

IRRA



COMMON GROUND

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS RESEARCH ASSOCIATION
FOR WESTERN NEW YORK

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

SPRING 1988

by Eric Lawson, Jr.

KUDOS AND KONGRATULATIONS

My final message as IRRA President shall, appropriately enough I believe, be devoted to some stock taking, but mostly I wish to acknowledge the many persons who have made this a banner year for the organization.

Look what we've done:

Magnificent monthly meetings! Beginning in September with the first of two mini-cons, David Keicher and Ron Uba drew us together for a discussion of "Substance Abuse and Drug Testing in the Workplace".

In October Dick Bradley single-handedly oversaw "OSHA in the Reagan Year -- Watch-dog or Pussycat?"

In November IRRA went on the road for the second mini-con, co-sponsored with the National Academy of Arbitrators. A committee of Tom Rinaldo, Howard Foster, and yours truly put down anchor at the Buffalo Yacht Club, where an overflow audience conferred on the topic, "Measuring the Strength of Your Case for Arbitration".

In January, David Farmelo orchestrated our annual Law Night, which featured new NLRB Regional Director Rich Ahearn and Regional Attorney Sandy Dunbar. They spoke on "The NLRA: A Perspective From Within the Board".

February was fun and games at 420 Linwood. In recognition of the month in which Presidents' Day and Valentine's Day both fall, and, for this year anyway, the month in which leap year is recognized, IRRA members, fun seekers one and all, were

treated to "The Low Road of Presidential Romance" and "Politics Makes Strange Bedfellows." A high point of the evening was the sudden and unexpected appearance of Cupid, clad only in his "I Have a Heart for You" shorts, but baring up well (sic). The evening was under the baton of Barbara and Tom Christy, ably assisted by Beverly Lawson, Sylvia Hahn, Candy Saxton, Jim and Carol McDonnell, Kathy Berchou, Pat Chavanne, Rich Wyssling, and Kathy O'Hara. Special thanks to Jim McDonnell and his barbershop quartet.

Our March meeting was the product of Joe Ritz's genius, and handled with Joe's usual pizzazz and verve. We heard from Ray Rogers on "From J.P. Stevens to Hornell: The Bumpy Road of Corporate Campaigns." This meeting was co-sponsored by the Industrial Relations Association, and even though it extended beyond 9:00 p.m., Rogers's comments and the questions that followed held the capacity audience's attention.

Elena Cacavas and Lou Jean Fleron kept your President enthralled with numerous possibilities for the April program before bringing in "The Corporate Restructuring of America: Its Implications for the Labor-Management Relationship", featuring Professor Harry Katz of Cornell. At this meeting we also recognized our Citizen of the Year, Peter Rybka.

Finally, the May program promises to bring this year's selection of monthly meetings to a grand finale. Reynold Jennetti will gather the membership on the decks of the AMERICANA, so that a dockside program on "Strikes: Have the Tables been reversed?" may be presented.

(Continued on Next Page)

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE Cont.

In addition to superb programming and excellent speakers, the success of the monthly meetings was the product of many contributions. Marie Antonucci and Ramona Gallagher saw to the arrangements, a real piece of work this year as we added spice and variety by moving to different locations each month. Pat and Dan Chavanne were pillars of reliability in overseeing the registration table. Ed Schmidt's maps unerringly guided us to our meeting place. Chuck Leonard was invaluable, as always, in performing many small but necessary services like escorting speakers and helping with registration. Rivona Ehrenreich must also be thanked for pinch hitting at the registration table. Ed Kelly arranged for the procurement of pen-and-pencil gift sets to recognize our speakers.

This year we adopted completely new bylaws! The Bylaws Committee, under the able leadership of Rich Wyssling and with members Mary Thomas Scott and Miriam Winckur performed excellent service in undertaking this long overdue task.

