

Index: Saskatchewan homesteading, early farming, depression, Edmonton Motors union, Edmonton 1940s, Hanna Alberta, household expenses, Canadian National (CN), CBFRT, World War Two navy, Halifax ammunition boats, CBRT, Canadian Congress of Labour, Trades and Labour Congress, AFL-CIO merger, racism, "colour line", right-to-work, railway unions, railway brakemen, railway working conditions, railway fuel, coal, Manning government, labour and politics, Canadian Ukrainian Youth Federation, Non-Partisan League, Canadian Pacific Railway strike, Kellogg Commission, railway safety, locomotive engineers, H.A. Gilbert, Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers, Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen and Enginemen, Ed Giller, Chicago Northwestern Railway, Pinkerton's, Eugene Debs, worker militancy, Alberta labour laws, union control over members, union education, Home School Association, Edmonton Voters Association, Brian Mason, Julian Kiniski, New Democratic Party, globalization, Edmonton Senior, depression, blackballing

Louis Broten

- Louis, you were born in 1914 right?

1914, on a Friday too, Feb. 13

-Well that means it brought you good luck

Can't argue against it.

- you're still here.

- thank you very much for appearing for an interview. You were born where?

North Dakota. Melrose, in the NW corner of ND

- when/why did you come to Canada?

Well, eh my father's brother had been up here and had homesteads in Saskatchewan and I presume it was part of when the west was opened up, a good portion of the settlers were from the U.S.

- What year was that?

1917

- So you were how old?

Three years old

- So you were just learning how to walk

Yep, just learning how to walk.

- where did you come to in SK,

Came to a town called Viscount, about 40 miles east of Saskatoon

- and your parents settled on a farm?

Yah.

- so how long were you on that farm?

On that farm? Well, we were on that farm until the late '30s. But in the meantime I had homesteaded in North Eastern Saskatchewan at a town called Choiceland.

- and okay, Choiceland is on the way to Melford isn't it?

It's north of Melford, yes. NE about 70 miles from Prince Albert

- Well tell us a little bit about the early days of farming

Well the early days all the farming was done by horses. And of course for a young kid the highlight of farming you know was the harvest , the thrashing you see and that you see you think about yah.

- **When you homesteaded did you have to clear the land?**

Yes.

- **How did you do that?**

By hand. By an axe. An axe and a grubbel

- **Tell us a little bit about the hard work that that was.**

That it's hard work there's no question about it. But in some ways I believe that the old fashioned way of cutting the trees down and disposing of them is better than going in there with a great big bathe(sp?) a great big power because it doesn't disturb the surface of the land.

- **how did you pull the roots out?**

You pull the roots out. Well, some people used to cut down the trees three feet above and then they used a stump puller. But the more popular way is to chop the roots and take the tree out with a portion of the roots. By doing that you'd have less problems with your, with a brush breaker.

- **Well how would you take the roots out?**

Well, you turned them out by hand mostly after you turned over and you'd get out there and you'd pull out the roots. If they're too big you may have to use your horses

- **Some used their horses to pull them out right?**

Yes, some, if it's very big. If it's too big you do. Otherwise, you you you have to loosen up the land and soil and by taking out the basic part of the stump and portion of the stump, the roots next to the stump it becomes a whole lot easier.

- **How many acres could you clear in a year?**

In a year (laughs) If you cleared 10 acres or 12 acres that was would be pretty good going.

- **So on that basis it would take you 16 years to clear a forest**

It did - but there was portion of the land that I had that was relatively loose and what not and it would take very little, hardly any brush breaking.

- **but there there were farmers there that had pieces thicker than the hair on a dog's back.**

Yah.

- **and that would take a lot of work?**

That takes a lot of work, yah. Yah, but it was mixed you know.

- **Well how was the infrastructure on the farm is uh looked after. Like we, in Saskatchewan and Alberta you have a road every two miles one way and every mile the other way?**

That's right.

- **How were they built?**

Well, they were built uh, uh, some of them were late building because of the drainage problems, there was problems of drainage. It was beaver dams and much of the land was low lying.

- **Hmm But it... I always found it a bit incredible that the farmers in addition to doing their land, in the main also built the roads.**

They did, well they did. Uh not in northern Saskatchewan so much, but they certainly did on the prairie. And the prairie municipalities that built the roads. My dad was a foreman on the road gangs. You see they could work, they would work there. Some of them worked off taxes on the roads.

- **Yah the farmers worked on the roads so they worked off taxes**

Yah. Yah.

- **and uh, but you know I...**

It was all done by the farmers you know

- **When the provinces were built, it started in 1905 and you have uh the infrastructure and the road structure is enormous. Saskatchewan's got likely more road than any other province in this country**

Yah. Credit to the municipalities. The municipalities built it

- **the municipalities built it but the farmers, some had scoop shovels eh?**

Well, uh no. It was mostly built by fresnoes(sp?) and stuff like that too. More and more you'd get a two-horse scoop, but then more of it was built by a four-horse fresnoe. It'd be about four feet wide and you had a plough, and you'd get down into the clay. You'd have to plough it to run the plough. One fellow would plough and do that and loosen up the dirt because you couldn't cut into that hard clay without doing that.

- **So when you after you cleared you still had to break your soil and uh, what kind of crops did you get?**

Fantastic crops. I recalled.

- **this is in Northern**

The northern part, yah. On the prairies they were the usual crops you know. 30 bushels an acre would be a pretty good crop. And as it got drier it got that and they and they gravitated to, you know it was dry farming, and you gravitated to two crops and then summer fallow on the prairies.

- **how long were you on the farm?**

Well I was on the farm until about 1940.

- **1940**

I came to Edmonton

- **Yah, but you had different experiences during that period of time.**

During that period of time, yes. Of course I was a homesteader, but then in '36 I went back and farmed myself on my dad's farm because he'd moved out to Saskatchewan.

- **Well, you say in uh that you had tough experiences during the depression**

During the depression it was tough you know. There was no question. It was tough. Uh, it's a funny thing that you can be in Northern Saskatchewan and the train came every other day from Prince Albert. But then the homesteaders would go out, you know, the vast majority would go and work in the summertime in the south and come back in the fall. Well they'd come back in the fall, of course there'd be a run on all the groceries in the stores. And they were out. And I remember eating porridge and syrup for three days. That's all, that's the only thing. It wasn't a case of starvation because you could eat, but it was starvation because the the supply wasn't there.

- **Mmm hmm**

The other starvation I had of course, I had left and gone to B.C., to Vancouver, and that was my real test of starvation.

- **Well, tell us about it**

I laid on the park benches at the foot of Cambie Street for four days and never had as much as a crust of bread. That's when you could get a meal on Hastings Street for 15 cents. Finally I went to a lady that I had stayed with

and had a room in the winter and asked her if I could split some wood for a meal. And she said okay. You know even without four days without food you were young then you're still you're still you know fairly...

