

Lynn Bue

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LB: My name's Lynn Bue. I was born in Saskatchewan on a farm near ... ?. I'm working at the national office right now but I came through the Edmonton local of the Letter Carriers Union of Canada and then came here (to Ottawa).

Q: When did you start working at the post office in Edmonton?

LB: My seniority date is February 1976 but I actually started in 1975 a day before the strike. I was working midnights in the plant and all of a sudden everybody's leaving the building. I had no idea what was going on. I was working with ... ? and all of a sudden there we are out on the street and everybody's happy and I was on strike. That was my first experience of a strike.

Q: So you were working inside at that time?

LB: I was working inside at the time, internal group. Of course I wouldn't even have known that at the time. I'd just started with the post office as a casual worker, then I applied to be a letter carrier (because) that's what I wanted to be, a letter carrier.

Q: In 1975 were there very many women working in Canada Post?

LB: Internally I think there were quite a few women. But I found when I went outside to be a letter carrier, there weren't that many. What surprised me when I got involved in the union and saw what was going on across the country (was that) we were well populated in Edmonton, whereas in some parts of the country it was less than 1%.

Q: To what do you attribute the difference in Alberta? What was it like in Alberta?

LB: It was an oil and construction boom and there were better paying jobs than the post office, so the men left to go to those better paying jobs. They needed to hire (because) there was expansion. Alberta was growing so they needed people at the post office, so darn it, they had to take women in.

Q: Tell me about when you started in 1975.

LB: I had come to Alberta. I'd been at university in Regina and I wanted to try something different, so I came up and looked around. It was still fairly hard to get a job for women, so I did some different jobs for about a year and a half. I met Colette Forest (the first full-time female Letter Carriers Union of Canada officer), who was a letter carrier. I thought, my god, she works outside. I'd come from a farm and I hadn't really thought of (being a) letter carrier. I thought, "that's great." The main interest I would have would be my political work, and I can go to work and do my thing, then have my time to do other things. Colette was saying it was well paid and certainly the other jobs were very close to ... ? So I really wanted to have this job and be outside, especially for a farm lady. So I started and the day after I started we were out, and there I was outside in the street. It was really exciting. I don't even know if I knew anybody in there, I likely did. I didn't know very much about it but I knew ... ?, that's about it. So that was my introduction.

Q: So what wage were you getting when you started there?

LB: I just remember my first cheque that I got. It was more than double what I was making in this other place. In fact, I thought it was a mistake. I truly thought, "how will I spend this?" Being a university student and then working at these really low paying jobs, you're used to pinching pennies, eating lots of crackers and a little bit of hamburger. I actually didn't know what to do with this money at the beginning. Of course you get over that. But it was a very good time then too, because I think our wages were going up quite well at that time.

Q: What were you studying at university in Regina?

LB: Music, piano. So it was a bit of a change.

Q: And you were politically involved?

LB: Yes, I was really involved in the women's movement in Regina and in Saskatoon with the abortion and (Henry) Morgentaler thing that was happening, women's health and self-examination, so a few different groups. I was at the women's center in Regina and ? was there too at the time. It's hard to believe. That was sort of my main focus. I had looked for it, found it, and was involved. So I continued that in Edmonton, including at Edmonton Women's Place and the Rape Crisis Center and a few other things.

Q: What led you down that path?

LB: I looked for it. It has to do with adolescence where all of a sudden ... From my parents I never got the idea that girls couldn't do certain things. School was fairly easy, so when I'd go there we were pretty equal in that class. Something happened when we became adolescents and the boys all of a sudden started treating you like you weren't as smart as you were a year ago. I was really frustrated with that, plus the message that I was getting in church. I started paying attention to that message about women and frankly I got to a place and said, "if it's my choice I'll go to hell rather than ?." So then I started ... I just had to make that choice then. So I started reading a lot, looking for things and then looking for organizations. My first demonstration was about aboriginal women not getting the same rates as non-aboriginal women. It was a status of women demonstration in Saskatoon.

Q: Did you know the union could offer further possibilities?

