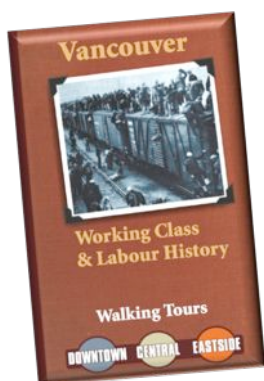


April 2015

BC Labour Heritage Centre Spring 2015 Newsletter

Embracing Labour's Heritage in BC

by Karen Tankard



It's now possible to discover some of BC's history—on foot.

The BC Labour Heritage Centre is offering three labour history walking tours in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, Downtown

Vancouver, and a section of the central Downtown area that sits in between. Each tour takes about three hours to complete, but history buffs and energetic walkers can do all three in one day.

Feedback on the tours, which cover dozens of significant events in Vancouver's labour history, has been positive.

"People are excited about it and they really enjoy it," said BC Labour Heritage Centre chair Ken Novakowski. "There's a genuine increasing interest in what happened to get us where we are today. Some of that comes from knowing labour history."

Novakowski, a retired social studies teacher and former BCTF president, is looking forward to leading some of the walking tours himself in 2015. In his mind, one of the most

significant stops on the route is the Sinclair Centre at 757 West Hastings Street, the former main post office and site of the "Sitdowners Strike" of 1938.

"Protesters took over the post office and sat down. They wanted to be arrested. They had no jobs, no welfare and the Depression was on. At least they'd have something to eat if they went to jail. One Sunday, police moved in with tear gas and clubs. It was a very bloody Sunday. What's remarkable is the people of Vancouver rallied around those involved in the sit-down. Most were working people and they understood the effect unemployment was having on the young people," Novakowski said.

The centre has been busy training new guides to lead the tours. As well, it recently refreshed and re-printed the tour booklet entitled *Vancouver Labour History Walking Tour*, which describes the 34 historical stops on the three routes with photos and text. The publication's renewal was made possible by help from the SFU Labour Studies Department, the Pacific Northwest Labour History Association, and the Vancouver and District Labour Council.

Tours can be organized free of charge for a minimum of six participants and a maximum of 20. Participants can purchase the 48-page walking tour booklet for \$5.00 (see below).

Booklets can be borrowed during the tour for free.

Down the road, the centre hopes to add an audio/visual component to the walking tours to enable participants to view video vignettes of the historic sites on their personal smartphone or tablet.

"We're hoping we can increase the number of tours we have every year and increase awareness of labour history in Vancouver, which is very extensive and rich," said Novakowski

How to book tours, buy guide booklets

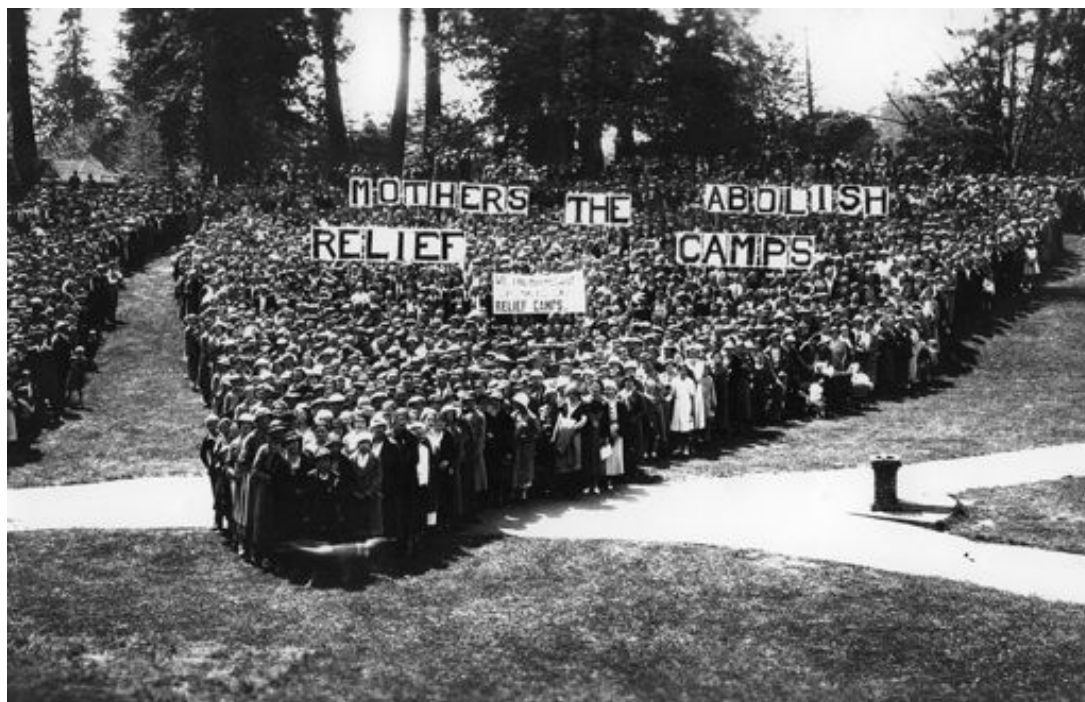
Tours can be booked by contacting:

