Unions and organizations that shaped Alberta’s labour movement
The 2013 labour history calendar, produced annually by the Alberta Labour History Institute (ALHI), profiles trade unions that represented Alberta's working women and men at some point in our province's history but which, for one reason or another, no longer exist today. Some of them, such as Local 120 of the United Garment Workers of America (later of the United Food and Commercial Workers), are gone because their employer went out of business or moved operations elsewhere. Such was the case with Edmonton's GWG factory, which was purchased by Levi Strauss. That company closed the factory in 2004 and moved its operations to Haiti.

Some unions, like the International Cigar Makers’ Union, are now only part of our past because the industry their members worked in no longer exists in Alberta. Others existed in the past under a different name. An example is the Civil Service Association of Alberta (CSA), forerunner to the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees (AUPE). A number of unions, such as the Mine Workers' Union of Canada (MWUC) and the International Typographical Union (ITU), merged with other existing unions.

The Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) is an example of a union that was created as a result of the merger of two unions: the National Union of Public Employees and the National Union of Public Service Employees. The merger happened in 1963. In September of this year, CUPE will celebrate its 50th anniversary.
A Canadian section of the US-based Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters (BSCP) was formed in Calgary in the early 1940s in response to the racism that workers of African descent faced on the railway, not just from their employer but also from the Canadian Brotherhood of Railway Employees. Their collective agreement had sleeping car porters, where blacks were slotted, in a separate group which prevented them from ever being promoted to conductor.
This Month In Labour History

Jan 1, 1966 The Canadian Pension Plan went into force on this date

Jan 2, 1905 Conference of industrial unionists in Chicago leads to the formation of the Industrial Workers of the World

Jan 6, 1963 The 1,000,000th claim for compensation by an injured worker is filed with the Alberta Workmen’s Compensation Board in its 45th year of operation

Jan 12, 1973 Negotiations for a first contract at Wardair fail. A two-month strike starts

Jan 15, 1929 Martin Luther King born in Atlanta, Georgia

Jan 16, 1906 Founding meeting of the Edmonton Trades and Labour Council

Jan 17, 1915 Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) poet Ralph Chaplin writes Solidarity Forever

Jan 21, 1962 Alberta New Democrats founding provincial convention

Jan 24, 1975 Canadian Air Line Flight Attendants (CALFAA) lobbying campaign defeats proposal by Transport Canada prohibiting female flight attendants from working beyond 13th week of pregnancy

Jan 26, 1850 S. Gompers, first president of American Federation of Labor, born

Jan 27, 1954 Workers at Fort Saskatchewan’s first chemical refinery are chartered as ICWU Local 530. Now known as Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Local 530A

Jan 29, 1946 Supreme Court Justice Ivan Rand, dealing with an auto-workers dispute in Ontario, rules that unions have the legal right to collect dues from all members of a recognized bargaining unit, when the majority votes to create a union local
The Civil Service Association (CSA) was formed in 1919. In its early years, it was more of an advisory board to government than a trade union. In 1969 the CSA was granted limited bargaining rights by the Social Credit government. Dissatisfied with their pseudo-collective bargaining regime, CSA members went on strike twice in 1974. One involved 12,500 civil servants who struck for two days when the government attempted to unilaterally impose a wage settlement. Two years later, the CSA became the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees (AUPE).
This Month In Labour History

Feb 2, 1989 African National Congress allowed to operate legally in South Africa after 29-year ban

Feb 4, 1965 The closing of the Standard Mine at Shaughnessy, Alberta ends the coal-mining era in southern Alberta

Feb 4, 2002 Alberta's largest teachers' strike begins; receives strong public support

Feb 6, 1906 Lethbridge Trades and Labour Council granted charter

Feb 6, 1974 General strike in Grenada leads to independence; US invades 10 years later

Feb 13, 1947 The gush of Leduc #1 oil well marks the beginning of a new stage of petroleum development for Alberta

Feb 14, 1949 5,000 workers begin a four-month, illegal strike in Asbestos, Quebec, a strike that marked the beginnings of militancy and secularism for the “Catholic” union federation in Quebec