- **you didn't put on any fat?**

You didn't put on any fat but I mean you're still fairly capable. And so I started to split wood and then she says, come out, she says, after I'd been splitting wood 20 minutes, she says 'hey boy. When did you eat last?' I says fours days ago and she threw up her hands and said 'my land'. She says, 'quit right now'. And I come in to eat. But you see, after four days I couldn't eat.

- **So this was the common practice that uh when winter came the people who were homesteading went out and went out and get a job. Right?**

They went in the summer time, they got a job. There were some of us who did tie-cutting and that and I would say, I did some tie-cutting in the north. And that has got to be the heaviest job I've ever had. These ties weighed from 150 to 200 lbs and you're working in three to four feet of snow. And they'd make trails but you gotta carry these ties out to where the horses can get at them. It's heavy work.

- **Well I knew some people who uh who uh farmed around Nipewan and they went working for lumber camps and what not**

Yes.

- **in the winter time.**

Yes. So.

- **So uh what made you decide to quite farming? Did you sell your land or?**

No I didn't sell my land. As a matter of fact I had a second quarter; I had two quarters. But I came to Edmonton. Actually I had an acquaintance in Choiceland, that I suppose now it can be told, that, uh, was, uh, uh, somewhat associated with German espionage. And that's really what brought me here to Edmonton, to follow this up.

- **Mmm hmm. In what way?**

Well he had connections and, uh, purportedly they financed, they used the Irish sweepstakes. This one, there was one Italian there, that you know all of a sudden won the Irish Sweepstakes.

- **Mmm hmm**

And then it seemed like the story I got from this guy was that this was trans-, the Germans used the Irish Sweepstakes to send funds over here for espionage purposes. And reportedly they had even like the bridges - supposedly the plans were to dynamite the bridges by remote control. But I never saw any evidence of that. The only evidence I did hear, he took a trip to Calgary and was supposed to have done something, uh, with the sewer system there and he came back and he showed me this luger bullet from a revolver and that. So I never did actually get any real concrete evidence on it. The RCMP didn't seem to be interested

- **Well he wasn't doing anything over I suppose**

Pardon?

- **He didn't do anything overt uh**

No. No. There may have been plans to but I never saw anything that was concrete. See.

- **So you uh what was your other work experiences uh during the thirties.**

Well that brought me to Edmonton and I went to work for Edmonton Motors, \$12 a week.

- **And you formed a uh bit of an association there?**

Well I didn't, but they did form a bit of an association. It was pretty ad-hoc

- **Well, there wasn't much experience in organizing**

No there wasn't and it was, uh, it was just a group in that particular - in Edmonton Motors. Not associated with anything else

- What year was that?

That'd be 1941. 1940.

- Well of course at that time, uh, all labour jurisdiction had reverted to the to the federal government right?

Yes. It-

- So there was no legislation in place at that time for forming a union

Just an adhoc group.

- Yah

Took themselves together to talk with management you see because you know mechanics was getting like 60 cents an hour so you know

- Well that was not too bad at that time uh 60 cents an hour

60 cents an hour, no. Of course this is all piece work you book on to the job, you've got your card, you book on to the job and then if the work isn't there you stand around.

- I started as a labourer in the oil refinery in '41 for 35 cents an hour

35 cents an hour, yah.

- Highest pay in the plant was 60 cents

(laughs) Yah yah yah. I got \$12 a week when I started there.

- Well, that's not much

No, it's not much. It's not much but you know you could get a meal for 25 cents.

- Yah, yah

And you could get a room for \$3 a week. So it's relative I suppose in a way.

- A dollar went further.

Pardon?

- Your dollar went further.

A dollar went further. But you know you didn't buy any- . My first suit that I bought was on time. A dollar down and a dollar a week.

- Well how did you uh go about getting the job with Edmonton Motors?

Well the, Frank Wolf(sp?), the Wolf's came from Viscount in Saskatchewan, they were grain buyers in that area. And so I knew them, knew of them. So I just went there and, of course, they knew it was an 'in thing', you know. It was an in-thing you see. And uh-

- and how long did you stay there?

Well I was there for about a year and a half, and then the Yanks took them over.

- Oh yah.

Then I went to CN.

- Mmm hmm

The Yanks came in you see they were looking for headquarters. And they went to Edmonton Motors because they had a choice location downtown. Frank Wolf(sp?) didn't want to relinquish his property because he had a

choice garage location and everything else. So he asked for \$15,000 a month rent. But that didn't fizz on these Americans one darn bit. They were not concerned about money. They said 'fine'. When can we move in? So in 36 hours we were closed up.

- **Mmm hmm**

We were all out of a job so then I went to CN

- **Mmm hmm and what did you do at CN?**

I went to Hanna, Alberta and worked in the stores department.

- **Is that right? Well, Hanna rings a familiar bell. There used to be a creamery there.**

Oh yah.

- **And, as farmers we went and shipped cream from Kindersley Saskatchewan to a creamery there and then you waited for a cream cans to come home with a little cheque.**

Hanna, yah, it's, it was a, well, I suppose it was a typical prairie town. Uh uh, I recall that I'd been married, and recently married that year. So we wanted to buy a washing machine. And that was the good old days when you had to have 1/3 down before you could buy it even on time. So the washing machine sat in the window of this hardware store for three months while I got the necessary down payment before they would let us have it. I still have it.

- **Mmm hmm**

Just for probably for nostalgic reasons. We don't use it anymore.

- **Well on the farm it was a big thing to have a washing machine, because you know a farmer's clothes got dirty and uh, quite a few families-**

Yah, the-

- **uh, a lot of women were still using the scrub-board.**

Yah. The scrub-board, yah. Like on the Prairie we- my mother had a washing machine so that it was run by a stationary engine.

- **of course yah.**

With a belt, yeah.

- **so how long did you stay there?**

Edmonton Motors?

- **No no at Hanna.**

Ummmh. About six months.

- **Was this with the CBRT [Canadian Brotherhood of Railway & Transport workers] or?**

That would be CBRT

- **yah**

It was about six months and then I went into the services.

- **Okay**

I was waiting for the call but, I'll be honest. You know I just got married. You kind of like to stay around a while. I guess it's only natural, you're young so I The calls were coming out so I went and enlisted in the army.

- **So you got married in 1940?**

1942.

- '42

Yah. Just before.

- **You're coming close to your 60th now eh?**

Getting close

- **yah.**

Getting close yah.

- **Well, you ah joined the army in Hanna, or Calgary or...?**

In Calgary. Yup. Then we went to Wetaskiwin. Took basic training at Wetaskiwin. And I stayed there for a couple of months as an instructor.

- **Mmm**

Then went to Hali-, posted to Halifax, and I was in anti-aircraft. I was on two drafts overseas and they both got cancelled out at the last minute, so then the navy wanted people for landing crafts, so I transferred to the navy . So I spent the rest of the time in the navy. I didn't get overseas, but uh, they-. One of the first things they did was they put me in ammunition boats. So I worked on ammunition boats in the Halifax harbour. That's where maybe 70 or any number of ships would come in and they would take the ammunition off them because they didn't want any re-occurrences of the 1917 explosion

- **yah**

And they put them into proper storages underground. And then when a ship was going out you got the call and out you go with another.

