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BC LABOUR HERITAGE CENTRE

December 2023 Newsletter

This newsletter is produced by the staff of the BC Labour Heritage Centre on behalf of our board of directors.

Diana Kilmury: B.C.'s Tough and Fearless Truck-Driving Woman



It was the mid '60s and Diana Kilmury was 19 years old, a mother, and divorced. She needed a job to support her family.

The story of how she became the first woman in BC to earn a heavy equipment operator certificate, joined the Teamsters, and fought as part of the controversial Teamster reform movement is told in our latest podcast episode.

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Diana tells us about her trailblazing journey to become the Teamsters' first female International Vice President in this incredible interview conducted by ✨ volunteer Rod Mickleburgh and transcribed by ✨ volunteer Jane Player.

[Watch the interview](#)

An award winning movie, [Mother Trucker: The Diana Kilmury Story](#), is based upon the history of Teamsters for a Democratic Union and the first-ever woman elected to the IBT General Executive Board in 1991.

[See the Hollywood version](#)

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NEW EPISODE

On the Line: Stories of BC Workers



Ep 23: Teamster Diana Kilmury:
B.C.'s Tough and Fearless Truck-Driving Woman



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Bitter Taste of Labour History at B.C. Sugar



The 10-week strike at B.C. Sugar Refinery in Vancouver is the latest chapter in a long rocky labour history.

Formerly the Rogers Sugar refinery, the facility has operated for well over 100 years on the waterfront. In 1917 workers established the Sugar Workers Union and petitioned wealthy owner **Benjamin Tingley Rogers** for a wage increase. When Rogers repeatedly refused to recognize the union, he fired the instigators, and the workers walked out. Rogers hired strikebreakers, bodyguards and private detectives. *"I will not have the few more years I have left to run this refinery spoilt by any union."*

The workers believed strikebreakers were sleeping in the refinery overnight, and stopped a delivery of blankets and milk at the gates. Fights broke out on the picket line. In the current dispute, picketers say they've seen managers bring cots and food deliveries into the factory. ([*"The Sugar War Gets Stickier"*](#), [*The Tyee, December 4, 2023*](#))

Despite strong support from other unions, the 1917 strike was eventually lost. Afterwards B.C. Sugar employees briefly joined the Warehousemen's Union, in 1944 organized into the Industrial Union

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B.C. Sugar employees are currently members of the Private and Public Workers of Canada (PPWC). *Photo: City of Vancouver Archives, M-11-65.*

Source: [*"Not Always Sweet: The 1917 Vancouver Sugar Refinery Strike"*](#) by Janet Mary Nicol (BC Historical News, Vol. 35, No.3)

[Download](#)

Refinery 'pickets' 1917. Of the 240 employees, 36 were women whose job was filling and sewing sugar bags. When the strike was lost, the men received three cents an hour pay increase; the women got nothing. *Photo: Vancouver Archives, 2011-092.1261*



B.C. Sugar workers who are members of the Private and Private Workers Union of Canada (PPWC) are currently on strike. They have met similar employer tactics as those in 1917. *Photo: Zak Vescara, The Tye.*