Feb 17, 1944 PC 1003, a federal order-in-council, provides federal government recognition of collective bargaining rights for Canadian workers

Feb 22, 2001 Calgary's longest transit strike begins, ending 49 days later

Feb 24, 1848 Revolution begins in France, inspiring revolts across Europe

Feb 24, 1965 District 1199 Health Care Workers becomes first U.S. labour union to oppose the Vietnam War

Feb 24, 1942 Canada forcibly removes all Japanese from the West Coast
The International Cigar Makers’ Union (ICMU) was formed in 1867 when Canadian affiliates joined the US-based Cigar Makers’ National Union. The latter was established in 1864 partly as an attempt to protect a trade which many cigar makers felt was being devalued through the importation of low-cost labour from Europe. Pictured here is an Edmonton local of the ICMU.

International Cigar Makers’ Union float during 1905 Edmonton labour day ceremonies. City of Edmonton Archives - EA-274-3
March 1, 1978 Canadian Human Rights Act takes effect, outlawing discrimination on the grounds of age or marital status
March 1, 1906 Seven-month United Mine Workers strike in Lethbridge begins, resulting in anti-labour Industrial Disputes Investigation Act being passed by federal government in 1907
March 8, 1908 First International Women’s Day started in New York City by garment workers
March 10, 1917 Calgary establishes Labour Representation League to nominate candidates in elections to all levels of government
March 13, 1919 Delegates from most union locals in western Canada meet at the Western Labour Conference in Calgary and form One Big Union
March 14, 1913 First convention of the Provincial Council of Carpenters
March 15, 1951 Local 630 of Oil Workers International Union certified in Edmonton, the first local in the oil industry to last for some time
March 17, 1977 Members of CUPE begin lengthy strike at Parkland nursing home
March 18, 1918 Government of Alberta passes province’s first workers compensation legislation
March 18, 1911 New York Triangle Shirtwaist Fire 147; workers, the vast majority women, perish after being locked in the factory by the employer
March 19, 1919 Civil Service Association of Alberta (CSA), precursor to AUPE, formed
March 20, 1980 United Nurses of Alberta organize program of action to publicize nurses’ low wages
March 24, 1918 Women win vote in Canadian federal elections
March 27, 1912 IWW launches strike on Canadian Northern and Grand Trunk Pacific lines
March 30, 1927 Cesar Chavez born near Yuma, Arizona
March 31, 1949 Last major strike of Canadian Seamen’s Union

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One of Alberta’s first unionized workplaces dominated by women was Edmonton’s Great Western Garment (GWG) factory. It was established in January 1911 and unionized by the United Garment Workers of America (UGWA) only three months later as Local 120. Unionization of the factory was not opposed by management because it meant they could use the union label to promote their products. In 1994 the UGWA became part of the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW). Local 120 continued to represent the workers at the plant until it was closed in 2004.
April 1, 1966 The Canada Assistance Plan provides federal cost-sharing to provinces for social services
April 1, 1902 United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners granted charter for Local 1055 in Calgary
April 1, 1917 Strike by 7,500 Crowsnest Pass miners belonging to the United Mine Workers of America
April 11, 1983 Bill 44 introduced: removes the legal right to strike for all hospital workers
April 12, 1919 The Edmonton Free Press, journal of the Edmonton Trades and Labour Council, begins publication
April 12, 2001 Amalgamated Transit Union Local 583 ends Calgary transit strike
April 17, 1907 Amalgamated Sheet Metal Workers International Alliance Local 371 formed in Edmonton
April 17, 1982 The Constitution Act is proclaimed, along with the Canadian Charter of Rights & Freedoms
April 17, 1984 The Canada Health Act penalizes provinces that violate provisions of the Medical Care Act
April 18, 1980 United Nurses of Alberta begin legal strike at 79 hospitals
April 20, 1914 Ludlow, Colorado massacre of U.S. miners
April 22, 1980 Nurses defy back-to-work order, winning a negotiated settlement six days later
April 22, 1951 Civic and healthcare employees form the Federation of Public Employees, forerunner of the National Union of Public Employees
April 23, 1956 Canadian Labour Congress is formed as a merger of two competing trade union federations
April 27, 1933 Fourteen leaders of a Calgary relief strike are arrested
April 29, 1903 76 people are killed in Frank, Alberta when Turtle Mountain, weakened by mining, collapses
April 30, 1900 First Alberta local of the International Association of Machinists (IAM 357) formed in Calgary
Canadian Brewery Workers

