

Maureen Werlin

MW: I'm Maureen Werlin and I work at the Federation of Labour as an admin assistant. I've been an activist in the Canadian Union of Public Employees in British Columbia Local 374 and I've been an activist at the BC Federation of Labour and the AFL, and I've been an anti-apartheid activist and women's activist, peace activist – pretty much any kind of activist--I've been that.

Q: When did you first meet Dave Werlin?

MW: I met Dave Werlin at the 1974 BC Federation of Labour convention. That's the convention where I met him and was introduced to him and I said, that's the guy I'm going to marry. And it took six years.

Q: So you were there as a delegate from CUPE 374.

MW: I was elected as a delegate to go to that. I had gone to my very first union meeting and spoken up on an issue that I felt very passionate about. Then later in the meeting, I didn't understand parliamentary procedure at all, later in the meeting they nominated people to go to the BC Fed. Everybody is standing and so I figured I would do exactly what everybody else did; so I stood. Then it turns out I turned to the person next to me and I said, what the hell is the BC Fed? They said, it's the BC Federation of Labour. So I was elected to be a delegate to a convention that I had absolutely no knowledge of, and beat out the secretary-treasurer to get there. I think it's an example of people not understanding parliamentary procedure and how it actually stifles free-flowing thing.

Q: So you met Dave in a CUPE caucus there?

MW: No, I met him on the floor. There were some key activists in CUPE. Dave Werlin was one, Harry Green was the president and he came out of Delta local 389, and Bill

Ferguson out of Kamloops. So of course we're all sitting together and my president knew Dave. So it's kind of a question of Dave's going around saying hi to everybody and chitchatting the way he always did.

Q: Do you remember any of the policy debates or issues at that time?

MW: In '74 that was the BC Fed convention, that was before the wage and price control debate actually took off, cuz that was the CUPE convention in '75 where that took off. But I know that the BC labour movement is very different from the Alberta one. That particular convention had 880 delegates – 800 were men. That convention I'll never forget, little Josephine Hallet, who was in her '70s, got up and talked about the need to organize the prostitutes, because she said it was a health and safety issue and those kinds of things. But the officers then were George Johnson and Len Guy, both very progressive. The BC labour movement was quite polarized. In the left, in the progressive movement, we had what we referred to as the floor generals. Really it only took going to one or two conventions where you knew who the floor generals were. You had George Hewison out of the Fisherman's Union, you had Lorne Robson out of the Carpenters, you had Dave Werlin out of CUPE, you had a number of people that were on the progressive side. You had Frank Kennedy out of the Longshoreman's. Then on the flip side you had the John Fryers from the BCGEU, you had the Jerry Stoneys from the IWA, and you had the other guy from the IWA, I can't remember his name right now. Jack Munro, yes. You had, it was very polarized. In the BC labour movement you were either progressive or you liked the status quo and you liked to play it safe. The reason why I was really drawn to the people that were very progressive, everything they said made a lot of sense. They were forward thinking and they were talking about everything I could buy into as a social justice activist. It resonated with me as a person. Nobody, and back in those days in the '70s you had real orators at the microphone in the trade union movement. You had people who had the ability to turn the entire convention because of what they were saying, and they said it with such passion. The left, I was involved in the action caucus, and I got to go to the CUPE action caucus. I guess Dave saw in me something because I got invited to do these things and go to these places. You really had a better perspective of how the

really committed left would do everything to try and drive the agenda in terms of advancing really good policies, making sure messages were being heard, and just moving things along. That was also a time when federations of labour met every year. Between conventions the Federation of Labour in BC always called ranking officers' meetings. The labour movement was always in touch, and you had this cross-union activism and discussion going on. I fell in love with my first convention. I fell in love with the trade union movement and I never looked back.

Q: Was Dave one of those orators at the mikes?

MW: Absolutely. He had the ability to get a standing ovation at a convention, and that's a very, very difficult thing to get. But one of the things that he did teach me is never overplay your hand. He said, in a week-long convention if you get to the microphone three times that's enough. If you get to the microphone any more times than that, people will be sick and tired of you; they won't give you the same weight. At the BC Fed there were enough orators and very passionate people. I don't know whether Homer Stevens from the Fishermen's Union was at that convention, but I know I did meet him at another convention. So I heard all about how he'd gone to jail for supposedly having a monopoly, organizing a monopoly in the fish industry. We see that on the corporate side all the time now. But it's interesting that trade union leaders go to jail for that kind of thing, and they did in the '70s. But there were people that they just, everything that they said made perfect sense. I guess it was because, like you always say with Hemingway, if you talk in the language of the people then they're going to buy into it. So you didn't have people doing these flowery speeches or using words that people didn't understand. You had people just cutting to the chafe of things and mobilizing and motivating people.

