

PRESS RELEASE

TO: ALL MEDIA AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS
FROM: JOSEPH MAIRS MEMORIAL COMMITTEE
SUBJECT: 21st ANNUAL JOSEPH MAIRS MEMORIAL, JANUARY 22ND 2023

The Joseph Mairs Memorial Committee welcomes everyone to the 21st Annual Joseph Mairs Memorial at St. Mary's Catholic Church Hall, 1135 4th Ave Ladysmith, BC at 1:00 pm on Sunday, January 22nd, 2023.

Come and join with other working people to honour Our Labour Martyr, Joseph Mairs. As always, our general theme for the day is 'Our Common Condition.'

We are pleased to announce our keynote speaker for this year's event is John Clarke.

John Clarke came to Canada, from the UK, in the late seventies. In 1983, he helped to form a union of unemployed workers, in London, Ontario. Seven years later, he moved to Toronto to become an organizer with the newly formed Ontario Coalition Against Poverty (OCAP), continuing in that role for 28 years. He is presently the Packer Visitor in Social Justice at York University.

The theme of John's talk is **Social Struggles at a Time of Global Crisis**

"The leaders of the G7 told us that that the post-pandemic world would be one in which we'd 'build back better.' Instead, we are living in a period that is marked by war, climate disaster, a rampant cost of living crisis and deepening economic slump.

In the face of such volatile and dangerous conditions, how do our unions and communities build the kind of powerful and united movements that can prevent those in economic and political power from imposing the burden of this crisis on working class people? How do we fight to win in this harsh and unprecedented situation?"

We welcome interest from media and can provide opportunities for interviews in the lead up.

As always, we will hold a discussion after John speaks and we encourage everyone to participate. Through this event, we hope to provide inspiration for all of us to advance our work to build serious struggle for workers' rights and conditions across this province and the world.

Again, this year we will enjoy live music by local musicians linked to the Labour Movement - Beverley McKeen and Lily Haythornthwaite. All this will be technically perfect due to the skills of our sound person Mike Gagnon.

After the indoor programme, we will form a procession behind our splendid piper Neil Hewitt and walk to the cemetery to place flowers at the graveside of Joseph Mairs.

Joseph Mairs was a trade unionist and a coal miner. He died in 1914, a month short of his 22nd birthday, after being arrested by government troops during the Occupation of Ladysmith.

This struggle which coal miners on Vancouver Island waged was for the eight-hour day, health and safety regulations and union recognition. Joseph rests in the Ladysmith Cemetery beneath a cairn his fellow miners erected in his honour with the stirring inscription:

"A Martyr to a Noble Cause - The Emancipation of His Fellow Men."