- **and so when were you discharged?**

'46.

- **46**

Not till '46. Now I had volunteered for the Pacific and I went to Vancouv- went to Victoria and I worked on tugboats as an engineer on tugboats. And one of the reasons why I didn't get out until the June of '46 is that the unit I was with was de-commissioning our ships and so the captain the on this boat - it was always on the tugboat called the Glendon that was named after a town in Northwestern/Northeastern AB here. And so I was on that. We went between Vancouver, Prince Rupert and Victoria.

- **so eventually you found your way back to Edmonton**

Eventually I was discharged. And I came back to Edmonton because the I had seniority in the stores department which was secured for 90 days after your discharge.

- **this was with whom? The railway?**

Yah, CN, And things were pretty uncertain in 1946

- **mmm hmm**

And you know I had the notion to stay with the navy but the navy worked on a 6 month budget. You got the money in October you had a job until spring. You got the money in the spring you had a job until October. So that was not the security I was looking for. And I knew I had security in the store department of CN so I elected to come back.

- **mmm hmm**

To do railroading. Although I just loved the west coast.

- **this was what year?**

1946.

- '46

I came back –

- **in the meantime of course uh you're in Canada, the uh CBRT Its head was A.R. Mosher.**

Yup

- **the uh together with the mine workers they uh led their way to forming the Canadian Congress of Labour, which was the equivalent to the CIO in the United States. CIO came here and then uh we needed an industrial union so the Canadian Labour Congress took the same position as the F of L so they formed an industrial union centre.**

Canadian Congress of Labour

- **yah**

Yuh

- **and so the CBRT were historic in that. But you then transferred over to the ...**

That's right. Yuh, yuh. The CBRT was. I had to classify the CBFRT as one of the most progressive of the railway unions.

- **the CBRT**

And it was Canadian union.

- **yah**

It was the only Canadian union.

- **that's right**

Yup

- **And that was A.R. Mosher, was the President**

(yuh, right, yuh)

- **and he was also the president, first president Canadian Congress of Labour. I remember him very well. He was a handsome guy - Dutchman. And when it came to convention meeting of the Canadian Congress of Labour he never slept an hour.**

Never eh?

- **But you'd never know it.**

Yah. I didn't know him I knew Claude Jodoin of course pretty well yah. I knew him pretty well yah.

- **Well Claude was with the Trades & Labour Congress**

Right but he came over the-

- **well then we merged.**

Merged. After the merger, yah.

- **So**

And I was here in the Edmonton when we merged the councils here in Edmonton I was at that meeting yah.

- **and you merged the uh Alber, Alberta Industrial Unions, Federation of Labour with the Alberta Federation**

(yup yup)

I recall that time and being there but details – it was just academic of course.

- **mm hmmm**

See, because I'd, we'd gone through the process in the states. Y'know I was in the States where they amalgamated together, ya see, the AFL-CIO

- **mmm hmmm. Yes. So the**

Very interesting portion there because you see the railway unions had the colour code.

- **the what?**

They had the colour code.

- **yah**

See Mexicans and blacks couldn't belong. Y'know (laugh) see and now when the trade unions was gonna amalgamate with the CIO that was a a no-no - to have the colour line in. So our union was requested to uh uh

...

- **this was when the merger took place**

To eliminate this from their constitutions. And in 1959 they went to the convention in St Paul and one of our members - this was in our constitution - objected. He was quite religious and he objected to the colour line. So it was one of our resolutions. Now when they got down to putting them - a President had a request from the AFL. You see to have this colour line removed and of course he's chewing - the staff told me he was chewing his fingers down to his knuckles trying to get this in without insulting the south.

- **mm hmmm**

That was still pretty Jim Crowish. Well along come these people from Edmonton with a resolution, so the staff told me that he just tore up his papers and that's that see. So of our four resolutions that was the only one that he approved of. So I smelled a rat.

- **mm hmmm**

When it came to the convention I got a delegation from the deep south and they said 'brother Broten, we all like you. But what's this about this here colour line? Is this important to your people up there?' I said 'don't make no difference to us because it's illegal in Canada. We can't do it anyway.' So I says 'When that resolution comes back brother, you will find me sitting in my chair. I will not get up at all'. That won support of the whole south delegation.

- **mm hmmm**

Didn't make any difference to us. But I thought we had some good resolutions there which the international president saw fit not to approve.

- **he didn't bring them forward**

Didn't bring them forward.

- **yah**

See

- **well uh**

But this one he did. Well one out of four he was not very good averages as far as I was concerned because there had to be some merit in some of the rest of them. So I wasn't going to be the scapegoat.

- **well I remember in Texas in some of the plants we had two local unions. One for the blacks and one for the whites.**

Right. Yuh, yuh.

- **and at the conventions often they would uh did you have the same experience that they would debate where to have the next convention whether they should have it in a place where they would admit negroes in a hotel and uh with the whites or**

No. I know we didn't but of course what was the concern was to having a convention tha—no there was another thing about... I'm just now trying to remember that about labour legislation that these 'right to work laws'. And we wouldn't—didn't want to have a convention in a state that had right to work laws.

- **Well you're in Canada, the railway unions were looked as somewhat the aristocrats of labour. They felt that uh once you had a job in the railway you were set for life and uh**

That's true

- **and uh**

That's true. I mean yah

- **they were very very conservative uh in their social network**

yah that's true. I uh they next to having a government job a railway job was the most secure there was

- **mm hmmm**

And but in addition the railway unions had the most comprehensive seniority laws/rules that protected you. And far better than any other group. And that was accepted by the uh by the railways. Not, not necessarily willingly because railway unions was chiefly organized as an insurance group and that's why they all had insurance. Because railway work was the danger- railway jobs were so dangerous that they could not get insurance from ordinary insurance companies. The record of people killed in the railways was fantastic in the early days.

- **why is that?**

Well the dangers of the job. Now I'll give you one illustration of the like we all knew about the
..... [tape missing last words]

And you'd have to physically drop that pin in there and that's when you lost your fingers lots of times you see. So it was dangerous and all other things. They didn't have—originally they didn't - have brakes throughout the train. All they had was brakes on the engine and individually on the engine. And the reason we had the name 'brakemen' and now of course later they were called 'trainmen' and the reason they were called 'brakemen' that's exactly what they was. There was a handbrake on each car up there. And the engineer needed extra brakes and he would whistle a signal from the top then the brakeman would have to climb up on the top and and tighten down these hand brakes. And that was the only thing they had before they had train brakes throughout the train. Of course later they got train brakes throughout the train, and the main brakeman was no longer the

...

- **technology replaced them**

Technology replaced them. And they were called trainmen after. They didn't like to be called brakemen because they didn't have to walk but brakemen had to walk the top of the... climb, climb up the cars, tie on brakes and of course – and you must remember the reason you're putting brakes on – you want to slow down.