Q: After that convention, when did you bump into Mr. Werlin next?

MW: Oh I bumped into him next. I was manager of a basketball team and we were over playing in Vancouver. He had contacted me, and we went out. I said to him I would never go out with anybody that was married; so he wasn't married then. Cuz at the convention

he had a ring on but was separated. Fine line for me. But anyhow we went out and believe it or not I was carded, which I took as quite a compliment, cuz I was 20 years old. So we went out then and then pretty much every time there was a trade union activity where I would be in Vancouver or if they were making something before the legislation, we always got together.

Q: When did you get married?

MW: Got married in 1980. I had said to Dave in '78, you know if this relationship's going nowhere, tell me now and I'll just move on. Then we went through all these hypothetical phone conversations: if I asked you to marry me, would you marry me? For a year or more to the point where neither one of us remembers when it wasn't a hypothetical question. But anyhow, we got married in October of '80.

Q: Did you ever go back to Saskatchewan and meet Dave's family?

MW: Yes, I did. As a matter of fact, we went back to the farm. Well actually his parents came out in '79 to Maple Ridge. I had introduced Dave to my family in '79 because I had never introduced them to Dave before. I knew they would try and talk me out of dating this guy. So I just didn't tell them until I said we're getting married. That same Christmas we went over to Maple Ridge, his parents were out then. That was the first time I met them. I fell in love with his mom, Stevie. His dad Russell, a different kettle of fish. I also met his kids there – Debbie, Doug, and Sherry.

Q: And that would be from his first marriage?

MW: His first marriage. He was married to Marlene Rayton for about 14 or 15 years.

Q: What was your reaction to his parents?

MW: His parents were salt of the earth. They absolutely came from a progressive background. I know Dave would probably credit his dad with a lot more in terms of being politically active with his grandfather and dad, the stories of them waving the farmers' newsletter and talking politics and stuff like that. But personally my analysis would be that his mother was far more progressive, because I think she saw the whole global picture. Later on it was her that would recount and tell the stories of when they would engage in peace marches and when they went into Saskatoon to meet Tommy Douglas. Years later it wasn't his dad that would be recounting those stories; it would be his mom, Stevie. So very progressive, but then he came from an extremely progressive community like Wynyard, Elfros. On a per capita basis they ended up having more members on the central committee of the Communist Party than any other area of Canada. There was just a little hotbed of activists that came from there. I think the Bjornsons came from there. Dave's family wasn't originally Werlin. His grandfather, who came from Sweden, their last name is actually Andersen, which is sons of tailors. But his grandfather, there were several Andersens in the area. So, when he had a bit to drink, he went down to Vital Statistics and he said, I wanna change my name. He wanted to change it to Verlin, which is the town he was from in Sweden. He was asked, how do you spell it, and the grandfather, who's had quite a bit to drink, he says, with a wobble you, what do you think? So that's how Werlin came to be. Dave's brother Richard would be the first naturally born Werlin.

Q: Was he older or younger than Dave?

MW: He's two years older than Dave. So his parents very progressive. His dad in terms of cooperatives and stuff like that, way ahead of his time. His dad as a farmer had another friend and they were sharing machinery, sharing pulling off crops, doing that kind of stuff. Unfortunately this person was hit by a bolt of lightning and killed; so that kind of affected the farming. But what Dave has told me about growing up on the farm is that it was a really tough life. His grandfather came from Minnesota by himself to buy the homestead and to clear land. Holga, his grandmother, quite a witch I've heard. I never got to meet her, but I think Dave would say the same thing. She followed her husband with