At one time workers in a number of Alberta’s breweries were members of the Canadian Union of United Brewery, Flour, Cereal, Soft Drink and Distillery Workers. It was formed in 1973 when the US-based international, formed a century earlier, decided to merge with the Teamsters, a move opposed by the Canadian locals. The late 1970s and early 1980s were a particularly active period for Alberta’s unionized brewery workers, including a seven and half month strike and lockout, which resulted in industry-wide bargaining.

Calgary Malting and Brewing employees beside their float, 1913. Glenbow Archives - NA-3164-380
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**May 1, 1917** Civic Employees Federal Union No. 30 granted charter

**May 1, 1923** Edmonton workers rally to support striking Edmonton coal miners

**May 1, 1957** Hospital Insurance and Diagnostic Services Act proclaimed; provides federal matching grants for provincial hospitalization programs without user fees

**May 4, 1886** Workers demonstrating in Chicago for the eight-hour day are attacked by police on Haymarket Square

**May 5, 1818** Karl Marx born in Trier, Germany

**May 5, 1903** First issue of Alberta’s labour newspaper, Bond of Brotherhood, appears in Calgary

**May 7, 1968** French students and workers revolt in Paris

**May 14, 1771** Labour reformer Robert Owen born in Newton, Wales

**May 15, 1903** International Union of Bricklayers and Allied Craftsmen grants charter to Local 1 in Edmonton

**May 15, 1919** Winnipeg General Strike begins

**May 18, 2007** Greyhound workers strike across western Canada

**May 24, 1921** Trial of Italian-American anarchists Sacco and Vanzetti begins

**May 24, 1919** Drumheller coalminers begin strike, demanding recognition of the One Big Union as their bargaining agent

**May 25, 1905** Calgary Trades and Labour Council granted charter

**May 26, 1919** Workers in Edmonton and Calgary begin general strikes in show of solidarity with Winnipeg General Strike

**May 28, 1871** Paris Commune crushed with 25,000 killed

**May 28, 1919** Eight thousand miners in District 18 join sympathy strike with Winnipeg workers
Unemployed Workers’ Organizations

The first organizations of unemployed workers appeared during the Depression of the 1930s. The mainstream labour movement was unable to mount any effective effort to support the thousands of men and women who lost their livelihoods. The Workers’ Unity League, established in 1930 mainly by Communists, its affiliated National Unemployed Workers Association and the Relief Camps Workers Union stepped in and played a significant role in organizing the unemployed for protests and demonstrations.

Relief strike march, Calgary 1935. Glenbow Archives - NA/2800/12
June 1, 1986 “The Battle of 66th Street” United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 280P begin six-month strike at Gainers meat-packing plant.

June 1, 1986 UFCW workers at Fletchers in Red Deer begin strike.

June 6, 1902 United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners granted charter for Local 1055 in Calgary.

June 7, 1935 The On-to-Ottawa Trek reaches Calgary from Vancouver.

June 13, 1831 Wat Tyler leads march of English peasants to London.

June 1, 1872 Trade unions provided first recognition in Canadian law but severe restrictions force most of them to forego registering.

June 14, 1912 First convention of newly-formed Alberta Federation of Labour begins in Lethbridge.

June 19, 1914 Hillcrest mining disaster leaves 189 dead, the worst mining disaster in Alberta’s history.

June 19, 2002 Alberta Teachers Association reaches deal that ends dispute with the Conservative government.

June 21, 1919 “Bloody Saturday” police repression of workers in Winnipeg General Strike results in two deaths.

June 27, 1869 Emma Goldman, famous anarchist–feminist, born in Kovno (now Kaunas), Lithuania.

