

Alberta Labour History Institute (ALHI)

Group Interview

- Date: 27 October 2005
- Location: Hinton, Alberta
- Participants: Bill Belcourt, Lauro Bertolin, Don Boucher, Mike Jodoin, Bryan Jones, Lynda Jonson, Ron Jonson, Wally Land, Noel Lapierre, Cory Maurik, John Mitchell, David Robson, Rod Schwetz, Bill Sommerfeld
- Index: Experiences in becoming involved in their unions (e.g. Communication, Energy and Paperworkers (CEP) Local 855, International Woodworkers of America (IWA), United Mine Workers of America (UMWA); Roles in the union (e.g. shop steward, health and safety committee, president); working at the pulp mill in Hinton; working as a logger around Hinton; Working in the coalmines; Working as a nurse; Workplace accidents and fatalities; Problems with management; Difficulty dealing with multinational corporations; ‘Wobbles’; Strikes; Impact of the 1986 Gainers strike; Benefits of unions to working people; Problems with Alberta labour laws; Importance of union members being involved in politics

My name is Noel Lapierre. I come into union environment in 1965 when I came to Hinton. It was a big change for me because in Quebec where I was working there was no union. I got involved as time go by.

Rod Schwetz. I hired on in '76 at the pulp mill here, and I've been with this union ever since. That was my first real exposure to a union shop.

My name's Wally Land. Right out of high school I started working for CNR, a member of the Maintenance of Way portion of that union. I moved out to Alberta in '74, worked in Grande Cache, was a Steel Worker up there for about 10 years. I've been 18 years here a member of the CEP.

My name's Cory Maurik. I started with the pulp mill here in 1959, and stayed with the pulp mill until my retirement 4 years ago, so about 42 years. Started as operational personnel, switched to electrical, and was a shop steward and union involvement in different positions over the years. Now retired.

Lauro Bertolin. My onset with organized labour began with my employment. I became a member of the Canadian Paper Workers Union, which now is the P in the CEP after the merger. I think what I can associate the most with is that the progress over the years is a matter that I think you need to be involved with what is happening to really understand how organized labour has been a benefit to the people of Alberta.

My name's Don Boucher. I'm presently national rep for the CEP. I got involved with the CPU in 1979 at the pulp mill in Hinton. From there we merged together with two other national unions to make up the CEP. I was president of the local for 12 years, and in 2002 I got a job at the national union.

My name's David Robson. I came out of school and went to United Mine Workers at CRC in 1973. Then I went to IWA in the bush here working for the mill. Couldn't transfer, quit the job, and then got a job in the mill. Worked here for 21 years, then went off injured. Worked in all kinds of union positions, from shop steward all the way up to president. I've had an enjoyable experience with the unions over the years.

Linda Jonson. I went back to high school as an adult student. Graduated from the Royal Alec nursing as a registered nurse in 1988, and worked here at the Hinton Hospital for close to 11 years, and retired and still became actively involved in the community with the long term care issues.

My name is Ron Jonson. I started working in the mill in 1964. I was shop steward, and I was with the union until 1980, then I went on the management side until I retired in 2000. So I've been retired for 6 years.

My name's John Mitchell. I first came to this country in 1927 from Scotland to Luscar. I first started working for Cardinal River in 1939. The union was United Mine Workers of America. I was there until Luscar shut down. I was the last foreman at Luscar at that time. Went from there to Merkle. It closed in '59 and I came to Hinton. I worked at the high school for a number of years, and I went back to Cardinal River in '75 and retired '85. I was foreman there when I went back.

I'm Bill Sommerfeld. I worked for a few jobs before I joined the union. I started working when I was 15. I worked for 3 different jobs in that time. When I was 25 I joined the union in 1963 the IWA, the International Woodworkers of America. I worked in the woods for the mill here until in 2000 I retired. During that working in the woods I had the opportunity to be job steward. I'll tell you, working with those lumberjacks I learned a lot. They were a pretty good crew. In the early days, we were known as the wobblers. If something didn't go right, we'd shut her down, we went to town, we parked the bus in front of the mill, we had a football, we played football until the argument was settled. Today that wouldn't go because of the way the labour laws are today. A good example again down in the meatpacking plant, if the picket line was honored there wouldn't be a damn bit of trouble. But it's not honored and there's lots of trouble. I just come from BC watching the teachers on strike there, and how wonderful it was that everybody honored the picket line. There was no trouble, except between the negotiator and the government. But that was done at a table. There were no outside problems. But for me the union was a great thing, because in the early days my cousin said if I wasn't signing the paychecks I should look to join a union. And I did. I did that, and the union treated me well. The union treated all of us well in the woodlands. We all end up with a decent retirement when we retired. Some of us didn't make it. We died. we got killed in the bush. The

hazards are still there, and they will be there just because of the conditions that we work under. I guess that's all I got to say. Thank you.

My name's Bill Belcourt. When I started out working originally I went to work in Ft. McMurray in 1967. I belonged to the Operating Engineers there. That was the first time I'd been involved with the union. At that time things were just getting started up there, so we didn't have much clout. More or less just did what we were told to do. Then I left there and went to Grande Cache in '69. That was a unionized shop there, the Building Trades. Then September of '69 I started working in the mill here, and became a member of the International Pulp and Sulphite Workers. I became shop steward about a year after I started working there. Been there ever since. Been on different positions throughout the union – vice president, shop steward, JFC rep, all that kind of stuff. I worked with Dave and Don. Quite a few of the changes I've seen since I've been there, basically a lot more health and safety rules have come in. Wally and Rod, they've worked a lot to do a lot on the plant sites, as well as lobbying the government for some of the changes. So I've been there since 1969 till the present time. Have seen quite a few changes. As far as management, when we first started out we were basically like a family run unit here. It was everybody in town, all the managers and everything. Then a while back, we've changed hands several times. It seems to be getting progressively worse with the change. I think the worst management we've had was International Paper, a multinational. They run everything from down in the States, from Stanford. They really didn't, kind of lost local touch with the workers. It was just we have to make profits for the shareholders. That's all their big thing was. I think that was the first time we went on strike. I've worked here for 36 years now, and we've only had one strike, and that was with International Paper. It lasted a week or so, and then we finally got a contract. But some of the old managers were pretty good to deal with. I was on several negotiating committees. We had our arguments, but we usually ended up getting a contract without too much grief. Seems the multinationals are harder to deal with. Talking to people I know in different unions that are working for other, it seems to be a global thing where more and more multinationals are coming in and making it harder for the workers. I think we're going to have to really stick together to keep going.

My name is Mike Jodoin. I'm a member of the Communication Energy and Paperworkers Union, Local 855. I'm a former general steward for the CEP in Local 855, as well as communications director. Served as the editor for the newsletter on numerous occasions, the political action committee. I sit locally on town council, and also we're just lobbyists for the Alberta Forest Community Coalition, which is sponsored by the CEP, among many other affiliates.

