



photos © 2009 Bill Burke/Page One

# Union Label History

Presented on the occasion of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Union Label & Service Trades Department, AFL-CIO, 68<sup>th</sup> Convention - Sept. 12, 2009

Kim Munson – art historian/author

# Union Label Week

Collection of the Labor Archives & Research Center, SFSU

*Your* LOCAL LABOR  
**CENTRAL BODY**  
AND  
**BUILDING TRADES**  
**COUNCIL**

WILL HELP CELEBRATE  
NATIONAL  
**UNION LABEL**  
WEEK

**MAY**  
**10 - 16**  
**1948**

- ★ LOOK FOR THE UNION LABEL
- ★ DEMAND UNION SERVICES
- ★ PATRONIZE UNION SHOPS

MILLIONS OF ORGANIZED WORKERS WILL  
CELEBRATE NATIONAL UNION LABEL WEEK

This poster features a stylized blue silhouette of a building on the left. A red and white lightning bolt strikes the top of the building. The background is light blue with scattered white stars and a red diagonal line. The text is arranged in a central, bold, sans-serif font.

**FIGHT**

*the*  
**SWEAT SHOP**

BREEDER OF  
DEPRESSION

National  
**UNION LABEL**  
Week  
MAY 10 16 1948

BUY UNION MADE GOODS  
DEMAND UNION SERVICES

This poster has a dark background. A large blue silhouette of a hand holding a pencil is on the left. A red and white lightning bolt strikes the top right. A yellow and orange sun is in the middle right. A line of blue silhouettes of workers in hard hats is at the bottom. The text is in a bold, sans-serif font, with 'FIGHT' in yellow and 'SWEAT SHOP' in white.

The Union Label Golden Rule: Buy union products and use union services as you would have union wages and benefits paid unto you...

# Early Labels



ARMS OF THE GUILD OF MASTERS IN STONE AND WOOD  
LUCA DELLA ROBBIA

Arms of the Guild of Masters of Stone & Wood by Luca Della Robbia  
Florence, 1400's.



Arms of the Worshipful  
Company of Blacksmiths,  
London, 1600's



Goldsmith's Hallmarks  
on a meat skewer, 1800's



*"Labor Builds Civilization"  
Greco-Roman myth of Vulcan  
disseminated through Italian  
Renaissance literature and painting  
(1490)*



*Coats of Arms of the British Trade Guilds  
London (1600's)*



**Multiple uses:**

- Post Revolutionary War - Mechanics Societies
- Widespread use due to commercial printing plates
- Post Civil War - Early union label, symbol of quality

**Evolution of the Arm & Hammer Emblem**



**Current usage:**

- Socialist Labor Party (1904)
- Church & Dwight's Arm & Hammer Baking Soda Trademark (1865).

# House Carpenters, 1869

*Resolved:* "That this League will furnish a stamp to all eight-hour mills, that they may stamp their work, so that we may know what material to put up, and may avoid using the work gotten out by ten-hour mills."

~ published in the *Daily Alta California*, August 4 1869.



OR...



OR...



# Cigar makers, 1874



Collection of the Labor Archives & Research Center, SFSU

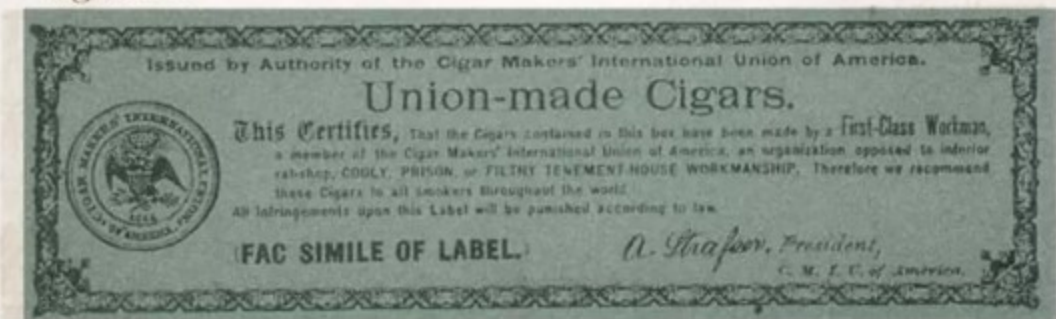
## Appeal to the Public!

Gift of  
Ira B. Cross

Ira B. Cross Collection  
Bancroft Library

The Cigar Makers of San Francisco take pleasure in bringing before the public the following facts:

1st. That we have organized a branch of the Cigar Maker' International Union of America to issue the following label:



2d. By refusing to buy cigars unless the above label is on the box you will assist us in peaceably driving 8,000 Chinese Cigar Makers from the trade, and keep \$6,000,000 yearly from going to China.