Russell, Dave's dad, all the way from Minnesota, all the way across Canada; she tracked him down. So she was quite the matriarch and I think she pretty much controlled that family and she lived to be 90. For example, Dave's dad, they lived in the old house that had the dirt floor forever. His dad built the house on the farm after they'd all left. So that wasn't the house that Dave grew up in. But his dad was 58 and Stevie got to actually organize her own first dinner and serve it when she was 56 years old, because Russell's mom treated Stevie like a busboy. She was like a hired hand. I think a lot of it had to do when you have an only child it's completely different. Back then people had big families, and Stevie came from a big family, whereas Russell could do no wrong in his mother's eyes. So it was a little different. His mother, Stevie, lived on a homestead that was kitty corner to the Werlins. So when she got married at 17 or 19 she literally went from one quarter section to the other. I think at one time the most they ever had was three quarter sections of land. I loved his parents, particularly his mom. His mom had Dave's sense of humour, or she had his rather. There was really nothing like playing cards out on the farm or sitting back and appreciating it, which you can do when you're older. I think for Dave the farm was work, it was drudgery, it was being poor. He went to a little school in it was called Heglaw school, and that's where his family is buried in the Heglaw cemetery. It was like a one-room classroom. I know that's where Dave got his love of baseball, because his brother was a phenomenal pitcher, Richard. They used to try and sneak off but their dad wasn't really receptive to them leaving farming to go and do that kind of stuff. So I think when Dave was growing up he was really close to one of his sisters, well close to them all but particularly close to Edna, who was two years younger than Dave. Edna was born with a heart defect. Dave used to put her in the wheelbarrow and take her everywhere. I think they had an extremely special relationship. She died in '74. Dave was actually at a union convention and was pulled away. But Dave left the farm when he was 16 and largely I don't think he ever looked back. There were so many not good memories because of the hard work. Yes they had friendships and they did a lot of stuff in terms of community, but he was dying to get out of the small community. So he took farm jobs and ended up finding his way to Calgary.

Q: What year was that when he left home at 16?

MW: He was 16 when he first left home to do farming, like paid farming jobs. He could've stayed and worked on his dad's farm but of course he wouldn't have made any money. So he went and worked on other farms where he would be paid a little bit of money. This is a story his mom always loved to recount. It was a story of Christmas Eve and David had come home. All the stores were almost closed and he had 10 cents. He wanted to buy his mom something, and he went in and bought her a comb. Now for her, for Stevie, that was like a prized possession. Dave doesn't particular like that story because it reminds him of how poor he was and what an awful feeling that was to realize it's Christmas Eve and you don't have a gift for your mom. So both of them, that story they both see in different lights. But his mom, for her it was like he spent his last cent on her.

Q: So when he left at 16, was that in 1940?

MW: Well he was born in '34. So that would be '50.

Q: 1950, sorry, yes. So how old was he when he landed in Calgary?

MW: When he landed in Calgary, he would've met Marlene in Calgary, he would've married Marlene in the later '50s. I would say he had a lot of different jobs between the jobs that some people are familiar with, like the Amalgamated Transit in CUPE Local 37. One of the things that he's always prided himself on is Dave has never gone a day without a job. If he didn't like a job and it wasn't work out, he would find a job the next day. He was a farm labourer; he sold encyclopedias door to door, which he was terrible at because he couldn't convince anybody. Like he said, how can I convince poor people to buy these encyclopedias? He's not that kind of a salesperson. So he also was a taxi driver but he was fired from that job because he fell asleep, didn't answer a dispatch. He was also a Brewster driver guide that would take people around, and that was probably out of Calgary where he would be in the Banff area. Then I think he eventually landed the job with Amalgamated Transit and then with CUPE 37.

Q: So the Amalgamated Transit was as a bus driver?

MW: It was as a bus driver, yes. While he was there with them, I think he might've done a stint with CUPE, then become a bus driver. There was a transit dispute. He felt very strongly that the international has sold them out, so at the ratification meeting I think he threw a chair at the president. He was that angry with the settlement. It was kind of like they'd cut a deal. All these bus drivers had been out on the line and they're the ones that ultimately should've had say in when that dispute was settled. But it was kind of taken out of their hands. So I think the fellow's name, I think Angus is either his first or last name, but it's worth looking up.

Q: The guy he threw the chair at?

MW: Yes.

Q: So from there he went to CUPE 37?