June 28, 1926 Six Labour members win seats in Alberta provincial election.

June 30, 1919 Government raids unions across Canada, enforcing new “sedition” legislation meant to restrict unionism and fend off socialism.
Wood, Wire and Metal Lathers’ International Union

Many of Alberta’s earliest trade unions were in the construction trades. Plumbers and pipe fitters, carpenters, bricklayers and hod carriers, painters, plasterers and cement masons are among some of the unionized workers who built the province’s cities and towns. Pictured here are members of the Wood, Wire and Metal Lathers’ International Union Local 221 from Calgary.

Members of Lathers’ local union no. 221, Calgary, Alberta, 1908. Glenbow Archives - NA/4667/3
This Month In Labour History

**July 1, 1919** A mass arrest of One Big Union members is coordinated by federal government.

**July 1, 1935** On to Ottawa Trek violently repressed by RCMP in Regina.

**July 1, 1958** Alberta proclaims its Hospital Insurance and Diagnostic Services Act.

**July 1, 1968** Federal Medical Care Act comes into force but Alberta does not yet participate.

**July 1, 1968** Canadian Union of Public Employees 474 in Edmonton is granted a charter.

**July 1, 1969** Alberta agrees to provide a provincial program that meets requirements of the federal Medical Care Act.

**July 1, 1980** AUPE “wildcat strike” at Alberta Liquor Control Board.

**July 6, 1949** International Association of Bridge, Structural, Ornamental and Reinforcing Iron Workers Local 720 charter issued.

**July 7, 1977** 2,500 Alberta nurses begin legal strike at seven hospitals.

**July 6, 1949** United Farmers of Alberta government is elected; four Labour members are also elected.

**July 10, 1997** United Food and Commercial Workers Local 1118, meatpackers at the High River, Alberta plant go on strike.

**July 11, 1961** Amalgamated Association of Street Electric Railway and Motor Coach Employees of America Local 583 strike Calgary Transit July 11 to August 22.

**July 14, 1912** Woody Guthrie born in Okemah, Oklahoma.

**July 17, 1936** Spanish Civil War begins.

**July 18, 1921** United Farmers of Alberta government is elected; four Labour members are also elected.

**July 20, 1966** Canada Packers strike by United Packinghouse Workers of America.

**July 26, 1948** Canadian Air Line Flight Attendants Association (CAL-FAA) is certified.

**July 27, 1997** Canadian Auto Workers Local 4050 goes on strike against Marriott Food Services, Red Deer.

**July 8, 1953** Sheet Metal Workers Local 558 formed in Lethbridge.

**July 10, 1997** United Food and Commercial Workers Local 1118, meatpackers at the High River, Alberta plant go on strike.

**July 27, 1997** Canadian Auto Workers Local 4050 goes on strike against Marriott Food Services, Red Deer.
The International Union of Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers (Mine Mill, for short) was founded in 1893 as the Western Federation of Miners (WFM). It became Mine Mill in 1916. Workers at Medicine Hat’s Medalta Potteries, many of whom were women, were members of Mine Mill. Like its predecessor, the union was a particularly militant one and faced a lot of repression not only from government and employers, but also from more conservative elements within the main stream labour movement. Mine Mill merged with International Steelworkers of America in 1967.

Medalta pottery workers placing pottery in kiln for firing, ca 1935. Medicine Hat Historic Clayworks
### August 1, 1932
The CCF is founded in Calgary by labour, farmer and socialist parties and the Canadian Brotherhood of Railway Employees.

### August 1, 1906
Edmonton Trades and Labour Council granted charter.

### August 1, 1918
With trade union pressure the Workmen’s Compensation Act becomes effective for the coal mining industry.

### August 2, 1997
United Food and Commercial Workers Local 1118 settles strike.

### August 4, 1908
Two-month national rail strike of CPR shop and yard workers begins.

### August 6, 1945
U.S. drops nuclear bomb on Hiroshima.

### August 6, 1981
Wardair locks out its 700 flight attendants for 13 weeks, with the company using scabs and a strikebreaking security firm.

### August 7, 1940
The Unemployment Insurance Act receives royal assent. Labour had fought a long battle for a federal program of UI.

