



Tom Deary Papers

1950-2007

13 boxes (9.75 linear feet)

Call no.: MS 526

Collection overview

Tom Deary was an union organizer for the IUE, serving on the executive board of Local 201 at the GE Plant in Lynn, Massachusetts. He was an union organizer for the IUE, serving on the executive board of Local 201 at the GE Plant in Lynn, Massachusetts. Involved in the 1969-1970 strike, Deary joined the IUE staff in 1971 and served for 30 years as an organizer, negotiator, and strike leader in the northeast and southern states. Frequently at odds with union careerists, he built a small labor newspaper in the 1980s into one with a regional focus, *New England Labor News and Commentary*.

The Deary papers include organizer reports, correspondence, IUE election campaign literature, and oral histories and videotapes. Letters, financial records, and business plans document Deary's establishment of a regional labor newspaper, the *New England Labor News and Commentary*.

Background on Tom Deary

Tom Deary was a union organizer, and steward for the IUE (International Union of Electronic, Electrical, Salaried, Machine and Furniture Workers), affiliated with Local 201 at the Lynn (Massachusetts) GE Plant, and in the IUE staff union, the AFL-CIO (American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations) during the 1990s. Deary's involvement in labor issues began in 1969-1970 with the GE strike in Burlington, Vermont. He served on the IUE staff for 30 years beginning in 1971 during which he participated in organizing and negotiation, and as a strike leader primarily in the northeast and south. In 1977, Deary was victim of a politically-motivated discharge that prevented him from returning to work. Due to overwhelming support by fellow members of the Local 201, including protests the went on as long as eighteen months, Deary resumed his position as a GE machinist. The IUE was forced to rehire him in 1978 at a national convention.

Deary led organizing efforts for notable strikes in Decatur, Illinois in 1995, and he was involved in organizing and negotiations for countless other strikes across the northeast, especially in Massachusetts and northern New England, as well as the south in later years. Deary began a regional labor news bulletin and newspaper in 1984, *New England Labor News and Commentary*, which operated for several years, as well as a radio show focusing on labor issues on the WMVU radio station (Nashua, New Hampshire) throughout 1997. Deary sought

to draw attention to labor injustices and malpractices brought on by economic crises and companies' abuse of workers.

After retirement, Tom Deary served on the Alliance of Retired Americans' New Hampshire and the New Hampshire AFL-CIO's Executive Board, and worked with the Nashua Labor Council to correct labor abuses in the state of New Hampshire. He attended the signing and sponsoring of labor bills at the capitol in 2003, and fought legislation that would strip workers of their rights such as anti-union Right to Work bills. He further advocated for election turnout for labor friendly candidates, Social Security, Wal-Mart and corporate abuses, as well as child labor and unfair labor practices abroad in countries such as Romania. Deary died in 2006 in Nashua, New Hampshire.

Scope of collection

This collection contains a range of materials from correspondence to files related to specific strikes which Tom Deary participated in on the behalf of the IUE. Correspondence between Local 201 leaders and district or national IUE leadership, as well as affiliated organizations, and individuals in the labor movement, relates to issues of management as well as broader labor issues such as economic deregulation, the loss of jobs, and on-the-job abuse of labor from the 1950s to 2002. Early news files contain clippings and papers relating to the "red scare," McCarthyism, and the association of labor unions with communism. Audio along with audio-visual (VHS) tapes deal with specific strikes, and movements within the organization primarily during the late 1980s through 1990s.

The collection further contains general labor publications which deal with general labor issues such as methodology for organizing labor movements, the impact and success of labor movements, and the obstacles faced in the United States, and world, beginning with labor organization's decline in the 1980s to 2007. Materials relating to New England Labor News and Commentary newsletter/newspaper (1984-1990) publication include correspondence, feasibility studies, surveys for readership as well as subscriptions, and audio tapes from the radio show on WMVU (1997). Themes include improving working conditions in U.S. plants, and factories, critiquing labor management, and labor organization primarily in the United States. Also documented, labor strikes, labor organizing conferences, and meetings by the IUE, and its affiliated organizations, and staff of such organizations through photographs, slides, and negatives from the 1960s through the 1990s.

