

BULLETIN

On to Ottawa Trek: 75th anniversary highlights labour victories, goal to end homelessness

June 1, 2010

This June marks the 75th anniversary of the On to Ottawa Trek, when 1,000 young unemployed men climbed atop railway boxcars to take their plea for work and wages to the federal government.

In 1935, unemployed workers were being forced into relief camps, and made to perform labour under military-style discipline -- for 20 cents a day. When workers finally organized a walkout to protest conditions, then-Vancouver mayor Gerry McGreer directed city police to beat the protestors. Two months later, the young protestors decided to take their message to Ottawa.

The courage of the On to Ottawa Trek triggered key social and legislative changes, including the disassembly of labour camps, and the establishment of unemployment insurance and other social safety nets.

Celebrate the 75th anniversary of the On to Ottawa Trek:

Date: June 6

Place: CRAB Park, at the North foot of Main Street, Vancouver

Speakers: Libby Davies, MP; Jim Sinclair, President, BC Federation of Labour

Music starts at 12:30

The anniversary celebration will include the dedication of a bronze historical marker at the Trek site, and a modern-day food kitchen. The celebration will also send off the 2010 Homelessness Relay delegation, which will leave by train later that day to take their demands for a national housing program to Ottawa.

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