MW: CUPE 37, and at CUPE 37 he worked in the cemetery and he dug graves. Probably because he was raised in Saskatchewan and then moved to Alberta, he was getting pretty sick and tired of the cold. He had also developed really bad bursitis. So he kind of had this epiphany where he decided he'd had enough of this cold weather and he wanted to head out to the coast. So he left Marlene and the kids behind in Calgary and he set out in '64 for Vancouver, and then shortly thereafter the family moved. He landed a job with CUPE Local 1004, City of Vancouver. It wasn't called CUPE 1004 then. It was called the Outside City Workers. That was a period of time where they were not in the, they were not back in the CLC. That local and a lot of the progressive unions in BC had been thrown out of the Congress during the McCarthy period, some of them as early as the middle of the war. It would take years for some of them to go back in, but the workers in the local were okay with that because they liked their leadership. That's where Dave got his grounding. In particular there's one mentor that he always liked to talk about. One of

them was Don Guise. Don Guise was a business agent and Dave was very young. I don't know whether he wasn't a business agent yet or, if he was, he'd just started on the job. Howie Atkinson would've been another young guy. But this Don Guise was a member of the Communist Party. Jack Phillips, who was also a business agent there, was a member of the Communist Party. They were getting ready for a strike; I think it was the '68 strike. Don Guise says to Dave, well let's go out and talk to the guys. So they went around to all the shacks to talk to the guys in sewers, waterworks, you name it. Back in those days people socialized in those shacks; you could have a drink and all of that – different time. Don Guise was talking to all the guys about baseball; he was asking about their families; he was asking how life was happening. Dave could not understand. This went on from shack to shack to shack. They get back to the office and Dave goes to Don, Don, you never asked them about the strike; you never asked them if they would be willing to go out on strike. Don just looked at him and said, Dave, if they were concerned they would've raised it. So he learned some really valuable lessons. He had excellent mentors and in that respect I view Dave as probably my number one mentor and I think he did the same thing with me in the sense that we would talk about issues but he would lay out options and he would say, you know Maureen, you could do it this way and it would be totally acceptable or you could do it this way, which would push the envelope a little bit. He said, you know if it was me, I'd do it this way. I think over the years Dave was much more patient earlier on. I would say when I met him he went out of his way to foster younger trade unionists such as Gary Johnson, who was the best man at our wedding. A number of the young guys in 1004, Ken Davidson. Dave would mentor a lot of us because he was older and wiser. He would take the time to explain things to us so that we not only were learning a lot more about the labour movement but we were developing some class analysis so that we would know. I think one of the things that Dave has always encouraged of everybody is to ask the question, in whose interest? If you can't answer that and end up saying it's in the workers' best interest, then you'd better go back to the drawing board and rethink it. But I know that my relationship with Dave in the '70s was, like I became a shop steward then secretary-treasurer then vice-president and then president. But whenever I had a burning issue he would be my go-to person, so much so that there were a few poison pen letters that he actually wrote for me to the CUPE

national. I remember the executive administrative assistant to Stan Little actually wrote back cuz I had sent a copy. No, he sent a copy of the letter to Dave and he'd written on the bottom, nice letter Dave. But it was sent by me from our local, but Dave has a very distinctive writing style. I'm going to digress a bit, but I think before he became active in the labour movement he was also active in the peace movement, always had been. I think that started from the farm and it was something he parlayed. In Vancouver it was Ban the Bomb and it was Vietnam and he was taking his kids to demonstrations against Vietnam and stuff like that. He always tells me the story of his very first sort of official speech. He had been asked to speak in a church kind of setting on the question of peace. He had laboriously scripted the speech and it was all written out. He got up to go to the dais to make this speech and he dropped his papers. He also had not numbered the papers. So what this did is, for anybody who got to know Dave later on, he was the master of the cue card, the recipe card. I think that's one of the reasons he made such great speeches and such impassioned speeches is because he had a few key words and then he just sort of talked to your heart and talked to your mind. But that taught him a valuable lesson – never again will I do anything, well his cue cards were always numbered, never again will I not number my speeches and never again will I write something out, because the delivery is not the same. His first speech as a Fed president was written out, and he delivered it in '84 because that was the norm, the expected, that you would type it out.

Q: It would be handed out on the floor and reproduced in the proceedings verbatim.

MW: Ya, and maybe it was. I don't know when the Federation stopped all the verbatim things, but I've never seen any of Dave's verbatim speeches. So '84 he had one that was typed out and then the rest of the time they were all written on cue cards. Hopefully ALHI will end up with most of those cue cards, because Dave, always the minimalist, would always throw his stuff in the garbage. I would go and say, no, I think I'll keep that, I like that. I loved history too. So I liked to keep things, especially if his speeches were good.

Q: Did he join the party in Calgary with Art Roberts?