info@labourheritagecentre.ca

Walking tour booklets can be purchased at the BC Labour Heritage Centre any Wednesday between 10 am and 3 pm—e-mail us at the address above to let us know you're coming

Labour History Picture of the Month

by Robin Folvik



Mothers' Day Heart in Stanley Park. Photo by Pacific Tribune

Our first Labour History Picture of the Month: Celebrating activism and Mothers' Day

Mothers Abolish the Relief Camps is the first photograph featured as part of the BC Labour Heritage Centre's *Labour History Picture of the Month*.

On May 12, 1935 close to 1,500 people marched from Cambie Street Grounds to Stanley Park. Organized by the Mother's Day Committee, the group co-ordinated the Mother's Day event to draw attention to the dreaded Relief Camps and the experiences of the men who lived and worked there.

Four women pushing baby strollers led the march. Behind them, 300 women followed with a banner reading "We the Mothers of Today Demand Abolition of the Relief Camps." At the tail end were more than 1,000 relief camp workers, including the Chinese unemployed.

As they arrived in Stanley Park, the women created an outline of a heart while the men filled the space in the centre. In addition to posing for the photograph, they sang songs and gave speeches.

Although not as visible in the historical representations of Depression-era activism, women were organized and active in many ways. Reminders like this photograph help keep their memory alive.

DO YOU HAVE HISTORICAL PHOTOGRAPHS?

Do you have historical photographs featuring workers and work-related activities in your archives? Let us know:

info@labourheritagecentre.ca

Plaques Around the Province to highlight role of labour movement and working history in British Columbia

by Donna Sacuda

Building on the success of the series of educational panels installed along the interior and exterior of the Vancouver Convention Centre in 2010, the BC Labour Heritage Centre has launched a "Plaques Around the Province" Program. The aim is to extend the program to areas outside of Vancouver.

Centre Chair Ken Novakowski met with representatives of BC Labour Councils in February at the CLC Harrison Winter School to introduce the project.

"There was great enthusiasm among the group for our Plaques Project," says Novakowski.

"Union members at the local level are excited by this opportunity to communicate the rich history of the labour movement and working people in British Columbia."

A Plaques Around the Province Working Group reviewed proposals for design and production of the plaques from four different British Columbia sign companies.

The Committee is in discussion with Ornamental Bronze Limited (OBronze) located in Richmond to produce the metal plaques. OBronze produced the plaque for the 75th anniversary commemoration of the On To Ottawa Trek.

"OBronze is a union shop whose employees have decades of experience in crafting these types of signs," noted Novakowski.



The next phase of the project will be for unions, labour councils, individuals and other organizations to nominate subjects for the signs' contents.

The BC Labour Heritage Centre will select and prepare the content and graphics for use on the plaques. Nominators will be required to raise funds for production, installation and maintenance of the plaques. We anticipate this will be an ongoing project extending over a period of years.

The subject matter can include defining events, actions, episodes, movements, groups, individuals, places or experiences that played a significant role in the history of the labour movement and working people in British Columbia.

The BC Labour Heritage Centre has launched a Plaques Around the Province program. The goal is to produce similar educational panels to this one to communicate the rich history of the labour movement and working people around British Columbia.

