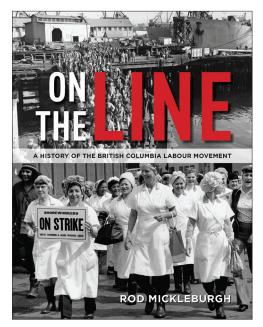
# On the Line

# 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 Published by Harbour Publishing Pub Date: April 28, 2018 \$44.95 CDN / \$44.95 USD Hardcover 8.5" x 11" / 320pp ISBN: 978-1-55017-826-5



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).



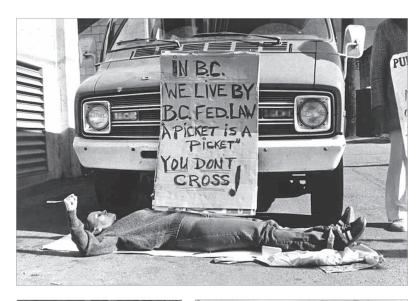
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What have one hundred and fifty years of union struggle achieved for British Columbians?



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- 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





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# On the Line: A Timeline of the Labour Movement

## 1850

BC's first strike. Miners imported from Scotland to work a fledgling coal mine on northern Vancouver Island down tools to protest their grim working conditions.

#### 1906

Indigenous longshoremen on the Vancouver waterfront organize their own union, known as "the Bows and Arrows", and affiliate with the radical Industrial Workers of the World.

#### 1918

Union workers shut down Vancouver for 24 hours to protest the killing of labour leader Ginger Goodwin. It was Canada's first general strike.

# 1939-1945

Thousands of women enter the industrial workforce of BC for the first time, replacing men who are off fighting in World War Two.

#### 1956

Formation of a new BC Federation of Labour, uniting industrial and craft unions for the first time.

# 1967

Homer Stevens and George Stavenes of the United Fishermen and Allied Workers' Union sentenced to a year in jail for failing to instruct their members to obey a court injunction, the harshest of the many prison terms given other union leaders for similar offenses.

# 1983

Labour's Operation Solidarity leads an unprecedented, broad-based fightback against an avalanche of anti-union, anti-rights legislation by Social Credit, bringing the province to brink of an all-out general strike.

## 2016

BC teachers win a similar ruling from the Supreme Court, restoring class size limits and teaching ratios for special needs students that had been unilaterally taken from their contact in 2002. Several thousand new teachers have had to be hired as a result.

# 1885

Completion of the CPR national railway, thanks largely to the toil of 17,000 immigrant Chinese labourers, who helped build hazardous sections through the Rockies and Fraser Canyon for a dollar a day, at a cost of hundreds of lives.

## 1914-1914

The Great Vancouver Island coal strike, the most protracted, fiercely fought labour dispute in the province's history.

#### 1935

A widespread strike by BC relief camp workers, paid a paltry 20 cents a day, leads to the legendary On-to-Ottawa Trek, perhaps the most well-known event of the Great Depression.

#### 1943-1944

New provincial and federal measures finally provide compulsory recognition of unions and collective bargaining, after 80 years of struggle by BC workers.

## 1958

Combination of enhanced organizing rights and post-war economic boom lead to peak unionization rate of 53.9 percent of the adult workforce in BC.

# 1973

BC becomes first province in Canada to remove jurisdiction over picketing from the courts, which had led to the jailing of many labour leaders over the years.

## 2007

Supreme Court of Canada issues historic judgment that collective bargaining is protected by the Charter of Rights and Freedom, quashing preemptory legislation by BC Liberals that stripped Hospital Employees Union members of their negotiated protection against contracting out.



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