MW: Yes he did. He joined the party in Calgary in Art Roberts' house at the same time that Bill Patterson did. He was introduced to the party by Gordie Mitchell, I think, and Gordie Mitchell was I think CUPE 37. Then Art Roberts was CUPE Local 8, the hospital workers. But Dave met them at the Calgary and District Labour Council meeting. He really liked what Art had to say, who came from Wales and he was a miner and worked in Drumheller and then got the job in Calgary. But what they said resonated with him so much so that he decided not only am I'm going to be a trade union activist, I'm also going to be a political activist. So he joined the party and I think he joined the party probably in I would say the late '50s or the early '60s, I'm not sure, in around that timeframe, obviously before he headed out to Vancouver and I would say after Debbie was born, and Debbie was born in '58. But I know that it didn't take long for Dave as an activist to catapult himself onto his top executive, the BC provincial council executive and also the central committee of the party. When I met him in '74 he was on the central committee of the Communist party. He was on the central committee until the party split in '92. But I want to digress, I want to go back to a BC Fed convention. All of the conventions were really good, but the '76 one was quite historic in the sense that the secretary-treasurer had his written report and it was delivered, and it was an election year. Elections were every two years but conventions were every year. Len Guise was up for, he was running again to be secretary-treasurer. He ended his report with, you know, I hope you elect me to continue this work for another two terms. Well the right didn't like that. They thought that he was taking advantage of his speech. So they used a little known clause in the constitution and it was Jack Munro moved and BC government seconded, or vice versa, to call for a roll call vote at the BC Fed. Never been done before. It took three and a half days. I think I have the report that I gave to my local when I came back about what a complete waste of time and money it was for all of these delegates to be there. Literally they divided, if you had a delegation of four your membership was divided by four. Each one of you had to go to a microphone and pledge your fourth of your delegates. All the activists, everybody's got calculators and they're bringing calculators out and you've got George Hewison and you've got Lorne Robertson, you've got Dave Werlin and you've got all these people going around the entire head table. I think Ron Johnson who later went

on to be very active in the NDP in BC, he was a staffer at that time. Well it just completely threw the convention. Even though they were trying to have the odd debate about a resolution it pretty much sidelined an entire convention. I don't think it's ever been done again but I'll never forget, because you know when you're young and the labour movement is predominantly male, a lot of guys will come over and talk to you. I remember talking to John Fryer at that convention. He said something about, oh my god, there's so many commies here at this convention. I said, well you know, how many Communists do you think are here? He goes, there's gotta be like 750. There were only 900 delegates or in that neighborhood. So at the lunch caucus, because we would always get together, the action caucus always got together at lunch, I was saying to Dave and Bill Ferguson from CUPE 900 and George, how many Communists are there at this convention? By then I probably knew 20 or 30 maybe outside. They just laughed. They said, oh my god, we can't believe. They said, maybe max 40 or 45 Communists might've been at that convention. He said, but it just goes to show you how much the right is afraid of the Communists and their impact on the labour movement and progressive policies, like for it to be so out of whack.

Q: So what was the end game for the roll call?

MW: The end game for the roll call vote, the roll call vote was whether or not, the question was, are you in favour of the secretary-treasurer's report? We were voting on whether to adopt the secretary-treasurer's report, that was the question. It wasn't about politics, it was about this report has been given – are we going to accept it or not, moved, seconded and carried? We got the move, seconded, roll call vote, two and a half hours, and the report was upheld. But it took all that time, and at that time I think I was the vice-president of my local. Our local was supposed to go out for lunch. I voted one way and the other people from CUPE 374 voted in the opposite direction. So we were supposed to go for lunch that day or dinner that night. I'm at the elevator and I said to the guys, I said, so are we still on for dinner? They said, absolutely not, there's no way that they were gonna go out for dinner. I said, well I can't say a word. I told them very politely break it off. I said, we'll just see when we go back home. So when I went back home to my local I

gave them a very comprehensive report. That convention I was in 63 caucuses outside of the regular convention time. I was in the CUPE caucuses, I was in the women's caucuses, I was in the action committee caucuses. I actually counted them up and there were 63 times we met, and we would [be] caucusing at midnight trying to figure out how the vote is going and how this is going to happen and what we can do and all that kind of stuff. So when I went back to my local and I'm giving my report, the other delegates got really upset and they said, you can't tell them that. I went, what do you mean I can't tell our members what happened at a convention that they elected me to go to? I said, you'll have your chance. I'm giving my report. You can feel free to tell them why you voted the other way. I'm telling you why I upheld the report. I figured back them I did a little bit of math. I figured conservatively in lost wages and time we were probably in 1976 dollars talking about half a million dollars just going down the tubes just because of that vote.