Surely a key service to our membership is our newsletter, COMMON GROUND. Begun during the administration of Jim McDonnell, COMMON GROUND was edited this year and last by Howard Foster. Under Howard's direction the newsletter effectively communicates information of importance to our membership. The health of the newsletter is directly related to the timeliness and pertinence of the information it reports. The membership is encouraged to support the newsletter by regularly submitting newsworthy events, meetings, brief articles, and other notices.

As always, the Vice Presidents and Advisory Board members dispatched their various assignments with competence and efficiency. Miriam Winckur's service as Recording Secretary deserves special acknowledgement.

Norm Stocker, our Executive Secretary-Treasurer, contributed to our Chapter in many important ways. He kept the books balanced and oversaw the collection of dues and paying of bills. He also planned and executed the annual summer picnic for the Board of Directors. He has my special thanks.

Marie Siegel is deserving of extraordinary recognition. Marie has uncomplainingly put up with numerous frantic phone calls, deciphered my illegible script, adjusted with a smile to the many requests I have made of her. She is a person whose good humor and sense of order has made orderly and businesslike the operation of WNYIRRA, which, were it in my hands alone, would have long ago descended into total chaos.

Chuck Davitt, our Executive Vice President and Nominations Committee Chairman, has submitted a slate of officers. As usual, the sole criterion for service is a willingness to participate in the running of our Association. Anyone interested in service as a Vice President or as a member of the Advisory Board is encouraged to share his interest with any officer.

Finally, allow me to do some stock taking. This year has been a good year for WNYIRRA, as can be seen by the activities listed above. My regrets are limited to two small areas. During my travels within the labor-management community in WNY, I am often amazed at the number of people who have never heard of IRRA. I cannot explain this. Perhaps as a society we are over-organized and people simply tune out "yet another organization". However it seems to me that for persons engaged in the business of conducting or influencing the region's labor-management relations, IRRA membership should come with the job. As an incentive to increasing our membership and as an inducement to the early renewal of existing memberships, a book, The Essentials of Labor Arbitration, will be offered free of charge. Perhaps this bonus will help bring into our membership those who have escaped our recruiting efforts so far. We need to reach these people -- they belong in our ranks!

My other regret is that the operation of our Chapter is not more widely spread across the membership. "Involvement" produces a rich harvest of rewards. Active service on a committee, on the Advisory Board, or as an officer of the organization gives direction and motivation to our Chapter. We need wide diversity of leadership from our members. Please, let Dave Keicher, next year's President, know of your interest and availability.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve.

BULLETIN: WNYIRRA LANDS 1990 SPRING MEETING

President Eric Lawson has announced that the WNY Chapter of IRRA has been selected to host the national organization's annual Spring meeting in 1990. The notice from national Secretary-Treasurer David Zimmerman reported that the decision of the IRRA Executive Board "took into account your description of the strength and activity of the Western New York Chapter, as well as your preliminary plans for local arrangements, and your previous bids to host a spring meeting." Details will be forthcoming in September's issue of COMMON GROUND.

WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS

Please extend an enthusiastic welcome to the following additions to our ranks:

James M. Ash
Production Superintendent, Standard Oil

Stephen D. Balmer
Associate, Jaeckle, Fleischmann & Mugel

George Koller
Mill Representative, AFGM Local 36

Andrew S. Loeb
Student

John J. Moody
Sr. Field Representative, NYSUT

Kenneth J. Mulhisen
Business Representative, AFGM Local 36

Joseph Nowak
V.P. for Manufacturing, Seneca Steel

Joseph A. Podwika
Associate, Jaeckle, Fleischmann & Mugel

David V. Scarcella
President, Local 30N, GCIU

Gary M. Sobilo
Director of Human Resources,
Brooks Memorial Hospital, Dunkirk

Ralph L. Wray
V.P. of Employee Relations, Bflo. News

TRANSITIONS

Barbara Christie, long-time IRRAer, has been appointed Personnel Associate in the Employee Relations Section of the Personnel Dept. at SUNY/Buffalo. Barb has been active in the CSEA Local 602 at UB, serving two terms as Grievance Chair and nearly three terms as President. COMMON GROUND extends heartiest congratulations to Barb on her promotion and wishes her smooth sailing. (Fat chance in this business!)