Photo by Donna Martinson

April 28th—International Day of Mourning

by Layne Clark

Workplace fatalities and injuries are a constant reality in Canada. Every year, over a thousand Canadians are killed due to work-related incidents. It is because of this tragic reality that in 1985 the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) adopted April 28th as the "National Day of Mourning." This day is to honour those workers who have been killed, injured or disabled on the job.

April 28th holds a special significance in Canada because it marks the first comprehensive *Workers Compensation Act*, which originated in Ontario. This first Act eventually led to Canadian-wide regulations and prevention strategies.

In December of 1990, after many years of lobbying efforts by trade unions and the NDP, the Canadian government passed *Bill C-223*, the *Workers Mourning Day Act*, making April 28th, 1991 the first government-recognized national Day of Mourning.

The Act reads:

Throughout Canada, in each and every year, the 28th day of April shall be known under the name of *Day of Mourning for Persons Killed or Injured in the Workplace*.

This day has now been adopted by various organizations and countries around the world. The International Labour Organization, the United Nations, the American Federation of Labour and many others have endorsed it. Today, over 100 countries observe the Day of Mourning.

This year marks the 30th anniversary of the Day of Mourning. While workplace injuries and deaths still occur at alarming rates, the labour movement continues to have a strong presence in demanding that health and safety be a priority in Canada. As our mantra often goes, "Mourn for the Dead, Fight for the Living!"

Labour History Project Launches New School Initiative to Recognize the National Day of Mourning

By Al Cornes

The BC Labour History Project, a partnership between the BC Labour Heritage Centre and the BC Teachers' Federation, has initiated a new project to have the National Day of Mourning for Workers Injured or Killed at the Workplace recognized in BC secondary schools. The Labour History Project is working with WorkSafeBC and the BC Federation of Labour to undertake this project. As described in the article above, the Day of Mourning (April 28) was first recognized by the government of Canada in 1991 and has since spread to many countries around the world.

The goal of this project is to ensure that every secondary school in BC honours this important event on April 28, commencing in 2016.

The long-term goal of the project is to ensure that workplace health and safety is part of the curriculum for every student, to help reduce the numbers of young worker deaths and accidents in the province.

"Connecting with students and young workers is critical," said the BC Labour Heritage Centre chair and retired social studies teacher Ken Novakowski. "Many of

our secondary students have entered or are about to enter the workplace for the first time. The statistics show that young workers are more likely to suffer injury or death at the workplace not only because they are inexperienced, but because they have not been trained about workplace dangers, work overload or health and safety rights and responsibilities in the workplace."

WorkSafe BC spokesperson and director of Government, Community and Media Relations Scott McCloy hopes the project will open the door to encourage all the stakeholders in education to become involved in educating students about the need to establish safe conditions and prevent injuries and deaths in every workplace.

"It is critical that we work together to honour those who died and those who continue to suffer," he said. "It is also important that we take every opportunity to educate young people about workplace health and safety."

The joint project will build on existing and new resources to assist schools in recognizing the day and educating students about health and safety as they enter the workforce.

On average, each year in British Columbia, there are seven young workers killed and 9,000 injured, with 2,000 seriously injured¹

For information on April 28 Day of Mourning events around the province, see bcfed.ca and worksafebc.com

¹WorkSafeBC. *A Snapshot of Young Workers Injuries 2011*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K-dFQRygdte>

May Day

by Robin Folvik

Historically known as a day for celebrating the end of winter and the beginning of spring, May 1st is a holiday with special meaning for many.

Today, one of the most familiar celebrations of May Day involves the long-standing tradition of dancing around a May Pole. However, May Day is not only a day significant for recognizing themes of change and renewal, it is also a day of importance for workers around the world who view May 1st as International Workers Day.

By the mid-19th century, workers increasingly organized to challenge unsafe working conditions and long hours of work at low rates of pay. Efforts to establish a shorter day of work, part of the Nine Hour Movement (which later became a fight for an eight-hour day) caught the attention of workers in many countries, bringing them together in the late 1800s to make their demands.

In 1884 the North American Federation of Organized Trades and Labour Unions declared plans to strike on May 1st if demands for the shorter workday were not met. As the deadline came without change, workers took to the streets.

