
Inventory of the California Labor School Collection, 1942 - 1957

Accession number: 1988/043 & 1990/012

Labor Archives & Research Center

San Francisco State University
San Francisco, California

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Descriptive Summary

Title: California Labor School Collection,

Date (inclusive): 1942 - 1957

Accession number: 1988/043 & 1990/012

Creator: California Labor School

Extent: 2 cubic feet

Repository: San Francisco State University. Labor Archives & Research Center
San Francisco, California 94132

Shelf location: For current information on the location of these materials, please consult the Center's online catalog.

Language: English

Access

Collection is open for research.

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Introduction

This collection brings together records from several sources: The Bancroft Library which donated the bulk of the material; the Archives' Ephemera Files which held an aggregate of items from individual donors; and a small collection from an anonymous donor. These were combined into this California Labor School Collection which spans the entire life of the School from its founding as the Tom Mooney Labor School in 1942 until its closing by the Internal Revenue Service in 1957. Researchers should also see the Holland Roberts Collection (Acc. #: 1987/088) which includes subject files on the School and a draft manuscript of Holland Roberts' memoirs. The California Labor School Collection was processed by Carol Cuénod in May-June 1994.

History

The Tom Mooney Labor School opened in August 1942 in a few rooms over an auto salesroom at 678 Turk Street in San Francisco. Under the heading of "Education for Victory," the announcement stated "Side by side with the Army training camps, with the industrial training programs, with the civilian defense classes, it will undertake ... the systematic training and education of the men and women of San Francisco in the principles for which our country and the United Nations are fighting..." The School's program promised to analyze social, economic and political questions in light of the present world struggle against fascism. Dave Jenkins was the founding director and continued until 1949 when he was succeeded by Dr. Holland Roberts, the School's educational director.

This collection provides materials which describe the historical period of the California Labor School's early years. It was a period when unions and industry worked together to achieve maximum production for the war effort. There was interest in and a strong spirit of friendship for the USSR, a wartime ally of the U.S. Support for the School was received from unions whose membership had grown due to war industry. The ILWU sent 4,000 members to classes for new union members. Prominent citizens from industry and government were also listed as sponsors including Cyril Magnin, Richard Gump, Charles Crocker, U. S. Senator Sheridan Downey and U. S. Representative Franck Havenner. By the time the School was five years old, it boasted of conducting 135 classes for 1800 students, it had moved to larger quarters in a five-story building at 216 Market Street and had extension classes in Oakland and other Northern California sites.

In 1945, the U. S. State Department asked the California Labor School to serve as the official host in San Francisco for labor delegations to the founding conference of the United Nations.

From 1945 to 1947, The California Labor School was accredited by the California State Department of Education for veterans' education under the G.I. Bill of Rights and by 1947 there were 220 full-time students.

In 1947, the School bought its own building at 240 Golden Gate Avenue. Holland Roberts, in a draft manuscript of his memoirs, described 1948 as "the School at its peak." That same year, however, the U.S. Attorney-General placed the California Labor School on the Subversive List and thus began a ten-year attack led by the Subversive Activities Control Board in the Department of Justice and other government agencies. After the School was on the Subversive List, a student could not be employed by the federal government or any institution which had a "loyalty oath." If a student worked for the government, s/he could be discharged.

Support and attendance at the California Labor School declined. Union support was reduced to a few CIO locals which in 1949 were expelled from their Federation for being "Communist- dominated." The School was no longer a vital center for labor education and by 1951, the catalogs did not list one labor studies class. The School survived as a center of resistance to the political repression of the cold war--McCarthy years. Until it was padlocked by the IRS for alleged non-payment of taxes, the remaining students continued to support a reduced number of classes on the cold war, McCarthyism, U.S. history, USSR and socialism, writing, literature and the arts.

Scope and Content

This collection offers researchers a multi-faceted view of the California Labor School and its place in the left-wing community of the San Francisco Bay Area. Throughout the Box/Folder list, cross-references to the Holland Roberts Collection are made. Series I holds term catalogs starting with the Opening Announcement of the Tom Mooney Labor School in 1942. The early growth of the School as well as its decline in the 1950s is documented by these catalogs which list the number of classes offered. The changing political atmosphere can be seen by the class subjects. Series II contains syllabi, reading lists and special flyers promoting the classes. Arrangement of folders is by general subject headings, alphabetically. Material for several different classes might be in one folder.

Series III is titled "Administration," but it represents all non-classroom activity. "Fundraising" records direct appeals for donations, but the files also includes announcements of many social and cultural events held to raise money. Significant was the annual Christmas Market booklet which in early years listed many of the supporters of the School--both businesses and individuals. "Publications" by the School range in content from *Why Work for Nothing?*, a popularization of the Marxist theory of "surplus value," to *Melanie*, a booklet of whimsical autobiographical drawings by Melanie K. Kahn. A folder on the Library holds material on its active outreach work. Its bulletins and booklists offer insight into the intellectual character and scope of the left-wing community during the World War II and post-war periods.

Series IV documents attacks on the California Labor School by the Subversive Activities Control Board. The bulk of the material covers the years 1955 to 1957, a period when the School was ordered to register as a subversive organization. Correspondence and other documents

report the Board's hearings on the School in San Francisco and other events up to the closing of the School.

This collection provides a rich study of the impact of anti-Communist repression on the left-wing School, contrasting its early success during World War II and the post-war era to its battle for survival in the 1950s.

