

**Title:** AFSCME Local 1733 Records

**Extent:** 2 linear feet (2 storage boxes)

**Date:** 1962-1974  
(Bulk 1968-1970)

**Repository Name:** Walter P. Reuther Library  
Wayne State University  
Detroit, MI

**Processing Information:** Finding aid written by Johanna Russ in September 2008.

**Accession No.:** 1992 (Database Record #: 8478)

**Creators:** AFSCME Public Policy Department  
AFSCME Organizing Department  
AFSCME Local 1733

**Acquisition Information:** The records of AFSCME Local 1733 were placed in the Walter P. Reuther Library in 1975 and were opened for research in September 2008.

**Language:** Material almost entirely in English.

**Access Restrictions:** Records are open for research.

**Use Restrictions:** Refer to the Walter P. Reuther Library *Rules for Use of Archival Materials*.

**Notes:** Citation style: "AFSCME Local 1733 Records, Folder X, Box Y, Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs, Wayne State University"

**Admin/Bio History:** Two AFSCME departments maintained most of the records in this collection: the Public Policy Department and the Organizing Department. Some records were maintained directly by Memphis Local 1733. These records were originally pulled together from the separate departments during the creation of an exhibit on the 1968 sanitation strike. The material was kept together and processed as one collection.

AFSCME Local 1733 in Memphis was officially recognized in 1968, but it formed several years earlier in an attempt to gain collective bargaining rights for Memphis city employees. Local 1733 earned assistance from AFSCME International when sanitation workers began a strike on February 12, 1968. While the workers struck for union recognition, pay increase, a grievance procedure, and dues deduction, racial discrimination was also a major target of the strike. In fact, inequality between black and white sanitation men was the major impetus for the strike.

White sanitation workers enjoyed many benefits not shared by their African American counterparts. When it rained, white workers were allowed to go home and still be paid. Black workers had to remain at work or lose payment that day. One day, while rain poured down, two black sanitation workers got into the back of their garbage truck to stay dry. The truck short-circuited, and the two men were crushed to death. After this, Local 1733 began its strike.

AFSCME International leaders like President Jerry Wurf, Field Staff Director P.J. Ciampa, and then Associate Director of Legislative and Community Affairs William Lucy came to Memphis to help organize the protest. In time, they invited national civil rights leaders to Memphis to help their cause. Martin Luther King, Jr. traveled to Memphis to support the strikers and organize marches. The first march ended in violence, but King returned to lead what he hoped would be a nonviolent march. On April 4, 1968, however, before the march could take place, King was assassinated.

After this, President Lyndon B. Johnson urged Memphis Mayor Henry Loeb to return to the negotiating table, and on April 16, after 65 days, Local 1733 won union recognition, wage increases, dues check off, merit and seniority promotion, and a non-discrimination statement for union members.

While best known for this campaign, Local 1733 waged other protests in the months and years following King's assassination. Once Local 1733 had official recognition, its leaders, T.O. Jones and Jesse Epps, worked to organize and advance other city employees, including hospital and school employees.

In June 1969, as part of an AFSCME campaign to increase wages for city employees, a group of white Memphis women toured low-income neighborhoods and the homes of city sanitation and hospital workers. Shocked at the conditions of poverty, these women lent their support and petitioned the city council to increase wages. With union agitation and the support of the white women, AFSCME won a wage increase and three-year contract for city workers, beginning July 1, 1969.

In the fall of 1969, Local 1733 led two other major campaigns with mixed success. The first involved St. Joseph's Hospital, a Catholic hospital whose workers Local 1733 attempted to organize. After a dispute with hospital administrators about union elections, workers began an 80-day strike. During the same time, the NAACP began to demand more racially equal representation on Memphis's city council. This led to a citywide "United Black Coalition" led by the NAACP and AFSCME Local 1733. In addition to the St. Joseph's Hospital strike, the Coalition led marches and urged boycotts, both of commercial districts and of the schools, organizing a series of "Black Mondays" where parents were asked to keep their children home from school on the first day of the week. The marches resulted in the jailing of civil rights leaders like the Rev. Ralph Abernathy. The St. Joseph strike was settled just before the end of 1969. A lawsuit filed by the Board of Education convinced leaders to call off the school boycott.

In mid-1970, Jesse Epps resigned as Local 1733 leader under allegations of misuse of union funds. Local 1733 continued to address issues related to sanitation and hospital workers, as well as other city employees.