Tribute to Veterans of the Mackenzie Papineau Brigade



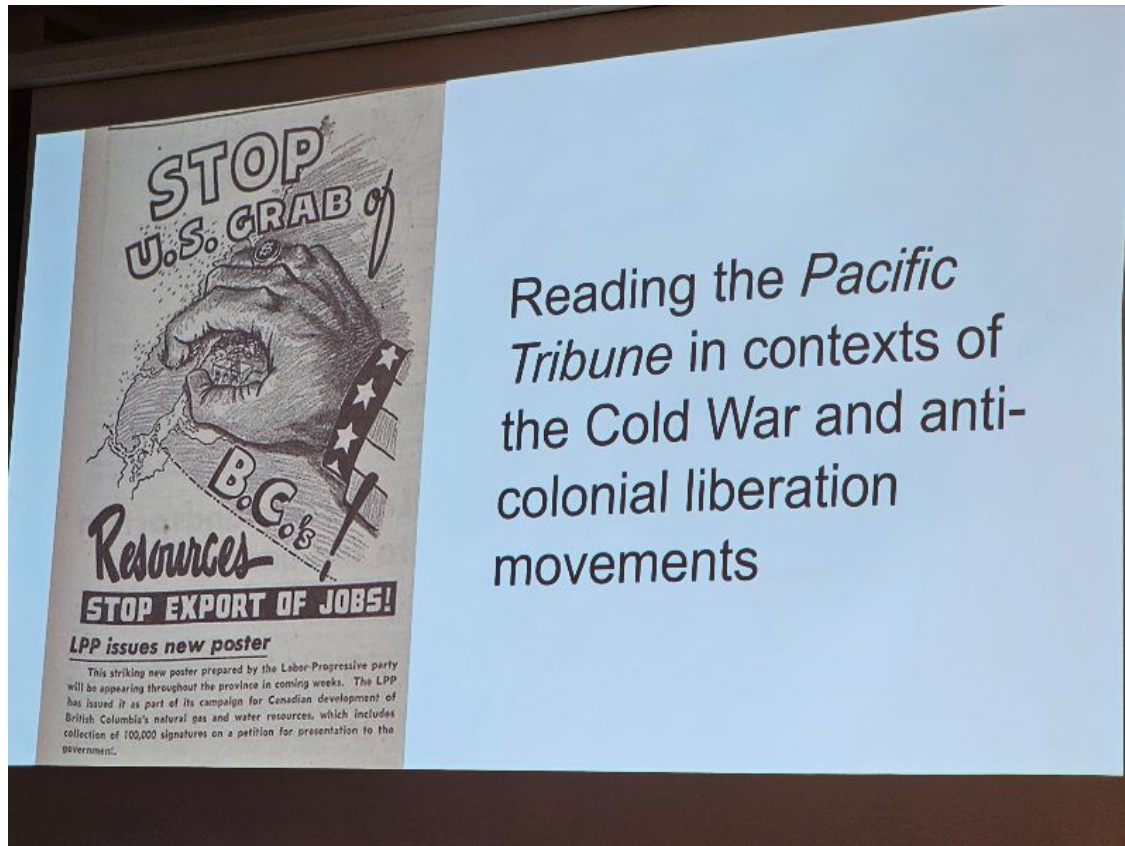


Across Canada, volunteers visited the graves of Canadian veterans of the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) on November 11. Mainly working-class, the **Mackenzie Papineau Battalion (MacPap)** volunteers fought fascism in Europe, in a prelude to the Second World War. Met with suspicion upon their return, they are still not recognized as war veterans. Volunteers David Yorke, Ken Dent (whose father was a MacPap), Donna Sacuta and Brian Gardiner laid white roses for 12 MacPaps at Forest Lawn Cemetery in Burnaby, B.C.



Editorial cartoon from *The People*, May 6, 1943. The sign indicates Oran, Algeria. The French collaborationist Vichy government in 1939-40 had arrested thousands of communists, including many who had fought in Spain, and many of these were sent to a collection of internment camps that Vichy established in Algeria. The Camp near Oran was called Bossuet, and was liberated in the spring of 1943, but the administration of the camp remained, and continued to hold left-wing political prisoners. Their release was used as a condition in negotiations for co-operation with the Free French forces. *Thanks to David Yorke for the summary.*

Because No One Else is Saving It



Last month an engaged crowd of BC labour history enthusiasts celebrated the newly completed digitization of [The Pacific Tribune](#) newspaper from 1947 - 1990. Over 20,000 pages are now available to browse free and online. This project was a partnership with the Centre for Socialist Education and was made possible with matching funds from the BC History Digitization Program.

[More digitized newspapers](#)

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B.C. DISTRICT UNION

NEWS

Vol. 1, No. 27 JANUARY 10, 1949

B.C. Federation of Labor Presents Introductory Brief To Provincial Govt.