LB: No, I was there to certainly, even in 1981 CUPW (Canadian Union of Postal Workers), I wasn't part of the strike. Where I was, some of the inside workers weren't

supporting it but there were about five letter carriers. Our depot was not very good but five of us stayed out and it was about returning to ... ? Of course that was, I came more from ... the women's organizations were very excited about this and of course we're gonna support it. But then I also started seeing the dynamics among workers and sometimes the fear about strikes or what would happen if people weren't standing together. So that was I think the first time I really started having a little bit deeper class analysis, just watching how that was developing. But it really was that time, because of my involvement in the women's movement, that I was on that picket line. That's what (we were) doing by saying, "yeah, go for it CUPW, maternity leave, great."

Q: So you were inside as a casual (worker) in 1975 and then you went to (become a) letter carrier in 1976. How many women letter carriers were there in Edmonton at that time?

LB: I'm not sure, maybe 30% at that time, 35%. I think I was saying earlier that what we had was a real boom in oil and construction. They were looking for people, so there were people coming from other provinces and the men were going to these (oil and construction) jobs. There was a need to have these women in what was generally considered a man's job. How that played out in the workplace was different. Some of the men welcomed the women. A good friend of mine who had started two years earlier, she had to work. She was told, "well we don't know if you can do it." So for a year and a half she got the worst work, didn't get any seniority, had to prove herself. So it wasn't very good. Also, it was pretty clear that some of the men felt that by our coming into the workplace it devalued the work. If women could do it (they thought), anybody could do it. So ... there was a bit of a military atmosphere in the post office, so very male.

Q: Many of the supervisors were ex-military. Were there any women supervisors at that time?

LB: No, I didn't see a woman supervisor for letter carriers for years.

Q: What percentage of letter carriers are women now? It was about 30% then?

LB: Yeah, nationally it was about 11%. Alberta had the most of anyplace by quite a bit. Ontario was bad, Atlantic (Canada). I think B.C. had some of the same boom in some places, so they had more. There were a few places that were almost all women, but Edmonton really got the (most).

Q: The growth in the community must have reflected that.

LB: Yes, the towns in Alberta were becoming cities quite quickly. I remember going to the CLC (Canadian Labour Congress) women's conference in 1984 and going to visit the Quebec local, who were all very nice to me. But when I asked them, I said, "why aren't there more women here in Quebec City?" They said to me sincerely, "Quebec women are more feminine." I said, "more feminine? So they don't care about making a better wage?" I just said to them, "do you think maybe the fact that they don't see anybody else doing it, it might not occur to them they could have this job?" It was very clear, as we saw from other practice in our national office, that women were discouraged. Their applications were lost in parts of the country, and what they put up with in some places, I wouldn't even repeat some of the stories I heard about things that were happening to some of these women. That's in the '70s and '80s, not that long ago.

Q: Did the hiring panels tend to be men?

LB: Yes. One of the reasons that I got in is because I came from a farm. I do physical labor and I'm strong. They liked to hear that; I didn't know that. But as soon as I mentioned that it was really clear that was a good thing.

Q: You were key in establishing a women's committee in (the) Letter Carriers Union of Canada in Edmonton. How did that come about?

LB: Well also Laura ?. What happened is in my depot the harassment became so bad. There was a letter carrier there, actually it was a friend at one time. I think he was patting me on the head kind of, almost protective, but I challenged him one day because of his abusive statements towards a woman who was a Mormon. He just turned on me and at one point he threatened to kill me. The supervisors would do nothing. He would go by my desk and push me into the desk. In talking to the supervisor, the supervisor's advice was, "why don't a bunch of you get together and get him in the alley?" What happened, and I realized this, is that he would move off me for a little while and then go after another woman. In some ways it was such a relief that I would not pay attention. I tried to talk to him and see if we could figure it out. As we were friends at one time, I just didn't understand what had happened. I worked with Laura Week and she was in the office. Edmonton had the first fulltime woman officer in Canada and they had the second fulltime woman officer in Canada – Colette Forest (secretary-treasurer, Letter Carriers Union of Canada Local 15 in 1978) first and then Laura Week. So we had obviously had a very different situation in the union than most places. So Laura was trying to work this through, and nothing was happening. Finally the reason it changed is because some of the men after a year could no longer stand what was happening. One of them went in tears to the supervisor and said, "we've gotta do something." So they never listened to us, it was finally when men said, "you have to do something." One time he did something really abusive. All of us got together and went out for coffee and said, "what are we going to do? We have to take this on." So it was more collective. But ... even though they'd been watching this and hearing this. This man would say, even to other men ... a man coming in, his wife had just had a baby and he said, "how does it feel that you're not man enough to father a son?" cause he'd had a daughter. Things like that. So they put up with this too, but that was what was so strange. When we started working collectively even some of the men turned on us, even though it was just to try and stop this one very abusive situation. This person threatened to shoot me, and later on another person too. But later on finally almost all the women had left the station except for two of us, got transferred out, and that's when they finally went to the supervisor and the supervisor started to shut (it) down.