Cory Maurik: I started working in the pulp mill and part of the condition of employment was you had to join the union. So being a young kid coming out of school, you don't have any choice, you just go ahead and join. It was probably a few years after that, I got into the electrical crew. It seemed the union was looking after everybody in general, but there were some problems in the electrical crew. Nobody was willing to step up. I thought, even if I get into trouble, it doesn't matter. I'm young, they can kick my butt out of here, it's no big deal. So I agreed to become electrical crew shop steward, looked after our

interests. From there it led to other things later on in life. There's a general union, but you have your small departments that need some special interests, and that's what got me started into being a shop steward. Thank you.

Wally Land: I started out working for the CNR right out of high school. The first thing that struck me was, I started right out of high school with no experience of any kind, making more money than my dad. Within a few weeks of being on the job, we were on strike. I got educated on unionism real early, and got to see how everything works and how people take care of people.

Don Boucher: When I started working at the mill, I knew there was a union there but I wasn't really involved with it. A couple years into my employment there, the union asked if I would sit on the joint health and safety committee, and I agreed to do that. So I got involved with health and safety quite a bit in the mill. One day the vice president of maintenance come up to me and said, you're no longer on the committee. I asked him why, and he wouldn't give me no reason. He just walked away. I was pretty upset about it, so I went and tracked him down again. I said, listen, why am I off the committee. He said, we forgot to put your name on the list when we gave it to the company. I said, put my name back on the list, they'll accept it. He said, no, it's too late, the names went in at the end of October, and this is the middle of November. You're done. So I went around to the rest of the executive at the time and asked them, why am I not on the committee anymore. They said, we don't want to talk about it. I said, this is a bunch of crap. I served on that committee for 2 years for you, and all of a sudden I'm off. So I finally got one of the vice presidents to talk to me. He said, you're too friendly with the company. I said, I'm too friendly with the company? I went to the maintenance vice president and said, I'm gonna have your job next election. He looked at me and started laughing. I said, don't laugh, I'm serious. This was November, elections weren't till October. When election time come around I got the vice president's job. I got the vice presidents job, and then that fall Bill Belcourt and myself were into negotiations for the first time too. That was how I got involved. That would be in the '80s.

Rod Schwetz: I got involved with safety. It happened just after Don took his vice president, well after he beat the other vice president and he took over. He said to me, could we get you to just give it a try, try it out for a few months and see if you like it or not. That was almost 20 years ago. I'm still involved in safety today. That's how I got my input to it, was through Don.

Noel Lapierre: I start to get involved in 1967. In 1966 I had a major accident. I broke my back and ended up I hospital for 4-1/2 months. When I come out of hospital I start working about May in the camp. That summer it was the Expo '67. I tried to get some time off, and my foreman said no, you can't get no time off, you've been off for a year already. I said, okay, I came down to town and see the manager of the mill. He said no. Because I was working in the camp 27, it was about 20 miles from town, every day I used to drive to town. I was off from 10 in the morning to 3 in the afternoon and sit in front of Wayne Sawyer's office. After 3 weeks he said, yes you can have your time off to go down east. That was my parents' 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary. When I came back in August, it was time for

me to go back to work, I had to go see Wayne Sawyer, and Wayne Sawyer said, you can take another 2 weeks. I was flat broke. I survived the 2 weeks and went back to work, and 2 weeks later they shut down the camp. We were moving everything to the big camp in town. Saturday, they told everybody not to work on Saturday, and I didn't know that. A bunch of us went to work. We come back that Saturday evening, and Wayne Sawyer was a mean manager in those days, three of us got fired. Three French guys. We went see the shop steward and talked to him. We went to his place and his wife was crying, don't get involved, don't get involved. We said, ok we'll look after ourselves. On Monday we went back to the office and talked to Wayne Sawyer and got our job back. A couple weeks later we got fired again. The 3 of us were very radical for some reason. We got our job back again. About the 14<sup>th</sup> of December, the day before my birthday, I got fired again. That time I got fired because I took my paycheck and my 4 months raise, because I didn't have much money on my check. I said, where is my money? He said, we used your money to pay your bill in town. I said, I swear, I said I don't owe to anybody. If you take so much you can take the rest. That time my paycheck was \$4. Anyway I was fired. I went to see the shop steward, the same guy again. He didn't want to do nothing for me. I drove to Edmonton and went to see the president at the IWA. He came with me to town, we talked to the foreman, we talked to the superintendent. They checked back, and I was in the right, he was in the wrong. We have to go see Wayne Sawyer. When we went in the office Wayne Sawyer said to the foreman and superintendent and president of the union, if we take this guy back, you guys are all fired. Those guys just walked like that out of the office. I went to Prince Albert for 3 years. Over there I got involved with the Operating Engineers as a shop steward. After the 2<sup>nd</sup> strike, I had a friend who said, Wayne Sawyer is not here anymore, see if you can come back. I came back in '72 and got involved right away with the union. I got fired again. Yes, I got fired after that too. I got more involved with the union as chief shop steward. I was involved in negotiation in 1975, '77, '79. I got the axe again in '81, because I am a rebel. 1975 was a good year for negotiation. We negotiate for the pension plan, that was a big thing that year. The 40 hours a week, '77 was tough because of the price and wage control that that Trudeau had in place at that time. But we got a good contract, same thing with '79. After that 1980, 26 guys got fired. I was working in the bush at one of the camp, and one of the shop steward came to see me about 2 o'clock in the afternoon. I told him, get back to town. Made sure all the boss know when they come to town, reserve a place, we can have a meeting tonight. Because I was the chief shop steward, we had a meeting, everybody from the bush was there. I'm sure Bill will remember that. There was a motion on the floor that we not go to work the next morning. Next morning we parked all the bus in front of the security office. I went and sit down in the back of the bus instead of to be at the wheel. We were there about ½ an hour. ? was there. He come to the bus and scream at me, get at the wheel and get back to work. I said, I'm not a driver, I'm just sitting at the back of the bus. He tried to get somebody else and nobody move, we just sit there. Then they called president in Edmonton and they called the coast, our vice president over there, he flew over during the day. That evening around 5 o'clock we were still sitting in front of the yard. They were going to have a meeting but they didn't want me at the meeting. I told the guy from the coast, you go there by yourself, you'd better get back to Vancouver, because I don't want anybody like that. I've got to be at the meeting. After an hour's negotiation they

agreed that I should be at the meeting. But I was advised, your days are counted. A year down the road, I was gone too.

