

**Pacific Northwest Labor History Association**  
**27920 68<sup>th</sup> Ave E, Graham, WA 98338 USA**  
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**Call for Papers, Workshops and Presentations for the  
2012 Conference, to be held in Tacoma, Washington May 18 - 20**

## **Bread, Yes, But Roses Too: What Are the Roles of Government and Public Sector Unions in Creating and Sharing Our Common Wealth?**

Next year's Pacific Northwest Labor History Conference will be held in Tacoma, a struggling city with a proud labor history and a continuing union presence at the ballot box and the work place. The presidential election year of 2012 offers a good opportunity to reassess and relearn some of the history of labor-based politics from 100 years ago, when a Socialist candidate (Eugene Debs) received 1,000,000 votes in a run for president. The 2012 election year will also provide an opportunity to discuss the viability of using the ballot to reverse Republican and right-wing assaults against worker rights and unions. In addition, 2012 commemorates the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the "Bread and Roses" mass strike, when thousands of textile workers of many nationalities, led in large part by women and immigrants, united to win a historic union victory in Lawrence, Massachusetts. In the spirit of Bread and Roses we will include arts and music to see how worker struggles benefit the whole person, stomach, heart, and mind. In the context of today's uprisings by workers in Wisconsin and beyond, we will discuss the past and future of the public sector and public sector unionism, as well as labor's role in electing government leaders committed to achieving a good life for all.

Conference sessions will be held in the heart of Tacoma's downtown historic district at the Washington History Museum, the University of Washington Tacoma, and nearby art and glass museums and union halls. Utilizing rallies, music, art, films, panels, labor tours, speakers and seminars, the conference will address our history and our present. We invite proposals for academic research papers, panels and individual presentations, interactive workshops, drama, music, art, memorabilia displays, and other forms of presentation. Interactive sessions are preferred and the reading of papers is discouraged. We welcome all submissions including those that address, in both historical and contemporary perspectives

Public sector union struggles in 2011 and 2012 and the years to come; collective bargaining in the public sector; the struggle to save and expand the public sector in Canada and the U.S. In the project of forging a common interest, what is the role of public and private sector unions, public policy, the use of government spending to create private sector jobs, and labor and community alliance



- How government best serves the people's interests. What is the meaning of common wealth: what kind of public goods and social wage should working people demand (public transportation, health care, parks, culture, etc.)? How can teachers' unions and working families struggle for a good education? How should we

- respond to many related issues such as the potential represented by smaller classrooms, the issue of vouchers and charter schools, merit pay, seniority, and other controversies roiling education today? How do we get labor into school curricula?
- Roses, flowers, fruits, bread, vegetables, and meat: struggles for justice among farm workers, community gardeners, co-ops and labor unions in the food processing, grocery, and transportation industries in the Pacific Northwest. What are the social ecology lessons of the past to help us survive in the future?
- How should we remember the 1912 Bread and Roses Strike? How can we use innovative tactics, cross-ethnic and immigrant organizing, art and music to help us win?
- How can African Americans and other people of color, immigrants and women achieve their full status in our historical accounts and in society? How can we reach Martin Luther King's beloved community in which "all labor has dignity"? What can be done to reform the prison-industrial complex and unfair sentencing policies creating the "new Jim Crow" for men of color?
- Arts and the public sector. Using art, music, and history in theaters, museums, and other public locales to promote good aesthetics, good politics, and full employment for arts workers and educators.



- Can capitalism be reformed through struggle to meet the needs of everyone? The role of unions, government, non-governmental and community organizations, and people in creating a fair distribution (and/or redistribution) of wealth. What can we done through politics, tax law, and public policy to correct America's massive mal-distribution of wealth? In the context of "shared sacrifice," when do the rich do their share?
- Labor in US national, local and state electoral politics, 1912 and 2012: contrasts and continuities in the Pacific Northwest and beyond. Labor and a Labor Party: is there anything to learn from the candidacies of Eugene Debs? From the experience of the NDP in Canada? What should we be doing in the presidential election of 2012: where and how should labor stand?
- Labor unions, public policy, and worker ownership of companies. The historic relationship in the Northwest between labor unions and worker-owned companies.
- War and its impact on progressive politics: 1912 to 1919, and today.

**Proposal deadline is January 16, 2012.** Please send a short summary and list of all presenters to Ross K. Rieder, PNLHA President, by email to [pnlha1@aol.com](mailto:pnlha1@aol.com), or by mail to 27920 68<sup>th</sup> Ave E, Graham, WA 98338, USA.

For further information contact Rieder at 206.406.2604. For updates, check our website: [www.pnlha.org](http://www.pnlha.org)