

Jackson inspires Labor Day crowd

Large crowd turns out in support of local workers

By ANDREA HOWE
Clarion Managing Editor

PRINCETON— It was a blue banner, blue collar day in Princeton.

United Mine Workers of America President Cecil Roberts and civil rights activist Jesse Jackson ate fried chicken and the fixings in the industrial exhibit buildings at the Gibson County Fairgrounds with 200 or so Labor Day Association workers Monday before a huge tri-state rally at the grandstand.

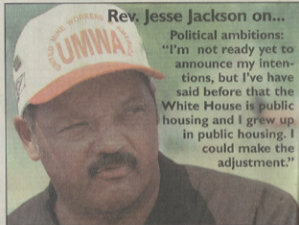
A dusty white sedan from a dealership in a small southern Illinois coal town ferried the pair from dining barn to the camouflage-painted podium at the center of the grandstand, where hundreds sat in the baking sun waiting for the message.

"If you come to Princeton, you meant to come to Princeton," joked Jackson. "I definitely came here for a reason. I want to discuss a worker's bill of rights."

And that, he did, in classic Jackson style:

"I AM SOMEBODY! —SAY IT!
— I AM SOMEBODY!"

The crowd echoed his words: "We're all somebody, everybody, sayeth the workers, sayeth



Rev. Jesse Jackson on...

Political ambitions:
"I'm not ready yet to announce my intentions, but I've have said before that the White House is public housing and I grew up in public housing. I could make the adjustment."

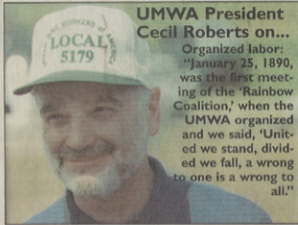
the family. This land is our land! Forward ever, backwards, never! Keep hope alive!"

Jackson preached the gospel of investing in American working families through better health care and job stability. "We must fight for living wages, choose schools over jails, love over hate and hope above all," he said.

"Most poor people are not on welfare," said Jackson. "Most poor people are not black. They're white

females. They're young. Most poor people work every day. They're family farmers. They're cooks. They flip hamburgers. They work two, maybe three jobs."

Jackson said the disparity between America's rich and poor is more obvious today. "We have a wage gap. That's our challenge. ...If we can take taxpayers' money and invest it abroad, if we can use our wealth to bail out foreign countries, then we can use our wealth to



UMWA President Cecil Roberts on...

Organized labor:
"January 25, 1890, was the first meeting of the 'Rainbow Coalition,' when the UMWA organized and we said, 'United we stand, divided we fall, a wrong to one is a wrong to all.'"

bail out America's poverty-stricken.

"Ten years ago I was determined to change the frame of debate in America," said Jackson, recalling his 1988 Democratic Convention address. "It's about livable wages. It's not about black and white so much as it is about wrong and right. The real struggle today is about the right to share in the growth of America."

Jackson and Roberts both called

upon American union members to support one another and uphold striking members.

"They're fighting for their dignity and dignity is non-negotiable," Jackson said.

The two will travel to Nelsonville, Ohio, for a rally to focus upon rural poverty on September 27. Roberts, who has toured the country with Jackson, agreed that "we may have ended welfare as we know it but not poverty as we

know it. Nearly 40 million people have no health care. This is an issue that crosses cultural or religious lines."

Republican lawmakers took the brunt of Jackson and Roberts' wrath for injustices to American workers. Jackson endorsed 8th Congressional District Democrat nominee Gail Reicken's challenge to incumbent Republican John Hostettler, and urged the voting public to take a part in their own future by "organizing a midnight train to Georgia and making sure Newt Gingrich is on it."

And in his evangelistic style, Jackson closed Monday's blue collar rally with an "altar call," convincing about 20 or 30 people to meet him at the podium to register to vote.

The rally was the culmination of a day of Labor Day activities that began with a huge parade through the heart of Princeton to the Fairgrounds.

The 108th Labor Day Association festival opened in Princeton Friday evening with carnival rides and grandstand attractions throughout the weekend, including a beauty pageant. See photos inside today's edition.