David Robson: We go back to '75. In '75 I came out of the bush where I worked as a skidder operator. Before that was scaling, then went to the skidder operator. Had to quit to go back into the mill. I had a little bit of a hair problem, it's called a bad hair day. I had a big afro. The only way I could get a job is I had to go get a haircut, like Mike Jodoin here. The actual hiring person walked in and walked right by me. Usually he's say, good morning Dave, but he didn't recognize me. A few minutes later his head stuck out the door, he looked at me. He says, holy geez, you must want a job. So I got a job in the mill. I started out in relief and recovery. Ron can remember this, 6 months later I had the biggest afro I ever had. The hardhat sat on top of the head and sort of bounced around there. I don't know if it really worked that well. But we got through that stage. It all starts out with your camaraderie with the other people. They start pushing, c'mon Dave, get involved. This is wrong, the safety. Exactly as Don and Rod have done, got involved in the safety, and quite a few other people here. They have a push to go to safety. So the safety was an issue. Then along came a shop steward. I remember being about 20 some years old, and I got a big afro, and I'm a hippie or whatever. I'm standing between 2 employees and they're ready to go at it. They're fighting, ready to go at it. Thank god I'm 6'3", 200 some pounds. Standing between these 2 guys... we got them all calmed down. Nobody got fired over nothing or anything like that. That was part of the initiation. Then exactly as most people here, you have other people behind you that are pushing you. They pushed me to shop steward. We had a strike issue. We got a phone call, you're shutting down the mill tonight. Ok, 16 hours later, we're all too tired to work, we're shutting down the mill. So we shut down the mill. Then Terry McMillan brought in 12 hour shifts. Back in the days, 12 hour shifts were going backwards to the 40s and that. Most unions were against it. Being the rebels we were, Bill, Terry and I and a few others, we went around and I spent days in the mill getting thrown out of control rooms by older people stating, get out of here you hippie, we're not going backwards. They were serious. We'll call the foreman. I had to register at the gate every time I went in there. But through the help of other people, we got 12 hour shifts in here, which was the first in our community. Later on I helped the mine workers committee, and the president still to this day is still there. He was sort of against it. They were again thinking that it was going to take away from, or would add productivity, which it does a bit, but it wasn't going to lose jobs or anything. So we went onto 12 hour shifts as people. We were in a strike position there too because they had this injunction over our head, which we went through the labour board, which was a real eye-opening experience. We negotiated some safety issues. I sat on the Alberta Federation of Labour Safety Committee. We had an individual at that time who was a director of it, that really thought the wording for health and safety should be indoctrinated into the contract. We had a paragraph back then. So at the end of negotiations in my time, we had more than a paragraph, which gave these people some muscle to work with. To this day they're still expanding on that issue, and making sure that those issues are brought up. They pushed me all the way to the top, the individuals. It was a real enjoyment. We tried to get negotiating pensions, because you can work your whole lifetime and then lose it all in the end if you don't have a pension to be relied on. The changes that have come out in the past number of years have helped a lot to the

senior citizens. Not that you're a senior citizen. But Cory and Ron, for instance, even the management people, have gained by the labour movement. Every time you got a benefit they got a benefit. They have had one of the sweetest agreements for management, and I heard they just lost it in the last couple of years, or this year. Starting to lose some of the pension benefits for the management people. But it all starts from down below I think. It's a surge of pushing you up. It's the same for every one of us. We've all had somebody else pushing you up, and then once you get going, look out. I still got a little bit of an afro, but most of it's gone.

Noel Lapierre: Those days when we go in negotiation, what you get we'll get, especially for benefits. Because they didn't have much benefit, management. We fought for it and management got it. We work for it.

David Robson: I think in the end too, management indirectly was behind us. I don't know if I should tell you this, but I've had management people write speeches for me. Go figure. But they were once labour people too, and in the end it did help them out.

Bill Belcourt: [Missing portion] They come out with a bloody novel. This is what we need, and they're all supervisors. Because if you guys get it then we're going to get it. We talked to some of the guys on the floor, the hourly guys and the union members, and they'd say, what do they want that for? Some of our best ideas came from management. The guys on the floor, the supervisors, they'd say go fight for this and go fight for that. Then it makes us easier for us to get it. We say, they're giving it to the hourly guys, why not give it to us? I might even have some at home still, different notes I got from supervisors. They'd come up and say, I'm not signing this. I'm just giving you my ideas, but I'm not going to sign it. But you know if you got any questions about it, who to ask. If you don't understand what we're going for, you can get a hold of me. But I won't sign my name to it of anything. So I'd make a little note and keep track of who to get a hold of to clarify what they actually wanted. Back then most of the supervisors worked up through the ranks and came off the floor. They knew the system, and they knew what all the workers were going through as far as safety and stuff. They couldn't do nothing about it personally, because they had somebody telling them what to do. To me, they were kind of in the middle. They were getting heck from their bosses and heck from the guys that they were supervising. So they were kind of stuck in the middle there. Some of them would like to help you, but they couldn't. Dave remembers, we got a lot of stuff in that way from just talking to some of the managers. The difference between then and now is now we're getting a lot of people from outside the mill. You can't talk to them. They come along, an engineer, I got a ring, and this is the way it is. Ya ok you went to school for 4 years. I told a couple of them they should add a couple of years to that and teach you common sense the first 2 years. There's guys that have been operating there for 30 years plus, and they know what's going on. So we get to the point we just tell the guys, you're the boss, I do the work, you tell me what to do. Then we're down. So ok now we're down, tell us how to get it going again. Well what do you guys think? Well, tell us what to do. You're the guy with the ring.

Lauro Bertolin: What I have to offer on this is I became a shop steward very early in my tenure as a member of the local 855. Things were pretty mellow. I went to the odd meeting, the general meeting. I knew what a grievance was, I knew I was an officer of the local. I had some affiliation. And I knew we had a labour agreement. But it took something outside of local 855 to get me wrapped up in the fact that organized labour has a goal. That was the Gainers strike. I'm sitting here in Hinton, watching it on TV, reading the newspapers. It was remarkable what went on in that time period on 66<sup>th</sup> St. That's when I became more realistic of the fact that I belong to the same organization that those people do, and they're in a battle. I might have that opportunity to be in a battle one day, I may not. That made me start to think. Then one summer day, and this is really something because I have a few notes that I brought with me, but it's a small world. On a summer day I'm driving to Calgary on Hwy 2 and I'm playing with the radio, and I hit the Access network. There's Mr. Dave Werlin giving a speech on the anniversary of the Gainer strike. Do you remember that? That was a very powerful speech. As I was driving down the highway by myself in an older vehicle, I think it was a Chev car or whatever, but your speech was, it's hard for me to express to these people what you were saying and how you were saying it. It was a speech that really brought you to the fact that you should be proud to be a member of organized labour in this province. Then I had an opportunity to go to my very first AFL convention. It was the one where Audrey Cormack became president. There I got a chance to meet a lot of people from other realms of organized labour in Alberta again. I'm a pulp mill worker, all I know is pulp mill issues. All I knew was pulp mill issues. But all of a sudden I had a chance to talk to transit drivers, nurses, cinematographers. They were on strike at that time. We went and gave them support at their picket line. Again that totally reflected on me that there's a lot going on that I'm not aware of, even though I'm a union member. The question of activity or what brings you into activity in your own local is the fact that you need to understand or see that you have to look beyond the fact that you're just a member of your own local. There's a lot more happening. If you can get involved in your own local, then you can create opportunities for yourself to get more aware of what's happening around you, and the benefits you can pass on to other people.

