

## *Preface*

In retelling fifty years of International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union history in the manner here presented our chief concern has been to recapture the warmth, color, excitement and sense of immediacy which participants in the events of that history knew.

Other histories of the ILGWU have been written often, and well. But few of these have kept in constant focus in their pages the human beings who, as members and leaders, provided the vision and courage by which an industry has been lifted out of the slums and sweatshops.

Only in the selection of materials from contemporary newspapers, magazines, reports and other publications have we exercised the historian's prerogative of hindsight in order to provide each period of ILGWU history with a unifying framework.

Each piece of copy in the twelve issues of ILGWU NEWS-HISTORY is reprinted as written but is cut only because of space considerations or to avoid inclusion of copy not pertaining directly to our story.

All copy in ILGWU NEWS-HISTORY is from sources contemporary with the events described. The source of each item is indicated at its end. The dateline of each item is the date of its original publication in the cited source.

Clearly, the use of a multitude of non-union sources means that not all opinions expressed in these pages coincide with the position taken by the union either now or at the time of the event. The passing of the years has also brought about the solution of many of the problems that in the past agitated either the union or the industry or both. Many who in the early pages of an ILGWU history appear unfriendly to its purposes return, in later pages, as its staunch champions.

ILGWU NEWS-HISTORY is neither a completely detailed nor definitive account. It is rather a retelling of the highlights of the garment workers' history in a way that presents at least one example of most of the situations and problems with which the union had to contend.

Today, the ILGWU is a much admired institution. Its every move provides copy. The ILGWU is news. But this has not always been the case.

When ILGWU problems were largely internal, the debates raged in the pages of its own publications. For years, its difficulties were reported chiefly in the foreign-language press and ILGWU NEWS-HISTORY contains a number of important pieces translated for the first time.

ILGWU NEWS-HISTORY reflects, in its sources, the whirligig of public opinion, tracing, as the late Joseph Shaplen once phrased it, "the evolution of labor news from the police blotter to the front page."

In putting the twelve issues of ILGWU NEWS-HISTORY to bed, the staff of "Justice," the ILGWU publication, worked against a convention deadline more exacting than any they ever had to meet. For the aid they gave in speeding our task we are indebted to Mrs. Dorothy Kuhn Oko of the New York Public Library's Service to Trade Unions as well as the library's Photographic Service and Newspaper Division, and the photography department of "Justice."

Most of all we are indebted to the many thousands of garment workers who made ILGWU history and to the members of the fourth estate, with and without by-lines, who held the mirror up for the public to follow the rise of a great trade union.

MAX D. DANISH

LEON STEIN

New York City  
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