### August 19, 1905

### August 22, 1961
Amalgamated Association of Street Electric Railway & Motor Coach Employees of America Local 583 Calgary Transit strike ends.

### August 22, 1980
Solidarnos, founded in Poland.

### August 23, 1927
Execution of Sacco and Vanzetti by state of Massachusetts.

### August 20, 2005
AFL declares August 20 Farmworker Day in memory of Terry Rash and in solidarity with the struggle of farmworkers to achieve dignity and respect.

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Amalgamated Transit Union 569 granted charter.

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- **August 19, 1905**: Formation of the first Medicine Hat Trades and Labour Council.
- **August 20, 2005**: AFL declares August 20 Farmworker Day in memory of Terry Rash and in solidarity with the struggle of farmworkers to achieve dignity and respect.
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- **August 22, 1980**: Solidarnos, founded in Poland.
- **August 23, 1927**: Execution of Sacco and Vanzetti by state of Massachusetts.
Dissatisfied with the lack of support they received from the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) while on strike, Alberta miners formed the Mine Workers’ Union of Canada (MWUC) in 1925. By the following year it was the largest miners’ union in the province. During the Depression of the 1930s MWUC, along with the Workers’ Unity League, led miners in their fights against the coal companies. The companies responded by blacklisting their members and encouraged divisions among miners by exploiting UMWA’s desire to regain its membership. MWUC eventually rejoined the UMWA in 1935.

Miners from Coleman local of MWUC marching on May Day, Coleman, Alberta. Glenbow Archives - NC/54/2015
September 1, 1905 Alberta becomes a province
September 3, 2004 First IWW World North American General Assembly in Alberta begins in Edmonton
September 4, 1920 Edmonton Free Press becomes Alberta Labour News; serves as official paper for AFL
September 6, 1946 Alberta Farmers Union begins 30-day strike demanding minimum fixed price for wheat
September 8, 1886 Alberta's first union, the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers, is founded in Medicine Hat

This Month In Labour History

September 9, 1991 Canadian government workers stage 9-day strike
September 10, 1904 Plumbers and Pipefitters Local 488 receives first charter; largest plumbers and pipefitters local in Canada and one of the largest in North America
September 11, 1973 Democratically elected government of Salvador Allende overthrown by CIA backed coup
September 17, 1956 Convention begins in Edmonton leading to the merger of the Alberta Federation of Labour and the Industrial Federation of Labour of Alberta
September 17, 2003 CEP Local 1900 walk out in Edmonton in effort to ratify first contract with A-Channel
September 19, 1909 Civic Service Union 52, representing City of Edmonton inside workers is founded
September 24, 1918 IWW declared illegal in Canada
September 24, 1963 Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) is formed by a merger of National Union of Public Employees and National Union of Public Service Employees

September 25, 1918 Borden government outlaw publications and meetings in 14 languages. Canada's radical and labour press are targets
September 25, 2003 Levi Strauss announces closure of Edmonton's GWG plant founded in 1911
September 26, 1918 Borden government bans 14 organizations, including IWW, Social Democratic Party, Chinese Labour Association and Ukrainian Social Democratic Party
September 29, 1931 RCMP murder 3 coal miners in Bienfait, Saskatchewan during peaceful strike demonstration
International Typographical Union

Skilled printers were among the first Alberta workers to organize. Calgary Local 449, pictured here, received its charter from the International Typographical Union (ITU) in 1902. Alberta’s ITU locals were founding members of local labour councils in Edmonton, Calgary, Medicine Hat and Lethbridge in the early 1900s, and of the Alberta Federation of Labour in 1912.

Composing room of Calgary Herald newspaper, Calgary, Alberta. Glenbow Archives - PA/2679-1
### This Month in Labour History

**October 1, 1920** One Big Union miners begin province-wide strike. Government passes Order-in-Council for miners to accept UMWA as their official representative.