**Scope and Content:** This collection traces the first five years of AFSCME Local 1733 in Memphis, Tennessee, with special emphasis on 1968-1970. The collection is divided into three series. The first, and largest, is composed of media clippings that trace the progress of Local 1733 in its various endeavors. The clippings series is divided into two subseries: newspaper clippings and journal clippings. The newspaper clippings form the vast majority of the entire collection, cover the years 1968-1973, and come mainly from *The Memphis Commercial Appeal* and *The Memphis Press-Scimitar*. Other regional and national news organizations are also represented. Journal clippings primarily discuss King's assassination in 1968.

The second series is comprised of material from Local 1733 relating primarily to the 1968 sanitation workers strike, but also relating to other 1733 campaigns. The material includes correspondence; workers' pay stubs; information on C.O.M.E. (Community on the Move for Equality), a group organized to gain community support for the sanitation strikers' cause in 1968; Memphis U.S.A., an organization formed to raise funds for sanitation strikers in 1968; press releases; resolutions of support; statements from the strikers; and information on a "Look In," a 1972 campaign by Local 1733 to encourage fair practices at the credit bureau.

The final series is composed of publications and other miscellaneous material from the Southern Regional Council based in Atlanta. A special report from this organization focused on the Memphis Sanitation strike, while other reports and newsletters treated other aspects of racial segregation and poverty in the United States South, notably voting rights.

**Important Subjects:** African Americans—Civil rights.

Boycotts.

Community organization.

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

Race discrimination.

Sanitation Workers Strike, Memphis, Tenn., 1968.

School attendance.

St. Joseph's Hospital (Memphis, Tenn.).

Strikes and lockouts—Hospitals—Memphis, Tenn.

**Important Names:** Abernathy, Ralph, 1926-1990

Ciampa, P.J.

Epps, Jesse

Jones, T.O.

King, Martin Luther, Jr., 1929-1968

Loeb, Henry

Lucy, William

Wurf, Jerry, 1919-

**Series I: Clippings, 1968-1973**

This larger series is composed of media clippings that trace the progress of Local 1733 in its various campaigns. The clippings series is divided into two subseries: newspaper clippings and

journal clippings. The newspaper clippings form the vast majority of the entire collection, cover the years 1968-1973, and come mainly from *The Memphis Commercial Appeal* and *The Memphis Press-Scimitar*. Other regional and national news organizations are also represented. Journal clippings primarily discuss King's assassination in 1968.

**Series II: Local 1733 Material, 1962-1974, undated**

The second, smaller series is comprised of material from Local 1733 relating primarily to the 1968 sanitation workers strike, but also relating to other 1733 campaigns. The material includes correspondence; workers' pay stubs; information on C.O.M.E. (Community on the Move for Equality), a community group organized along with the sanitation strikers in 1968 to support the cause; Memphis U.S.A., an organization formed to raise funds for sanitation strikers in 1968; press releases; resolutions of support; statements from the strikers; and information on a "Look In," a 1972 campaign by Local 1733 to encourage fair practices at the credit bureau. Also included are issues of *The Memphis Public Employee: Official Publication – Local 1733* from 1972-1974.

**Series III: Southern Regional Council Publications, 1966-1970, undated**

This series includes reports, newsletters, conference proceedings, resolutions, and correspondence from the Southern Regional Council, an organization founded in 1919 to fight racial injustice in the United States. A lengthy special report focuses on the Memphis sanitation strike while other material treats various aspects of the segregated South, notably poverty and voting rights.

**Arrangement:** The collection is divided into two series. Series I: Clippings, 1968-1973, is divided into two subseries: newspaper clippings and journal clippings. The newspaper clippings subseries forms the bulk of the entire collection and is arranged chronologically. The journal clippings subseries is arranged alphabetically by journal title and chronologically within each title. Series II: Local 1733 Material, 1962-1972, n.d., is arranged alphabetically by subject.

**Detailed Box Description:**

**Series I**

Box 1

1. Newspaper Clippings, February 12-16, 1968
2. Newspaper Clippings, February 17-21, 1968
3. Newspaper Clippings, February 22-24, 1968
4. Newspaper Clippings, February 25-29, 1968
5. Newspaper Clippings, March 1-5, 1968
6. Newspaper Clippings, March 6-9, 1968
7. Newspaper Clippings, March 10-16, 1968
8. Newspaper Clippings, March 17-27, 1968
9. Newspaper Clippings, March 28-31, 1968
10. Newspaper Clippings, April 1-4, 1968

