

Labour Day Picnic

Written by Mike Epp
Thursday, 02 September 2010 19:00 -

Although the summer days are growing noticeably shorter, there is still one special summer event to look forward to!

The free Peterborough and District Labour Council Labour Day Picnic is **Monday, September 6** at the Nicholl's Oval Park pavillion at the corner of Parkhill Road East and Armour Road.

It is a great opportunity for New Democrats to come out and show their solidarity with our brothers and sisters in the labour movement. Ours is a long and deep historical relationship, and one which we have the opportunity to celebrate on Labour Day Monday.

The day promises lots of fun for all ages. There are games for the children and lots of prizes, drinks and ice cream.

The barbecue is from noon to 1 pm - come early to make sure you get a burger or a hotdog! They "sell out" early. Music follows by the Smokehouse Trio. Another feature of the day is the large number of draws - it seems almost everyone at the park goes home with something!

Our **federal candidate, Dave Nickle**, who is a delegate to the Labour Council from his union, OSSTF, will be there, so stop and say "hi!" and wish him luck.

So, mark Monday, Labour Day, on your calendar. And take a moment to remember why we celebrate it:

Labour Day has been celebrated on the first Monday in September in Canada since the 1880s. On April 14, 1872 a parade was staged in support of the Toronto Typographical Union's strike for a 58-hour work-week. The Toronto Trades Assembly (TTA) called its 27 unions to demonstrate in support of the Typographical Union who had been on strike since March 25.

George Brown, Canadian politician and editor of the Toronto Globe hit back at his striking employees, pressing police to charge the Typographical Union with "conspiracy."

Although the laws criminalizing union activity were outdated and had already been abolished in Great Britain, they were still on the books in Canada and police arrested 24 leaders of the Typographical Union. Labour leaders called another similar demonstration September 3 to protest the arrests. Seven unions marched in Ottawa, prompting a promise by Canadian Prime Minister Sir John A. Macdonald to repeal the barbarous anti-union laws.

Parliament passed the Trade Union Act on June 14, 1873, and soon all unions were demanding

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a 54-hour work-week.

The Toronto Trades and Labour Council held similar celebrations every spring. American Peter J. McGuire, co-founder of the American Federation of Labor, was asked to speak at a labour festival in Toronto, Canada on July 22, 1882. Returning to the United States, McGuire and the Knights of Labor organized a similar parade based on the Canadian event on September 5, 1882 in New York City, USA.

On July 23, 1894, Canadian Prime Minister John Thompson and his government made Labour Day, to be held in September, an official holiday. In the United States, the New York parade became an annual event that year, and in 1894 was adopted by American president Grover Cleveland to compete with International Workers' Day (May Day).

And speaking of May Day, that's the day to celebrate labour in Europe. It commemorates the 1886 Haymarket Massacre in Chicago, when Chicago police fired on workers during a general strike for the eight-hour workday, killing several demonstrators and resulting in the deaths of several police officers, largely from friendly fire

In 1889, the first congress of the Second International, meeting in Paris for the centennial of the French Revolution and the Exposition Universelle, following a proposal by Raymond Lavigne, called for international demonstrations on the 1890 anniversary of the Chicago protests.

May Day was formally recognized as an annual event at the International's second congress in 1891. Subsequently, the May Day Riots of 1894 and May Day Riots of 1919 occurred.

In 1904, the International Socialist Conference meeting in Amsterdam called on "all Social Democratic Party organizations and trade unions of all countries to demonstrate energetically on May First for the legal establishment of the 8-hour day, for the class demands of the proletariat, and for universal peace."

The congress made it "mandatory upon the proletarian organizations of all countries to stop work on May 1, wherever it is possible without injury to the workers."

In many countries, the working classes sought to make May Day an official holiday, and their efforts largely succeeded. May Day has long been a focal point for demonstrations by various socialist, communist and anarchist groups. In some circles, bonfires are lit in commemoration of the Haymarket martyrs, usually at dawn.

After the Haymarket Square riot in May, 1886, US President Grover Cleveland feared that commemorating Labor Day on May 1 could become an opportunity to commemorate the riots. Thus he moved in 1887 to support the Labor Day that the Knights supported.

FOOTNOTE: Did you know that the original union at the *Peterborough Examiner* was Local 248 of the International Typographical Union?

For a quick survey of this information and more, check out [Wikipedia](#) ; for more in depth history,

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see the article on the subject by Clifford A. Scotton, editor of the former CLC flagship publication, "Canadian Labour." Or get in touch with our (very) active member Karen Hicks, who used to be president of one of the union locals mentioned above!