Martin Erdei has been promoted to V.P. for Human Resources by Ruslander & Sons, Inc., a local maker of stainless steel products. Martin joined Ruslander four years ago as Human Resources Manager, following a stint as Personnel Manager at Curtiss Wright. He is responsible for labor relations, affirmative action, and general employment matters. Martin is a cum laude graduate of UB.

Joseph O'Donnell, formerly an I.R. Rep at the GM engine plant in Tonawanda, has been appointed Staff Attorney for the CSEA in Albany. Joe spent ten years at Tonawanda and was active in the negotiation of the current local agreement. In his new position, he appears regularly before PERB and at arbitrations.

Past President **Richard A. Slisz** has been appointed Commissioner of Personnel for Erie County. Prior to this appointment, Dick had served in the Erie County Legislature for 14 years, four of them as Minority Leader and six more as Chairman. He has had a long time association with the United Textile Workers (later the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers) as a full time representative and later a consultant. Dick continues to be active in the IRRA.

STATE MEDIATION BOARD REPORTS 1987 ACTIVITY

The New York State Mediation Board, headed by IRRA Vice President Msgr. Jim Healy, has issued its annual report for 1987. The agency closed out 115 mediation cases in its Buffalo office, and its local staff handled 86 arbitrations. An additional 66 arbitrations in the Buffalo area were heard by SMB panel arbitrators.

DEPARTMENT OF UNSUNG HEROES

By now the Degraff Hospital Strike is history, and we're all hoping that everyone there is working on putting their relationship back together. While the strike was widely and prominently reported in the local press, there was little mention of the work of the various neutrals.

On November 20, 1987, Bob Ahern, Executive Director of the Buffalo-Erie County L-M Council, distributed a memo to members of the Council. It begins thus: "I'm attaching a copy of a Memorandum of Understanding which will direct the back to work effort at DeGraff. [It] leaves in place the economic settlement which was mediated by Joe Bania of the FMCS prior to the strike which began August 11, 1987."

Bob goes on to detail the efforts of the LMC to bring the parties together. Several thorny issues had been resolved and a settlement drafted, when a last-minute problem surfaced regarding 1988 vacation eligibility for strikers. Bob notes that "it was this single issue that was handled by Reverend Jackson's intervention. Jackson showed up after 5 p.m. and met with some members of the Hospital Board and CWA Vice President Jan Pierce at another motel. The result of their deliberations was that the Union withdrew this demand [to count strike time in determining vacation eligibility] and, at approximately 7 p.m. on Friday, November 13, the parties signed the settlement agreement we had drafted that afternoon without changing a single word.

"As you are all aware, despite the fact that we put a good month's work into the effort, guided some ten days of negotiations, conceived of the return to work mechanisms, drafted the settlement agreement, etc., we received absolutely no recognition. As an individual with considerable mediation experience, I can accept this as I'm sure Joe Bania can; mediators are very seldom given any credit for the hard work they do. However, with regard to the recognition due the Buffalo-Erie County Labor-Management Council for its unique ability to intervene in long term strikes and bring them to a conclusion, I think it most unfortunate that the community was not made aware of our successful effort."

IN THE NEWS

IRRAer Jo Davenport of the New York State United Teachers was honored with the Labor Leader Award at the AFL-CIO Annual Awards Dinner on April 22.

Msgr. James A. Healy, Chairman of the State Mediation Board and long time IRRA Vice President, was appointed by the Los Angeles City PERB to mediate a 2.5 year old dispute between the City and its police officers. The dispute had already been through mediation and an improper practice hearing when Jim was called in. He spent the week of March 21 in LA wrestling the parties to an agreement, which was especially difficult to find in the smog.