Q: So let's talk about the wage and price controls CUPE convention.

MW: At the CUPE convention the minister came to speak to us. The activists had decided that we would give him absolutely no reception at all. We were just going to sit there and do absolutely nothing. But then the francophone delegation from Quebec were just in an uproar. So we couldn't understand whether they were excited or angry at the minister. Turns out that the translation was not working. That's why they were up there. But that minister came and he introduced it, and the convention was absolutely incensed. I think CUPE went on to play a major leadership role in the day of protest.

Q: What city was the CUPE convention in?

MW: That CUPE convention, let me see, the '75 convention, probably Quebec City. We had a lot of conventions back then in Quebec City.

Q: So 1975, wage and price controls, Quebec City.

MW: No, '74; '75 was Toronto, beg you pardon, '75 was Toronto. Sorry.

Q: He brings in the wage and price controls in October '75.

MW: And that's CUPE convention is always in the fall, so it was the fall of '75 in Toronto.

Q: So after the French delegation were upset, then what happened?

MW: Then what happened is that, well, first of all, the progressive people tried to block the minister from being given the floor. But back then Stan Little was still the president of CUPE. Coming out of that convention we would end up with Grace Hartman, but at that convention it was Stan Little. So with Stan Little if you invite somebody to speak they're gonna be heard. But what happened is that person spoke and the convention did absolutely nothing. There was not a clap, a cheer, there was absolutely nothing. There was talk about, and this is where strategy and tactics come in, there was a lot of discussion amongst the caucus, the action caucus or the progressive caucus, whether or not to actually walk out. Quite often we would talk about walking out of conventions before an important vote or walking out if we wanted to make a particular stand. But the decision was that to walk out would actually give this minister more credence than he actually deserved. So the decision was made just to sit and actually it was supposed to be deafening silence, and hopefully embarrass the minister so that he'd want to just disappear.

Q: How do we get from there to CUPE considering dropping out of the CLC?

MW: We would go backwards in time. It was the '73 convention where CUPE, and I think it had to do with per capita, was not happy with the CLC. So the debate at that convention and Shirley Carr supported pulling out of the CLC and so did Stan Little. So the officers were taking a leadership position to take CUPE out of the CLC. Back then the BC division of CUPE had Harry Green as a president, and Harry Green was a phenomenal person. He had great personality, and Dave wrote most of his speeches.

Harry was the kind of person who could deliver a speech that Dave had written. So there were three people that were pivotal to that turning the tide, turning the delegates. That would've been Harry Green at the microphone with a speech that Dave had written, Dave himself, and Bill Ferguson. Bill Ferguson and Dave often referred to themselves, and a lot of other people and I, we often referred to them as the one-two punch. Bill Ferguson was great at strategy and tactics and Dave was great at strategy and tactics but better in one area and Bill was better in the other. Bill could ground Dave a little bit more but there would be a really good analysis. So they became known in CUPE as the one-two punch. Harry Green was very effective as president. If he's still alive Harry, Green has the most extensive records that he kept. Dave and I went to visit him after we were married. He's pulling out files and saying, Dave do you remember this, Dave do you remember this? All of the struggles, all the disputes and stuff like that, he was able to remember. Dave was defeated in '75 or '76 in his position with CUPE Local 1004. He has often said it probably was the best thing for him to go back into the trenches, cuz he went back to the sewer department. It was definitely the fostering of 'this leadership is a little bit too left for us,' but I also think it was a little bit too that there was a little bit of arrogance. It was also back in the days where the party were the vanguard; so you could have a little bit of that. But in terms of the leadership of 1004 at that time, the only person who was Communist was Dave. Yet they turfed, because they always had slates, they turfed the entire executive and they brought in not great people. Probably well-meaning trade unionists, kind of middle of the road, but they weren't those driving activists that the slate that surrounded Dave had been. They ended up being in office for the next four years. Two years later Dave almost got reelected but there was a nucleus. There was Norbert McKenzie, there was Roy Cooper, there was Dave Long; later on there would be Ken Davidson; there was Dave, Howie Atkinson. Roy Cooper wanted to still be on the slate, and he was probably the eldest and he would've been running to be secretary-treasurer. Dave Long would've been running to be president, and Norbert and Harold would've been on the executive and Dave would've been the business agent. There were a lot of discussions because there was a lot of sentiment amongst the local that people didn't really care for Roy. But Roy really wanted to be on that slate. I think that's sort of a testament to Dave's loyalty to people. Roy had always been there and had always helped