Q: Did the others choose to leave because of the difficulties?

LB: Yeah, it was very stressful. As a feminist I thought I should be able to take care of this and just leave the others behind. But it was really clear that even though I was involved in the women's movement, and I remember writing this one time (in) a foreword for something the Alberta Women's Committee did. The Women's Committee identified sexual harassment, which we had been talking about. But (we) didn't identify it. But I started to understand that the union could be a key power in changing that situation. It took a long time before we started getting more power, but the union was key. The women's movement, the identification and bringing people's attention to it and trying to change laws and agitating was really important, but the power of the union to actually change things in the workplace became very clear. I don't think I had understood that before about what role the union could play.

Q: So you were involved with the AFL (Alberta Federation of Labour) Women's Committee as well?

BL: Yes. The Edmonton local of LCUC (Letter Carriers Union of Canada) was very well (organized), so that's how I started paying a little more attention. I'd go to some meetings that were really important meetings, but really that was just ... and things like that. But after that I became shop steward and then went to a meeting and I became chief shop steward for letter carriers. When they had an election I said, "what does that mean?" I was so lucky to be part of the Edmonton local, and you know the people there. We had strong women and we had strong men, not everybody, but strong men that were very committed to changing things for women too. We still had a problem with this in most parts of the world, but they would push women forward and they did that with me and they supported me throughout my time. There are still key people in that local that I look back to, and if they hadn't been there I don't know what I would've done.

Q: So you formed a women's committee?

LB: Yes.

Q: That must've been one of the first ones in the LCUC.

LB: It might've been the only one; there might've been some afterwards. Then in 1984, see our local was known as the Pinko local, ours and Quebec, the Pinko local with the LCUC. How that played out, 'cause I didn't know the national politics, is that the way they'd go after the men, then men in the local would call them gay 'cause they supported women.

We put forward a resolution to have a national women's committee and we ended up getting it passed at our region and it went to national convention. Well that was my first speech in a national convention. You can just imagine the LCUC. We had women, and how angry some people were. It was clear it was going to go down. So what happened is a brother got up and reminded Gary, who's president, that he's part of the CLC and the CLC had made a commitment to the women's committee. So what he said then is, "okay don't worry about this motion, we'll have a national women's committee." So that's what happened. We didn't actually win the motion but got a commitment from Gary in 1984.

I was the main speaker and we were on ... and generally he tried to put other women on the committee that actually didn't believe there should be a women's committee. So they did that and then gave us really no time to meet. The only time we met officially was when we were sent to a CLC women's conference and we got together in Ottawa. So they took us over to national office and gave us a tour and showed us how to fill out an expense report, which of course we never saw again because we were never off for anything. But this committee that started out with a number of women that really didn't think, except for one, that there should be a women's committee, we actually I think became quite tight and were trying to figure out how to make our way through this. Almost every meeting, whenever there was three of us there we would get together. So we spent a lot of evenings late at night after all the other business was gone, trying to hold a women's caucus or discuss things. We tried to have a survey and we did get a

survey out. It took us about a year and a half before we ever saw the results of the survey, but it was still an interesting experience. But not having something in the constitution, there could only be so many people ...

Q: What was the purpose of the survey?

LB: I guess to find out what women were experiencing and what they wanted the national women's committee to focus on and to do.

