

1928-1953 The Early Years Of the New England Region

The period of time between 1928-1953 was both a time of tremendous growth and hardship, not only for the International Hod Carriers and Building Laborers Union of America, but for the entire country as well.

With the death of General President Domenic D'Alessandro in 1926, the Union came under the leadership of Joseph Moreschi, who would remain in power throughout the Great Depression, the Second World War, and the next twenty years until 1968.

It was soon into the young Union's first growth period that it experienced one of its darkest hours – the Great Depression. Unemployment reached epidemic proportions as the Union's membership dropped to 17,365, which was as low as it had been in twenty years. However, the Union surged forward, scoring victories such as the merging with the Tunnel and Subway Contractors' International Union, which furthered and added to its jurisdiction.

An Honor for a New England Laborer

In 1930, the International Union honored the late General President D'Alessandro with a memorial at the Union's headquarters in Quincy, Massachusetts. General President Moreschi said in his eulogy to D'Alessandro,

“Although he gave un-selfishly to the organization, he was ever alive to his civic and moral obligations to mankind. He was instrumental in the enactment of legislation outlawing the vicious exploitation of the worker, and was the founder of the immigrant aid society whose aim was to assist the newcomer...so then he would not become easy prey for un-scrupulous employers nor dangerous radicals.”

The War Effort and the Union's Golden Anniversary

The Laborers' were just one of the many unions that stepped up to the plate when the World War II began in Europe, suspending all dues until the war was over. A resolution was also adopted in 1940 which pledged the Laborers' full support for the National Defense Program.

In 1941, the Union held its first Convention since 1911, and in thirty years the Union had reported its membership had risen from 8,955 to 281,325. General President Moreschi also reported on the Union's growth under New Deal legislation and the relocation of the Union's headquarters to Washington, D.C., which happened that previous year.

The war dramatically increased the rate of construction in America, and by 1942, membership in the Union had nearly doubled what it had been at the 1941 Convention. By the end of 1942, membership had risen to 430,000 members.

In 1946, with the War over, General President Moreschi attributed the Laborers' success during the war to the unionization of construction work. He said "workable understanding was reached which made possible the miracle of construction during the recent emergency."

In 1953, the Union celebrated its 50th Anniversary with over 2800 people attending the Golden Jubilee Celebration in Washington, D.C. In his remarks, General President Moreschi noted the important contribution made to the Union by those of foreign ancestry, most notably long-time General President Domenico D'Alessandro who was of Italian descent. "It was a tumultuous time for our Union forefathers as they had to endure the trials of the Stock Market collapse and the Great Depression. With unemployment at an all-time high, our Union still managed to survive, and as World War II erupted, the Union assisting fully with the war effort. The Laborers' Union leadership steered the membership through both the good and bad times, and celebrated its fifty year anniversary in the true spirit of pride, honor, and strength," said LIUNA General Secretary-Treasurer and New England Regional Manager Armand E. Sabitoni.