John Mitchell: Listening to all this about the 12 hour day, and yet United Mine Workers fought for years for the 40 hour week. You worked 6 days a week, day shift, afternoon shift, night shift. You come off afternoon shift Saturday night at midnight, and by the time you got home it was 1 o'clock in the morning. Monday morning had to go back down in the mine. A lot of the old timers couldn't figure out why they would want to go on 12 hour shifts. It's a lot different now. You work four 12s and you're off 4 days. So you get a little bit of time off. For young people going in, you must realize that we were isolated up there in the coalmines. There was no way out except by train. You come in 3 days a week, Monday, Wednesday and Friday. And they were very close knit. Usually the secretary and the president were a couple of guys who had been down in the black hole for years all their lives, and they got them on to be president. Usually the president and secretary was what they called a check weighman. When your coal came out of the mine on 2 ton cars and went down into the tippie, and the picking table boss had to be out there and say, there's 100 lb of rock in that car of coal. He'd hit the bell a couple of times. The check weighman up there kept an eye on things, and made sure they weren't putting in



500 lbs of rock that should only be 100. But that's the way it was. I know there's still a lot who think, why would they want to go back to 12 hour shifts? Like I say, it's different now when you're only working 4 days a week. It was the same way when I was there. I worked 6 days a week, and that was it. You did it or else you didn't have a job. My father-in-law was with United Mine Workers. He went down to Drumheller to help start it there. My dad was in the coal in the old country. My grandfather was in the coalmines in the old country. My dad started work down there when he was 14. He came to Canada in 1926 to Luscar. His brother was there. My mother and I came the year afterwards. I'm still a coalminer at heart. These boys can tell you that when the Cheviat hearings were on. I guess the coal gets into your blood and stays there, so this is the way I feel. I strictly believe in the unions, because if it hadn't have been the unions,.. I talk to the kids in school about early days. They figure you made \$30 an hour. I got \$3.30 and they said, an hour? No, a day. My first pay was \$32, and that was 12 days. The union did a lot for the working man. In fact it did a lot for the, on the compensation board, I lost a finger at work. Hit it with an 8 lb sledgehammer, lucky it only hit the little finger. I got \$32 for that, so that's not too bad.

Bill Sommerfeld: I got involved with the union pretty early. When I started in 1963, we were was horse logging. I might be one of the last ones in captivity that worked with a horse. Bucked and piled. We got paid by the cord. Were you there, Lapierre? Yes. I was a new rookie. I wasn't much of a logger, but I worked like hell. At that early time, they needed a job steward in Camp 23. So a few of guys, like Bill says, c'mon you do it, you do it, you're just the guy to do it. I wasn't just the guy to do it, cuz I didn't know anything about the union. But after I volunteered to be the job steward, I found out right away the grievances that had to be looked after. In those early days we had grievances for the horse. The horse was looked after a little better than the man. There was complaints from the SPCA, animal rights, and the horse did get more damn rights than we did. On cold days he could stay in the barn, and we went out falling. Those things. As a new member, I spent a lot of time talking to Keith Johnson, maybe you might remember him Dave. What should I do in this case, what should I do there? It was a real fast education. Our crew was wobbly. If it didn't work, we didn't go to work that morning, and the horses stayed in the barn, and let's settle it. So it was settled. The other thing when it come time to go to the annual union meeting, you go, you go. So I went, and I got involved. I remember Dave from quite a while back. You get involved, and like you were saying you talk to different working people. They all have their troubles of some sort. I used to be a truck driver, but I wasn't union. Now some of these truckers belong to the teamsters union. They got complaints. The old shift, the 12 hour. When I was trucking it was the law by the boss to have 2 books, one for the law and one for the company. At one time I gave the law the wrong damn book, and then I was in trouble with the company. I used to run Winnipeg/Edmonton in 32 hours. Winnipeg, Edmonton and back, 32 hours. The boss would slap me on the back, you did a hell of a job young feller. It's no damn wonder I've got white hair today. I spent half my young life not sleeping. Those were the days when you got the job done, like the boss would say. So the union has been for me a good thing. We did have a strike in '69. We had a strike that lasted about 4 months. We had no problem with the mill workers, we had no problem with the CNR. But we put our picket line at the wood yard stopping wood from coming in. We were going to shut the mill

down. So if we don't let any wood in there, the mill's going to have to go down. One night, I don't know what the hell happened, but a piece of railroad track disappeared. The damn train went in, but it couldn't come out. We got a court injunction; I'm still IWA woodworker, and I still can't loiter on CN property, because they will take me to jail. But there was a big injunction. It cost us quite a bit of money for that little piece of railroad track, and nobody knows where that damn railroad track got to, or who took it. But those were the days. But the union on that strike, we were fighting for a bit of something that most everybody else had, and that was a pension plan and sick benefits. We have it today, the drugs and the teeth and the eyes, something to help our families. That was our big issue. We did go back to work, we got that, but we never got one penny raise. At that time I believe we were working for \$7 + a cord in the late '60s. That was a cord, we bucked and piled it. That was done by hand. The horse did the skidding and I did the bucking and the piling. Shortly after that the company got rid of all the horses and we went to mechanical logging. From that time on, for my own experience, the life of a logger as myself became easier. It became a pretty damn good life. We still had our problems, we still had our grievances. We still had everything that goes with being out there. We had issues of safety. Lapierre will remember the safety issues. We'd look at the mountain and your hat would fall off. Well, that's gotta be logged. Well holy Jesus, it's straight up to heaven. We shouldn't have been on them. We lost some men on there. They got killed. After they were dead, hindsight is always so damn wonderful. Then, oh well, we shouldn't be on those steep slopes no more. With the union pushing for better conditions, and the mill itself, the supervisors out there, they give us a lot of support, the foremen, cuz they were right amongst us working amongst us. We had things, one issue we settled was the logger was the first guy to go on the fire. We'd be taken off the job just as we were, wet up to our ass and dirty and stinky, and we'd to go a fire and sleep in a tent. They had those, I won't call them what they are, but paper sleeping bags. You're dirty and cold and hungry, and you're sleeping in a paper sleeping bag in a tent, and wet and miserable. There was always somebody wrangled in a jug of rum. Geez, that was good stuff in them days. It was a night toddy, a hot toddy to go to bed on. That was good. But we did get some rights there. When we were taken off the job, they paid us our average earnings. We didn't work by the hour, we worked by the piece. The good pieceworkers, their average was pretty good pay. It was, even way back then, 20 or 30 years ago.