Q: You were at one time photographed in a chokehold by the police. Do you remember that?

LB: It was in '87 during the strike. The incident ... so we had a strike. There were a lot of things on the table and in some ways I think it was a very successful strike for the members of LCUC. LCUC was seen as a less important union than CUPW, but we had actually started to see even the leadership saying, "yeah it's (important), we used to be able to solve things ... and now we never solve anything. So I think they were starting to get frustrated and the conditions were deteriorating in our workplaces. There was a lot of anger. So when they called the strike, people were out. That's when you realize ??, don't panic about that, almost all of them are, they come through.

But it was a very violent strike because of the scabs. At that time we had no experience. We learned from that one that they're not going to be able to do this. But the fear of seeing them bring people across to continue to do this job, what would that mean to our strike? What would it mean to fight to improving our conditions if they just have someone else do it? But the other thing they did is the people they were bringing across the line, except for these muscle people that came up and were trying to knock you over, were people that were having a hard time getting jobs, often immigrant workers. That's when we saw the ugly side of fear, because that's when you heard racist comments and the men who were going across the picket line were called faggots. So that's when we started to have more discussions within LCUC about that, how quickly that can break it

down within my depot. There weren't many people to cover as letter carriers union. There were two (minority groups) Chinese and aboriginal people. Especially for gay men it was always ???. So how quickly that solidarity, how did they feel? Did they feel supported by their brothers and sisters when this is happening? So we learned a lot.

Q: The women were on the picket line as well?

LB: Women were the toughest; the men said that.

Q: There were a number of arrests?

LB: That picture of me being picked up by my jacket, and this (police officer), we knew he was really crazy. You could see he just couldn't wait to get in there. That wasn't true of most of the police, but for him it was true. It was due to my mouth that this happened, but he knew that he would go. So he picked me up and I'd seen him coming so I had my chin down. But another brother from the depot who was very gentle, he saw this and thought I was going to be really hurt. So he approaches, let her down. This guy didn't let me down, he dropped me and then swung around and kicked him in the groin, just dropped him. Then this brother got arrested for assault. Unbelievable.

Q: Were you arrested as well?

LB: No, not for that one.

Q: But you were arrested?

LB: Yeah, at the Gainers strike.

Q: Tell us about that.

LB: Well that was 1986. I'd gone to labor college ... because one of the questions you have at labor college is the history. If I hadn't had that context around, you think about the education that you got and nothing's wrong and it's quite fair and you don't know about the history of workers. So it would've just, because that was the scabs were ? too, so that's the reason why in '87 we were a little bit more prepared. In '86 when it happened it was a total ? for the ? and certainly for us. The fact that I'd seen and heard about this ?? made a huge difference in my ability to process this and move with it. They put an injunction on us right away ? workers bringing in scabs. There were rules about how many could be on the picket line. We weren't supposed to be on the picket line, we couldn't have support strikers, so they were just trying to break them. Our local was very supportive but we knew we might get arrested. So we were walking very peacefully, the police were trying to persuade us. We got arrested in the paddy wagon, and being in a paddy wagon is a little claustrophobic when you're left there for quite a while. Three of us were letter carriers union. We were taken downtown and I guess what had been happening to all the people that got arrested is they signed a paper saying they couldn't go back. So when I saw that paper I said, I can't sign it because that would be a lie, 'cause I'm planning on going back, so I can't sign it. The judge was furious. It wasn't because I planned to cause all this upset. Sheila Greckol (currently a judge of the Alberta Court of Appeal) almost got arrested, she thought she was going to jail too. The judge? Because she was labour? To me it was just not that knowledgeable but just ... so I can't sign it.

Q: So they gave you a paper and said, "sign this."

LB: Yes, and then I could've gone free. I said, "I can't sign that." They said, "you're off to jail." They thought I'd be in two weeks. So I stayed overnight and then the next day the judge ... So I got taken out in handcuffs. The police took you out really nice, they were trying to shield you so you don't get seen with these handcuffs. It was very surreal. Then the judge, he let us go. He was so angry but he didn't know what to do. He didn't know what to do, so I was let go. It was very surreal.

