



Sept. 23, 2001

The Hon. Richard Grobschmidt
State Senate
State Capitol
Madison WI 53707

Dear Senator Grobschmidt:

I will be unable -- due to my job -- to be present to provide testimony in support of Senate Bill 235, requiring the teaching of labor history in the schools of Wisconsin, and would like to provide you with the enclosed statement.

As you may know, I feel very strongly about the need for this bill in order to provide a balance to the education about economics in our schools. This bill does not prescribe specific curriculum or topics for instruction, but merely provides that the topic must be included. Corporations have ample opportunities and resources to provide information to schools, and have been taking full advantage of that.

Among union members there is a strong belief that labor history has been largely neglected in our schools, and the absence of this instruction ill prepares children for the work place.

I hope you will share this statement with your colleagues. If I can be of any further help, feel free to call upon me. I have enclosed a copy of our Sesquicentennial Booklet.

Best wishes.

Sincerely,


Kenneth A. Germanson, President
313 E. Plainfield Ave.
Milwaukee WI 53207

6333 W. Blue Mound Road, Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53213

Affiliated with the State Historical Society of Wisconsin



In Support of Senate Bill 235 to require public schools to instruct pupils on labor history

**Testimony of Kenneth A. Germanson, President, Wisconsin Labor History Society,
313 E. Plainfield Ave., Milwaukee WI 53207 prepared for the Wisconsin State Senate
Education Committee, Sept. 26, 2001**

The eight-hour day.

Employer-provided health insurance.

Saturdays off.

Vacations.

Holidays.

Family-supporting pay that has fostered a strong middle class society.

Civil rights.

Voting rights.

These have become accepted features of life in Wisconsin and across the nation, and none of these would have come into being without the involvement of labor.

Yet, how many of our children know of the contributions of working people and their unions? This is one of the most neglected stories in history, and it's one of the most exciting to tell.

In this day-and-age, we are continually and rightfully concerned about providing for a school experience that will equip our children to effectively operate as adults. Your committee, I'm certain, has a major goal to assure that Wisconsin's children are able to complete their school years ready to assume the role as citizens.

What better way that to let them know that as citizens they will be able to "participate" and help to mold their world, help to improve the lives for themselves, their families and their children and grandchildren to come?

Testimony of Kenneth A. Germanson - 2

The story of labor is the story of how ordinary people were able to work together and to join with others to make their communities and society as a whole a better place for all. Working people through their unions, of course, organized first and foremost to improve their pay and benefits and conditions at their workplace; but even in those struggles there was a noble goal to assure that the capitalistic system would be working at its fullest potential, that the one side of the economy -- that of business -- would not be reaping all the rewards. Without labor unions asserting their goals for equality, who knows what would have happened to our society? A tyranny of the corporations, a fascist dictatorship or a citizen revolt similar that of 1917 in Russia?

And Wisconsin unions were at the forefront of many of these struggles. I am pleased to provide to the committee a copy of "Workers in Wisconsin History -- A Sesquicentennial Project," a booklet that the Wisconsin Labor History Society and others published collaboratively in 1998 as part of Wisconsin's 150th Anniversary of Statehood. You will note six areas of interest: the Bay View Tragedy of 1886 that dramatized the efforts for the 8-hour day; the Oshkosh Woodworkers Strike of 1898 that brought Clarence Darrow into the state and removed the shackles of court interference into the rights of workers to organize; the difference that unions made in Stevens Point through the years; the growth of labor-management cooperation and its resulting "success story" in Wisconsin's paper industry; the role of labor during World War II and eventual entry into greater community involvement; and the working people who were vital in building Superior.

In addition, it's critical to note the role that labor, particularly through the early efforts of the Wisconsin Federation of Labor and later through the successor State AFL-CIO, played in such important achievements as creating the earliest laws in workers compensation and unemployment compensation, in supporting public education and the state's great university system and in helping to make a vocational (now technical college) system that is second to none. Also unionists through the state have worked for strong environmental laws and family support programs.

These stories need to be told in our schools, along with the stories about our great industries and farming traditions.

Testimony of Kenneth A. Germanson - 3

Sadly, they have been largely neglected in our schools. Our business friends have the resources and have recognized the value of education, and have flooded our schools with materials telling their story. Not so with labor and working people.

For instance, a 1997 survey of the three most widely used textbooks in social studies for 5th graders showed only minuscule mention of labor. The three each had more than 700 pages of text; yet one had only nine paragraphs devoted to unions or working people, another had 16 paragraphs and the other 20 paragraphs.

While I'm not present in Wisconsin classrooms, I suspect that's a pretty good sign of the level of teaching time involved in educating students about unions or working people.