Series descriptions

Series 1: IUE

1950-2003

IUE materials such as agreements, contracts, correspondence, and files, grievances made by workers against their employers, audio tape recordings of strike-related material, and conversations, taped coverage of strikes, and meetings or conferences, as well as election and campaign ephemera such as fliers, buttons, and pins. The agreements and contracts are the outcomes of negotiations held between companies and the IUE or its representatives. The series also contains correspondence between Local 201 leaders, and district or national IUE leadership relating to issues of management, and broader labor issues such as economic deregulation, the loss of jobs, and on-the-job abuse of labor. Grievances primarily document labor issues at the GE plants, as well as within the CIO during the 1990s. Files, and tapes cover strikes against companies throughout the south, and northeast such as Trico (Texas), La-Z-Boy (Louisiana), and the GE plant in Wilmington (North Carolina), and labor movements such as Solidarity/Reform Now (1995) and "the War Zone" in support of striking Tate and Lyle workers in Decatur, Illinois. Some materials have been restricted due to discussion of internal politics and sensitive issues within the IUE after 1995.

Series 2: General Labor Publications

1955-2007

A range of publications such as pamphlets, constitutions/ bylaws, agreements, papers, reports, and articles of individuals, and organizations affiliated with the labor movement including unions such as the UAW (United Auto Workers), Trade Union Leadership Institute, and the AFL-CIO. Topics covered include the relationship between local politics, and labor, the role of the state in labor, workers' rights as human rights, and U.S. economic practices. The bulk of the series spans the 1980s-1990s, when labor faced a decline in support from within, and many external threats from deregulation, and the outsourcing of jobs.

Series 3: New England Labor News and Commentary (NELNC)

1983-1997

Correspondence, newsletters, newspapers, notes, scrapbooks, and other records held by the New England Labor News and Commentary such as feasibility studies, and subscription information. In 1990, Deary was interviewed by Michael Moore in relation to the IAM response to labor's bureaucracy, and the desire of some labor leaders to see the newspaper dismantled. Correspondence arranged by state of origin of organization documents the Labor News and Commentary appeals for both financial, and mission support, while feasibility studies and surveys assess what kind of impact the paper could have on New England, and how well it reaches its audience. Prior to the creation of the paper in 1988, New England Labor News published a newsletter beginning in April 1984 to draw attention to local labor issues. After the paper was canceled, Deary hosted a radio show on WMVU. This series includes approximately two-dozen tapes recorded of the show which continue to deal with labor issues on a local, and national scale. Some audio tapes have been restricted due to sensitive material regarding IUE internal politics after 1995.

Series 4: Photographic Material**1960-2003**

Photographic material primarily related to various strikes held across New England during the 1980s and 1990s, as well as the south. Strikes against the following companies include: ADT (ca. 1990), Amalgamated Transit Union (1990), Colt Firearms (1988), and the United paperworkers' Union (1989). The materials depict picket-lining, leafletting activities, other forms of organizing, as well as negotiations, and meetings. Other photographic materials depict conferences or training activities of IUE, AFL-CIO, and affiliated groups interested in remediating broader labor issues such as the Massachusetts Union Women's Seminars (1988), and the Solidarity March on Washington (1991). Images document staff as well as affiliates of union organizations such as the IUE, local teamsters' unions, and NELNC carrying out day-to-day activities and at formal gatherings.

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Administrative information

Access

Materials related to the following are restricted in this collection: the Wilmington, NC organizing campaign by the IUE, the CIO (IUE staff union) after 1995, internal IUE politics after 1995, treatment of IUE staff as well as relations between staff and IUE leadership after 1995, and the merger with the CWA and its relation to internal strife shall be restricted for 20 years. Restricted material types includes audio tapes, as well as notes from those tapes. This restriction may be waived on a case by case basis by written permission of Marge Deary or by Thomas Deary, Michael Deary, or Theresa Gray.(Boxes 7, 11, 12 in Series 1 and 3).

Provenance

Gift of Marge Deary, 2007.

Processing Information

Processed by Michelle C. Sigiel, December 2017.

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Search terms

Subjects

- General Electric Corporation
- American Federation of Labor--Correspondence
- Deary, Tom
- International Union of Electronic, Electrical, Salaried, Machine and Furniture Workers--Correspondence
- Labor movement--United States--History--20th century
- Labor--United States
- Nashua (N.H.)--Newspapers
- New England Labor News and Commentary
- Strikes and lockouts--United States--History--20th century

Contributors

- Deary, Tom **[main entry]**

Genres and formats

- Newspapers