Q: So that was the labor movement in Alberta at the time?

LB: Yeah, the Alberta Federation of Labour was really active then. They were there during our strike in '86, at Gainers, they played a really good role at that time.

Q: So it was a pretty amazing time in Alberta at the time?

LB: Yes, and our locals of the LCUC were working together very well.

Q: Has it changed since then?

Q: What was that like?

LB: It was rough. I think if we wouldn't have had the '87 strike and all this pride that the letter carriers got for the union, maybe they wouldn't have cared as much. But the vote was so close and no one in our local really knew why we were having ?. The fact that we had the vote and ?? was ?.

Q: How did the merger come about?

LB: From us, we knew there were discussions about this and the two unions apparently at one time were very close. I think from what I know, LCUC, not Gary but others within LCUC had broken off. I think they thought they could win it, because we were very close in numbers. They thought mostly people would vote for their own union but more CUPW would vote for LCUC because CUPW was too radical. So I think they were very shocked. It was about 51% to 49%, very close.

Q: Then at that point what happened?

LB: In Edmonton it was a different experience than anywhere else, because our two executives had sat down and said, "this is what we need to do." No matter which side wins, and we're going to have an election, so we're just gonna restart it. So the fact that

we'd figured it out before, even though it was difficult, it put our local in a much better place than many others where it was just a struggle to gain control.

Q: And it worked well?

LB: Yeah, it worked very well; I was going to gain more sisters.

Q: How many women were involved in the executive at that time?

LB: I don't know ... numbers? Myself, Karen, Wendy... Explicitly feminists, so that made a difference.

Q: So suddenly we had two different unions that became one, so what changed?

LB: Even in Edmonton, we had the election and it was unbelievable. Now we have a 15 member board – we've got seven inside workers, seven external workers, and one GLT (General Labour and Trades Group) which was the PSAC (Public Service Alliance of Canada) union that had come in, the maintenance workers. So a total balance. I had to go through, even though when I went out, because our local, we actually talked about “do we do any campaigning, do we do anything?” So when I went out and was talking (it) my message was, “this really sucks. If I knew who put us into this position, because there's two powerful unions that have a great history and one of them I thought would be gone.” So that was it, and no matter what happens we're going to have a good union, but still that frustration. So we didn't create a lot of angst in our members, first of all, except they saw what was happening across the country. But what I noticed is the ones that came from LCUC and all the traditions, we knew how our union worked, we went through a grieving process. It was clear, our union is gone. What surprised me is I saw for the traditional CUPW it was played out in a different way because they had won. They were really good to us, welcoming us in, but then everything changed for them. So it was, but we won. So I think almost unconsciously there was a bit of anger because we were the winners, it should've stayed the same. When you come in, don't change anything. Of

course it had to change. The membership doubled in size. If we had a few bumps like that in Edmonton, imagine it nationally. I ended up coming to negotiations in 1989 because our executive, our 15 member executive, sat down and said, "the new CUPW contract will be looked after but (some) of the former LCUC was very worried about how our contract was going to be looked after. It had to do with measurement and we'd already heard some of the leaders (say) "that's just a bunch of garbage." That's a management system in some ways but it's our job security too, and whatever happens with it affects every minute of our day. It does protect our jobs, because our jobs had to be replaced all the time. We were very worried that it would be very cavalierly treated, and also it's complicated. So the local said to me, "Lynn, you don't have children, you know the measurement system, we want you to apply." That's how I ended up in Ottawa. I remember very reluctantly writing this out. When I put it into the mailbox I said, "oh god, please don't make me do this." So I came here and I think what I saw was kind of an emotionally battered CUPW because I think they'd felt betrayed by LCUC. After the vote, did we have the bull session first? That was our in between convention. LCUC, imagine bull session, you know how male it was. That sort of felt like saying goodbye and we even saw some CUPW people like Andre ? from our local was there visiting. We thought, "okay it's hard but it's gonna be okay." Then we went to the LCUC, the last convention, 'cause they have to lay everything down. That's when we saw they had these horrible resolutions which were really about keeping the fight going and taking on CUPW and taking over. It was a terrible resolution and you could see that Gary in the front did not (like) this. He looked so sad 'cause you've gotta have your voices heard. But what happened, for me I knew that that would've just died down. But for CUPW it was very clearly a message of war, so they took it on like that. They had some things, like loyalty oaths. That was horrible, it was horrible. So here I'd been a very committed union person and I signed that one for the members. I wouldn't sign the one ... but that one I did. I remember phoning the local saying, 'cause they were all into this and you have to do it... This is a ? but you have to do it. I signed it. I called in to JC and said to him, don't you ever tell me I can't say anything (to) the LCUC, this is my union. But I signed it. So it took a long time.