Past President **Ed Kelly** received the Community Services Award from the National Conference of Christians and Jews at a luncheon on February 18. The awards are given for various categories of service; Ed's was Labor. Congratulations!

Advisory Board member **Joe Ritz** has written a play, "Acts of Contrition," that opened at the American Ensemble Company's East 29th Street Theater in New York City on April 15. The play, under an earlier title, was one of five finalists in a competition of the New York Drama League. The play also will have a three-week run at Buffalo's Alleyway Theater next winter. It is based in part on the life of Thomas Merton, a Trappist monk, author, and poet, who shortly before his sudden death fell in love with a young nurse, and it focuses on the conflict between an anti-religious reporter eager to uncover wrongdoing in the life of a prominent cleric and the abbot of the monastery who wishes to keep the story of the forbidden romance hidden.

IRRA ANNOUNCES MEMBERSHIP INCENTIVE

In addition to the normal benefits and advantages of membership in the IRRA, to encourage early renewal and new membership, all new members and members renewing their membership early for 1988-89 will receive a copy of **ESSENTIALS OF LABOR ARBITRATION**, by Eric Lawson, Jr. and Eric Lawson, Sr., as long as supplies last. We urge each current member to recruit at least one new member.

A MESSAGE FROM OUR INCOMING PRESIDENT

by David Keicher

As President-Elect for 1988-1989, I have been asked to share with you my plans for the coming program year. In all honesty, the only plan I have at this time is to get through the year as smoothly as possible. With the support of the officers, the Vice Presidents, the Advisory Board, and all the other members who take an active part, that should not be too difficult.

Chuck Davitt, next year's President-Elect, has agreed to serve as co-Chair of the Program Committee for 1988. Chuck and I are confident that the Committee we have begun to assemble will deliver the quality programs our members have come to expect.

Some of the programs the Committee will be considering are: The U.S.-Canada Trade Pact. What is it? How or will it affect the WNY economy and the collective bargaining process? Also, can labor and management, by working together, play a larger role in economic development? We will try to attract "name" speakers to address these and other timely topics of interest. IRRRA members are urged to make suggestions for possible programs and can do so by contacting me at 887-2623 or Chuck Davitt at 856-6500.

PERB HAS NEW MED-ARB PROGRAM

An experimental program to assist labor and management in local government and schools to resolve grievances has been expanded, PERB has announced. The program was initiated on January 1 in the Albany area. Under its procedures, the parties make a joint request for Med-Arb and agree to accept the services of the staff neutral assigned to the case by PERB's Director of Conciliation. The staffer attempts to mediate the grievance, and if mediation fails, the same staff person convenes an arbitration hearing and issues an expedited award. According to PERB, the experimental phase of the program was well received, as it permits quick, inexpensive resolution of grievances. For more information, call PERB at 518-457-2676.

Also, we would welcome any volunteers to serve on the Program Committee, or for that matter any committee. Like many organizations, volunteers have always been the moving force behind WNYIRRA. We will once again be counting on our members to offer suggestions, and to come forward and help when requested. I look forward to working with all of you in what promises to be an educational, interesting, and sometimes fun year.

Finally, at the Buffalo AFL-CIO Council Annual Awards Dinner on April 22, a \$1,000 scholarship was awarded to Laurel Queeno, the daughter of Anthony and Winifred Queeno. Anthony is a member of the Maryvale Teachers Association. This scholarship was established in memory of Luke Buonocore, former Business Manager of the Textile Workers Union who passed away on November 6, 1987. Luke was also an active member of the WNYIRRA.

Luke's family is very proud that a scholarship has been awarded in his name, and I too am very proud. Luke was my colleague, my confidant and, most importantly, my friend. I miss him.

UPCOMING EVENTS

The AFL-CIO and the United Way will once again sponsor a Labor Day Parade on Monday, September 5, 1988, in Williamsville. Anyone interested in participating should contact one of the co-chairs for the parade, Dave Keicher or Byron Goins, at 887-2626.