Chicago had the largest numbers out on strike, with estimates of up to 100,000 people. On Monday, May 3rd, many in Chicago refused to return to work.



Artwork by Sam Bradd from "May Day: A Graphic History of Protest in Canada" (Graphic History Collective, 2012)

A showdown at the site of an on-going strike at the McCormick Harvesting Machine Plant Company led to police firing into the crowd, killing four people. In response, people gathered in Haymarket Square the following day. Police violently advanced into the crowd and a bomb was thrown. Although evidence of who threw the bomb was far from conclusive, eight workers were arrested and four were executed on November 11th, 1887.

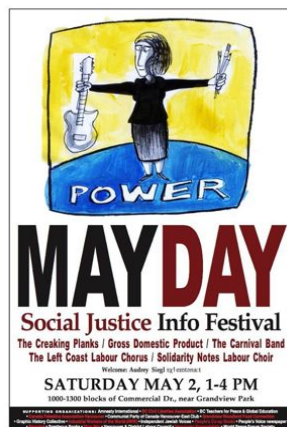
Their deaths and the continuing international struggle around work led to May 1st becoming an internationally celebrated day to renew the struggles of workers around the world. Around the world, many still explicitly remember and recognize the Haymarket Martyrs.

May Day 2015

Today, many May Day celebrations still focus on celebrations of spring. However, some towns throughout British Columbia also recognize May 1st as International Workers' Day. Cumberland BC continues to hold their annual Bean Supper while a number of events are scheduled for Vancouver, BC.

Stop by our Facebook page to let us know of other events in your community: <https://www.facebook.com/LabourHistoryInBC>

Email us at info@labourheritagecentre.ca



The BC Labour Heritage Centre's curriculum project team will attend the May Day Social Justice Info Fair—join in, and come talk to them



Posters by David Lester

Don't like unions?

by *Ken Novakowski*

Many politicians and much of the media continually bombard us with the notion that unions are no longer necessary. The article accompanying this note came to the attention of Andy Neufeld and he, like many of us who have seen it since, was impressed by its effective message. We were unable to trace the author but thought it was worth sharing because it makes a powerful point. Many of the things we take for granted today were actually achieved through struggle by working people over many years. We benefit greatly today from what others were able to collectively achieve, in many cases through great sacrifice.

Many of our current battles are to maintain the benefits and rights gained in the past as our society continues to exhibit a move towards even greater social and economic inequalities amongst the population. This article is one that should help to make dubious people sit up and think. We hope it does.

DON'T LIKE UNIONS?

Maybe you want to sign on the dotted line.

In just about any workplace, you can always find somebody who says they don't like unions. Next time you encounter someone like that, you may want to tell them to put their money where their mouth is by signing a form that would go something like the following.

"I am opposed to all unions. Therefore, I am opposed to all benefits that unions have won through the years. I reject the following—dignity in the workplace, paid vacations, statutory holidays, dental/prescription drug plans, paid sick leave, safety and health laws, Workers Compensation Employment Insurance benefits, premium pay for overtime, job security, regular wage increases, union/company pension plans, Canada Pension Plan, Old Age Security, grievance and arbitration process, job classifications, promotions, paid breaks, bereavement pay, long-term disability, severance pay.

I refuse to accept any of the above benefits that have been won by unions and hereby authorize and direct my employer to withhold the amount of union won benefits and pay rates from my cheque each week and donate same to charity.

Article credit: *Unknown*

Pacific Northwest Labour History Association 2015 Conference

This year's Pacific Northwest Labour History Association conference happens May 1-3 in Seattle. The annual gathering brings together multiple communities to share ideas, explore, and engage around the theme of labour history in the Pacific Northwest.

