Executive Department
State of California

May 2013

May – Labor History Month

When we study the past, we can begin to understand the historical patterns reflected in today's events. This month, as a result of AB 2269, which I approved last year, Californian students will be applying themselves to the history of labor. Given the present turbulence in the world of work, there has never been a more opportune time to study this history, which I have already cited extensively in my Labor Day proclamation (http://bit.ly/CALaborDay2012). It is a history full of triumphs and tragedies, replete with stories that can inspire or caution us as the world changes around us and as we strive to change the world.

I remember labor history in part because I was part of it. As secretary of state and in my past terms as governor, I worked closely with the United Farm Workers to ensure their fair and equitable treatment by employers. Their successful campaigns enabled me to sign the Agricultural Labor Relations Act of 1975, the first state law in the United States to extend Wagner Act protections to farm labor.

Young people today should learn about such turning points in our history. The history of workers is just as important as the history of generals, inventors, philosophers and politicians like me. Understanding the past and how our current arrangements of work came into existence will help guide our children throughout their own careers in the twenty-first century.

For these reasons, I strongly support Labor History Month and the broader efforts of our young people to engage with and understand the history of industrial relations.

Sincerely,

Jerry Brown

EDMUND G. BROWN JR.