- **while you were at the farm and uh**

Yup

- **and they they were subjected to the uh onslaught of changing technology**

Technology yup.

- **they had coal was replaced by bunker fuel and then later on by diesel engines**

Yah. Yah the coal being replaced by bunker fuel didn't really make that much difference. It was just a matter of different firing of the same engine - you fire with oil instead of coal. Of course oil was considerably easier, but coal was, uh, if you were on what is called a hand-fired engine it was a back-breaking job. I used to make trips

to Vermillion from Edmonton to Vermillion and we would burn a car load of coal. I shovelled a car load of coal. Seven, you know, and 35 tons into that locomotive from here to Vermillion and back.

- **where did you get your coal from?**

Different places. Different places.

- **mostly Drumheller or ...?**

Not always from Drumheller. They, uh, we got it from Coalbridge, a lot of it from the Coalbridge, but then there was other places that had coal too. You know there was different places with coal. And on the farm we had committees on coal because you see the during the war the railway here in Edmonton stacked up coal - they had piles of coal. Well when they left it out there for a couple of years it leaked the gases out of them. And we used to say it's like burning real estate. You might as well just take the shovel and burn something out of the ground. And it was very poor coal. The awful difference on coal and we would have committees on coal and were always complaining to the company about the poor coal, you see.

- **it was technological change that brought a lot of the running trees and what not into the congress and became more progressive because if you they now felt the need for having Labour's support. And their firemen were one of the first right? They had a, you had a**

The firemen were the most militant of all the railway operating unions yah. They were the most militant

- **they came to the fore with technological change**

They were the ones – you know initially all you had was hand-fired engines. So the train ran on the backs of firemen and believe me if the fireman decided he's going to have a rest that's it boys ye know. Ye know because they couldn't run the train without the firemen that's because he was the guy that provided by the strength of his back. Of course later on they got into what is bigger engines and they got one called the stoker engine which made it easier and of course when you got into oil it was even easier yet.

- **So uh what kind of a position did you have in the union at that time?**

Uh locally I started out here as president.

- **mm hmmm and uh**

It wasn't by choice. I wanted to, I'd seen by that time that it would mean for unions to have some political avenues and I was really more interested in becoming what is called a legislative representative. They did have a good legislative representative and every year they would gather from all over AB and go and meet with the provincial government. Of course

- **separate from the federation**

Separate? Oh yah separate from the federation. They had their own legislative board. Entirely separate with the federation. And this was one time I remember that they went up before I think it was the Manning government and they said 'well they're here representing uh railway labour' and the Manning government said 'oh no you're not'. He said 'how? What do you mean?' Well he says they voted for us, so we represent labour in Alberta'. So I was there solidified in my mind that labour needed a political arm. You have to do it and you have to have your significance of labour's political arm.

- **Is that what interested you most when you when you sort of became active in the union?**

More than anything else, yes. But I was primarily also interested in an organization because I had been in a number of organizations out at the farm. Strange to me saying to them that I was president of the Canadian Ukrainian Youth Federation and I'm not Ukrainian. But I was active in Northern Saskatchewan there and they got together and they didn't differentiate so I was.

- **So you knew the value of organization**

I knew the value, yah. I knew it of course, always knew the value of organization because my father in United States was a member of the Non-Partisan League which was a group of farmers, non-partisan but they were

advocates for farmers interests and my mother was in the women's suffrage movement. She actually went and homesteaded. Can you imagine in 1890 a woman going out and homesteading? My mother did that. I had a pretty good social conscious background from the parents.

- **well in Saskatchewan people understood that unless they did something for themselves nobody was gonna do it.**

That's right. And you see all over there was small farmers' co-ops that handled things. Twining was a big thing. They brought the twine in into Saskatchewan. Wheat pool had a lot to do with it. Then the coal came. You see they dealt directly with Drumheller to bring in coal you see. And so these were small little co-ops, only small little co-ops but they'd be in the east locality. Little small adhoc co-ops.

- **people got experience in managing things.**

They got experience in management and then not only that but you see in the school system,. The local school had the old school board. They set the taxes. The municipality collected them, of course, but they run the school. That was before the big schools so you also had the avenue of the school system besides the municipal area, you see. People were very much interested in the municipal councillors and so forth like that and very active in the municipalities. Like I know 1928, I attended a farm boys' camp in Saskatoon and that was through the municipalities.

■ **mm hmm. And so uh being a legislative, being involved in legislative uh representative, was that your first job in the union?**

No. I never had that job. (laughs) I got drafted into being president.

- **oh yah.**

And so I was in the president's position and I was in the grievance portion of it too later.

- **oh grievances are pretty complex affair in the railways right?**

Pretty complex, believe me, but the railway unions they were intense. They knew their rights in the meeting. You didn't get away with anything. There was always some sharp member who'd - it was not a top down thing.

- **mm hmmm**

It, they went to these meetings and boy they had their say. And it was very democratic, very democratic. And then you see but ah we gravitated to further things you see in all like was the fireman's case was one thing and. But then the -

- **I was going to ask you uh were you involved in any of the work stoppages on the railways?**

Oh yes.

- **Tell us about them.**

Well - there was a work stoppage over the fireman's issue. That was the - fireman's issue was imported or exported from United States and the notices for the removal of firemen classified as firemen helpers or so. It was universal in the North America, in the United States and Canada. Then, they elected to withdraw their notices in the states and concentrated solely on the Canadian Pacific Railway because they considered the Canadian Pacific Railway was the soft underbelly as far as labour relations was concerned.

- **they were vulnerable in their view**

They were ones they were going to get. It was harder - there was other factors in the states and they wanted to provide an example and they ruled out the Canadian National because it was government and went to the private concern Canadian Pacific which had a dismal labour record, always did. And so they went there and when the notice was served they used the term 'carrier' instead of 'railways' and that was a term that is used in the states and not in Canada. So it was imported from the states. The CPR took a form of a pattern.

- **Well didn't the Canadian unions have a say in that?**

Oh yes. Yes they did.

- **So they must have agreed to it then.**

Eh? Well they went through the Kellogg Commission. It went through the Kellogg Commission. The Kellogg Commission ruled against them.

- **against the firemen**

Against the firemen. And part of the fault I --

- **established the Kellogg Commission**

Pardon?

- **who established the Kellogg Commission?**

Oh the Federal Government

- **okay**

Yuh

- **to solve the dispute**

Yuh. To solve the dispute, yuh.

- **was it binding arbitration?**

Binding – yes.

- **okay and what was the ruling?**

The elimination of the firemen. And that set the pattern for North America.

- **mm hmm**

So one followed the other you see.

- **In a way ...**

There was a strike. Yes there was a strike

- **how do you uh how would the union justify retaining the firemen when the in fact many respects the job had disappeared?**

Well, the question the predominant question was safety.

- **mmhmmm okay.**

Well that was the question, safety. When do you get too safe? You must remember there weren't any headlights before the railway unions. There weren't any automatic brakes. The rail the railway unions is the one that pushed for safety all along and they said you can never get too much safety. See one with other you see. And as a matter of fact there was cases of, many cases, where the - I know the one case in the States where there was a collision and, you know, you don't stop a train on a dime.