11. Newspaper Clippings, April 5-8, 1968
12. Newspaper Clippings, April 9-10, 1968
13. Newspaper Clippings, April 11-14, 1968
14. Newspaper Clippings, April 15-17, 1968
15. Newspaper Clippings, April 18-30, 1968
16. Newspaper Clippings, May 1-7, 1968
17. Newspaper Clippings, May 8-12, 1968
18. Newspaper Clippings, May 13-18, 1968
19. Newspaper Clippings, May 19-21, 1968
20. Newspaper Clippings, May 22-28, 1968
21. Newspaper Clippings, May 29-31, 1968
22. Newspaper Clippings, June 1-8, 1968
23. Newspaper Clippings, June 9-28, 1968
24. Newspaper Clippings, July 1-15, 1968
25. Newspaper Clippings, July 16-31, 1968
26. Newspaper Clippings, August 22-September 18, 1968
27. Newspaper Clippings, September 23-25, 1968
28. Newspaper Clippings, September 26-28, 1968
29. Newspaper Clippings, September 29-30, 1968
30. Newspaper Clippings, October 1-5, 1968
31. Newspaper Clippings, October 6-13, 1968
32. Newspaper Clippings, October 14-21, 1968
33. Newspaper Clippings, October 20-24, 1968
34. Newspaper Clippings, October 25-27, 1968
35. Newspaper Clippings, October 28-31, 1968
36. Newspaper Clippings, November 1-7, 1968
37. Newspaper Clippings, November 8-10, 1968
38. Newspaper Clippings, November 11-15, 1968
39. Newspaper Clippings, November 16-30, 1968
40. Newspaper Clippings, December 1-14, 1968
41. Newspaper Clippings, December 15-30, 1968
42. Newspaper Clippings, January 1969
43. Newspaper Clippings, February 1969
44. Newspaper Clippings, March 1969
45. Newspaper Clippings, April 1969
46. Newspaper Clippings, May 1969
47. Newspaper Clippings, June 1969
48. Newspaper Clippings, July 1969
49. Newspaper Clippings, August 1969
50. Newspaper Clippings, September 1969
51. Newspaper Clippings, October 1969
52. Newspaper Clippings, November 1-13, 1969
53. Newspaper Clippings, November 14-30, 1969

Box 2

1. Newspaper Clippings, December 1969
2. Newspaper Clippings, January 1-10, 1970
3. Newspaper Clippings, January 11-19, 1970
4. Newspaper Clippings, January 21-March 31, 1970
5. Newspaper Clippings, April-May, 1970
6. Newspaper Clippings, June-July 15, 1970
7. Newspaper Clippings, July 17-31, 1970
8. Newspaper Clippings, August-November, 1970
9. Newspaper Clippings, December, 1970
10. Newspaper Clippings, January-April, 1971
11. Newspaper Clippings, September-December, 1971
12. Newspaper Clippings, 1972
13. Newspaper Clippings, 1973
14. Newspaper Clippings, January 1974
15. Clippings – unknown
16. Journal Clippings, *AFL-CIO Federationist*, May 1968
17. Journal Clippings, *AFL-CIO News*, April 13, 1968
18. Journal Clippings, *Building Services Employees International Union*, April 1968
19. Journal Clippings, *Business Week*, March 30-April 13, 1968
20. Journal Clippings, *Church in Metropolis*, September 1968
21. Journal Clippings, *Current*, May 1968
22. Journal Clippings, *Ebony*, April 1973
23. Journal Clippings, *Esquire*, August [1968?]
24. Journal Clippings, *Graphic Arts*, May 1968
25. Journal Clippings, *Kommunal Arbetaren* (Sweden), November 10, 1968
26. Journal Clippings, *El Malcrido*, April 15, 1968
27. Journal Clippings, *The Nation*, April 22, 1968
28. Journal Clippings, *Newsweek*, April 8-22, 1968
29. Journal Clippings, *Time*, April 12-19, 1968
30. Journal Clippings, *U.S. News and World Report*, April 8-22, 1968; February 21, 1972

## **Series II**

### **Box 2**

31. Community on the Move for Equality (C.O.M.E.), March 1968
32. Contract Models
33. Correspondence, February 1967; February-July 1968
34. Employee Earning Statements, October 1962-December 1964; September 1965; January 1967-February 1968
35. Handwritten Organizing Notes
36. Legal Negotiations
37. Letter to Citizens from Sanitation Crew, 1968
38. "Look-In," April-June 1972
39. "Memphis U.S.A.," [1968]
40. Organizing; Coverage
41. Press Releases, 1968; undated

42. Resolutions of Support, 1968
49. *The Memphis Public Employee: Official Publication – Local 1733*, 1972-1974

**Series III**

Box 2

43. Southern Regional Council Special Report on Sanitation Strike, March-April 1968
44. Southern Regional Council Reports, 1966-1970
45. Southern Regional Council Reports, undated
46. Southern Regional Council Voter Education Project (V.E.P.) News, 1967-1969
47. Southern Regional Council Reports, Speeches, Conference Proceedings, 1967-1970; undated
48. Southern Regional Council correspondence, resolutions, proceedings, 1968; undated