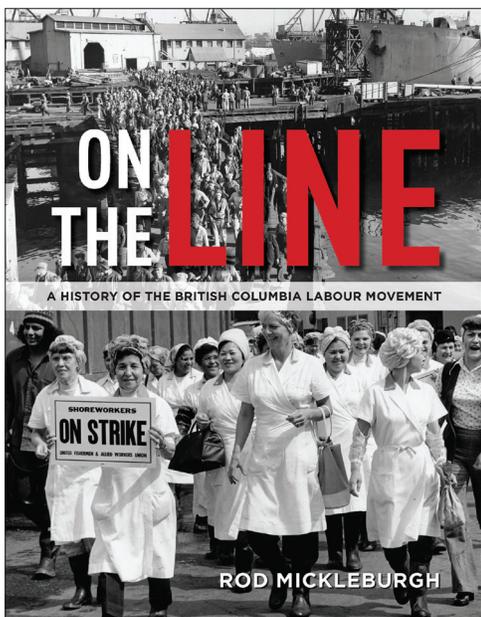


# On the Line

## *A History of the British Columbia Labour Movement*

A uniquely comprehensive and engaging account of B.C.'s labour movement,  
as told by veteran labour reporter, Rod Mickleburgh



### ON THE LINE

A History of the British Columbia  
Labour Movement

Rod Mickleburgh

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**F**ast-paced, thought provoking and richly illustrated with more than 200 archival photographs, *On the Line* chronicles British Columbia's labour movement from pre-confederation to today. In doing so, it celebrates BC workers' strong record of fighting back against unfair pay and unsafe working conditions—one rooted in the resilience, tenacity and innovative thinking of these local workers and their communities.

BC's labour movement dates back to 1850, when Scottish labourers launched one of the province's earliest strikes against wretched conditions at the colony's first coal mine. In the years that followed, the labour movement became the most militant in Canada, helmed by charismatic leaders such as Ginger Goodwin—ultimately murdered for his beliefs—and 'pull-no-punches' Harvey Murphy, a communist whose infamous 'underwear speech' nearly capsized his gains. Through decades of wins and losses, setbacks and successes, *On the Line* shares how BC Unions eventually established the foundational rights many of us take for granted such as the five-day work week, the eight-hour day, paid holidays and the right to a safe and non-discriminatory work environment.

As the age-old adage goes, a union's enemies never sleep, and in addition to documenting the movement's history, *On the Line* provides a comprehensive overview of present unions. Mickleburgh profiles the B.C. Teachers' long and successful fight for improved classroom conditions, and the Steelworkers' battle for safer workplaces, amongst other notable events. He highlights the role played by women, Indigenous peoples and minority workers in bettering communities and workplaces, and underlines the additional challenges these groups continue to face in their access to fair and equal opportunities.

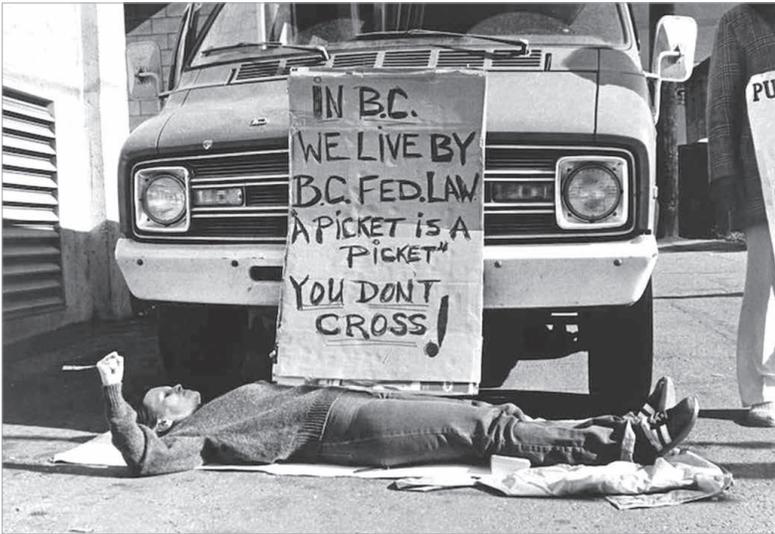
For 150 years and counting, labour organizations have influenced B.C.'s economic, political and social fabric. At long last, *On the Line* shares their all-encompassing story—celebrating how far we've come in the fight for equality and democracy, and sharing informed perspectives on where we go from here.

**ROD MICKLEBURGH** is a former labour reporter for the *Vancouver Sun* and *Province* and senior writer for the *Globe and Mail*. He is also the author of *The Art of the Impossible: Dave Barrett and the NDP in Power, 1972-1975* (co-authored with Geoff Meggs).

# On the Line

## *A History of the British Columbia Labour Movement*

What have one hundred and fifty years of union struggle achieved for British Columbians?



- the eight-hour day
- extra pay for overtime
- weekends
- paid vacations
- sick leave
- pensions
- workplace health and safety
- maternity leave
- equal pay for equal work by women
- an end to child labour
- the minimum wage
- workers' compensation
- employee rights
- unemployment insurance
- the right to strike and free collective bargaining

# On the Line:

## *A Timeline of the Labour Movement*