Full program conference is now available:

<https://pnlha.files.wordpress.com/2014/12/pnlhaconferencebrochure2015round3.pdf>

CELEBRATE, HONOR, ACT

Celebrate the 100th Anniversary of the writing of "Solidarity Forever"

Honor the life of Joe Hill on the centennial of his execution

Act to strengthen and rebuild the Labor Movement for a secure future

Pacific Northwest Labor History Association's 47th Annual Conference,

May 1-3, 2015

Notes from the BC Labour Heritage Centre Chair

1. **The BC Labour History Book** being produced by the BC Labour Heritage Centre in partnership with the BC Federation of Labour and the SFU Labour Studies Program



has a new author, Rob Mickleburgh. Rod was a labour reporter in Vancouver for many years and comes to this task with a fine appreciation for the contribution working people and their unions have made to this province. Health issues prevented the initial author seconded to author the book, Andy Neufeld, from being able to carry on. Rod will build on the initial work done by Andy and will work with

researcher Robin Folvik to have the book completed for publication by Harbour Publishing by Labour Day, 2017. Community Savings Credit Union is funding the book project.

2. **The BC Federationist**, an early publication of the BC Federation of Labour, is now accessible in digital format online at

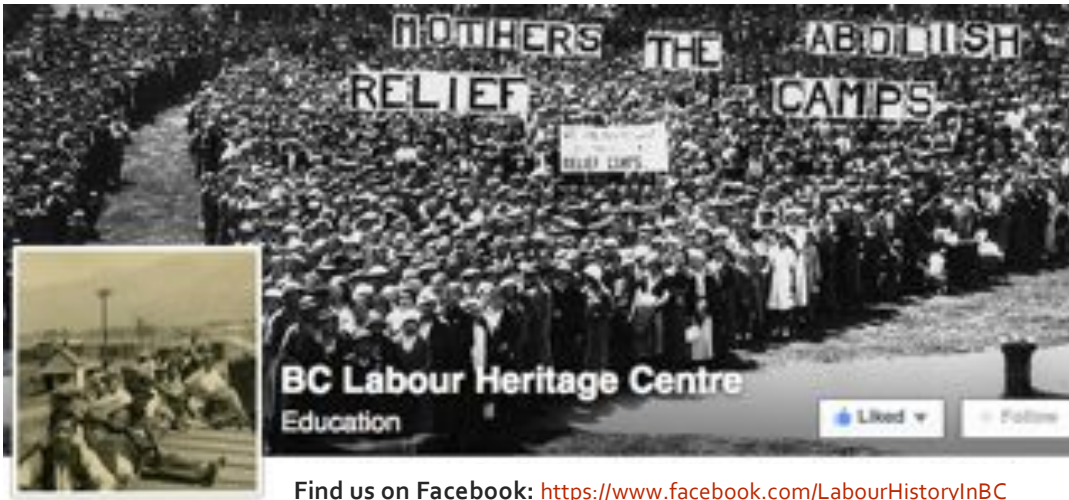
<http://content.lib.sfu.ca/cdm/landingpage/collection/bcf>

This was made possible when the book project obtained a grant from SFU to have this accomplished.

3. **The Health and Safety videos** project that the BC Labour Heritage Centre runs in partnership with WorkSafeBC has already produced six videos that highlight the historical evolution of health and safety workplace changes. It is now working on two new videos, including *The History of Asbestos and Its Impact on Construction Workers in BC* and *The History of Health and Safety in the Commercial Fishing Industry of BC*.
4. **The BC Labour Heritage Centre** is undertaking a major upgrade of its website and the first stage has been to change its focus to the many projects of the Centre and the availability of numerous resources and materials produced by these projects. There will also be a greater

emphasis on BC labour history itself in a variety of formats. The 30 vignettes produced by Landrock Entertainment for the Knowledge Network in the *Working People: A History of Labour in BC* series will also be available on the website, as well as the curriculum materials produced by the Labour History Project to go with each vignette.

5. **Labour History Picture of the Month** is launched with this issue of the BCLHC Newsletter, but it is the intention of the Centre to feature a different picture each month on the website. Eventually, we hope to move to a Picture of the Week. We will also be taking these historical photos and turning them into postcards which we then hope to make available to anyone interested.
6. Karen Tankard, a communications staff person with the BC Government and Service Employees' Union, has taken to writing articles for the *BCGEU Provincial* that highlight different BCLHC projects. The Centre then forwards these articles to other union publications for possible use in their respective publications.



This issue of the BC Labour Heritage Centre's E-Newsletter was produced by Robin Folvik, Marie Franco, Ken Novakowski

BC Labour Heritage Centre Spring 2015 Newsletter

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