



A Brief Glimpse of Human Rights Advances in the Teamsters

The First 50 Year

Women and minorities have always been active in the labor movement. Much of the critical legislation that has been passed over the years started as grassroots movements from within one or more of these groups, even though they frequently did not receive credit or recognition for their efforts.

The information and stories shared here provide examples of activities, issues and concerns of women and minorities, and how they are viewed and supported by the International Brotherhood of Teamsters in their official publication, *Teamster Magazine*.

Somewhat surprisingly, there was quite a bit of coverage of women's concerns in the early days, and they were active in union activities, including serving on negotiating committees and holding field rep positions. After World War I however, the reporting of women's issues dropped dramatically. In the 1950s a "Listen Ladies" page was developed, but this was often more household hints than discussion of concerns.

The Teamsters were often ahead of the crowd in regard to minorities and civil rights. The Teamsters took a supportive stance on civil rights, integration, and educational issues early on, and spotlighted minorities in leadership positions in *the* 1940s and 50s when no similar publications touched the topic.

Some of the stories and bits of information from past articles are funny, some annoying, and some deal with topics that could easily appear in next month's magazine and not seem out of date at all just goes to show that 100 years is a long time indeed, and a blink of an eye.

From Teamster Magazine

1906

Last year the salaries of elementary school teachers in Ohio, mostly women, averaged but 72 cents a day

The United States Garment Workers International Union now prints its own labels and derives a nice little income from them. Respect this label.

At least 2,000,000 children under sixteen years old are employed for wages, and ought to be in school. But families may need the earnings.

A new law requiring children between ages of 12 and 16 to have a special permit to work went into effect September 8. In the days just prior the permit office was overwhelmed with mothers and their children seeking permits. Police had to be summoned to keep order.

Men and women of the laboring classes should study and know their own interests and issues. Then they will know when proposed measures are for their benefit or ill advised. Wives and husbands must encourage each other *to* take up this practice.

1912

"A man said to a female textile worker who was discussing suffrage for women you should not mix in politics, your place is at home.' She replied, then why doesn't Harmony textiles pay my husband enough to keep me there? He had no answer and walked away. A host of women are asking similar questions. Women did not elect to leave home. They did not just lay down their tools and walk out. Every woman loves a home of a kind, and glad would be millions of women if they could stay there. But with coming of modern machines. women's work has been taken out of the home. Cloth-making, garment making and bread-making have



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been transferred to the factory, sweatshop and mill....Daily these women are confronted by laws which they had no part in making, and are compelled to submit to conditions they have no power to control....Under these conditions the ballot is not a question of right It is not a question of justice. It is a crying need-something that women must have here and now in order to protect themselves against the iniquitous industrial laws made for them by man. From essay by Carrie W. Allen, April 1912.

1916

Of the millions of workers in this country over one third are poverty-stricken.

Thirty-seven percent of wives and mothers of working men are forced to do hard labor themselves to keep the wolf at bay.

Nearly half of all women workers earn less than \$6 per week.

Babies of the poor die three times as fast as those of the rich.

Twenty per cent of all school children are underfed and undernourished.

Thirty seven percent of all workers homes have 3 or more people in each sleeping room.

1919

Women Laundry workers won a minimum wage of \$11 per week recently, and the right to keep existing closed *shop* agreements. This minimum wage applies to white women and colored women alike, as it has been shown that often colored women were receiving as much as \$2 less per week, frequently for doing heavier work. The National War Labor Board has *made this final decision*, and included Miss Ann Herker, the board examiner of the case, and Miss Agnes Johnson, the board's field rep in the entire decision process.

The Women in Industry service of the Department of Labor has concluded a survey that firmly supports the riling of the United

States *Supreme Court* which holds that long hours by working women are seen to be a serious threat to the welfare of the individual and to the state.

According to Labor Bureau of Statistics, lead is the most common of industrial poisons, and

accounts for 95 percent of poisoning due to occupation. Many workers in the lead industry are women, and this poison affects not only personal health, but future child bearing as well. Strict sanitary and exposure laws must be enacted now. From report by Dr. Alice Hamilton, May 1919.

"Thousands of families fall well below *the* poverty line in this country because the breadwinners happen to be women" is an interesting statement by Miss Mary Van Kleeck, Director of Women in Industry service of the Department of Labor. She also calls for a permanent women's bureau in the Labor Department, as well as improving standards for women workers by governmental policy formulated by women.

Legislative measures due to be introduced into this next session of Congress include: employee commissions in every state *with men* and women representatives, equal pay for equal work, and organizing and collective bargaining rights for women independent of male dominated organizations.

400.00 deaths are reported thus far from the recent influenza epidemic. Unlike past scourges that attacked the aged and weak, this new influenza is attacking the young in their prime. Women are particularly hard hit, as they are worn out already from caring for others and have no resilience left to protect themselves.

1921

We are pleased to *note the* number of high schools in this country are ever increasing.

Disarmament is possible if the people demand it. Call the mothers of the land together.

If the public accepts militarists and commercial expansionists as authorities on armament, then we shall end up with a kaiserized *democracy*.

If the public permits racial prejudice to grip them, then they must pay the price in back breaking taxes for military type establishments.

Today our country votes dollars for war and pennies for construction and peace.

