

## Labor Day

*by Mike Harris*

The title triggers two points of view. One serious, one of frivolity. I will present several names that have a common base in labor: E.V. Debbs, Samuel Gompers, Pullman, Grover Cleveland, John L. Lewis AFL-CIO 1955, I think these are enough of whatever you want to call them to generate some serious thinking!

While I am old, I am not ancient, I came into the labor force in 1936. Labor unions were on the rise. I was almost all my life a "union man". The clothing industry in those days was centered mainly in the vicinity of New York City and northeast United States. The Amalgamated Clothing Workers Union represented the men clothing workers and the ILGWU, obviously the workers in ladies clothing. Both unions were strong and not adversarial with each other. My first trade as a cutter in men's clothing was easily transferred to the ILGWU when I switched to ladies' clothing. and back to the Amalgamated when I moved to the farm and commuted to Philadelphia to garner the needed capital to make the farm work.

Labor Day does not today celebrate unions. The rise and fall of unions is the story of one hundred years. The names at the start of this essay have come and gone. The Pullman strike which was broken when Grover Cleveland sent federal troops to break the strike was a first, and is a forgotten part of labor history.

Union participation reached a high in about 1955, when the AFL and the CIO joined forces. The enlightenment of capitalism, namely that it was beneficial to have a loyal, honestly paid labor force, has prevailed and unions thrive mainly where that lesson has not been learned.

Today Labor Day heralds the end of summer, parks and pools are closing down, most people's vacations have been concluded.

The last third of the year and deadlines have to be faced, no more procrastination!

So these are my thoughts on this Labor Day.