A new power in B.C. labor manifested itself with the close of 1948, when the B.C. Federation of Labor (B.C.F.L.) presented its introductory brief to the provincial government in regard to labor relations, wages, and conditions in the construction of provincial buildings.

District Drawing Will Celebrate 1st Anniversary

No interval of the Allen, Mill and Smevor Workers and possibly has the best district-wide vote and celebration of the anniversary of the founding of the B.C. District Union.

Morgan, Bengough To Go To London

The visit of Mr. Morgan and Mr. Bengough to London is an extremely important one for the B.C. District Union and the B.C. Federation of Labor.

LABOR WINS IN TORONTO ELECTIONS

The victory of the C.I.O. in Toronto is a landmark in the history of the labor movement in Canada.

ISLAND HOURS

Determined to Have Settlement

A CRIMINAL CONSPIRACY

LABOR COMMISSION BRINGS DOWN REPORT

ATTITUDE OF B. C. OF L. TOWARDS THE MILITIA

COMMITTEE REPORT ON AFFAIRS OF THE 'TED'

On the LEVEL

FREEDOM OF PRESS THREATENED

Postal Increase Endangers Small Papers

Dues Supplement Constitutional Provision Endorsed

On December 20, 1948, the B.C. Provincial Council of Carpenters endorsed the proposed dues supplement for the members of the Provincial Council of Carpenters.

The new postal regulations introduced by the Government on April 1, 1948, could cost the publisher of a newspaper in Canada as much as \$200,000 a year.

They will still be introduced by the Government on April 1, 1949, and will cost the publisher of a newspaper in Canada as much as \$200,000 a year.

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THE RED FLAG

Vol. I, No. 1 SATURDAY, DECEMBER 28, 1918 Five Cents

They Are Still There!

By JOHN REED

American troops among them—our "Government" at Archangel, Vladivostok and the Siberian Government in the Far East—have not been driven from Russia. These "Governments," which are said to be supported by the majority of the Russian people (whatever they may be), have no characteristics in common; they stand for the return of Canada. So that the Allies, who started out with the avowed intention of "restoring the Constituent Assembly" and then setting up a bourgeois Republic, now find themselves in the position of gendarmes of the Czarist Revolution.

According to official statements of the American and Japanese governments, the objects of intervention in Russia were, protection of military supplies in Archangel and Vladivostok against German and Austrian war prisoners, and assistance to the Czech-Slovaks, who were presumably trying to leave Russia. The "red" salutes and public professions were given by both governments that they had no intention of "interfering in the internal affairs of Russia." But the British government, which was associated with the Americans and Japanese, stated through Lloyd George that the purpose of the intervention was to create "a center for the elements opposed to Bolshevism." And the French government, whose aims in Russia can best be seen in the light of Lloyd George's, did not deign to publish them.

As soon as foreign troops landed on Russian soil, the Committee for Foreign Affairs, Trotskyists, advised a note to the Allied and American governments asking why no notice of intervention had ever been given to the government, and demanding a bill of compliance.

"If the Allied and American governments have any cause for complaint against the conduct of the government of the Russian Republic," he said in effect, "we will make such such as has been held out as a

We have identified [24 B.C. labour newspapers](#) that are currently digitized and available to browse online. Titles begin as early as 1899 and add to our understanding of the origins of the province's unions and progressive movements. Have we missed any? Let us know! [Browse](#) and connect our website.

