HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF LABOR; 100 YEARS**

This issue commemorates the 100th anniversary of the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) as a cabinet-level department. A section of the Department’s web site is devoted to its history (http://www.dol.gov/oasam/programs/history/main.htm#.UN3HZHfgeSo) with a very full listing of both primary and secondary sources, in this issue. To a large degree, publications already included on the DOL web site are not duplicated. A number of documents can be also found in the department’s Wirtz Labor Digital Library. http://www.dol.gov/oasam/wirtzlaborlibrary/digital/main.htm

GUIDES TO PRIMARY SOURCES

National Archives


Describes the chronological catalog that was being developed at the time this article was published and which served as a finding aid to the official correspondence of the Secretaries of Labor housed at the National Archives.


Printed guide and set of seventy microfilm reels of records housed at the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library, which was distinguished from the other existing Presidential libraries at that time by including records of departments with those of the President “to offer a more complete picture of the Kennedy administration.” [Guide]

PRIMARY SOURCES

http://www.dol.gov/dol/aboutdol/#.UN3W7nfgeSo)
Issued in print, microfiche and electronically, the title has varied over the years: The Secretary of Labor reports, Annual report of the Secretary of Labor, Reports of the Department of Labor, Accountability report, Performance and accountability report, and Annual performance report. Summarizing the work of the bureaus as well as of the Department as a whole, the reports provide a picture of contemporary national economic and social issues including labor relations, mediation of disputes, wages, status of women, etc. Many reports have significant amounts of financial and statistical information as well as narrative. In the 55th report (1967) a list of appropriations for the units in the Department began to appear in the appendix. Starting with FY1997, the DOL’s annual report summarized progress toward achieving goals established for the Department. Financial statements for the department have often been issued as separate documents from about FY1988. (See Financial report below.)

Chief Financial Officer’s ... annual report (Based on FY 1992) SuDoc L.1.2:F 49/2/
Other titles: Fiscal Year . . . agency financial report (FY2010+), Annual report on performance and accountability (FY2001- FY2009)
http://www.dol.gov/ocfo/resources.html

“The Chief Financial Officers Act of 1990 (CFO Act) requires agencies to report annually to Congress on their financial status.”


United States. Dept. of Labor. FY ... strategic plan.
FY 2006-2011, FY 2011-2016
http://www.dol.gov/_sec/stratplan/
The 1993 Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) required agencies to develop five-year strategic plans and produce annual performance plans and reports. This law was updated by the Government Performance and Results Modernization Act of 2010, which requires more frequent reports and reviews.

http://www.oig.dol.gov/semiannual.htm [FY79--]

“The Inspector General Act of 1978 requires that the Inspector General report semiannually to the head of the Department and the Congress on the activities of the office during the 6-month periods . . . . intended to keep the Secretary and the Congress fully and currently informed of significant findings and recommendations by the OIG.” [web site] As stated by the Inspector General in the first report, it was “created as an organizational mechanism to fight waste, fraud and abuse in Departmental programs.”

The budget: proposed for the Department of Labor and related agencies. SuDoc no.: L.1.2:B85
Budget documents that include funding requests for the Department of Labor. Those currently online http://www.dol.gov/dol/aboutdol/#.UN3W7nfgeSo date from FY2007 and include the titles Detailed budget documentation, Budget in brief, Budget--overview, and Performance budget--overview.

Other sources to be consulted about the finances of the Department of Labor are: 1) the Budget of the United States, submitted annually by the President, the Office
of Management and Budget’s historical tables of outlays by agency, and other OMB analyses and tables http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/budget, 2) the Congressional appropriation bills, hearings, and reports, and 3) the Government Accountability Office http://www.gao.gov/browse/agency/Executive/Department_of_Labor/ (formerly the General Accounting Office), which has issued approximately 950 reports to Congress about the DOL since 1949.

DEPARTMENT HISTORIES

Periodically, the Department of Labor has issued histories, often in celebration of its anniversary.


*The Department of Labor: its history and aims.* 1953. 22 p.


On the 75th anniversary of the Department, the MLR produced a special issue with articles including “The careers of 18 Labor Secretaries” by Jonathan Grossman and contributions from eight former secretaries: Arthur Goldberg, Willard Wirtz, James Hodgson, Peter Brennan, John Dunlop, W.J. Usery, Jr., Ray Marshall, and William Brock.

*U.S. Department of Labor, the first seventy-five years.* 1988. 55 p.


Colorful, glossy piece, filled with photographs, letters, proclamations and ads. Very brief articles on the history of the Department and “album” of sketches of the Secretaries of Labor.
SECONDARY SOURCES


Babson, business analyst, educator, writer, and Assistant Secretary of Labor in the Woodrow Wilson administration, planned to publish a volume about the Department every four years. He produced two, chronicling the Department’s work under Secretaries Wilson and Davis. He based much of the writing on the annual reports of the secretaries, devoting separate chapters to each service, but leaving room for him to expound on current issues such as wages.


History of the U.S. Employment Service detailing the conflict between the officials who wanted a centralized service and those who favored one in which standards, procedures, and policies were coordinated nationally, but managed at the state or local levels.


Briggs maintains that the resources of the early Department of Labor “were devoted to administering the immigration laws,” and were divided between those agreeing with unions that advocated tight federal controls on immigration to reduce competition for jobs and the reformers who “argued that programs to increase opportunities for work would make restriction unnecessary.” Strikes occurred despite DOL efforts, and although the Department opposed repressive tactics, the author feels “it created a centralized administrative apparatus which made possible thousands of deportations during the Republican administrations of the 1920s.”


