



THE JEWISH LABOR AND POLITICAL ARCHIVE

Illustration depicting the march towards a 30-hour work week, from the program book of the 1937 International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union (ILGWU) Convention in Atlantic City, New Jersey. YIVO Archives.

50 HOURS

**YIVO RECEIVES
\$350,000 GRANT
TO DIGITIZE
COLLECTIONS
FOCUSED
ON JEWISH
IMMIGRANT
INVOLVEMENT
IN THE LABOR
MOVEMENT IN
THE UNITED
STATES**

YIVO has been awarded a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) for \$349,524 to process and digitize four collections from YIVO's Jewish Labor and Political Archive (JLPA). These four collections focus on the Jewish immigrant involvement in the labor movement in the United States including: the International Ladies' Garment Workers'

Union Collection, the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America Collection, the Jewish Labor Committee Collection, and the United Hebrew Trades Collection.

The membership and leadership of these organizations were infused with the ideas and ideals of members of the Jewish Labor Bund who immigrated to America after the failed Russian Revolution of 1905, changing and molding the American labor movement. These organizations also provided educational opportunities and English language and citizenship classes, thus playing an Americanizing and educational influence among Jewish immigrant workers.

ABOUT THE PROJECT

YIVO's Jewish Labor and Political Archive (JLPA) encompasses more than 100 collections (3.5 million pages of documents). The materials cover geographic locations across the United States and Europe from 1870 to 1992. They are rich in correspondence between major political and labor leaders; materials about revolutionary cells; illegal press and pamphlets circulated during the Holocaust; manuscripts of speeches delivered by figures in the Jewish Labor Bund; leaflets and flyers calling for protests and boycotts; posters advertising rallies and marches; and sound recordings of members of the US labor movement.

The collections illustrate how the transnational activities of the Jewish working class were instrumental in the international labor movement. Jews who immigrated to the United States during the period of mass immigration brought their political ideologies, social consciousness, and demand for labor reform to the new and fertile ground of the American working class, joining other ethnic groups in the fight for fair wages and workers' rights. The collections provide valuable insights on the impact of the Jewish immigrant community on American culture and serve as a bridge to understanding the evolution and diversity of the American Jewish experience.



Featured Artifacts

THE INTERNATIONAL LADIES' GARMENT WORKERS' UNION (ILGWU) COLLECTION

Many collections in YIVO's Jewish Labor and Political Archive help illuminate the role of the immigrant Jewish community in American trade unions, labor organizations, and political groups. One such collection is that of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union (ILGWU).

Founded in 1900 by members of seven local unions in New York City representing mainly newly arrived Jewish and Italian immigrants, the ILGWU grew to become one of the largest labor unions in the United States. During the union's early years, the ILGWU became an important force in establishing the rights to unionize, bargain collectively, and work under safe conditions.

The union staged several successful strikes including the "Uprising of 20,000" of 1909, at that time the largest strike by women in US history, and the "Great Revolt" of 1910 in which 60,000 cloak makers staged a walkout. In 1910, in the wake of these contentious battles, the ILGWU negotiated and successfully adopted the "Protocol of Peace," a system of regulations between the union and the garment industry that attempted to ensure stability, limit strikes, and maintain production



DRESSMAKERS UNION
LOCAL 22 I.L.G.W.U.
MAY DAY

KNITGOODS
WORKERS
UNION
LOCAL NO 1
INTERNATIONAL
GARMENT WORKERS
UNION
ORGANIZED

UNION LABEL
INTERNATIONAL LADIES GARMENT WORKERS UNION
AFL-CIO

1900
SIXTIETH
ANNIVERSARY
1960
ILGWU

continuity by creating an arbitration system for settling disputes between union members and factory bosses.

The union also took an active role in improving the lives of its workers beyond the factory walls. The ILGWU organized educational opportunities to train workers in subjects such as history and economics and even provided English language and citizenship classes; became the first American union to negotiate an unemployment compensation fund; and established a health care program for its members.

Between the 1930s and 1960s, the ILGWU more than doubled its membership, organizing Black, Latino, and Asian garment workers across the United States, often in areas where union representation was weak or non-existent.

BACKGROUND: Parade of the Knitgoods Workers Union Local 191. New York, 1937. YIVO Archives.

ABOVE: May Day banner for Dressmakers Union Local 22. New York, ca. 1930s. YIVO Archives.

BELOW: Left and right side views of an ILGWU hat worn for the sixtieth anniversary of the union. New York, 1960. YIVO Archives.



YIVO WELCOMES YOUR SUPPORT OF THE JEWISH LABOR AND POLITICAL ARCHIVE PROJECT (JLPA)

To date, the project has raised over \$1.2 Million towards its \$8.5 Million goal. This diverse collection includes items related to the Holocaust, labor unions, Jewish political activism, and much more. Together they offer invaluable insights into how Jews in Europe and the United States responded to the momentous events of the 20th century.

Join us on this journey as we make this historic archival collection available to a global audience.

Levels of support:

- \$1,000,000+ **Builder**
- \$500,000+ **Partner**
- \$100,000+ **Benefactor**
- \$50,000+ **Patron**
- \$25,000+ **Sponsor**
- \$10,000+ **Supporter**
- \$5,000+ **Contributor**
- \$1,000+ **Friend**

We are profoundly indebted to Irene Pletka for her generous lead support of this extraordinary collection.

YIVO gratefully acknowledges and thanks Ruth and David Levine, the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), and the Slomo and Cindy Silvian Foundation for their generous support of this project.

For more information and naming opportunities, please contact Melissa S. Cohen at 212.294.6156 or via email at MCOHEN@YIVO.ORG.



NATIONAL
ENDOWMENT
FOR THE
HUMANITIES

The National Endowment for the Humanities:
Democracy demands wisdom.