

## IN MEMORY: ROBERT F. WHEELER (1940–77)

December 23, 1987 marks the tenth anniversary of the passing of Bob Wheeler. At his death, Bob was 37 years old, an associate professor of history at the University of Southern California, and the founding editor of *ILWCH*. What seems remarkable from the retrospective viewpoint of a decade since Bob's death is how his legacy *lives*, not solely in what he produced but, more important, in what he provided of himself to others.

Bob was the product of a staunchly conservative working-class background. Radicalized by the Vietnam War, he remained a practicing Catholic who understood and cared deeply about the vicissitudes of working-class life. He had a passion for social justice and a strong commitment to sharing what he had with others.

In scholarship, as in personal life, Bob gave a great part of himself to the field he loved, labor history. Building upon the educational foundation of degrees at Niagara University (B.A.) and the University of Pittsburgh (Ph.D.), he became an energetic writer and lecturer on European and American workers. As a scholar, he is perhaps best remembered for his study of the German Independent Social Democrats, *USPD Und Internationale: Sozialistischer Internationalismus In Der Zeitder Revolution* (1975). Fellow researchers will recall the passion he felt for his work and the zestful openness with which he shared his archival findings.

It is *ILWCH*, however, that stands as Bob's *living* legacy. He started *ILWCH* in 1972 out of a file cabinet in his home, with the able assistance of his wife, Vera. Bob, Vera, and their small group of early supporters sought to create something different, an informal vehicle for the exchange of information; a medium where working-class historians throughout the world could report *on international meetings, conferences, and works in progress; a herald announcing the forward movement of an important and growing field*. These remain the defining characteristics of *ILWCH* today. We console ourselves in Bob's absence with the belief that his commitments live on, because Bob—the brash, informal networking activist—left the essence of himself in *ILWCH* where it could grow and continue to invigorate our lives and work.

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