAY

SAG-AFTRA and Video Game Companies Reach Tentative Agreement:

On Monday, SAG-AFTRA announced that the union has [reached a tentative agreement](#) with major video game labels on the terms for a new interactive media contract after months of work stoppage. [Read more.](#)

NABET-CWA Podcast Workers Innovate with New Audio Union Bug:

Workers on the hit podcast “Snap Judgment” negotiated something unique in their first contract, ratified in early April; the innovative win came with the creation of an audio union bug, acknowledging union labor at the end of every show. [Read more.](#)
Reports from the AFL-CIO Daily Brief and the CWA Newsletter.

Reed College Housing Advisors Ratify First Union Contract

Reed College Housing Advisors (HAs) represented by OPEIU Local 11 ratified a first union contract in May that increases compensation for HAs and provides greater job security for the student workers. The ratification vote passed with nearly 95% approval. The agreement came after Reed College’s bargaining team forged a last-minute deal with the union to avoid a picket planned in conjunction with graduation on May 19. [Read more.](#)

600 Starbucks Stores Unionized

Baristas at the Seattle Roastery marched together as a union to confront management and demand that they fully staff stores, guarantee consistent hours, and provide workers with what they need to do their jobs and make a living.

[Watch the video to see baristas leading the way, and leave a comment cheering them on](#)



Chicago Teamsters at Mauser Strike

Over 100 Chicago Teamsters are walking the picket line, fighting back against the anti-union playbook Mauser has deployed against locked-out Teamsters in Seattle

[Read more.](#) in *The Stand*



Immigrant Rights, Labor Leaders Condemn ICE Presence in Seattle

‘We call for solidarity among all workers in the face of this obvious attempt by the federal government to ignite civil unrest and divide working people’

[Read more.](#) in *The Stand*



*First Starbucks Organized by Starbucks Workers
United in December 2021, Elmwood Ave.,
Buffalo NY*

PNLHA on Mastodon

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Pacific Northwest Labor History Association

Preserving the History and Heritage of Workers in the Pacific Northwest

PNLHA 2025 Membership

☐ Sustaining Membership **\$250**

(Includes **two** free registrations to labor history conference or event)

☐ Organizational Membership **\$150**

(Includes **one** free registration to labor history conference or event)

☐ Union Retiree Councils **\$50**

☐ Contributing Membership **\$50**

☐ Individual Membership **\$25**

☐ Student / Low Income **\$15**

Please submit your membership in US dollars on our web site www.pnlha.org , or
mail this form to: PNLHA; PO Box 75662; Seattle, WA 98175.

Thank You!

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Thank you for joining PNLHA! Included in your 2025 membership will be a complimentary copy of the 2026 PNLHA Labor History Calendar.

Note: Membership is from January 1 through December 31. Memberships received after Labor Day of any year will be considered for the following year unless we are instructed otherwise.