

TIMELINE: WORKERS TAKE TWO STEPS FORWARD, ONE STEP BACK

Key events that influenced today's labour movement.

- 1815 Hatters in Quebec City walk out to demand improvements.
- 1872 Workers in Ontario fight for the nine-hour day; federal Trade Union Act removes penalties for belonging to a union.
- 1877 Miners strike in Dunsmuir mines on Vancouver Island. The mines were very dangerous. Between 1879 and 1909, 206 miners (including 70 Chinese miners) died in five major disasters in Vancouver Island mines. Safety concerns were key.
- 1880's 10-hour work days is still standard.
- 1880's Unlike most unions, which organized exclusively by "craft," the new Knights of Labour organizes all workers regardless of skill, gender, or nationality. The Knights were involved in most major strikes in Ontario.
- 1882 First major strike of women workers in Toronto. Women shoemakers strike for union recognition, uniform wages, and a wage advance.
- 1885 Canadian Parliament passes "An Act to Restrict and Regulate Chinese Immigration to Canada" that places a \$50 head tax (later raised to \$100 and then \$500) which initially discouraged women and children from accompanying the men workers and later banned immigration from China altogether.
- 1886 Dominion Trades and Labour Congress (TLC) is formed in Canada, and American Federation of Labour (AFL) in U.S.
- 1886 Ontario Factory Act ends "legal" child labour. At the time, children made up 11% of the Toronto workforce.
- 1890 Hundreds of thousands of workers in Europe, North and South America turn the first May Day into an international festival of working class solidarity, linking-the demand for the eight hour day and the Chicago Haymarket Massacre, with a larger vision of a more humane society. For most of Europe and South America, May Day remains "Labour Day."
- 1894 Labour Day becomes a holiday after the Labour Congress in Toronto asks that the first Monday in September be designated.
- 1897 Vancouver Trades and Labour Council begins to lobby for free libraries, evening and technical schools, and the establishment of public parks.
- 1898 Nanaimo miners elect Ralph Smith as MLA on their Liberal/Labour platform.
- 1903 Union organizer Frank Rogers is fatally shot in Vancouver by company gun thugs while picketing during the United Brotherhood of Railway Employees (UBRE) strike against CPR.

- 1904 Socialist Party of Canada is formed.
- 1905 Industrial Workers of the World (IWW or “Wobblies”) are formed in Chicago.
- 1907 In Vancouver, race riots erupt. Businesses and homes of Chinese and Japanese people were smashed by white mobs carrying signs “for a white Canada.”
- 1907 The federal Industrial Disputes Investigation Act, known as the Lemieux Act, Canada’s first significant labour legislation is passed. It provides for government inquiries and conciliation of labour disputes.
- 1908 On March 8, women in New York’s garment industry spontaneously walk out to protest sweatshop conditions, where women and girls as young as 13 slave for 14-hour days in terrible and dangerous conditions. The walkout led to a six day 54 hour week. In 1910 the day was adopted as International Women’s Day.
- 1910 The B.C. Federation of Labour is formed (first).
- 1912 Vancouver Island miners strike Canadian Collieries (Dunsmuir again—see 1877) mines.
- 1912 Vancouver Trades and Labour Council newspaper argues that women’s wages need to be raised to curtail prostitution, as women “could not support themselves on the low wages paid to them by employers.”
- 1912 IWW wins the right to make speeches on public property.
- 1912 IWW strikes the CN and GTP railway construction sites.
–1914
- 1914 150 Sikhs, from India, wishing to immigrate to Canada, are refused entry. Their ship, the *Komogata Maru*, is kept in Vancouver’s harbour for three months before finally returning to India.
- 1914 Trades and Labour Congress calls for equal pay for work of equal value—targeted at wages of ethnic minorities.
- 1916 First B.C. Workmen’s Compensation Act passes—for workers injured on the job.
- 1916 Women get the vote for federal elections.
- 1917 B.C. is the fifth province to extend the vote to women in provincial elections.
- 1918 Mine workers organizer, Albert “Ginger” Goodwin, is killed in Cumberland: Vancouver Workers respond with a one-day general strike.
- 1919 Winnipeg General Strike—although smashed by the Citizens League and the government use of armoured tanks against the strikers—leads to major gains for workers. Vancouver sympathy strikes lasted two weeks beyond the six week strike in Winnipeg. Telephone operators were the last to return. In the next Manitoba election, 11 of the labour leaders were elected.
- 1920 Minimum-Wage Act passes—setting minimum wage for the first time. Fewer than half of women workers were covered.

1920 B.C. Federation of Labour collapses.

1920s Racial minorities, excluded from most trade unions, form their own organizations like the Japanese
-1930s Camp and Mill Workers.

1921 First federal election occurs since women get the vote. Agnes MacPhail is elected as the first woman sitting in the House of Commons, in Ottawa. She was re-elected four times.