Related Collections

Other Collections with material on the California Labor School:

1. **Title:** Norman Leonard Collection,
1. Box 461, 462. Subversive Activities Control Board Hearings on the California Labor School, Transcripts and Exhibits, 1955 - 1956.
2. **Title:** Norman Leonard Collection/National Union of Marine Cooks and Stewards,
2. Box 330 House Committee on Education and Labor (Kerstin Committee), Hearing in San Francisco, testimony of David Jenkins, Director, California Labor School, 1948.

Series I: Term Catalogs

- | | |
|----------------|---|
| Box-folder 1/1 | Tom Mooney Labor School
Opening Term 1942
Winter and Spring 1944 |
| Box-folder 1/2 | California Labor School
Summer 1944
Winter, Fall for Oakland School 1944 |
| Box-folder 1/3 | Fall 1945 |
| Box-folder 1/4 | Spring, Summer, Fall 1946 |
| Box-folder 1/5 | Spring, Summer, Fall 1947 |
| Box-folder 1/6 | Yearbook; Winter, Summer, Fall 1948
Fall for Oakland and Berkeley |
| Box-folder 1/7 | Winter, Summer, Fall 1949 |
| Box-folder 1/8 | Class announcements, various terms 1950-1957 |

Series II - Classes and Class Materials

Additional Note

Includes course announcements, leaflets, class outlines, reading lists, seminars and conferences on class subjects.

- Box-folder 1/9 **Art**
 see also: Holland Roberts (HR) Memoirs: Personalities 1944- 1955
 Around the School - Anton Refrigier
- Box-folder 1/10 **Asilomar Summer School 1947-1949**
- Box-folder 1/11 **Children's Classes**
 see also: Theater and Acting 1945 - 1955
- Box-folder 1/12 **Dance**
 see also: Art, for material on Cultural Conferences;
 Children's Classes
- Box-folder 1/13 **Economics and Political Economy 1945 - 1956**

Additional Note

Class outlines, class schedules

- Box-folder 2/1 **Film Series and Forums 1942 - 1956**
- Box-folder 2/2 **Foreign Policy 1943 - 1950**
- Box-folder 2/3 **History Classes**
 See also: HR: Course material for U.S. History classes 1945 - 1956
- Box-folder 2/4 **Literature and Writing**
 See also: Art, for materials on Cultural Conferences 1944 - 1955
- Box-folder 2/5 **Mental Hygiene 1944**
- Box-folder 2/6 **Minorities (Negroes and Jews)**
 See also: HR: Course material for "The Negro Question" 1944 - 1956
- Box-folder 2/7 **Music**
- Box-folder 2/8 **Oakland and Other Branch Schools 1946 - 1950**
 Peace-related Classes and Events, see: Foreign Policy
- Box-folder 2/9 **Philosophy Classes 1944 - 1954**
- Box-folder 2/10 **Physical Science (Patri illustrated brochure) 1944 - 1954**
- Box-folder 2/11 **Political Action 1946 - 1952**
- Box-folder 2/12 **Public Relations 1945**
- Box-folder 3/1 **Reading Improvement 1955 - 1956**
- Box-folder 3/2 **Socialism - Science and Society 1947 - 1955**

Additional Note

(Dialectical Materialism, Development of classes in society)

- Box-folder 3/3 **Theater and Acting 1936 - 1956**

Additional Note

Includes Children's theater, classes and performances
See also: HR Memoirs: Personalities Around the School - Mara Alexander and Dave Sarvis Art, for material on Cultural Conferences

- Box-folder 3/4 **Trade Unions 1945 - 1946**

Additional Note

Includes: Training Program for Hawaiian ILWU members

- Box-folder 3/5 **Trade Unions 1947**
Box-folder 3/6 **Trade Unions 1948**

Box-folder 3/7 **Veterans Full-Time Program**
See also: HR: Veterans Full-Time Program; HR Memoirs: The GI Bill of Rights 1945 - 1947

Box-folder 3/8 **Veterans Full-Time Program - Study Plans**

Box-folder 3/9 **Women 1947**

Series III. Administration

Box-folder 4/1 **Books and Book Fairs 1955**

Box-folder 4/2 **Fund-raising 1944 - 1956**

Additional Note

Includes Building Fund campaign for purchase of 240 Golden Gate Ave. School, announcements of many social and cultural events

See also: HR Subjects: Fund-raising - Early grant application and final campaign in 1957

Box-folder 4/3 **Fund-raising - Christmas Markets 1945 - 1955**

Box-folder 4/4 **General**

Box-folder 4/5 **Library**

See also: HR Memoirs: Library Days and Nights 1943 - 1955

Box-folder 4/6 **Publications**

See Also: HR Memoirs: Publications, Adaptations, Readings 1943 - 1954

Box-folder 4/7 **Publications - Students 1944 - 1949**

Box-folder 5/1 **Publications - *San Francisco Writers Workshop* 1952 - 1953**

Box-folder 5/2 **United Nations Reception 1945**

Series IV. Opposition to the California Labor School

- Box-folder 5/3 **Attacks on the California Labor School**
 See also: HR Subjects: Statements of Dave Jenkins and Holland Roberts to the Tenney Committee, 1946
 HR Subjects: Defense
- Box-folder 5/4 **HR Memoirs: Escaping Subpoena Servers - Dave Goes through the Skylight**
 Attacks on the California Labor School - Subversive Activities Control Board (SCAB)
 HR Memoirs: FBI: Episode of Strangulation
 HR Memoirs: Conspiracy to Destroy Our School

Series V. Material About the California Labor School

- Box-folder 5/5 **"Education for Victory and Action: The California Labor School in the Popular Front Era," by Marvin Gettleman (copy of ms.)**
- Box-folder 5/6 **Newspaper clippings 1944 - 1955**