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Releases

BCFED pays tribute to the memory of Ray Haynes

Union members throughout BC are grieving the loss of long-time labour activist and leader Ray Haynes, secretary-treasurer of the BCFED from 1966 to 1973. The BCFED today released the following statement from president Sussanne Skidmore and secretary-treasurer Hermender Singh-Kailley:

For seven decades, unions in BC have been able to count on Ray Haynes' passion, leadership and courage — not to mention his warmth and humour. Many of us are hurting at the thought he won't be here any more to give us his advice and, at times, gentle prodding.

Ray Haynes dove into the labour movement at a time when outright legal oppression of unions was widespread and often violent. But he didn't let that keep him from quickly learning the ropes of organizing, and rising through the ranks of labour leadership.

He took the reins at the BCFED during years of social, political and labour upheaval. He rose to that challenge, not only in BC but well outside our borders. He made our Federation a voice on issues like the Vietnam war, nuclear testing and the California grape boycott. Facing off against the Socred government, he wrestled their draconian Mediation Commission Act to a stalemate until it could be repealed in 1972 by the new David Barrett government — a crowning victory as leader of the BCFED.

Nothing could have been more fitting for our 60th convention than to be blessed with the chance to honour Ray and hear from him one last time. The warmth and magnitude of delegates' cheering and their multiple ovations said a lot about his legacy — not to mention his undiminished ability to bring a thousand people to their feet.

Ray Haynes inspired us then, and he continues to inspire us today. Our deepest condolences to Ray's family and his many friends. And to Ray Haynes, our endless gratitude for sharing your dedication and solidarity with the workers of British Columbia and beyond throughout your life. We will miss you.

Additional information:

- Ray Haynes appreciation, from the BC Labour Heritage Centre
- Ray Haynes speech to the BCFED 2022 Convention