- **No.**

You see when you hit a car in a crossing, you're lucky if you can stop in maybe within quarter of a mile, you see. This woman that survived the crash: "My baby, my baby!" And they thought well, she's just being hysterical and it wasn't long before - the engineer had gone back but now the fireman came back and this baby had been knocked off the car or truck and it went onto a fuel tank. Not hurt and when he, the fireman, found the baby there on the fuel tank and he wrapped it up in his jacket and he walked back with a baby. So, there was cases. So the argument was then that 'when do you get too much safety?' That was the question 'When too much safety?'

- **So when the order came out to replace the firemen, what happened to you?**

There was a dead time factor. It said, 'all firemen hired before this date will be retained in service.'

- **as what**

Pardon?

- **what would they be doing?**

A fireman's natural promotion was to engineers. When you became a fireman for the first three years you took classes and you took examinations and if the end of three years you couldn't make the grade to be qualified for an engineer you were removed from the service. They didn't want you unless they could put you in some permanent position. But you see – besides being a shoveller of coal, it was the training ground for engineers.

- **okay but the engineers had a separate union**

They had a separate union

- **but they that's where the source was**

That's where the source was.

- **okay**

The source was. And at one time, engineers were so separate that there was a reluctance maybe to take the job when promoted to engineer because if they got laid off they had no place to go. And the firemen's organization they progressed the rule that when you come from the fireman's organization and you progress up the ladder to becoming an engineer, locomotive engineer, if the process is the reverse, you automatically go back as a fireman. They protected the engineers that was promoted to a fireman they protected them in being able to return.

- **but not the others. If they didn't come from the fireman then they wouldn't be wouldn't have that protection.**

Pardon?

- **If the engineer did not come from the firemen**

No. He wouldn't have that. Yah, yah. And the rule was invariably - you went through three years as a fireman because it was three years of besides being the job that you had it was a training for engineers and that was another reason the unions fought the removal of firemen. Because this is the logical place for the training of engineers. But if they still didn't win you know.

- **No. and so where where did where was the source then? Uh. They were getting their engineering ticket from the provincial government or?**

No the source then became Switchman.

- **oh I see**

See. After the elimination of firemen. Now the uh ...

- **switchmen had a separate union**

Separate union yah. But you see the Kellogg Commission - about three months after the Kellogg Commission's findings was handed down, I see a note in Calgary paper where this Justice Kellogg is been given a position on the board of directors. Tells you something eh? But on top of that, there was some fault with the man with the top branch of the fireman's union. There's times when you can be too ultra-sanctimonious. Because Gilbert, H.A. Gilbert, said he would never throw the switches for the trainmen. Had he done that, the the railways would have been probably more likely let a trainmen go. Because you see besides the fireman you had a trainman up there who was nothing but - he did nothing on the engine except get out and throw the switches. Well if the firemen had a job and it would made more sense to have the firemen get off and we did it on the passenger trains anyway because the trainmen were back in the coaches. It made more sense to have the firemen throw the switches. But the leader of the firemen's union, he's not going to take anybody's job and not going to do it. But that didn't happen as far as the trainmen.

- **No. okay**

They were willing they were willing to do the other man's job.

- **So you stayed on then uh**

I was on the protected list anyway. See, because by that time of course I was already qualified as an engineer a number of years before that.

- **okay. And uh did you become part of the. Did you become an engineer?**

I became an engineer.

- **yah and so you in operating you actually**

Yah but I never joined the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers.

- **you didn't**

No.

- **You were okay with the staying with the**

I stayed with it. Yuh. Because the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen way back in 1907 had included by the retaining of the transfer of seniority back and forth. They changed their name to Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen and Enginemen and there was railways in the United States where they represented both crafts.

- **mm hmmm**

And still do. Not in Canada. There was questions of trying to do that but they were never successful.

- **The firemen were really quite.... Their fights ... Wanted them to stay together.**

Yah, yah. They were quite proud yah. And even after the union dues came they introduced a union dues agreement where you have to pay dues to the craft you represent see. Which meant that if a fireman member got promoted to an engineer then he had pay dues for the engineers. Well I was president of the firemen's union here, and I said, 'well okay. I'll make a deal with you people and the engineers. We'll collect the dues and turn them over to you and the result was that I retained about a hundred members that were in arrears in the firemen's organization and they liked the firemen's organizing it you see. Which was probably one the reasons why we became the 12th largest in North America. Cause I retained them. See it was just a move that I said 'okay you fellas don't have to join the engineers we'll turn over the dues to the engineers and we'll tell the engineers, 'you don't have to bother collecting dues', all they were interested in was the money anyway. We said 'we'll give you the money. We'll collect the dues and give you the money. And we changed the membership you see.

- **You were also involved in membership grievances**

Yes.

- **How would've that worked?**

Well membership grievances. That became the 1959 – I went to a convention I got elected to the Board of Directors of Firemen. And that it was ...

- **What did that make you? A vice-president?**

No. No. It meant it made you a board of directors. They were a board of directors. And the board of directors one of the things for they were dealt with internal appeal system. They were judiciary body. Ruling on the decisions of the International President. People who appealed to the International President if they didn't like his decision they could appeal to the board of directors and that was what we did.

On top of that we were the fundamental - together with the three table officers - we were the finance committee for the union. And seeing as it was insurance, we had assets worth \$48 million dollars. And when I came on the Board of Directors I had to be bonded. And I was bonded for \$300,000, for faithful performance of duty. So you better be and quite often we'd get telegrams. They were, uh, we had an employ that was investments and during

the war we had an awful lot of low investments at two-and-half per cent and of course we sought to increase that and so I become very knowledgeable as far as the investment is concerned. But we decided on decisions of the international president and ...

- **well how was that uh. This is sort of intriguing isn't it? Uh**
Pardon?

- **So your international president must have had an awful lot of power**

Well he did. You see if there was an internal grievance it went to the International President. If it settled there, that was it. If they were not satisfied with the decision of the International President, they could appeal to the Board of Directors. And that's the way. We was five of us. They appealed it to us. We sat on many cases you see, where we ruled upon it and sometimes we gave -

- **So you had quite a bit of work there**

It was great but of course. I went in twice a year. And we'd be in there maybe a month or so each time. You see.

- **Yeh. It's interesting that uh you would have an internal grievance procedure against the officers that you...**

That's right. Against all of the officers. Could be against the Secretary-Treasurer, too. But predominantly they were against the President. And there was quite a few times you see and I ruled a lot of deciding opinions. Because politics plays pretty strong.

- **mmm hmmm**

You see. And so the president called me into his office: 'why are you always writing the dissenting opinions against my decision'. And I said 'Well, Ed, you know,' - his name is Ed Giller - I says 'ye know you're the type of a person I'd like to have for a neighbour.' I says 'nothing personal at all in any of my decisions. I'd be glad to have you for the next door neighbour'. It just so happens that I do not agree with some of the decisions you've made'. 'Now,' I says, 'you'll find that when I agree with you I'll be just as vocal in agreeing with you as I shout against your decisions'.