The bill requiring the teaching of labor history will have a strongly positive impact upon our ability to instill in our students the feeling that the school classroom is "relevant," that it shows how people can affect our society. Today, with so many people "turning off" on our institutions, whether it be political parties or churches or labor unions, it is critical that we teach our children to understand that they can make a difference, and that they can change society for the better.

The story of our labor unions demonstrates in a dramatic and interesting manner just that point: that a healthy democratic story requires the involvement and contributions of all citizens, including its workers and their unions. Labor history is "human history," full of warts as well as beauty, and should be told.

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss this with you.

Sumi, John

From: MICHAEL SALKOWSKI [MSALKOWS@cedargrovebelgium.k12.wi.us]
Sent: Monday, September 24, 2001 10:49 AM
To: CLAY Acker; JEANNE COURNEENE; JOHN HOCKING; MICHAEL SALKOWSKI;
Sen.Baumgart; Sen.Darling; Sen.Erpenbach; Sen.Grobschmidt; Sen.Harsdorf; Sen.Jauch;
Sen.Kanavas; Sen.Lazich; Sen.Robson; Sen.Roessler; Sen.Shibilski
Subject: Senate Bill 235

SEP 24 2001

Dear Senator:

I was greatly distressed to discover today that there is a bill under consideration to require (mandate) that the history of organized labor in America and the collective bargaining process be taught in public schools. Though I cannot be present at the September 26 hearing on this topic, I would like to express my views on this issue and have them recorded for the record if that is possible.

I don't believe this kind of legislation is needed at this time for two reasons:

1. It already is part of the Wisconsin Academic Standards. Section D.12.14 states: Analyze the economic roles of institutions, such as corporations and businesses, banks, labor unions, and the Federal Reserve System.
2. To create a new additional mandated curriculum will crowd out or reduce other areas that must be taught under the Standards approved by the state.

It appears to me that this proposal is being made at the request of special interest groups. Adding issues to be taught by our teachers at a time when there will be great pressure to have students do well on the upcoming graduation test is not appropriate or logical. If there are questions on the state test that are related to the topic of organized labor and collective bargaining, the topics will be covered. If these topics have not been deemed to be relevant to be covered in the state standards then it makes no sense to take precious time away from instructing students in areas that they will be held accountable.

As a former history teacher AND a union president I do not believe this bill should be supported. I believe the role of organized labor and collective bargaining is already being addressed in the U.S. History classrooms of the state. The emphasis today is teaching the basics and getting students ready to be competitive in a very complex inter-related world economy. Please don't hamstring our teachers with yet another mandate that will take away from our ability to get our students prepared.

Thank you for your consideration.

Michael Salkowski
District Administrator
Cedar Grove-Belgium School District

Vote Record

Senate - Committee on Education

Date: 9-26-01
 Moved by: Baumgart Seconded by: Robson
 AB: _____ SB: 235 Clearinghouse Rule: _____
 AJR: _____ SJR: _____ Appointment: _____
 AR: _____ SR: _____ Other: _____

A/S Amdt: _____
 A/S Amdt: _____ to A/S Amdt: _____
 A/S Sub Amdt: _____
 A/S Amdt: _____ to A/S Sub Amdt: _____
 A/S Amdt: _____ to A/S Amdt: _____ to A/S Sub Amdt: _____

- Be recommended for:
- Passage
 - Introduction
 - Adoption
 - Rejection
 - Indefinite Postponement
 - Tabling
 - Concurrence
 - Nonconcurrence
 - Confirmation

Committee Member	Aye	No	Absent	Not Voting
Sen. Richard Grobschmidt, Chair	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sen. Robert Jauch	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sen. Kevin Shibilski	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sen. Jim Baumgart <u>ERPENBACH</u>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sen. Judith Robson	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sen. Carol Roessler	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sen. Alberta Darling	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sen. Mary Lazich	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sen. Sheila Harsdorf	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sen. Ted Kanavas	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Totals: _____

Preface

Almost no one in America is immune to work. As Americans, most of us spend the greatest portion of our lives at work for a series of employers, accepting and expecting the benefits, customs, and responsibilities of the workplace. We look forward to paid vacation time, allowances for paid sick days, health benefits, and retirement plans. We expect to be relatively safe in the work environment, to be free of harassment, and to be paid reasonably for our work. It is seldom that we think about the hard-fought history behind those benefits, customs, and responsibilities.