Q: But that merger changed things.

LB: Yeah, but it was going to change. Thank goodness it happened because we're much stronger because of it. Externally we were still growing but we were retained by an iron ring, but we were still growing. But we would've lost a lot of members if that merger wouldn't have happened. We're much stronger together. It just took a while to get to know each other.

Q: Being a negotiator since 1989, you were in a good position to see how this has emerged.

LB: Negotiation, as they tell you, it'll be about six months. Just wait ...

Q: You were only back for a short time, then you were still involved with the local.

LB: Yes, and again, thank goodness for the kind of local I had in Edmonton from both the LCUC members and from the CUPW there all together. What happened was some negotiators were there so long, by the time you came back they just walked over, wanted nothing to do. Negotiations were always ... with CUPW, whereas my local absolutely held a space open for me and just overwhelmed me with kindness and bringing me back into the fold. I do have a union local because what has happened when you go six months is one thing, but by the time you come back three years and two months and a couple of days later, you've been pulled out of Fed where other organizations in the community, all that has moved on. If I wouldn't have had the local, you've lost all that. So that support from the local was so key.

Q: So then you ran for a fulltime national position.

LB: In 1990. I came up for negotiations in '84 ... for one year, then left and went home, came up for negotiations in '97 and again ... I'm here in Ottawa and there was a change coming, people were unhappy about some things in leadership. So there was a change. I'd

never really wanted a fulltime position but after being in negotiations all this time it's like fulltime, but in the local I loved being first vice president in the local. It was on the floor delivering mail half time and doing consultation and grievances or other work through the local, so to me it's the perfect world. I'd never wanted this fulltime. But I was so angry because there was a group of men who were ? I ?, that's all that happened. Because of negotiations you're well known, so I became first vice president in 1999.

Q: And you ran a second term?

LB: Yes, and then I became president.

Q: So then you had the national president and yourself on the national executive committee. What was that like?

LB: I loved (it). Dale's health wasn't real good but he wasn't there a lot at the end, so you have an acting president as well. Anybody who knows Debra (knows) she has a great sense of humor. Finally at the very end, no matter how bad things are, you'll hear this insane laughter that just makes you smile. You just have a laugh, and you need that in the union 'cause things are pretty tough. So there was that, but the other side of it was we would give each other constructive criticism about things. She saw I was going through a hard time 'cause my father was very sick, or I saw she was going through a hard time, and we would take on each other's work. I had children and was a foster mom, so I was always getting calls from school because of behavior issues and having to go, and feeling really stressed about that. With Debra it was just, "get outta here." It just took so much extra angst. The (stress) was tremendous so you always felt like you were working, but to be able to have that laugh there and that support. I saw with some of the males, they didn't seem to have this same kind of worries about what was going on at home. I don't know why, but there was always a bit of a judgment. ? was in my local and some of the national executive was there and after this meeting we'd gone to have a drink. ? was doing some work for the union and she was talking about the difficulty. She had to travel to Calgary, and the cost of the childcare. This person said, "you need to be willing to do

this for the revolution.” Really, out loud they said that. I said, “we pay a lot more than you are.

Q: So you're still in a leadership position at the national union, and you're now in charge of education.

LB: Yes.

Q: What has that been like?