David Robson: I could quit at noon when I worked in the bush, and have more money than I would've made in the mill in a day, that my buddies were making. So I'd quit at about noon and go do whatever in the creek, or whatever it was. I made more money than I would've in the mill. That was tree planting though, that was piecework.

Bill Sommerfeld: That's probably why I made it over 70, because I slept in the afternoons. That's good for me for now, thank you.

John Mitchell: I remember the '56 fire out there. I had a crew out from the mines, the big falls on the way out. On the radio we got a call from the bill that they were sending a crew out. When did they leave? They left yesterday. Well they haven't got here yet. So another fellow and I went down the trail, cuz I had an idea where they'd be. They'd gone in with the road so far, but from there up there was nothing except the horse train. Of

course they'd come in by truck. Those poor kids come in there, and they were all from Quebec. Nobody could talk French there because our teacher in school used to ask ? how you pronounce the words when we were taking French in school. They had no grub, nothing to sleep in, nothing. So we fed them and sent word in, and we finally got some stuff out for them. It was quite a time. The mill sure looked after them at that time. I guess I'm the only one here that every worked underground in a mine. There's a lot of talk goes around about that big explosion we had out there in 1945. I was still in the army at the time, but it killed 7 men. I knew them all, 2 of them I'd gone to school with. I know that there's nobody left in there, because I'd been working at #2 mine up where the pit is where it went on fire. They sent me down to the old mine underground as timber packer boss. We were going through to take some timber up to these miners that were looking for the bodies. We were walking across this entry, and you could smell... I'd been in Normandy, in the hot weather. If you smell human flesh, you'll never forget it. I said to the mine manager, you're close. This fellow beside me, he'd also been over there. I said, Dave, do you smell it? They have flexible tubes, they pump the air and out, and it came out into the main airway. We just got over there and the miners came down and said, we found them, the last man. They asked Dave and I if we would go up with the mine inspector and bring them out. We sent the other crew. So we went up there and took some really thick cloth like gunny sack in 6 foot rolls. We cut a big chunk and put it down and rolled the in. The mine inspector took a knife and cut the lamp off and the check. The check was just a round piece of brass with the number on it, same number as is on your lamp. When you go down you put it on there, when you come back you put it on the thing. Took the check off the lamp, rolled them up, put them on the stretcher and took them out. That was the last man. There was nobody left down there in Luscar after that explosion.

David Robson: I didn't know that. I worked there, hot rocks. Is that about somewhere in there?

John Mitchell: No that was just below where the plant is, the old mine. It went down 2400 feet.

David Robson: Ya, '73. Rocky ? got killed too.

John Mitchell: No, he was on the strip.....

David Robson: I was only 18 years old then. When somebody gets killed, it really wakens your eyes up to what's going on.

John Mitchell: When we were kids we were in school. At school you could look up where the road came down to the school. You'd be sitting there, and the town went by the mine whistle and the big steam engine. Six o'clock in the morning, 2 in the afternoon, 9 o'clock at night. One whistle work, 3 whistles no work. If it was a bunch of short blasts, it was an accident. You'd be sitting there and here, toot toot toot. Nobody would say anything. You'd wait and you'd see the mine manager and the president of the union coming down. They'd knock on the door and Principal Hughes would go to the door and

they'd talk. Then he'd go up to somebody and say that your dad was either badly injured or killed. But they didn't have counselors that come in to tell all the kids in school about it. Most of them, the family, that was your friend, you go over to the house. Mom and dad were there. This is how it was. That's how you found out. So we knew what it was like when the whistle blew and somebody got killed.

Bill Sommerfeld: I've gotta say, what you're talking about, the guys that were killed. In the '60s, even the '70s, there was no counseling, no support. You just did it. I remember the last 2 fellows that got killed out on the south there. One of the big log trucks run over Leo Shaw and Alfred Pamblan. The truck wheels are this high and the pickup is this high. It just ended up right on top of them. I was there, me and another fellow, Bob McCallum. We had to get them out. The first thing we had to do was get that damn truck off of them. The truck driver was totally shocked. He just went ballistic and he was no good for nothing. He was up beside the road sick. So I got in the truck and backed it up. Then we had to get him out. Leo was jammed between the door and the truck, and the door was right on him here. He was half in and half out, but he was alive. Half dead, half alive. But the body keeps working. The main thing, I'm not a doctor, I'm a lumberjack. But I took Alfred's pulse and he ain't got one – couldn't find it anyway. We'll get Leo out first cuz Leo's alive. We got Leo out. I took the picker clam on the picker truck, and I put the picker on the door. That was our jaws of life. I pulled that door off, and Bob caught Leo and laid him on the ground. Then we went to the bush with a power saw, and we cut splinters, splints, and tied him up from under his arm, and bundled him up, as we thought that was the best thing to do. We had him on the ground, and the rescue helicopter flew over us. You've never seen a couple of more disappointed fellows. In the meantime, we tried to get Alfred out. But you couldn't get him out. The motor was right in his lap. We couldn't get him out. We were working at it. There was nothing we could do for Leo, but Leo's still alive. Then a few minutes later the helicopter come back, and Dr. Murray was with the helicopter. I guess he's seen more death than I have. Oh hell, Bill, you don't need us, you did a good job. I said, man we need you. They took Alfred in, and then we proceeded to get Leo out of the truck. We finally did get him out, but Dr. Murray declared him dead. He was dead. But those are the kind of things that we did. There's no counseling. I went home and had a few shots of rum to calm myself down. That isn't exactly the best medicine for that kind of treatment. But we never had that. It's something that we have today. There's more counseling and more looking after, well counseling is the word. One other time we had a fellow caught in a barber chair. This is logger's lingo, a barber's chair is when half the tree falls, the other half breaks. It breaks right in half, and then it comes together like that. He was caught in that barber chair. Well he was dead too. We had to cut him out of there and get him out. He was dead when we hauled him down. But that barber chair is really a bad thing to see. I seen 2 of them in the 42 years I worked there. I don't want to see any more. That's part of our rescue and working in the bush. Sometimes we laugh at things. There was a fellow, his saw kicked back and he opened up his stomach and everything is open. He's laying on the floor and we're wrapping him with our dirty shirts. One of the fellows come along, you know him, Brian Craig, you're gonna die fellow. The guy laying on the ground.