The people can sweep aside the chaff and bend every public *official* to their will if the would but express it.



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war machines and fueling prejudices, and devote ourselves to building and peace? Nothing else counts. Nothing else is important The question reaches into every home, into every pocketbook, into every pay envelope in America.

1927

"Are we a second class school system? The children's scores and abilities are down, mainly since fancy men of letters have gotten a hold of our system. Our teachers, of whom are many fine women and men seemed to do the job just fine in the past This issue must be investigated thoroughly at once. A new law has passed restricting the workday of women to eight hours.

1929

The Chief Counsel for the General Cigar Company announced today that it will allow "girl" employees the right to *picket*, and have pickets near the factory entry. They may also speak to strikebreakers. There had been an injunction against these activities, until the company realized there was overwhelming support from the public for the "girls". Most painful it seems was the cigar smoking ban placed on husbands by their wives.

Recently in the California legislature \$813,325 was allotted to protect fish and wildlife, and \$53,820 to the Accident Insurance commission to benefit women and child labors.

1931

A manufacturer of women's garments has proclaimed the day will come when salesmen will not need to travel to shops. Ladies will simply step into a "television" booth, and with the aid also of a telephone will see and speak directly to the salesman and complete the transaction in minutes.

Women must be paid equally for the same work as men, but we must not force women or permit women to do work that is disproportionate to their physical strength as it may impair their potential motherhood and prevent the continuation of a strong health nation.

1934

Women in Berlin have watched American women in the labor movement, and are striking against the conscription of their unemployed husbands for farm work. They are asking for changes in the system that has caused widespread unemployment.

Miss Frances Perkins has been named Secretary of Labor. We recognize her abilities and support this appointment.

Beware of what you read and hear these days as the press is increasingly trying to play the public for fools.

1936

Mary Anderson, Director of the Women's Bureau in the Department of Labor denounced the practice of different wages for men and women at a convention of the Women's Trade Union League held in Washington DC. Miss Anderson warns that this practice will tear the economic fabric of the nation as women breadwinners struggle to keep afloat. Mrs. Roosevelt also spoke at the convention, and admonished all trade unionists to further promote the organization of women, and declared that arguments against women in trade unions were unintelligent

1937

Human relations must be a vital part of labor. Due to modern industry, we have forgotten the personality of the worker. They have become numbers not names. Mass production is here to stay, but this lack of consideration for the individual is causing or is the root of many troubles in labor today. We must be vigilant in this fight to keep this at the forefront of all labor discussions and advances.

1938

Women laundry workers have again sought mini-mum wages, using the laws that were enacted twenty years ago, and increasingly ignored. Minimum wages have now been set. with the aid of the old laws, at \$14.50 per week.



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1940

Big price for glamour it seems. Some 39,000,000 women who beat a path to beauty parlors in 1938 emerged more glamorous, but \$200,000,000 poorer in *the* pocketbook. This has brought the beauty parlor to sixth place among American industries.

1942

There is no line, in so far as color or race are concerned, in our organization. It is our experience that a Negro man or woman makes as good a union member, and as good a worker as any white man or woman. We are proud to say we have more Negroes in our trade unions than even the Sleeping Car Porters union.

Charges have been made that communists within the C.I.O. and other local organizations are fanning the race issue in the south, notably in Savannah. They are saying Negroes cannot get equal treatment in the union in order to get members away from the union and to their groups. We have firm evidence of this practice and shall dispute it by word and action.

1943

There are now hundreds of thousands of married women in the workforce, taking up slack while husbands serve overseas. Many are in the workforce for the first time, and despite the *foolish* doubters, they are doing a fine job, and even enjoying it they say.

1945

There is no excuse for permitting relaxation of legislation aimed at the welfare of women and children. It is a threat to sound labor and society.

There is a rising black market in illegal child labor. Under the guise of "we must win the war" labor standards had been relaxed for child labor, but unscrupulous employers have taken this to dire levels.

A national campaign against the Equal Right Amendment has been undertaken by a committee of women from the AF of L and many national women's organizations. The amendment, sponsored by the National Women's Party purportedly is to give women equal employment opportunity. In real-

ity, the amendment would repeal all the legislation enacted in recent years to *protect women in industry*. It would give them equal right by destroying the legislative benefits they have now.

1946

Experts predict that by 1965 America *will* import over half its oil. This raises concerns for the future of labor in the petroleum and other related industries, as well as future foreign relations.

Despite *efforts* of labor and reformers, 2,000,000 children are still at work, often in dangerous, low paying jobs.

Infantile paralysis has now reached the epidemic stage. Parents must be ever vigilant, and follow all advice from the medical community. The labor press will be called upon to help get the message out and to help raise funds for The March of Dimes campaign.

1950 and 1951

The tone of articles about and for women changed in the post war years in many publications, including the Teamster magazine. Topics from the "Listen ladies" pages of the Teamster Magazine:

Can you park?

Color your bed!

Canning watermelon

New photo album choices for those precious baby years

Do your part and vote!

Beautiful Hands

It's true! Men spend more money on clothes!

Are you a sinner...in fashion?

Accent on feet

That doe-eyed look

1955

A number of women are now Stewards, and we believe they will only **make the union** better and stronger.