1921 Communist Party of Canada is formed.

1926 All-Canadian Congress of Labour, made up of the One Big Union (OBU), Canadian Federation of Labour (CFL), and others is formed as a rival to the Trades and Labour Congress.

1927 Old age pensions are introduced

1929 Under the British North America (BNA) Act, which affirmed British Common Law, "Women are persons in matters of pains and penalties but are not persons in matters of rights and privileges." This was the law in Canada until the "Persons Case" when a Judicial Committee of the Privy Council in England overruled a Supreme Court of Canada decision of 1928. Women were now "persons." The case was led by Emily Murphy and other suffragettes.

1930s The "Dirty Thirties" of the Depression. By 1932 1,800,000 were on welfare, and 1/3 were unemployed with no UIC.

1930s Anti communist laws are used to jail and/or deport union activists.
-1940s

1932 The Cooperative Commonwealth Federation is formed (It became the NDP in 1961).

1935 Vancouver longshore workers fight the "Battle of Ballantyne Pier" on Bloody Sunday.

1935 Unemployed from the Relief Camp Workers' Union pour into Vancouver to demand "work and wages" of 50 cents/day. They are read the riot act and dispersed. They decide their grievance is with the federal government. Over 900 men jumped atop the trains in Vancouver for the On-to-Ottawa trek. The trek was stopped in Regina, where the men were attacked. Many were injured, and one was killed. The relief camps were soon abolished and the R.B. Bennett government lost the next federal election.

1937 400 Canadians (many from the On-to Ottawa Trek) join the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion as part of the International Brigade that fought, unsuccessfully, to maintain democracy in Spain against Franco's fascism.

1938 Camp Jubilee is built by organized labour on Indian Arm for children of low wage-workers.

1938 The unemployed stage "sit downs" by occupying the main post office (now Sinclair Centre), the old Art Gallery on West Georgia, and the Georgia Hotel. The protestors were eventually gassed, and beaten with wire whips as they tried to get out.

1938 During an IWA strike, Local Vice-President Bob Gardner is arrested at 3 a.m. on a made-up charge. He was severely beaten in police custody and later died of his injuries.

- 1938 Unemployed workers sit in at the main Vancouver Post Office, the Georgia Hotel, and the Vancouver Art Gallery. A month later, they were gassed out and beaten by police. The dispute spilled into a riot in the streets.
- 1939 J.S. Woodsworth, CCF leader and former B.C. labour activist, introduces a bill in Parliament making it unlawful to interfere with workers' right to organize. The bill passed, but it only applied federally—not to provincial labour laws.
- 1940 Canadian Congress of Labour (CCL) is formed by a merger of other organizations.
- 1941 Unemployment insurance is introduced during a period of low (4.4%) unemployment rates and highest wage levels ever in Canada.
- 1944 PC 1003 (Privy in Council)—important law for Canadian Workers—that legislates union recognition (requiring employers to bargain for the first time) and requires a grievance procedure, but obligates unions to work during the collective agreement and use the grievance procedure rather than down tools.
- Until now, most strikes were for union recognition—not just the right to belong to a union, but a requirement that employers actually negotiate with the Union. PC 1003 made that mandatory, and strikes that followed tended to focus more on wages and working conditions.
- 1944 Second B.C. Federation of Labour is formed.
- 1944 Family allowance (baby bonus) begins—adding a week's income to a poor family with three to four children
- 1945 Justice Ivan Rand, arbitrator in a 99-day strike against Ford in Windsor Ontario, conceives a compromise to resolve the dispute on dues check off. The "Rand Formula," later adopted across Canada, allowed employees in a new certification to opt out of the union, but pay union dues regardless, since they benefit from the terms that the union negotiates.
- 1947 Workers win vacation pay.
- 1951 Old Age Security is introduced.
- 1950s Red purges—communists and suspected communists are expelled from unions in Canada and U.S.
–1960s The government favours "co-operative" unions that keep the peace and expel socialists.
- 1953 The Canada Fair Employment Practices Act prohibits ethnic and religious discrimination in employment and for union membership.
- 1956 The Canadian Congress of Labour (CCL) and the Trades and Labour Congress (TLC) merge to form the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC), representing 80% of Canadian organized labour.
- 1956 The Unemployment Assistance Act is adopted.
- 1959 After a two-year campaign, the IWA certifies camp loggers in Newfoundland. The company refused the demands for hot and cold water in the camps, food other than beans, increased pay, and reduced hours. The Smallwood government passed legislation to decertify the union and used police to smash the subsequent strike and ultimately the union.