Well there came a time when a case came up and the other four members voted against the decision of the International President, and my vote was cast with the decision. And I wrote a dissenting opinion against the majority decision, supporting the International President. He called me down to his office and his hand was shaking. Ye know. I said 'well, Ed I told you. There's nothing personal in any of my decisions'. There based upon and on the Chicago Northwestern - I went back through dusty files and books way back into the 1880s and 1890s to get the history of the railway. And one of the reasons why we had so many seniority disputes is because of the financial system that was in the inauguration of the Chicago Northwestern Railway. You count each so for like that had a stake in it. So you had on the books you had a separate railway every 150 miles or 120 miles. And they got funds from that state, see. So they were one; it was one master railway. But in the technical and the financial sense and the other sense it wasn't. It was compulsory a new railway every 120 miles which, gosh sakes, it sure wasn't very practical.

- **that's just to be at the trough.**
Eh?

- **that was just to be at the trough**

Yah, it's a trough. And each one, you see, they would get the municipality - is receded but you know they have some say in the states when they get they get their finger in the trough you see. Little bits all like that and soon so then some seniority rules was pretty complex you see when you come to that you see then ... uh and uh ... I know ... I says reading all these books and found out that's how the Chicago Northwestern Railway was built. 120 miles at a time you see. Different company. It's like having...

- **So what was your uh position here back home yet? You were still the president**
I was still the president here, yah. Yah

- **and uh where'd you go from there?**

Well while there was a vacancy in the local unions and I took the job as chairman of the local grievance committee. Besides Edward Aston? left the president's job

- **was that a full-time job?**

No. No. None of them were full-time jobs you see. They weren't paying jobs either.

- **It paid you your lost wages**

Pardon?

- **It paid you your lost wages.**

Yah, yah right. They paid you your lost – if you got your lost wages you got paid you see. But it involved being the local grievance committee with the company board you see.

- **You had a brake unit.**

To be, for membership. Everybody – all these balls would be over here – see? And see this one.

- **mmhmm**

That's the secret ballot. You're black-balled see? That's how you voted on membership. You black balled, see. You got black-balled they wouldn't take 'em as a member so...

- **[changing tape]**

Well, I'll come back to that uh. I was gonna say you had a quite a bit of experience with the with international unions so to speak

Right. Yah

- **they were called international because they were both in Canada and the United States.**

Right.

- **did you find any cultural differences between the membership of both?**

No. No I didn't.

- **No**

No I didn't find any cultural... I had no problems in the States at all - and I was against many things that they did – but, I says 'look, you know you guys if you don't like what I say or do you could always appeal to Canada and have them export me.' But all they could do is send me down here and this is if you think you had problems before then ... (laugh). They would have to export me because you see I was born there you see. You know. So they couldn't.

- **So you had dual citizenship**

Eh?

I have dual citizenship – now I do, yah. But I always had that, you know, the fact I was down there. I knew my mother taught school for nine years in North Dakota so I got a background of American history before I ever got a background of Canadian history, you know.

- **mmmm**

And so I said "well, you know, Canada could export me and send me but they'd have to send me here. If you think you got troubles now, that's when you really would have troubles," I says. But I got along pretty good with and you know these like that and ...

- **you were going to mention something about the Pinkerton's**

Pinkerton's was very much involved in the in the anti-labour movement and very much so in the railway unions because, you see, in the early days before you had uniform seniority rules the railwaying was a 'boomers'. It were called boomers you went from job to job and that's how Canadian railways were built and that's why we got a lot of American railway people up here. And to begin with in the early days.

- **yah**

Because they when the – the boomers, boomers you meant to say you were laid off. And you had gotta get a slip. And these slips was so that you could hold it up to the light -- your prospective employer could hold it up to the light like that -- and if there certain marks on there you were, you were labour agitator.

- **mmmm**

And so you see, that's what Pinkerton's did to them. You gotta see you got yer discharge [unclear, warbled sound] new employer for a job. Holds up the card said 'we don't want you'.

- **is that right?**

Yah

- **were you aware of that at that time**

Oh yes yah. I was aware of that yah. I was aware of that. But it never happened in later years when we had such strong seniority rules like firemen could go up to engineers, engineers could come down get back to firemen then, you see. Did kind of spell the end of the boomer days. You stayed there because it you never really got laid off unless you were at the bottom end of the firemen. And one time we engineers wanted to make what is called an inner regular adjustment of the board. You see they wanted to give their engineers a little bit more for Christmas cheques, see. This is in December, and I was the local chairman here for the firemen and at first the company came to me because I was gonna be effected because you see scouts were going to go backfiring and they were shortening the engineers' board to get more work, you see.

- **mmm hmm**

And they said, 'well uh'. And I says 'Over my dead body! I've got firemen laid off' I says 'With kids at home that would be glad to get one triple in and now you want to make an irregular cheque of the board to give these engineers more money!' I says 'Over my dead body!' I says 'You're not going to do that'. And they said 'well, we agree with you. But we have to ask you.'

- **Well when you say that the Pinkertons had...**

Cards

- **cards and**

Right

- **there was this seems a constant conspiracy if you like or resistance to labour or workers having unions. That doesn't appear to have changed much over the years. What uh what when you see legislation, what's your view of that, why is why does has it taken more than a hundred years in North America to accept labour unions.**

Well, of course it's an ebb and flow thing. In my judgement the labour movements in – probably more so in the States than in Canada - from the 18 --. Formed in 1873 that was the fireman's union. The engineers was formed ten years earlier than that, 1863. That in the latter part of the 19th centuries when the unions were formed these unions were formed and up until the 1920s or so they were getting stronger and stronger and, of course, that was the period when Eugene Debs you know he ran on the Socialist ticket for President of the United States, you see. Five times. But then you had a period when it would dull and then when Roosevelt came in. F.D.R. came in the States then they got coming out -- one of the things of the depression, then you knew we got better labour laws. They were more liberal and lax you see, than it was before. And you had that influx so it's a thing that ebbs and flows. It comes up we get 'em. We have terrible labour laws in Alberta now. They're terrible. And not

much better for us than Canada but there was a time when there were more liberal than they are now but things change and I believe it has something to do with the militancy of the workers themselves. And management has found ways to get around the workers - the big thing, of course, has been reductions in staff. Reductions, all over the place, and frankly this scares the hell out of employees. Because protecting your job is a very important part of your life and you have no job protection, and that was the thing that was left when you don't know whether you're gonna be working. It'd be your protection is gone, then, of course, you see the will to fight probably goes down, too, a little bit. and the companies -- and I'm speaking more, you know, of the railway unions because I'm more familiar with them. They found the formula. They said 'we want to cut, uh, reduce staff'. Alright. Well there the unions fight against it, you see. But they said 'Now this we -- 25% of the staff, we're going to save quite a bit of money. We're willing to put some of that money we save on your backs.' And they did when they removed firemen. The engineers said 'well we want some more money' and so part of the money they saved with the elimination of firemen went for extra pay for the engineers and the conductors.