LB: I still ? but I work with great sisters. What happened with the loss of Debra (Bourque), the loss wasn't just for CUPW, it was for other women in the labor movement. Debra (Bourque) was a sister who would speak up at the labor congress about things that were hard. She was willing to voice them or she'd be willing to go on a demo and talk about these things. There was three of us on the national executive then. The difference between two women and three is incredible. There was Cindy McCallum and Debra (Bourque) and myself, so even if we didn't agree on everything there would be stuff that came up that was just about equity or about women. We'd just look at each other and speak out, it was a one two three. Then men would just, settle down. It took a lot less energy than it does now. It's like going uphill, it feels like going uphill. They're committed people but not having three women there... and that's pitiful – three women out of 15, that's pitiful. But going from three to two was an incredible change.

Q: Anything else you'd like to tell us?

LB: I just feel really lucky that I landed where I did, because I don't see that other women have the support that I did or encouragement that I do.

...

LB: We had a women's committee so we called it a lesbian support group – there was three of us.

Q: That was outside the women's committee?

LB: Yeah, it was outside of the women's committee.

Q: You're a foster mom, and you have an adopted daughter as well?

LB: No, that was the plan. Actually, she's just turned 20 and we're still talking about adopting her. I guess we think we need that. It's always very complicated, and she moved in and out of my life. She's back in pretty squarely.

Q: There were obstacles when you decided you wanted children.

LB: Yeah. My partner and I got together during the '87 strike, and she was also a letter carrier. I was very open in Alberta. I used to go to university to the psychology of deviance and I was a speaker talking about my issue. This is a good thing, this is deviance – it's natural and it's a good thing. I actually feel like I'm learning a lot because I'm standing in a different position, so I see things that you might not notice. But because of that, our options in Alberta at that time, there were a lot of things going on and there was not a lot of sympathy from government agencies about gay or lesbian couples having children. But because we were open, it looked like that door slammed. So when we came here to Ontario it was too late to think of, even if we could've afforded it, having a child from China or from another country. We thought, why not ? money there to support parents to have these kids. Then I saw an ad about Children's Aid Society and I said, hey we can adopt sometime. So we took the courses, they accepted us, and our worker said to us, yeah maybe, but you'll have less choice. But things have changed a lot now ????. It has changed a lot but that's what we were told. We were fine with that. They said, you can't have babies cuz other people want babies; you're going to get the children that really have lots of problems. So that's fine. My partner is a great parent; she's just a natural. So we

had children. I don't know what else to say about that except that we feel lucky to have these children in our life. Hopefully some of them will stay. We try to keep them with us and give them everything they need. Tammy is Korean and I learn so much from her. Things have changed but I still worry that it can rapidly change back again. There's still lots of violence. I used to watch people that worked fulltime for the union and started becoming really confident about, oh everybody should be out. I was in a very supportive place and I came from the women's movement, so I think in some ways that might've made it easier. It's still very unsafe for a lot of people. I'm still in a more protected position, having a fulltime union job, than a teacher or a person in another job. Even though it's against the law to discriminate, that doesn't mean it doesn't happen regularly.

Q: You see a lot of issues in your work, dealing with human rights files.

LB: Yes. I worry about the fundamentalism, all the different fundamentalisms. There's not much acceptance or even tolerance for gay and lesbian relationships, and we think things could change fairly rapidly.

Q: You're active in the national human rights committee as well, right?

LB: The national human rights committee came later than the women's committee. It has four subsectors – prime solidarity, ?, aboriginal women, and workers ?. I've seen that evolve. In the first while it was like there was a contest, almost a contest of who's the most oppressed. It's like that's how you get the status. But gradually we see there's a lot more connection where people are really looking to ? about what's going on with the different groups and seeing that it's just so connected. So that's been how the committee has evolved. We've really defined this, and that was the ? for change. When we started to see it, even to explain it to others, mainstream margin. Just because you're mainstream it's not like you're evil and awful, but you may be oblivious to the realities of the margins, margins being people in certain situations that don't have much power. So I think that's been really useful in trying to take away some of the blame, ?? education.

...

This was a print made after our 1987 strike, the LCUC strike. George got this; there were a couple of them done. I think he won it in a raffle, 'cause national LCUC had it and everybody at the convention signed. People were very proud to have their names on the strike. So that's what this is, history in the making.

[END]