John Mitchell: This summer I got a visit from a young fellow from Nova Scotia. His father was a real good friend of mine. We'd been friends from before the war, and I'd worked with him underground in the rock tunnels and airways. They shut down the underground, we were both on the pit. The old original sea pit, they'd drilled a hole through the wall to make it easier. On the west side of it, nice weather, just before Christmas, just like a Chinook. It froze and the wall curved a little, and 10,000 yards of rock came down and got him and Nick Hagblat. Fortunately that morning I was supposed to go up there, but they sent me to a different pit because we were having a big round, and I was hooking up about 500 holes. I had to go up there, and they said, gotta shoot some more down to make it safe. I said, I'm not shooting until we look in there and see what's happening. You knew in your mind that they're gone, but there's that one chance that big chunk of rock is protecting them. So myself and a couple more fellows walked around the far edge, all the way through and all the way back. We couldn't see a thing. We were almost there, and one guy glanced down, and he's laying underneath this slab of rock, just a few feet from the other wall where he could've run up. We can't lift it with a shovel. At that time a big shovel was a 4 yard shovel, and that was 58 yards. You can't lift it with a shovel because you don't know what's going to happen. So Bill Sheer and I got a hold of that rock. To this day we don't know how we lifted it, and pulled him out. There wasn't a mark on him, he hadn't even bled. This young guy's mother, they went back down east and she never said anything about it, just that he was killed. So he phoned me 2 years ago. This summer he came out and I went with him to Edson. He's buried in Edson, his dad's buried in Edson. Took him over to the mine and showed him approximately where he was killed, and we had a couple of good days out of it. The same thing, young boy was in school and nobody had said anything. He went home for lunch, Johnny was telling us. When he got back to the school, ? Mordine got killed. There must be another Mordine in town, cuz I was just home for lunch and that's how the kid found out his dad had got killed.

Linda Jonson: When I graduated from nursing in 1988, it was January. I had done my preceptor out here before, as I was studying to become an RN. So I'd worked at the hospital here. Sure enough, they went on strike. I had just finished. I said, I'm going to Florida for a month. Because it had been 7 years I'd been studying. He said, no, we're on strike, you gotta picket now. I'm going, what am I thinking? I really was studying, so I really didn't even know what they went on strike for. I did go, and when I came back sure enough, they said, we'll have a picket on your yard. We'll let you go, but on your lawn. My husband wasn't in the union at the time. I had in the summertime worked for the mill in order to go to nursing school, at the forestry greenhouses. So first of all I didn't even know what an RN made at the time. Then when I found out that the guys at the mill, if they were sleeping the floors just on cleanup, they're going to make more money than I did. I just finished school for 4 years. Of course I'm in a union now. So I'm thinking, I gotta strike, because I could be sweeping a floor, and I think I'm saving lives. I need to get more money than they were. Also, our son happened to be, when ? were on strike, Ron was in the union and our son was on strike, or not in the union and our son was on strike. I said, I'd better make those guys some cookies. Ron said, you'd better not. Then of course we had a rollback, the nurses, with the government. So we took a 7% rollback. I'm thinking, gee now I gotta pay the government back. Then we got a 5%, which they

thought that was a great wage. I said, gee we took 7%, we're not even back up to that yet. But we felt bad, because the government was cutting. So actually we settled for the rollback at the time. It's been quite interesting actually, in the unions.

Bryan Jones: I worked at the mill just out of high school, just for a short period of time. I moved to Edmonton and ended up working out of 48 plumbers and pipefitters. I worked there for 6 or 7 years, and I came back to the mill in Hinton here. Around that time when I first came back to the mill, I came across a book. I don't even know where I got it from, but I remember the title of it. It was called Bloody Williamson. It was about the mineworkers struggles down in Williamson County in the US, and some of the atrocious things that happened to him. I remember reading that and thinking, I can't believe that stuff happened. How workers were killed just because they either wanted to join a union, or they wanted some protection for their family, just some of the struggles that went on there. Somebody who'd be killed in the mine in the morning, and by supertime the families had to be out of the mine houses. How the mining companies brought in trainloads of the Pinkerton types and just shot these people, just for standing up for their rights. I remember reading that and I was thinking, you really have to support your union. I took a shop steward's job and a general steward's job with the local. Then I became vice president for maintenance. In that period of time I got involved with several different struggles and battles that the Alberta Fed was involved with. The main one that I was really upset about the government's plans was the right to work legislation that they were thinking of bringing in. I believe it's just a horrible thing. I luckily had the support of the local. They gave me some time off work and I put together a whole package of information. I sent it out to every member in the local. There was pages and pages of hard facts and figures about infant deaths, average wages, life spans and everything in these right to work states in the US, and how, with the odd exception, every state that had right to work legislation, the general population was suffering there. Their literacy rates were low, it was just terrible. I remember writing letters. I wrote 2 letters and I sent them to every MLA in Alberta. I remember some of the responses I got. One I remember was from Pearl Calahasan, from Airdrie or somewhere down there in that neck of the woods. She told me, it was just a vehement response, about how I had no business taking up her time writing her a letter like that. That all over her constituents, without fail, were 100% behind right to work legislation, and how it was for the betterment of everybody in Alberta. And I should just mine my own business and get on with it. Go to work and just basically shut up about it all. The copies of all those letters are still down in the union office somewhere, at least they were the last I remember it. I know that I was not alone in writing the letters, the Fed had a lot of people working on that. I think it's just really lucky that the Fed put the effort and time into organizing that battle, because I believe that the Alberta government was going to put in right to work legislation, and it was just by a hair that it was stopped. It by no means is gone. It's on the back burner, and they're just waiting for the right moment to get that ball rolling again. That's just one of the memories I have.

Q: Do you still have that letter?

Bryan Jones: I don't have it personally. I left all files with the local. There's been a few moves from one office to another. There was binders full of responses.

John Mitchell: We never had any trouble in the coalmines like that, up I the coal branch. The wife's father was there from before the railway. In 1923 or '24 they went on strike for a year. It was no trouble. They went back to work. They didn't get much. Then they had an illegal strike, some guy they brought in and the miner wouldn't work for him so they had an illegal strike. They were off on that. But then they had one for 9 months and they had a soup kitchen. But there was no problems. Even when I was at Cardinal River they had a strike there one time. Were you there when they had that strike. There was no trouble. One guy got a little rambunctious when the bus was coming through. He broke the lamp on the bus. They took him out of the picket line, and that's all there was to it. I guess we're a little different than down there. There they shoot everybody.

David Robson: I remember as a child, a young boy, my dad was involved. He wasn't a shop steward, but he somehow was involved. They had 3 peoples names for rabbling it up in a meeting, and he was one of them. He had my mom where she wasn't to answer the phone, and for some reason we were to shut up and not say anything. If the doorbell rang, it was run for the hills, because they were going to arrest him for rabblousing. It was hilarious that his son went on to be a union representative. I remember that experience, it was similar to what happens when you go on strike and you're president of a union, and the BC Teachers Association president made a choice to back her members. In that choice, when it comes down to it, I've had cases where I've had to tell the employees, this is me, I have to bend over backwards and tell you to go back to work. So I'm bending over backwards to tell you that. But in your situation, you're all behind the fight if there's a leg to stand on. In most cases, before the members go out, there is more than a leg to stand on. In one of my instances, it was a safety issue. I had the IR manager phone me up in the evening and say, you realize I'm going to have to fire that foreman, I need you to back off. I said, I can't back off. I can't for the reason of the safety and all the work that we put in over the years, on this issue, there's no backing off. It was a situation where an individual pulled a tag and then he energized it. The moment he energized that piece of machinery, not knowing where the employee was, pulling an employees tag he killed him. Goodbye, you no longer work here. My job as president of the union, we had to fire somebody. It was a hard choice, but it was an easy choice, because safety came first no matter what. Even if it had've been one of my own guys, in that situation you have no choice. You can't have people running around pulling tags or pulling locks off and starting up equipment. It's interesting how everybody can relate to the stories we've been told here today. Even though, like John's saying, they happened in the '40s and '30s, when I was 18 I'll still remember this day. I was on a opposite shift, but the employee got killed by 2 benches coming down on him coalmining. It shook me to the core. What kind of job is this I'm working in? What's the hazards? The lights went off. From then on, safety issues were partially blown out of proportion, just because of the death. I made a choice to change professions because of that, because of the death of one of my union brothers.