And this is a formula. In my estimation it tends to reduce the aggressiveness of the militancy of the employees because they paid them off. And this was one. They paid them off with higher wages.

- **having said that though when you take a look at Poland, Germany, even Italy. That when Germany reconstructed the big companies, and they got huge companies, world-wide companies, they invited organizations because they felt that was the best way for reconstruction in Germany. And their workforce was pretty well all organized. In England it's culture...**

Yuh

- **Like you know it's taken for granted in a way that workers are gonna have a union. Why, why not? In Italy even if you represent five engineers in a job you represent them to the employer and you don't have to have a majority. That has never taken hold - that attitude that workers have a right of expression in a practical sense. I guess human rights would say ... Alberta's been found guilty of violating international standards by the ILO several times, they don't give a damn about it.**

No

- **So why, why are we so slow?**

I don't know. The railways really had a different attitude originally to labour unions. In many cases, of course, management was promoted from labour, see. But they welcome when you're hired out in the railway. The official hiring you will tell you where the union is. Make the connection because they preferred to deal with the unions and let the unions deal with the men, you see.

- **mmm hmmm**

Now allow this local chairman. They wou--. I had one there was one fireman that had, well, he had done a few things that he shouldn't have done. He had, you know, booking off and something like that and there was a little bit of a thorn in the railway's side, eh. Then there was a case when they had forgot to call him and he should have been called, see. So he puts in a time claim for missing a call. I was local chairman and eventually it comes up to me and so he called me into the office and they said 'What in heck is the matter, now this guy he got off the train at west junction he did this and he's that, he missed all these calls, we didn't do nothing. This time we made a mistake and he wants to throw the book at us'. I says, 'give me the time claim!' and I just ripped it in half, see. So you discipline your own men and a railway liked that. You kept your men under control and that's why the railway unions were initially were favourites with the company. I don't think that exists anymore.

- **mmm hmmm**

Because we don't have -- it's like one retired official said: 'We don't have railway men in the management anymore.' Accountants and lawyers and stuff like that, see. We don't have railway this -- nobody's come up from the ranks and knows anything or they're not -- railway as an industry was very family oriented, you know. You know your father was a railroader, and you were a railroader. I don't mean to say that's the way you should go. But it did. It did

- **Well it seems to me that you pretty well established that you could make a difference in the union. One person can make a difference.**

You can. Yes you can, you can. You can make a difference.

- **So you enjoyed your...**

Yes I enjoyed it. I was always the one that believed that an informed membership is your best membership. And so I had advocated to put out a monthly circular to everybody. Well, naw, no, no. Opposition you see. So I bought a typewriter, one finger typewriter - they had those you know (laughs). And a mimeograph. And started to put out circulars to the membership all on my own. All on my own expense, postage, everything. Telling them what's going on. I mailed them once a month. I put 'em out. After four months or so you couldn't have taken it away from them. And they passed a motion right away to re-imburse me for all my costs. Now that wasn't a question. I wasn't concerned about that. I was willing to put out that money because I felt that the educated membership is your best membership, see. But when they saw the circulars when they got them there they thought, by God, you couldn't have taken it away from them.

- **mmm hmmm**

So uh...

- **You had another part of your life. You were not only a union activist, you were active outside of the union. You were a social activist. I still read articles that you write in the paper and what-not. Would you like to comment on that? Would you – where you were involved with the labour council, you were involved politically, you were on the school board were you not?**

No. I never lost a union election and I never, never won a political one (laughs).

- **but you did run**

But I was started out here in Calder and in the early days in the '50s the Home School Association were very active and we had a situation in Calder where we had a problem with classrooms. Calder was took everybody from Grey? down. Originally there was only two schools north of the railroad track - one in Calder and one in North Edmonton, and we went down as far as 111th St and took the president in Calder School -- because it literally means railway here. But I became involved in the Home School Association and we had twenty classes in 16 rooms. My eldest son went to grade one. He went to it one month in the morning and one month, the next month, in the afternoon - about a half a day. So I took a delegation down to the school board for more classrooms and we were successful. And they put in it was four portables. They put in portable schools. And, uh, I'm trying to think of what the guy who was, uh, chairman of the school board at that time. And so then they gravitated from there and then I ran for school board a couple of years. And those were the years when it was, you know, you had an election every year.

- **mmm hmm**

And eventually I did run in 1958 for city council. And, there was four of us initially formed the the organization that Brian Mason ran as.

- **mmm hmm**

And I ran for when Julian Kiniski ran. I ran for the city council. That was in 1958. But then when I became involved with the international union it wasn't feasible for me to be that active because of the fact that I was going away twice a year.

- **well you were also active in the provincial political party right?**

Pardon?

- **you were also active with the New Democrats provincially**

Yes, both provincially and - that and in the provincial yes I was.

- **And how did that uh, what reaction was there amongst your your own members in the union for you being involved in a political party?**

I didn't have any.

- **you didn't have any.**

Never had any. You didn't bring your politics into the union meeting.

- **mmm hmm**

You see it was an outside thing you see.

- **okay**

You see. Just have to separate a thing. And the same thing of course I was a bit active with a seniors' organization. I was President over here at Calder for years and years and years and ...

- **did your background and the starting from a homesteader to being an officer in an international union you must have some comment about what's going on in our globalization and all that just how do you rationalize all this. What's your attitude towards what the future looks like?**

Well, I don't particularly like what is happening as far as globalization is concerned. It's another power, you concentrate power into fewer and fewer hands, and that's so you might classify globalization as the last refuge of imperialism. Because it's concentrated into fewer and fewer hands. And I have predicted that it's going to run into headaches because eventually they may agree but eventually the each one wants a little bit of his own bailiwick. And you see evidence if you just try reading the papers. You see evidence, now alright. Now, the United States of course is not in favour of the your system, then you know what is taking place in Europe is becoming a competitive group when you take all the countries in Europe and put them together in competitive group. They're smaller when they own a portion but they become more powerful when you kind of bring them together in a semi-collective.