the local, even though he instinctively knew that this was not going to be a good move. He agreed to let Roy stay on the slate, and Dave lost that election by two votes. So he would've gone back in as being a business agent in '77 but instead the entire slate, the progressive slate, went back in in '79. But by then Dave had accepted a rep's job in Calgary with CUPE. I think by then Dave had realized you can never really go backwards in time. If you're a business agent and then you're doing something else, to go back and be something else is very difficult. You should always be moving forward. But to me the CUPE progressive action caucuses were phenomenal. You would never see it today. Harry Green would buy groceries and stuff like that, he'd be slicing and dicing and making all this food, and everybody would be crammed into a hotel room and everybody would be talking politics. There were some great people like Tom Silva from North Van's local, which is where Harry came out of; the Delta local, my local. There were some activists out of CUPE 50, the City of Victoria. The woman who led the Sandringham strike, the longest strike in the history of Canada, which was in Victoria, I think her name's Margaret, I can't remember her last name. But I remember being on their picket line. I remember her being at CUPE conventions getting resounding support from the delegates. The settlement for that Sandringham strike, there was one condition, and that was that she would not go back into the Sandringham Hospital to work, that she would work somewhere else. So here you have somebody that led the strike to organize, and it's a three-year-long strike, and then the settlement is that the key activist can't go back into that facility. For me the '70s were really exciting times. There were so many things happening. The very first convention I went to in '74, we always go on marches, so we were out marching for the farm workers and it was the grape boycott. We also went to City Hall one day and the tennis player Arthur Ashe spoke about South Africa. So that's kind of where I got my passion for South Africa, and also for the farm workers. Later on, Dave, years later, Dave would go down on a CLC delegation when César Chávez was fasting, but this was after his term as president. I just fell in love with the labour movement and I can honestly say that the people that I was lucky enough to know, and Dave was certainly key, always kept things lively. There's one thing about Dave Werlin then: his phenomenal sense of humor was able to unite people and also defuse difficult situations. You would be having a very serious conversation but somehow he could inject

humor. Also it was like we worked really hard, we strove to get really good policies, and we also really had a good time. I think that kind of set Dave apart as a labour leader, because he worked hard and he played hard, and he was a lot of fun to be around.

Q: You got married in '79?

MW: No, '80.

Q: Was that after Dave moved to Calgary?

MW: Well Dave moved to Calgary in '79 and in I think June or July he agreed to take the rep's job. Then I moved out. No, he must've moved out earlier. I moved to Calgary the Easter weekend. He came in '79 in the summer of '79, cuz I came and visited him a couple times when he was staying in a hotel before he found a place to live. Then I came out in the fall of—no, I came out Easter of '80 and we got married in October.

Q: When did you join the Communist Party?

MW: I didn't join the party for a long, long time. I never joined the party the whole time I was, I didn't join the party until we were living in Edmonton. It was probably '85, '84. I was a little tired of sitting in the kitchen when the club meetings would be held in the living room. You could only be in the room if you were a member. Dave actually had said, no, you really don't wanna go down that path; it's okay not to be a member. I said, well it's a little frustrating to be sitting in the kitchen. I can literally hear everything but I can't be there. So I figured I might just as well join. I was probably a party member from '84, '85 until the party split. Then when the party split and the trade union and key activists went down one road and the, for lack of a better word, those that were more theoretical went another way, then the outcome was the formation of Cecil Ross Society. I was a director on the Cecil Ross Society for Alberta from '92 until we wound it up, which was probably in the late '90s. So I sat on that board of directors with people like Bill Zander from BC, David Ferry out of the Trade Union Research Bureau, Doreen