Browse labour newspapers

Gary Kroecker
1948 - 2023



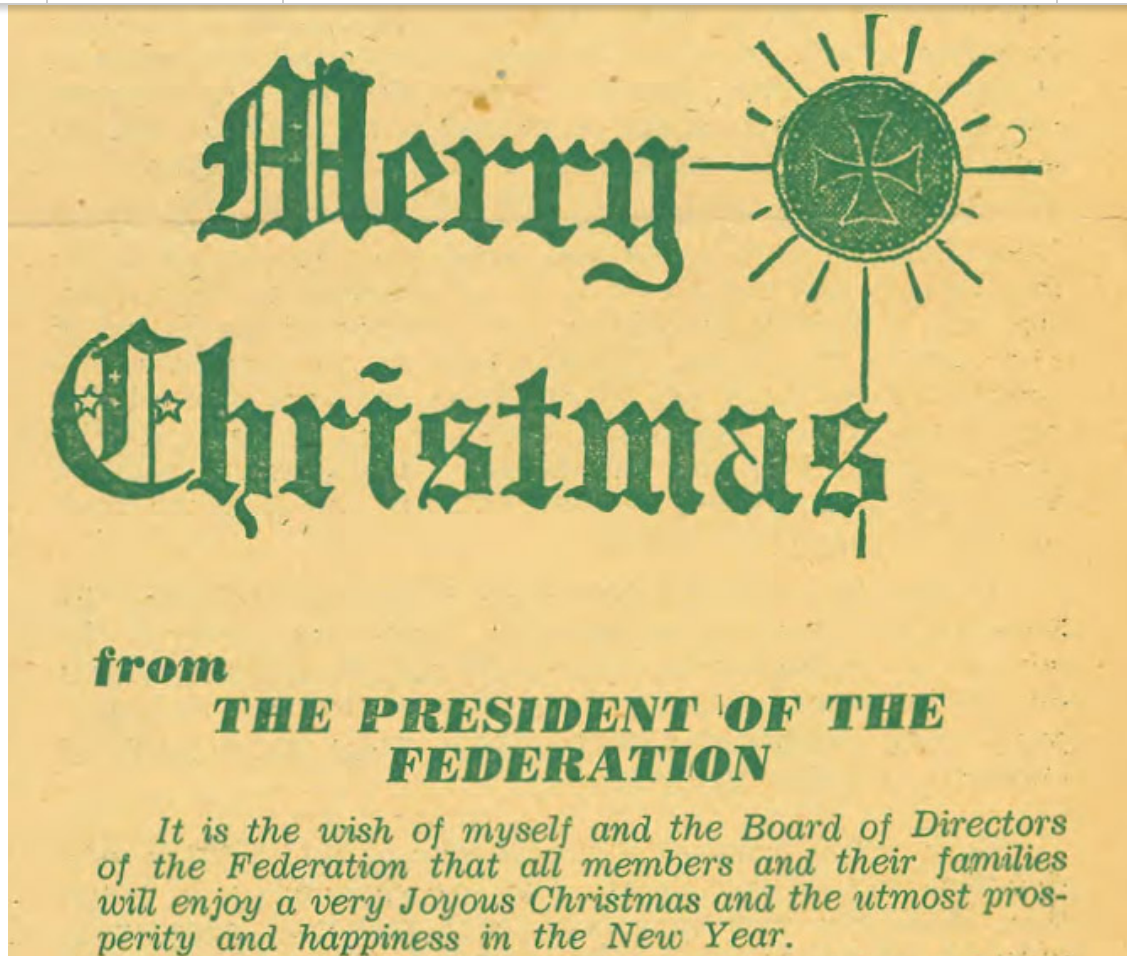
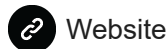
Sadly, we acknowledge the passing of Gary Kroeker. We were fortunate to record a long interview with Gary back in 2017, in which he speaks to Jim Sinclair about his 35 years as an activist and executive member of Local 115 of the International Union of Operating Engineers, as well as his term as President of the BC Building Trades Council. You can see this interview [here](#).

From the Archives



United Papermakers and Paperworkers Steward Classes, Local 630, Campbell River - February 19 & 20, 1969. *Art Gruntman fonds, 2022.1.2.1.9*

The B.C. Labour Heritage Centre will be closed from December 22, 2023 to January 9, 2024. Just as the President of the Federation of Telephone Workers said in 1952, we wish you a very joyous season and much happiness in the new year.

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