- 1960 Aboriginal people get the right to vote federally.
- 1961 The CLC formally allies itself with the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (CCF), which became the New Democratic Party (NDP).
- 1962 Saskatchewan's NDP government introduces public medical plan—doctors strike for three weeks in resistance.
- 1963 The Canadian Union of Public Employees' (CUPE) is formed in Winnipeg. It merged the national Union of Public Service Employees (NUPSE) and the National Union of Public Employees (NUPE). Now the largest union in Canada, CUPE has over 460,000 members.
- 1960s–1980s Many Canadian Unions (Canadian Auto Workers and the IWA) break away from U.S. based internationals or set up as new Canadian based organizations (e.g., Independent Canadian Transit Union—ICTU).
- 1966 Canadian Pension Plan (CPP) begins—minority Liberal government forced to pass this and other progressive reforms 1962–68.
- 1966 Canadian government introduces the National Medicare Insurance Act. Responsibility for administration was assigned to the provinces, and implementation occurred two years later in 1968.
- 1968 Medicare is nationalized.
- 1968 HEU begins province wide bargaining for a first master agreement.
- 1970 HEU wins human rights case to secure compensation for 25 radiology and physical medicine attendants. First successful case of a union claiming wage discrimination on the basis of gender.
- 1970 HEU Convention delegates decide the union should begin organizing in private hospitals.
- 1970s Labour participates in one of the longest and most successful boycotts in North America—refusing to buy California grapes in support of farm workers there.
- 1971 UIC coverage and benefits are expanded.
- 1972 CPP and family allowances are improved.
- 1972 Association of University and College Employees (AUCE) and the Service, Office, and Retail Workers' Union (SORWUC) are formed as feminist unions in response to the resistance of mainstream, male-dominated labour to organize traditional women's jobs, or to bargain for issues of importance to women. They also applied feminist principles to collective decision making and action. Neither exists today.
- 1975 Trudeau introduces the first peacetime compulsory wage and price controls. They lasted three years and only controlled wages.
- 1976 A day of protest over wage and price controls is held. A million workers strike on October 14th, a year after controls are introduced.

- 1982 The Compensation Stabilization Plan (CSP), public-sector wage controls, is introduced.
- 1983 Solidarity (BC)—Operation Solidarity and the Solidarity Coalition form to oppose the Socred government's attack on the public sector, labour, social services, and community. 60,000 marchers protested at the Socred Convention in Vancouver, and over 100,000 workers were involved in strike actions. Ended by the "Kelowna Accord".
- 1985 Federal Child Tax Benefit (CTB) replaces family allowances. Not indexed for inflation, the CTB has been a detriment for poor families.
- 1987 The Socred government, led by Bill Vander Zalm, passes Bill 19 despite a one-day general strike. The act replaced the Labour Relations Board with Industrial Relations Council and amended the Code significantly against workers and unions. The B.C. Federation of Labour and its affiliates boycotted the IRC, led by Ed Peck, until the NDP were re-elected and returned the LRB.
- 1990 Parental Leave (10 weeks) is added to Unemployment Insurance (UIC).
- 1991 Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC) members suffer seven years of wage freezes. Introduced
–1997 by the Tories, the freeze is worsened by Liberals in 1995, when they add increment freezes.
- 1993 B.C. Farm workers are included under the Worker's Compensation Act and eligible for WCB.
- 1994 Following eight years of opposition and demonstrations, the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) is signed between the U.S.A. and Canada, and then the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) which includes Mexico.
- 1995 Laundry workers in Alberta hospitals have a 10-day wildcat strike against privatization, and win their demands.
- 1995 Ontario Days of Action protest against regressive cuts and legislation by the Harris government.
–1999
- 1998 The MAI, an international trade deal placing corporate interests ahead of sovereignty is withdrawn after the agenda is exposed by organized labour and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).
- 1998 Canadian Auto Workers (CAW) organizes Starbucks in Vancouver and McDonald's workers in Squamish.
- 1998 The Public Service Alliance (PSAC) wins a Human Rights Tribunal against the Federal Government for pay equity. The Tribunal found the government in violation of its own laws against discrimination by refusing to pay equal wages for work of equal value. The government responded by filing an appeal, and workers across the country held spontaneous strikes for the day. A negotiated collective agreement provided significant remedy for a majority of affected workers, but the decision on the appeal is still pending.
- 1998 Community Social Service Sector Unions join in solidarity as a single bargaining table.
–1999
- 1999 Alberta Labour works in coalition to derail Bill 37, Ralph Klein's legislation for private acute-care hospitals.

- 1999 Nurses in Saskatchewan and Quebec defy back-to-work legislation. The Saskatchewan government even defers an election, knowing the public supported the nurses and striking CUPE hospital workers.
- 1999 McDonald's workers decertify 10 months after joining the Canadian Auto Workers.
- 1999 The World Trade Organization (WTO) meets in Seattle in November to revive the key components of the MAI.
- 1999 The Supreme Court of Canada finds that it is discriminatory to deny benefits to same-sex partners.
- 1999 24-hour shifts are eliminated for B.C. Social Service workers.
- 2000 World March of Women brings together women from almost 1,400 organizations representing 113 countries to protest poverty and violence.