3d. We, the Cigar Makers' Union, recommend the firm of Koenigsberger, Falk & Mayer, of San Francisco, as the only Cigar Manufactory who are to-day employing White International Union Men, and by calling for the following brands, you are sure of getting a cigar made by White Labor:

KREE KREE,  
LA ROSA,  
SCOTTY,  
ECLYPS,

GARCIA HAVANA,  
COMERCIAL "  
PORTO RICO "  
ESTELLA "

J. E. Brooks & Co., Printers, 401 Clay St., S.F.

# American Federation of Labor



Logo officially adopted in Pittsburgh. 11/19/1881

hello landsman!



העלָא לַאנְדסמאַן !

YIVO Center for Jewish Study



AFL Union Label, 1894.

Samuel Gompers (1850-1924)





GENERAL OFFICE  
**UNION LABEL TRADES DEPARTMENT**  
 OF THE  
**AMERICAN FEDERATION OF LABOR**

JOHN B. LENNON, President  
 THOMAS F. TRACY, Secretary-Treasurer  
 EXECUTIVE BOARD  
 First Vice-President, JOHN F. TOBIN - 245 Summer Street, Boston, Mass.  
 Second Vice-President, T. C. PARSONS, 214 P Street Northwest, Washington, D. C.  
 Third Vice-President, MAX MORRIS - 315 Agard Building, Denver, Colo.  
 Fourth Vice-President, OWEN MILLER - 3535 Pine Street, N. Y. Ave., Wash. D. C.  
 Fifth Vice-President, J. J. MANNING - 402 Second Avenue, New York, N. Y.

Washington, D. C. April 13 1909

Frank Morrison,  
 Sec'y American Federation of Labor,

Dear Sir and Brother:

Your favor of the 12th containing receipt for \$10.00 for premium on bond for Sec'y Treas. of this department to hand. A short time ago I filed an application for a certificate of affiliation with the A.F. of L. for this department, but neglected to enclose check for same.

Enclosed find check for \$5.00 for the same. Please acknowledge and oblige,

Yours fraternally  
*Thomas F. Tracy*  
 Sec'y Treas.

RECEIVED APR 14 1909

**CHARTER RECORD**

OK  
 Morrison  
 4-2-1909

Name of Union Union Label Trades Department, A. F. of L. No. \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_

Application received and entered April 12, 1909 Receipt made APR 14 1909

Chart issued April 7, 1909 Charter and Manuals mailed 4/14/09

To whom mailed Sec. F. Tracy City Washington State D.C.

To whom outfit expressed \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_

Books, Literature, etc., expressed \_\_\_\_\_ Seal expressed \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Express Company \_\_\_\_\_ Seal ordered \_\_\_\_\_

Charter Letter written April 22, 1909 Secretary's Letter written April 23, 1909

To whom forwarded Thomas F. Tracy City Washington, State \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Organizer \_\_\_\_\_ Organizer's Letter acknowledged \_\_\_\_\_

ANSWERED  
 APR 24 1909  
 GORTON









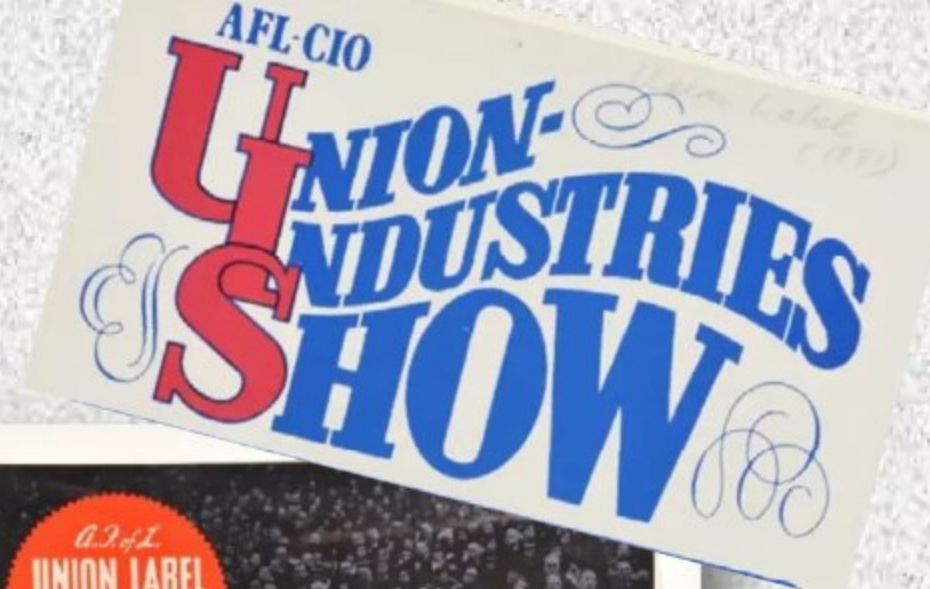
# Union Label Week



Labor Day Parade with San Francisco Label Section, SF Labor Council, Waiters Union #30 and Waitresses Union # 48 Carrying AFL 8 Hour Banner, 1925



# Union Industries Show



PRESIDENT ROOSEVELT  
*Endorses the Principle of*  
 UNION LABEL

THE WHITE HOUSE  
 WASHINGTON

My dear Mr. Woll:

Please accept sincere thanks for the kind invitation to attend the first national Union Label and Industrial Exhibition. I regret that I am unable to accept but I desire to send you hearty good wishes for the success of this undertaking.

