

PRESS RELEASE

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HEROINE OF THE NEW DEAL HAD DEEP ROOTS IN MAINE

New center opens in Newcastle to honor Frances Perkins's accomplishments and carry on her legacy of social justice

Newcastle, ME – March 12, 2009 – The newly formed Frances Perkins Center in Newcastle, Maine, commemorates the work of Frances Perkins, secretary of labor under President Franklin Roosevelt and the first woman to serve in a presidential cabinet. The Perkins family home, known as The Brick House, will become the eventual site of a center and gathering place for elected officials, labor leaders, historians, policy makers, students of all ages, and others interested in honoring and building upon Frances Perkins' commitment to working people around the world.

The opening of the Center will be kicked-off by two major events this spring. On April 21st in Washington, D.C., a celebration of the Center's opening will be held in the U.S. Department of Labor's Frances Perkins Building. On May 2nd, the Center will present a Conference, "Mending the Safety Net: The New New Deal and the 21st Century Workforce," at the Hutchinson Center in Belfast.

Both events draw attention to the woman who laid the groundwork for many of the programs that have provided a safety net for today's workers. Frances Perkins earned President Roosevelt's respect and admiration when she served as New York State Commissioner of Labor when he was Governor of New York. When he was elected President, Roosevelt asked her if she would be interested in the position of Secretary of Labor. As conditions for her appointment, Perkins laid out a series of programs which she would want to initiate if she were to be named labor secretary. Those programs included unemployment insurance, social security, the Fair Labor Standard Act, child labor laws, workplace safety standards, overtime pay, and a minimum wage.

Today, as in 1933, we face serious economic uncertainty. As the nation struggles to find new answers, the Frances Perkins Center is committed to becoming a major contributor to finding new solutions which honor the foresight and imagination of Frances Perkins.

To learn more about the Frances Perkins Center and its forthcoming programs, contact Executive Director Barbara Burt at bburt@francesperkinscenter.org, or call (207) 563-2129 or visit the web site at <http://francesperkinscenter.org>.