Q: I was reading an article in the Edmonton Journal the other day. There had been 2 young guys killed, about 3 days ago. In that article the occupational health and safety

spokesman said they are currently investigating 40 deaths. I don't know how long ago all these people got killed. They're still currently investigating 40 deaths. Listening to everybody here, there have been some improvements. But where do you see it going from here? You've got all these young people being killed on the job. Then if they decide they have to fight over issues, then they scab the job. Where do you see the struggles going from here? It seems you win something in the past, and you have to win it all over again sometime further down the road.

Don Boucher: It's not going to improve with Klein still being in power. I look after 14 locals in the province. Most of the health and safety is ongoing. I remember in the mill, in the late '80s when we had a young man get killed in the wood room. What happened was he was shoveling sawdust from a tail pulley. He stuck his shovel in the tail pulley while the belt was still running, and it caught his shovel. He hung on, the instinct is to hang on. He went into the tail pulley and got killed. He was working alone for one thing. The people on the panel at that time had kicked out, it was just about time for shift change. So the guy that was in charge went down to the panel, flicked the panel back on because it kicked out. Didn't know this guy was in the tail pulley. I guess it was going into the next shift they were going, where is this guy? So they started looking for him, and they found him. He was just mangled. The company didn't even want to cut the belt to loosen up the tail pulley so the people could pull the body out of the tail pulley. It took one of our union members to say, listen, get out of here. He cut it. Going back to your question, it's still out there, and it's production over health and safety. If they can't get the production out of the people, it doesn't matter if they get hurt or whatever, they're all up front preaching health and safety. Well guess what, when you're actually producing out there, it goes to the wayside, you get hurt, too bad. If you are hurt and you're looking at claiming WCB, they're finding some way to threaten you. They're finding all the tricks they can find in the industry to try to get that person back to work and forget about health and safety.

John Mitchell: A lot of the trouble now days they don't take time to train these young people. This is the big thing. If you work at Cheviot and hear people in Hinton talking, oh well those guys should go back coalmining. Actually the guys that are on the strip mine aren't coalminers. They're operators of equipment. He says, how long is it going to take? Oh just a little bit. Well I was talking to Mr. Stevenson that time about the dangers of the underground. You worked with an experienced miner for 4 years before you ever went to somebody else. He said, gee that's quick. Where he was in Britain, you worked 6 and 7 years with an experienced miner before you could go take somebody being with you. When you went down in the mine, you went either on the haulage crew or the tippie or the timber packer, and learned about the dangers of the mine.

Don Boucher: Apprenticeships now days, guys are working by themselves, and they're going, who's teaching me to be a millwright apprentice? No one's around. That's how they're taking their apprenticeships.

Linda Jonson: You can see that right now with AUPE. They just had an information picket here a couple of weeks ago. They're doing a rotating one. They're caregivers. They have an 8 week in house, but also these caregivers were hired to look after the resident.



Now not only do they look after the resident, they have to clean the rooms and do the food prep. Just in an 8 week course they are giving out medication that they're not trained to do in that time. So there's no job satisfaction, because they're actually now, you're taking my job, so that job a lot of our people here have been laid off. Because they're going from one, they used to just be a caregiver, and we used to have people that used to clean the rooms every day. Now that caregiver not only looks after the resident, they have to clean the rooms and then they have to give them the food. Then they have to wash them, clean then. There's no time, they're so short. I went to after Hinton to Evansburg, and they went out there the next weekend after, and then to Edmonton. It's all across. I think to myself, why is the union, first of all they're taking other peoples' jobs so there is no job satisfaction in the workplace. You're taking somebody else's job, so everybody is like, you're stabbing my back and who's going to be next. Morale is not good. I always think to myself, why is this happening? How can this be happening, and how can their union no, because the people aren't being taken care of for one thing, that's the big issue. Right now we're in a crisis across this province. It's already known there's a crisis. Since even the auditor general's report in May came out, nothing has been done. The MLA taskforce came out, they wanted their recommendations in by September 30<sup>th</sup>. Another task force to tell our health minister that there is a problem, that the auditor general already addressed to her. And advocates across this province have been telling her of the desperate situation that are seniors are living under. I had just phoned the health minister's office a couple days ago saying, we actually have to go for a humanitarian relief effort in this province. These people need help, these people are dying. A lady just died. It's not the caregiver's fault, it's because our government will not get them the staff to look after them. They can't do the job. So I can't see why they're changing the names of the facilities, redesignating them, downgrading them. Our government's giving them the money to do it, \$500,000 they give to our Good Samaritan here in order to downgrade it, deregulate it, get rid of the RNs so you have lesser staff. It's an assisted living, so you don't need the staff as you would under the Nursing Home Act, which they would have to have on the staff. You don't need the physiotherapy, because they're only assisted living now. I see the unions going, things are going bad here. Especially I see in the health part of it, because they're not trained. When my mother in law was in there they would say to me, Linda, you take out the pill the right color. It's either pink or blue, whatever color that she shouldn't have. She had severe diarrhea. I said, why are you giving her? when she already has c difiail. They really didn't know, and it's not their fault because they are made to do a job that they're not skilled to do. They're not trained to do that job. They can't speak for themselves, the people that are in there. The families are trying to speak out. If there is anybody speak out about it, then there is ramifications either to their family members, and I've seen it across this province. I can't believe where they've even actually been kept from each other. Husbands have been kept from their wife, mothers their son. I thought, how can this ever be? I've heard recommendations are supposed to be coming out. They're supposed to have finished them. If these unions don't get tougher, I can't see anything changing. They've got to get tougher, and you've got to be educated for that job in order to make the quality of care any better.

Q: I think that's a common thing around here. Maybe it's part of what we're trying to do, is education. Labour history to me is education. Telling the stories, repackaging them, and

telling them again to the workers. Why is it so important? All of us, different unions, different trades, whatever, we all have things to tell workers that are coming up, and it's incredibly important.