- **that may very well be, but don't you think that countries and government are losing power to corporations. They're bigger now and operate by their own rules.**

Well sure they do. It'd be we the governments are there. The governments always can be the powerful ones. But they choose not to. Because if we are to say that the governments of the countries of the world don't have the ultimate power then they're supposed to be representing the people. If they don't have the ultimate power then what have they got? They haven't got anything. We don't have a country. But they don't choose to do that. And they have been the handmaidens of the corporate community and it has been. Nothing is more evident of that than what is taking place in Alberta. But it isn't only in Alberta, of course, but it's a classic example of the corporations controlling the politicians. When the corporations say 'jump' the politicians say 'how high?' And that's what's taking place now. But even these corporations that have used – formed an association to control governments eventually will fall out amongst themselves. Thieves, you know, all eventually fall out. And they'll fall out. I would be around to see this. (Laughs) Maybe you won't. Won't be that far apart when we go (laughing)

- **we'll both go**

Whooo yah. But in writing these articles in the Edmonton Senior, I went back at one time to the poor laws in England in 1605. And I showed that there was a pendulum swing from time to time. In the 1890s, of course, the swing was for -- if you couldn't provide for yourself there was something wrong for you. Old age. And I used to have one you mentioned about the New Democratic Party. As a matter of fact in the earlier days here all the posters was made in my garage. Out here. And I used to have a sign there you see what their duties were you see. You know, you're a teacher, you know, you have to do this and do that and one of the things was that you had to set aside so much money so that you would not be a burden upon your peers as you got older. And so that thing has shifted back and forth. The parishes in England, of course, would have to look after the poor see? And they had the prisons. They went to prison if you couldn't - if you were too poor you went to prison you see. But it was the parishes. Then you switched 'til there was some public responsibility and a hundred years ago it was very much so that you had to look if you couldn't provide for your retirement, for your future, you were lazy or ignorant or stupid, you see. But then they found out when there was a depression in the 1880s- 1890s,

and even the mayor of Toronto said , ‘well, these people how can they provide for a future when the they are so poor?’ And so there is some that society as a whole - governments have some responsibility to people because even the best of people and we who laid the laws in the 1930s knew very well that fact now how can you answer. And I said ‘well I walk the streets of Vancouver without anything to eat. Here I am. I’m young, I’m sure willing to work. There’s no job, no work for me. I can’t get a job.’ I went there -- there would be the Vancouver Sun. The province used to put the want ads up in the in the window as soon as they came off the press. And we would go there and read them you see? So then walk about three miles down to Foss Creek there was a mill there wanted jobs. Well there were 180 people there.

- **mmm hmm**

Looking for a job. They wanted three people. They didn’t bother to take. We were first in line that didn’t make any difference at all.

- **the one who’d work for the least?**

No. They went down the line and the guy I went with is 180 lbs. 6 ft 3”. Well he’s the guy they hired and he was way down the lines. See? So if I you see, so these were the things when we were like that you see but there has been swings. So in the 1890s there was an acknowledgement in the union, acknowledgement that society as a whole had some responsibility for the people socially. Keeps on swinging. Now you see it’s swung around the other way. And eventually it has to swing. We have the influx. We have the pensions and so for like that come up where there’s a public responsibility and so forth to become involved. And now, of course, we’re seeing the ‘oh let’s scrap all the pensions we don’t need them they’re no good’. ‘The Canada Pension’s no good’. ‘The old age pension is no good’. And they want to eliminate those things you see. But, you see, it’s gonna swing around again.

- **so you think we’ll see swings.**

We’ll see swings. Yup. Going back 400 years and I could pattern the swings. So the swings are gonna come back again. It’s gonna be realized because it doesn’t matter. Sure there are people who are lazy. There’s no question about that but more people that could do them do better for themselves. But by and large – by and whole -- there are people that are destitute, forlorn and poverty stricken through no fault of their own . There are other forces that contribute to it and they must have a social consciousness.

- **well thank you very much and maybe we’ve left something out. Anything you would like to that you think maybe we should tell. We can always come back and maybe you have some ideas.**

Well I think you covered it pretty well.

- **yeah. So if there’s anything you think we haven’t touched on that’s important**

It’s the so--- yeah I’ve always been more socially active and during the depression you see, I read a book and this book was put out by a labour MP from Australia. And it said that the depression was man-made. And he quoted millions of international finances and other like that to prove his point. It says, ‘the common herd have become too powerful and something must be done to keep them down’. And that propogated the oppression of the 30s. But of course it got out of hand. They tried to control these downward trends. Now usually when we have that little bit of a scare in the stock market, I says, ‘Tell me how in the world can Ford, how many cars do they have to sell from Friday to Monday for real?’ The big drop came on a Thursday and a Friday, but yet on Monday it bounced up again on the stock market. I says how many cars did they have to sell over the weekend for in order to improve their position? Because I take the position that the stock market is an evil empire to quote Bob Rae? (laughs). It’s an evil empire, and it doesn’t have anything to do with practicability or common-sense and there was a time, of course, when corporations or manufacturers was more conscious of the money factor than something these factories like that and was built – if you had a business alright, you could evaluate your best business. Like that you see? Then you did so much for good will, eh?

- **mmm hmm**

Well that you’d built up this business and you got your clientele like that. But that doesn’t have nothing to do with the up and down of the stock market. And another thing was that it always used to be that corporations

were conscious when they built a plant. They were cost conscious, but after 15 years of depression and the war the commodities were not being, you know, weren't being manufactured so much and there was a big cry for commodities and what do the companies that are onto it they're saying, they said when, they didn't say how much this was going to cost. They said- [tape cut off here.]

They said that over-time and time-and-a-half and so forth like that. They said, 'we're not interested in the cost. We just want to get that plant in operation as soon as possible.' And that created a spiral. And it created emotionally the same as they didn't care about the cost. And when the employees on construction, when the company doesn't care about the cost, well boys, "pick up your tools and take 'em home". You see and you have those things happening. You see and they said "well we want more wages. We want you to pay 'em travel time and you pay 'em anything you like in order to keep 'em working. And sometimes it can be a vicious cycle that perfect example which you see, but they don't care anymore, it's cost.

- **okay, okay. Go ahead.**

This is an actual box that you buy it on admission to membership. And this came from the BLFNE. This was a one way we you applied for membership and then you would have a route on admission. And you'd have a number of balls in here you see. And you hear the balls like this and there'd be a black one amongst them you see. Now, some would come up here and you'd drop them in this slot here. So when they go from this box on this side they'd be so, so many white balls and so many black balls. And that's that's how you become a blacklisted. And that was the list.

- **blacklisted by the union?**

Blacklisted by the union. You couldn't be - they didn't accept you as a member.

- **okay**

See. And that's what this box was for. That you get the term blacklisted. I don't know.

(sound of balls clinking)

- **What would the what would the rea- reason you would black ball someone?**

Well, you must remember that in the earlier days Pinkerton's was very much involved

- **okay.**

And there was some people they were suspecting as being Pinkerton spies.

- **I see**

Alright. So you then you blacklist them this way. Then there is no vote - there's nothing recorded, you just you're just blacklisted.

- **mmm hmm**

And that's one way of doing it, you see. Blackballed they that's where you're blackballed out, you see. And then it avoids nobody knows who in the world. It's completely secret not even have to count them, because there's a black ball in there. Who put it in? You don't know who put it in you see. You don't know who put it in. It took one. It just took one black ball, you see? It took one black ball see. One black ball was all you'd --. One black ball. If you're accepted, you're accepted. And if you're not, you're not and it was in my recollections it was mostly used on the Pinkertons. They were adept to putting labour spies into labour organizations and they were and so this was one way if you suspected somebody of a Pinkerton agent you blackballed 'em.