The materials, resources, and lessons included herein are designed to assist teachers and students alike to think about a variety of historic social and economic events, circumstances, laws, and forces that helped to shape today's workplace. Use of these materials will lead to an expanded labor history knowledge base and a greater appreciation of the role of organized labor in this country's growth. Labor history in the United States is filled with examples of monumental bravery, abject poverty, hideous working conditions, unconscionable greed, graft, the exploitation of children and immigrants, and the indomitable spirit of American workers. Those workers believed in the promise of democracy, unilaterally supported free public education for all, and wanted an end to class privilege—particularly the practice that allowed the wealthy to buy their way out of military service—and a halt to the practice of jailing debtors.

Wisconsin's labor past is wrapped around those same issues. More than one citizen gave up their lives to improve the lot of fellow workers. They hoped to reshape the work world into a more compassionate one by establishing the standards of the eight-hour day and the 40-hour week, and by making foundries, factories, shipyards, mills, mines, railroads, print shops, and workshops of all kinds safer. They worked on railroads, made tires, furniture, bricks, and shoes; they worked deep in dark, dank mines, sweated in overheated foundries; they lost arms, hands, and feet in cramped shops and mills.

The lessons of the past have significant meaning today. In underdeveloped countries around the world, the same kinds of exploitation and safety issues have surfaced alongside issues of entrepreneurial and industrial economics. Among industrialized nations, the United States appears to be losing ground. American workers work longer hours and have less vacation time and fewer parental benefits than their counterparts in Europe and Japan. In addition, jobs that once supported thousands of American workers have been exported to underdeveloped countries, forcing many Americans to work two or more poorly paid jobs to support themselves and their families.

Making sound decisions for the future depends, in part, on understanding the implications of the past. The materials offered here are designed to begin a discussion of the role of labor in general and of organized labor in particular as they pertain to our own lives and the lives of those who have not yet entered the workplace.



State Representative
John Lehman

**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE
SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE
SENATE BILL 235 -- THE LABOR HISTORY BILL
SEPTEMBER 26, 2001**

Statutory Requirements for K-12 School Districts

1. Section 118.01 (2) mandates instruction in academic skills, vocational skills, citizenship, personal development, technical preparation, and remedial reading..
2. Section 121.02 (1)(h) requires school districts to provide adequate instructional materials, tests and library services that reflect the cultural diversity and pluralistic nature of American society.
3. Likewise, Section 121.02 (L)4. mandates that our schools twice in grades K-8 and once in high school include instruction in the history, culture and sovereignty of the state's American Indian tribes and bands.
4. And Section 121.02 (1)(m) directs schools to provide students with access to education for employment programming approved by the State Superintendent.

States Mandating the Teaching of Labor History

- Illinois
- California
- Massachusetts

State Capitol:
P.O. Box 8952
Madison, WI 53708
Toll-free: 1-888-534-0062
(608) 266-0634
Fax: (608) 282-3662
E-Mail:
Rep.Lehman@legis.state.wi.us
Legislative Hotline:
1-800-362-9472

Home:
2421 James Boulevard
Racine, WI 53403
(262) 632-3330



State of Wisconsin
Department of Public Instruction

Mailing Address: P.O. Box 7841, Madison, WI 53707-7841
125 South Webster Street, Madison, WI 53702
(608) 266-3390 TDD (608) 267-2427 FAX (608) 267-1052
Internet Address: www.dpi.state.wi.us

Elizabeth Burmaster
State Superintendent

September 26, 2001

The Honorable Richard Grobschmidt
Chair, Senate Education Committee
State Capitol
Madison, WI 53702

Dear Senator Grobschmidt:

I am writing to express my support for Senate Bill 235, which requires instruction in the history of organized labor and the collective bargaining process. These are key elements upon which much of the collective bargaining history in this country is based.

The importance of the history of organized labor and the collective bargaining process has also been recognized by others. Much of this material was included in the model academic standards, which have been approved by the legislature.

Thank you for holding a hearing on this very important issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Elizabeth Burmaster". There is a small mark or initials "EB" at the end of the signature.

Elizabeth Burmaster
State Superintendent

jk

Sumi, John

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In this day-and-age, we are continually and rightfully concerned about providing for a school experience that will equip our children to effectively operate as adults. Your committee, I'm certain, has a major goal to assure that Wisconsin's children are able to complete their school years ready to assume the role as citizens.

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Sadly, they have been largely neglected in our schools. Our business friends have the resources and have recognized the value of education, and have flooded our schools with materials telling their story. Not so with labor and working people.

For instance, a 1997 survey of the three most widely used textbooks in social studies for 5th graders showed only minuscule mention of labor. The three each had more than 700 pages of text; yet one had only nine paragraphs devoted to unions or working people, another had 16 paragraphs and the other 20 paragraphs.

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