**October 4, 1918** Amalgamated Meatcutters Union formed in Edmonton.

**October 6, 1958** Office and Professional Employees International Union Local 379 chartered in Calgary.

**October 8, 1919** Alberta Teachers Alliance holds province's first teachers' strike.

**October 12, 1918** Unionists in Calgary stage sympathy strike with Calgary freight handlers.

**October 12, 1975** Grace Hartman becomes CUPE president, the first woman president of a major union in North America.

**October 14, 1976** Canadian Labour Congress holds national day of protest against the Trudeau government’s wage-control policy.

**October 15, 1919** Alberta Teachers Alliance strike resolved.

**October 17, 1865** Delegates meet and form the National Bricklayers Union.

**October 21, 1999** Founding meeting of Alberta Labour History Institute at southside Rosie’s, Edmonton.

**October 28, 1995** Federal Government workers win major pay equity claim after 16 years of struggle.

The United Packinghouse Workers of America (UPWA) was a large industrial union that organized all workers in a plant regardless of skill or trade. Formed in 1937 as the Packinghouse Workers’ Organizing Committee, they had a significant presence in meatpacking plants throughout Canada including Alberta. A nation-wide UPWA strike in 1947 resulted in national pattern bargaining for packinghouse workers, which remained in effect for the next 40 years.
November 1, 1934 Amalgamated Sheet Metal Workers International Alliance Local 371 re-chartered to become Local 271, Edmonton
November 8, 1999 Members of the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers of Canada Local 115A and the Graphic Communications International Union Local 34M at the Calgary Herald walk off their jobs after seeking a first contract for more than a year
November 11, 1902 United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America granted charter as Local 1325 Edmonton, the oldest construction union still operating under its original charter in Alberta
November 14, 1995 CUPE Local 8 and AUPE Local 55 (Foothills Hospital) laundry workers in Calgary engage in illegal strike to stop contracting out. Strike spreads to all major hospitals
November 16, 1997 Maple Leaf pork plant (formerly Gainers) workers strike despite company threat to close plant if workers strike
November 22, 2002 Edmonton Shaw Conference Centre workers UFCW Local 401 strike ends with workers winning first contract
November 23, 1170 BC First recorded strike of workers occurs in Egypt
November 24, 1995 CUPE Local 8 and AUPE Local 55 hospital laundry workers’ illegal strike in Calgary ends with moratorium on contracting out
November 25, 1983 Canadian postal workers reduce postal rates to 10 cents as part of negotiating tactics with Post Office
November 27, 1992 Canadian Paperworkers Union, Communications Workers of Canada, and the Energy and Chemical Workers Union merge to create Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union (CEP)
One Big Union

The One Big Union (OBU) was formed in Alberta in 1919. It advocated for the general strike and for workers to seize control of their workplaces. In 1920, 90 percent of miners in the Crowsnest Pass voted to leave the United Mine Workers of America and join the OBU. However, the life of this radical union was short-lived as governments sided with employers to crush the OBU via arrests of its leaders and brutal suppression of their strikes. However, many of its leaders and activists went on to become important figures in Alberta’s broader labour movement.

Strikers from One Big Union, at Drumheller, defend themselves from police attacks, 1919. Glenbow Archives - NA/2513-1
December 6, 1921 William Irvine of Calgary wins first federal labour seat in Alberta for Canadian Labour Party

December 7, 1896 International Union of Steam and Operating Engineers is issued a charter by the American Federation of Labor

December 9, 1869 Knights of Labor founded

December 10, 1886 American Federation of Labor founded

December 12, 1883 Railway engineers and firemen in Calgary strike against wage cuts

December 18, 1944 Amalgamated Transit Union Local 1374 at Greyhound chartered in Calgary

December 19, 1966 Proclamation of federal Medical Care Act

December 21, 1932 Edmonton Hunger March is ended by police violence with over 100 arrested

December 24, 1904 United Association of Plumbers and Pipefitters Local 496, Calgary granted charter

December 30, 1886 Knights of Labor establish first Alberta base with an assembly in Calgary
The Alberta Labour History Institute would like to recognize our partners who help us make this calendar possible:

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McGown Johnson, Lawyers
McManus & Hubler, Lawyers
Brenda Kuzio, Lawyer

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