The New York State Public Employment Relations Board will conduct a Taylor Law update for labor and management representatives on September 29 at the Ramada Renaissance. Topics will include PERB structure, appropriate bargaining units, interference with protected rights, the duty of fair representation, and the duty to negotiate in good faith. Speakers will review recent PERB and court decisions on deferral to grievance arbitration, smoking at the workplace, drug testing, and subcontracting. PERB's new services (Med-Arb and labor-management committees) will be explained and workshops conducted on improper practice charges and representation petitions. A modest fee will be charged for registration. For more information, contact the PERB office at 847-3449.

PETER RYBKA IS WNYIRRA'S "CITIZEN OF THE YEAR"

Peter J. Rybka, an official of the American Federation of Grain Millers for over 55 years, was named IRRA Citizen of the Year at our dinner meeting on April 28. The award was presented by Awards Committee Chairman Charles Donner. Here are excerpts from Charlie's presentation:

* * * * *

Peter Rybka was born on May 14, 1910 in the mining town of Dupont, PA. He moved to Buffalo when he was seven. A year later, his father was killed in an industrial accident, leaving a widow and five children, the oldest of whom was Peter. Shortly afterward, Peter lost his three sisters to scarlet fever. At the age of 15, Peter left school and went to work to help support his mother and younger brother.

Needless to say, these tragedies and hardships left a lasting impression on Peter and undoubtedly served as the basis for his lifelong record of service and dedication to the working man. In 1932, Peter was in the forefront of the successful organization of Allied Mills, where he worked, and he was soon elected to various positions of increasing responsibility within the union. He became its full-time Business Representative in 1938, then servicing a membership of 900. During the next 20 years he was elected an International Vice President of the Grain Millers, and in 1958 he became its Executive Vice President, a position he held until his ostensible retirement in 1984. During Peter's tenure as Business Representative, the local's membership grew to 2,500 and the number of companies under contract from 6 to 32, including virtually every flour mill and feed plant in Buffalo.

The International Constitution required that Peter "retire" in 1984, but he has actually continued, as a labor consultant, to serve Local 110 much as he had been doing for over 45 years. He serves without compensation, performing the same contract negotiations and grievance processing functions as before, servicing 750 members in 17 bargaining units.

Peter's success in representing his membership has not resulted from confrontation and tests of wills. His staff cannot recall a case in recent memory where Peter was not able to settle a contract without a strike. His trademarks include a willingness and ability to accommodate and reach amicable settlements.

Peter is not only dean of the local labor community, but has had achievements in the political arena as well. In 1947 he was elected Councilman-at-Large in Buffalo with a record total of 111,000 votes. During his term he became the Council's Majority Leader. His personal secretary and protege was future mayor Stanley Makowski. Peter was also active in the creation of the Niagara Frontier Port Authority. He is still active in Democratic politics and has served as unofficial campaign manager for his daughter, Joan Dudek, who is Cheektowaga's Receiver of Taxes and Assessments.

In recognition of his long and distinguished career, Peter has received several awards: the 1984 Labor Leader of the Year, the Am-Pol Eagle's 1976 Citizen of the Year, citations from the Community Services Committee of the AFL-CIO Council, the Buffalo Port Council Maritime Trades Department, and the Catholic Diocesan Labor Management College.

Peter and his wife are the proud parents of 4 daughters, and they have 8 grandchildren and three great-grandchildren. Peter is by all accounts a devoted and caring family man, who despite all his responsibilities and busy schedule has taken the time to be there for his family, just as he was for his widowed mother in his early teens.

Since his retirement, Peter has been instrumental in organizing retirees. He is President of the Erie-Niagara Retirees of WNY, AFL-CIO, and the Buffalo and WNY Retirees Council. He helped establish the Charter Chapter of the AFGM Retirees here in Buffalo, which has served as a model for other chapters across the nation.

It is an honor to present the 1987-88 Citizen of the Year Award to Peter Rybka.