

Workers Memorial Day events

and a number of activities to commemorate Workers Memorial Day this year. These included a memorial service and OSHA Reform rally; an areawide moment of silence; meetings with local District Attorneys to press for criminal charges in future cases of workplace health and safety crime; and efforts to get local proclamations passed. A brief summary follows.

Memorial Service and OSHA Reform Rally

Despite rain and cold, 75 people gathered April 25 in Ithaca to attend a memorial service dedicated to the 25 Hamlet fire victims, followed by a rally for OSHA Reform. Civil Rights activist Dorothy Cotton, a close associate of Martin Luther King Jr., and former Director of Community Education for the SCLC, gave the invocation. The eulogy took the form of a poem, "Twenty-Five Dead. Fifty-Six Injured," by Elana Levy. Dr. Michael Lax, Medical Director of the Central NY Occupational Health Clinical Center, spoke on OSHA Reform. Coleen Kattau (United University Professions, AFT) and Deb Whiter (UAW Local 2300) led those present in singing "Amazing Grace," "More Than a Paycheck," "Coal Tattoo," and "Solidarity Forever." Over 100 OSHA Reform post cards were filled out, and we will be continuing this drive during May.

Unions represented included Bricklayers Local 17, CSEA Local 605, CSEA Local 855, Ithaca Teachers Association (NEA-NY), Laborers Local 589, Machinists Local 1607, APWU Local 1151, Public Employees Federation Local 251, Teamsters Local 317, UAW Locals 802, 1326, 1774 and 2300, United University Professions and NYSUT.

Moment of Silence

In Ithaca the moment of silence was signaled for the 30,000 area residents by the City's fire horns. Precisely at 2 pm on April 28 the horns sounded the traditional "Death Bell": the Box-5-5-5-5 signal normally used for the death of a firefighter. Also in Ithaca, the Cornell University chimes played "Solidarity Forever" and "Amazing Grace" in honor of the occasion.

DATED _____

AUG 14 1991

DATED _____

SEP 10 1991

Peter Favretto
PETER FAVRETTO
ASSOCIATE ATTORNEY

Cortland, in response to a request by CSEA Local 605, the president of the SUNY campus in Cortland authorized almost 1,000 college employees to observe a moment of silence at 2 pm. The college carillon also rang at 2 pm and continued for two minutes.

The moment of silence also was observed in Schuyler County, though the promised blowing of the fire horns at 2 pm never occurred.

District Attorney Meetings on Workplace Health and Safety Crime

Workers Memorial Day this year was also an occasion on which the labor movement in Central NY opened a new front in our campaign for safe jobs. Labor delegations met in separate hour long meetings with the District Attorneys of Tompkins County, Cortland County and Schuyler County, all on April 28.

The purpose of these meetings was to discuss the possibility of local criminal prosecution of employers in cases in which their negligence and willful violation of safety rules leads to serious workplace injury or illness.

The meetings served to educate the local prosecutors about the issue of workplace crime, and about the importance of prosecution of wrongdoers under the state criminal code. Each meeting resulted in a commitment by the prosecutors to initiate investigations and pursue such cases where sufficient evidence that a worker death or serious injury resulted from negligence or willful violations was brought to their attention. They also expressed willingness to continue the dialogue with labor on this issue. We were encouraged by their response.

Proclamations

Four local jurisdictions - the cities of Ithaca and Cortland, Schuyler County, and Tompkins County - approved Workers Memorial Day proclamations (Ithaca proclamation attached).

6/10/91
AGENCY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK
TO THE ATTORNEY GENERAL'S OFFICE
7/1/91
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Change the Amount of
to \$ 86,000
Modification to a Planning Grant