Noel Lapierre: I think we as a union member need to be involve in politic. If we not, nothing's going to change. We cannot just sit back like we've been doing for the last 30 years, not involved. Because our or parents grandparents were there and were pushing the government to change. At this time we are not, and we are paying the price. The big corporations are the one that are in touch with the government of the day and they got an agenda. We as a union member don't want to do anything, just sit back. We gonna lose everything we have, all our benefit we be losing them. We see what's happening with WCB. WCB is not there for us anymore, is there just to protect the company. We have to fight every time we get somebody hurt, and this is not right. WCB was there for us. We better wake up, because if we don't wake up, the next 5 years a lot of our benefits will not be there for us. And there will be no unions either, because look what some of the laws taking place in this province. They make laws to destroy the union movement, and they doing a very good job at it. We better wake up and get involved.

Bryan Jones: You see so many things that are repeating themselves. Lauro had mentioned earlier about the strike at Gainers. It brought back memories. I remember going to Edmonton specifically to go to the picket line. I had a day off, I went in there. I arrived on 66<sup>th</sup> St. and had to park a ways back. I walked up and was just getting there. I passed union rep Norm McLellan for the Canadian Paper Workers, and Doug O'Halloran and a few of their buddies had just had an altercation. They got upset and rolled a van over. They tipped it over. I just got there when it happened. I was going, wow, this is pretty wild. Then the police were loading Doug and Norm into a police van with a couple of other guys. Those who know Doug, he's not a small man. And neither was Norm. They were inside this van, and they almost succeeded in rocking the police van over. Somebody came and told them, you guys are in enough trouble already, maybe you should not roll this vehicle over. I remember all the battles that went on with Gainers. I proudly wore a button for a long time that said, "Gainers makes wieners with scabs". I was really proud of that button. It thoroughly disgusted quite a few people. It was exactly true. I hear in the news with what's going on down at Lakeside now. Just recently Doug O'Halloran been run off the road, and the hassles that went on. That stuff just doesn't get investigated by the police as it should. I know exactly the type of things that happen. A few years ago our town local went on strike here, members of our union working for the town. It was almost no time from when they went on strike and the town had hired some goons to work here. They were a bad bunch. We were trying to get town council to hear our grievances and complaints as they were going in. They blew right by us. We were banging on the door, and the goons came out. They were ready to knock heads. Later on within a couple of days I was working the picket line out at the town landfill. James Duke, another member, and I were there. The contractor that was looking after the landfill site, this guy with a truck and a trailer, gravel truck, dump truck, came flying off the highway 40 into the landfill, and he tried running us over. We were able to get the gate, we had something there and we got out of the way. He had to stop at the gate, and he stalled his truck. But he was aiming for us. Once he stalled his truck we thought, we'll

go and get his license number. So we ran behind the trailer and I was ripping off the piece of cardboard he had over his license plate. He saw us going back there and he tried running us over. I was kind of stupid, I got between the trailer and the truck. I have to run along. James got out of there. I kind of bounced off the trailer and I went out. Then the guy went into the landfill. We phoned the police, we had a cell phone there. There was a new police officer in town, I can't remember his name. He didn't know where the dump was, he didn't know where the landfill was. Had no idea, wouldn't come out there. I phoned and phoned, and it was 2-1/2 hours later before he got out there. We parked vehicles across that gate and wouldn't let that truck out. We thought they were going to be smashed. When he finally got out there, he wanted to charge us with all kinds of offences. I told him, this is a legal picket line. We have the right to stop a vehicle, a vehicle must stop at this picket line. If they choose to proceed, that's something that will be dealt with. But we have the right to stop vehicles. On top of that, he tried to run us over, we have witness. Then he tried to run us over going backwards as well. He wouldn't entertain any of that. We were there till 3, 4 in the morning. This happened 7 o'clock at night. Three or 4 in the morning we're still fighting with this police officer trying to get something done. I spent several other occasions down at the town office meeting with the police trying to get them to lay charges against this guy, and they refused to do it. I phoned K division in Edmonton because I wasn't getting any satisfaction here. The staff sergeant from town here called me. He didn't threaten me, he never said those words, but it was very clear to me that I should just make this go away or things wouldn't be rosy. I was sure I'd be, every time I was driving down the street I'd be stopped for whatever. That's not that many year ago, and that crap still goes on. This is a town where there's a lot of labour. That kind of stuff can happen. I can just imagine how bad it is down in Brooks. That's a very anti-union neck of the woods. There's farmers, they're all independent people. You have the city council there, which is I'm sure they're totally on the Lakeside side of the battle. My brother in law is on city council there, and he and I have had some discussions about that. This is prior to him being on council, but we had discussions about it years ago. The mayor has come out years ago saying there's no business there of union being there. I can really imagine how those new Canadians are feeling on the picket lines down there. The provincial government is getting involved in things that they have no business being involved in. It's a private struggle, and they're sticking their nose in where it doesn't belong. It's siding with the employer. They delayed the strike for how long so they could operate. Now they've got an injunction for saying that the meat inspectors must be allowed across the picket line. They should just stay out of stuff that there's laws to handle, not use those laws against the worker. So nothing changes.

Lauro Bertolin: The beauty of that town unit strike, if there is a beauty to the whole issue, is the fact that, and I sat on the executive board of our local during that time, was that one of our executive members took it upon himself that the role of being strike commander or whatever. What was amazing about the thing was to watch this individual basically organize in very little time, and for the very first time that this local had been in this situation, organize 80 people going on strike. You're sitting in meetings and your mandates are being made, committees are being formed, and action is being expected. In the end it all comes through, it all happens. People are doing what's expected of them, people are participating, and the union is working on a common agenda. We achieved a

new agreement for these people. To watch how it all unfolded all because one person was able to motivate a lot of people to create the fact that local 855 has a unit on strike.

John Mitchell: It used to be in United Mine Workers if you scabbed, you didn't have a job when you came back. They were on strike all through district 18, the Crows Nest Pass coalmines, and Bruel worked. Then Bruel shut down, and they came over there. They were known till the day the place shut down as the Bruel scabs. They went to work when the rest of the union was out. At one time when you belonged to the union, you belonged to the union and that was it. You didn't go to work.

I really want to thank you for coming out and telling your stories. I hope when we leave here that ... everybody can organize if they want to. For goodness sakes, get some kind of history club going. Do something to preserve the history. We just touched a little bit of it. At your union hall there's incredible stacks of people you guys used to put out. I used to get it when I was at the federation, I'd get it every month when it came out. It's a goldmine of union history and union opinions, and humor. We always had fun on strike. There's always humor. You people have told wonderful stories, and we really appreciate your coming. I hope we are able to leave a bit of a seed that gets planted here, that you'll really talk up your own history and make sure it's told, make sure it's archived. And make sure that sometime down the road when students are looking into history, they can get your workers' story, as well as the story of the architects and engineers and all the rest. The worker's story needs to be told. I hope you've enjoyed our coming. We have certainly enjoyed coming here and being with you. Thank you very much.

[end]