The author sees President Wilson’s appointment of the Secretary of Labor, William B. Wilson, as head of the government’s wartime administration for labor policies as more a symbolic than real victory for the DOL. The actual operating policies remained under the control of other federal bodies, and Wilson excluded the Secretary from his inner war council. The successful lobbying of Assistant Secretary of Labor Louis F. Post prevented the separation of war-related functions from DOL, despite bureaucratic challenges like the creation of the National War Labor Board and the War Labor Policies Board.


The investigation by this task force included 1) a statistical analysis of the status of minorities and women in the Department that showed underutilization of both groups; 2) a study of recruitment policies that indicated that minimal outreach efforts were being made; 3) an examination of upward mobility programs that showed that only 45 out of 3500 nonprofessional employees had been affected in the previous five years; and 4) the finding that the organization of EEO in the Department was fragmented and not at a sufficiently high level to be influential. The task force report concluded with several pages of recommendations.


Part of the Praeger Library of U.S. Government Departments and Agencies series,
this volume describes the major events and functions in DOL’s history from pre-cabinet status in the nineteenth century to the 1970s. Grossman chronicles the effects of two world wars, the Depression, and major labor disputes on the Department, which expanded or diminished in size depending on the political capital of the Secretary of Labor and the pro-labor or pro-business stance of the particular Presidential administration. The remaining chapters are devoted to the organization and major functions of the Department. Grossman also wrote the article “The Origin of the U.S. Department of Labor” (*Monthly Labor Review*, March, 1973, pp. 3-7), which presents a summary of the Department’s history through the Nixon administration.


Ryan, Solicitor of the Department of Labor, lauds President Reagan’s regulatory reform efforts, predicting constructive effects of efforts such as eliminating the costs of government regulation from the price of goods and services, promoting new, productive ideas in a less regulated environment, and decreasing inflation and bolstering productivity affecting profits and jobs. Labor lawyer George H. Cohen focused on OSHA regulations in his response (pp. 31-39), saying that the costs of complying with OSHA regulations to protect against occupational health hazards were well understood and justified. Rather than impeding labor-management relations, OSHA served to bring safety and health issues to the bargaining table.


This paper, written by a conservative think tank analyst in the middle of President Clinton’s first term, advocated transferring some DOL functions to the states (job training programs and funding for unemployment insurance and employment services), some to other federal departments (combining the Occupational Safety and Health Administration with that for mines, the Pension and Welfare Benefit Administration with the Social Security Administration, and the Bureau of Labor Statistics with the Census Bureau), and repealing and reforming “outdated labor laws, executive orders, and regulations,” including the Davis-Bacon Act and the Fair Labor Standards Act.

**GOVERNMENT REORGANIZATION PROPOSALS**

The reports below are the products of periodic reviews of federal government departments and agencies.


One of the reports from the Commission which was organized in 1947 and headed by former President Herbert Hoover as a post-Depression, post-war effort to review functions of the departments and bureaus to achieve greater economy and efficiency. The report on the DOL states that functions which were removed from the Department and set up outside DOL should be restored. The report recommends that “[i]t should be given more essential work to do if it is to maintain a significance comparable to the other great executive departments.” (p. 4) The agencies and functions the report recommends for transfer to DOL were the Bureau of Employees’ Compensation, Employees’ Compensation Appeals Board, the Bureau of Employment Security, Selective Service System, enforcement of labor standards, determination of minimum wages for seamen, prevailing wage research, and the Division of Industrial Hygiene.

This paper, which was not widely distributed, is a response to the proposal of Delaware Governor Pierre S. du Pont that the Department of Labor should 1) be restructured with the addition of employment programs from other departments, 2) focus on comprehensive national employment policy with an emphasis on training, and 3) be overseen by a public-private sector coordinated National Employment Investment Board and a new Congressional Joint Committee on Employment Policy to replace the numerous, existing Congressional committees then dealing with employment issues. Ainsworth examines past reorganization proposals by Presidents Johnson (1967--to combine Commerce and Labor into one department) and Nixon (1971--to distribute DOL programs between new departments) which failed primarily due to opposition from constituency groups and lack of support from Congress. Ainsworth suggests that DuPont’s proposal faced similar obstacles plus the high cost of reorganization.


The Department of Labor Task Force of the Survey, whose Executive Committee was comprised of “161 high-level private sector executives,” estimated that implementation of its recommendations could result in a three-year cost savings of $3,718 million. Since the Department itself was already in the process of implementing cost reductions, the additional areas the Task Force identified for potential savings were 1) reduction of costs in the Federal disability program, 2) alignment of certain General Schedule Salary Scales with comparable local salary conditions, 3) reduction of costs of certain wage legislation and regulations, and 4) improvement of internal department administrative procedures. A joint GAO/CBO analysis (*Analysis of the Grace Commission’s major proposals for cost control*, February, 1984) noted that many of the recommendations with merit were similar to earlier GAO proposals. Some with the greatest savings potential required restructuring or elimination of government programs necessitating Congressional action, which by and large were not carried out by the legislature.


With the goal of cutting red tape, empowering federal employees, and emphasizing customer service, the Gore commission spent six months reviewing government functions, agencies, and departments. The DOL’s report contains twenty-one recommendations which touch on areas such as re-employment of disabled federal employees, Mine Safety and Health Administration’s equipment regulation, streamlining job-related information, updating the CPI, and integrating training employment for veterans into the Employment and Training Administration. The task force projected a five-year savings of $252 million “by updating its programs, conducting its work in less cumbersome ways, and designing its activities to respond to market forces.” (p. 2) In the General Accounting Office’s *Management reform: GAO’s comments on the National Performance Review’s recommendations,* (GAO/OCG-94-1, B-255769, December 3, 1993), the authors disagree with only one recommendation: to create a multi-agency Work Force Development Council, stating that consolidating the large number of federal training programs would more efficiently deliver employment training services to those who need them.