



Leo W. Gerard
International President

October 30: A Day to Remember Nuclear Weapons Workers

Today, we honor the work of over a half-million men and women who served our country during the second half of the twentieth century by producing nuclear weapons, the most dangerous weapons known to mankind.

These workers and scientists developed and crafted our bombs for five decades, from 1943 to 1989. They performed this work for many years, despite the known and unknown risks to their own health and safety.

They are our neighbors, our friends, our co-workers and our fellow Americans. They lived and toiled in places like Rocky Flats, Colorado; Paducah, Kentucky; Oak Ridge, Tennessee; Portsmouth and Miamisburg Ohio; Idaho Falls, Idaho; Hanford, Washington; and elsewhere. Many thousands were USW members (or PACE or OCAW before that) and many are still working and are members of our and other unions. They are people who many of us have never met, or even heard of, though they were and continue to be quiet heroes.

Many of these nuclear weapons workers are no longer with us, having succumbed to illnesses caused by the radiation and toxic agents with which they worked. Others are alive but ill. Many more are sick with cancer, lung disease or other ailments. Many can no longer walk across the room without becoming short of breath or cannot hear the voices of their grandchildren due to occupational hearing loss.

Just as they protected us during World War II and the Cold War, we must vow to protect them, to preserve their health and well-being and to achieve justice for their sacrifice. Today, we recognize their hardships, their worries and their suffering, just as we remember and honor their hard work, selflessness and patriotism.

We praise our government for acting to aid these workers even as we raise our voices to seek greater assistance. And tomorrow, let us continue to remember them and continue our commitment to justice and dignity on their behalf.

In solidarity,

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