I have long been convinced that the consumer wields a great power which, if consciously used to support fair labor standards, would be of great benefit to workers and to those employers who cooperate in the maintenance of such standards. I trust that the Union Label Exhibition and the work of the Women's Auxiliaries will help to make the public aware of the tremendous influence it can exercise through wisely directed buying power.

Very sincerely yours,

Mr. Matthew Woll,  
 President,  
 Union Label Trades Department,  
 American Federation of Labor,  
 Washington, D. C.

Union Label Catalog, 1944



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# Outreach: US Bicentennial 1976

Labor Archives & Research Center, SFSU

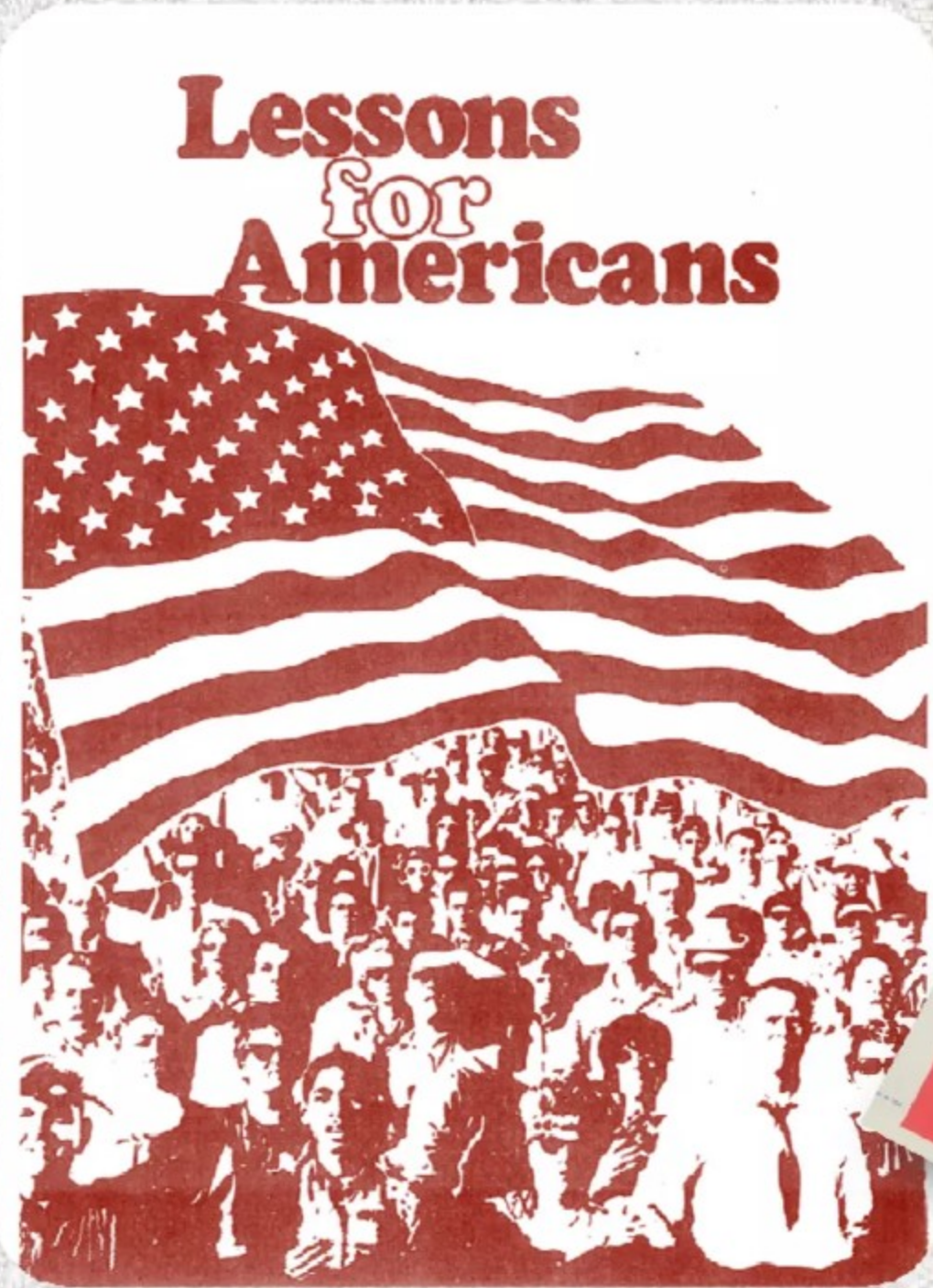
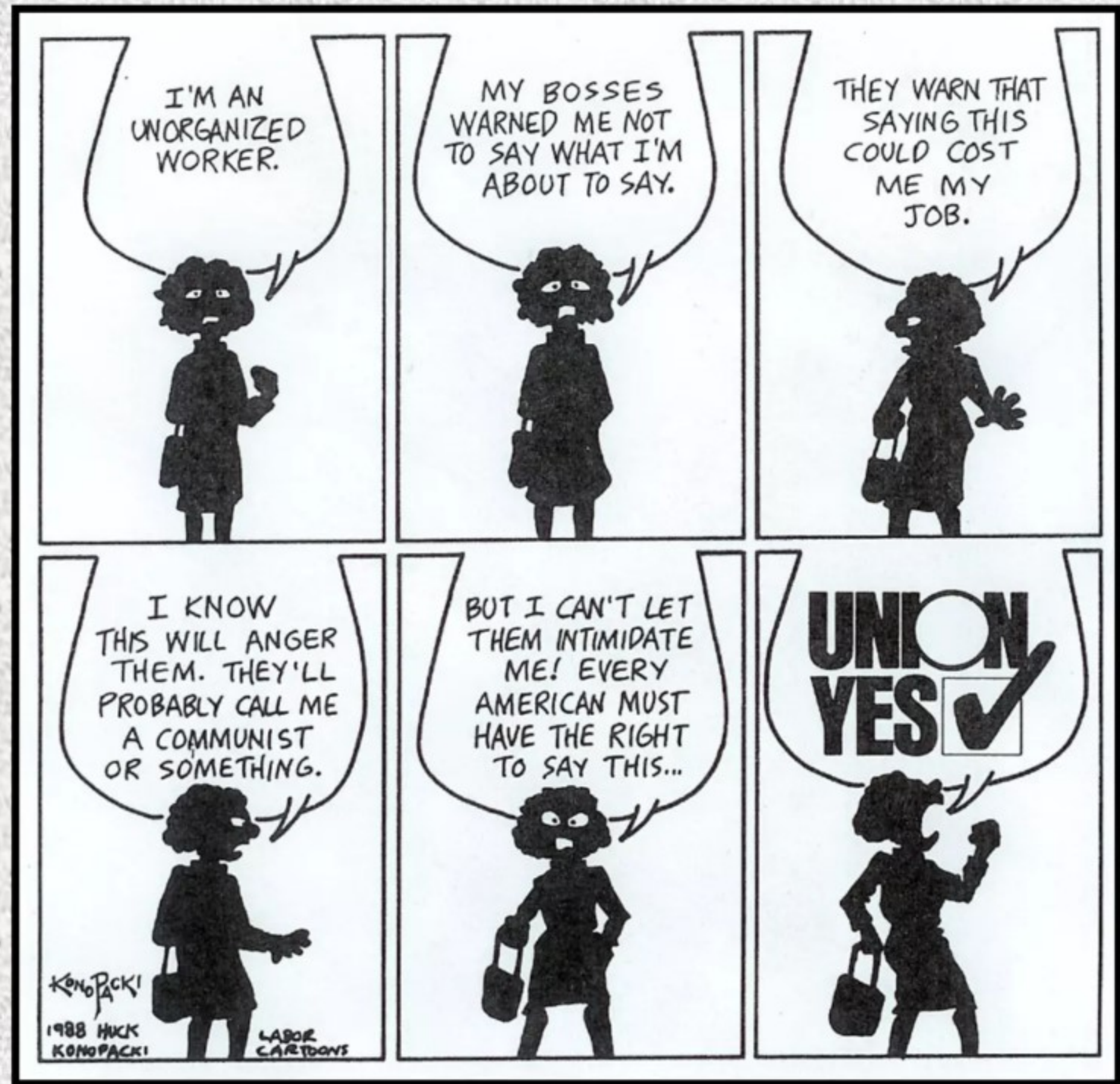


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# Universal Labels

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Union Yes! logo by Lois, Pitts, Gershon, Pon/GGK  
Art Director George Lois, 1987  
Cartoon from "THEM" by Gary Huck & Mike Konopacki, 1991

# Union Label Book Project

*Signs of Unity: Stories and Symbols of the American Union Label Movement*, a book project being researched and written by art historian Kim Munson collecting the origin stories of US union labels.

**Have a story to tell?**

<http://www.mg-km.com/labels.html>

or e-mail Kim at:

[unionlabel.story@gmail.com](mailto:unionlabel.story@gmail.com)

