
Presidential Documents

Title 3—

Proclamation 6891 May 3, 1996

The President

Labor History Month, 1996

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

In the early 1900s, millions of Americans left their farms to begin new lives as factory workers. Sadly, many of these citizens found neither secure employment nor higher wages at their new jobs, and the industrial economy brought them exploitation, continued poverty, and the risk of injury and death. No student of American history can forget the images of filthy children emerging from mills and mines, the stories of terrible fires and explosions, or the grim legacy of the slums that grew up in factory towns.

Although child labor, sweatshops, and workplace disasters are largely horrors of the past, efforts to eliminate them began to succeed only after workers organized and spoke with a united, independent voice. The American labor movement helped the first generation of industrial employees to express their aspirations and insecurities, empowering them with the necessary tools to define the terms and conditions of their employment and to expand the role of labor in the larger society.

As we approach the 21st century, our Nation's economy is undergoing a transformation as momentous as the change that spurred the exodus from farms to factories 100 years ago. And in facing the challenges posed by global competition and rapid technological advances, the workers of the Information Age need the same effective leadership that allowed their forbears to succeed. Each new generation of workers must embrace the activism that has characterized labor's rich history, and all Americans should recognize the role that labor has played in the continuing progress of our democracy.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, WILLIAM J. CLINTON, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim May 1996, as Labor History Month. I call upon Government officials, educators, the media, and all the people of the United States to observe this month with ceremonies, activities, and programs that encourage reflection on the labor movement's heritage and its many contributions to the creation and maintenance of a just America.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this third day of May, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety-six, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twentieth.