Plowman from Winnipeg, peace activists, Evelina Pan out of Steel. George Hewison-- actually George Hewison never sat on that board. Tommy Morris was on the board; Lynn Rack was on the board. So we were kind of, we did over 100 oral interviews, cuz we had a bit of a history project and wanted to talk to a lot of the oldtimers. I don't know whether they have been transcribed, but that's certainly for anybody out of Alberta if you guys wanted to get a hold of those transcripts. Rick Stowe would be your guy or Tommy Morris. But I think for some of the key activists it was the split in the party changed the whole labour movement and progressive movement. It changed how we work. For example, every convention that I was at in the '70s and until the party split, the labour secretary of the party was at the conventions. Probably before my time and during my time the key activists in the party would get a little kit, and they would strategize before conventions on what were key issues, what they wanted raised, what were the important resolutions. Actually the writing of resolutions: Dave became an excellent writer. It was by trial and error. If you go back to his early days in the '60s when he started with 1004 as business agent, one of the first jobs he was tasked with was putting out their newsletter. Dave has grade 9 education and he had never had the responsibility of putting together a newsletter. He did it and ended up doing it on a regular basis, and as a result he honed his skills as a writer. I think that's why both his writing and his speaking just cuts to the core, like the brevity is there. But he also, the whole time we were married and certainly the whole time I knew him, he was one of these people that if he had an idea he would job it down, because he didn't want to lose that idea. I know he did that when he was producing *On the Line*. I think that's a publication that he's extremely proud of. All of the back issues are probably in the archives in BC.

Q: So we left off with the 1970s labour movement in BC.

MW: Right. I've had a chance since last week and I just wanted to mention a few things that I forgot last week. In touching base with a few people, they've kind of been brought to the fore. One of them was in the past week I talked to Dave Long and right off the bat I said, 'it's Maureen Werlin.' He goes, 'no, Maureen Nutall.' So I completely forgot that the whole time I was in BC I was Nutall, not Werlin. But I think there's a few things that

during the course of the '70s Dave had a huge influence on me. In '75 our local was locked out, and '75 was the beginning of the amalgamation by municipalities into bargaining groups. All the municipalities were out. Initially one local struck and then the rest of us were out. Still have that picket sign. Three months, three days. I can honestly say that Dave's support, because I met him in '74, in terms of what to do and in terms of the initiation of flying pickets, like hitting all the hotspots and stuff like that – these were his ideas that I was able to bring back into the Victoria area that they weren't aware of. We also had a situation where the police decided to raid our local to try and take the secretarial staff. Last week I mentioned how Dave had poison penned some letters and CUPE national had recognized his style and even put a little note. I think those were the kinds of letters that, I know he wrote those letters. But one of the things that he did for me was he challenged me to--I would always have to write the letters. Then just like you, Jim, he would then be the editor of the letters. I think that develops you as an activist, develops you as a person. The other thing I didn't mention last week is for me to become president of my local, by the time I was president I was not quite 25 years old, and it was the ninth largest local in British Columbia. It's pretty huge, it's an executive of 23 and we've got three females. But I always relied on the outside workers because, as Dave used to say, when you're in a trench, like if you're digging a sewer or something like that and you're looking up at the foreman, if you're looking up at the boss, you instinctively know what's right and what's wrong and you instinctively know what needs to be done in order to make things better. I think for white-collar workers there's a real blurring of the lines. Any local that has outside workers as their core group is, I've found that they're the ones who lead the major struggles, have led the major struggles. That's been my experience not only in the '70s but further on. So there was the raiding, there was our strike. Dave was certainly instrumental in that Parkland strike that went on for the three years that I touched on. But later on just before I left we had a horrible situation where I got a phone call and one of our trenches had collapsed and one of my members had been buried up to his neck. So I rushed to the hospital to see this man, who looked to be 100 years old; that's what he looked like when he was going in. He had a fractured pelvis, he had all sorts of internal injuries, he had broken bones. He was 59 years old, never had a sick day, and was going to retire the following year. So when I was talking to Dave he

said, you know, there was no shoring. He said, you need to go out to that site and you need to take pictures, because they could bury it and then the whole situation kind of disappears. So I remember being out by myself at this worksite with this little--back in the '70s cameras were not what they are today, and there I am taking all these snapshots for historical purposes and stuff like that. That fellow was hospitalized for an extremely long time. I ended up moving to Alberta; it's probably one of my regrets. He spent more than a year in rehab and WCB. He eventually died. WCB denied his claim in terms of relating his death to the accident because he had tooth decay. They said the reason why he died was because of his teeth, not because all of his organs had been crushed. So because I left to move to this province and marry Dave I think that's one file that I would've pressed really hard on and made sure that his wife ended up with a pretty substantial settlement. I know that I would've had Dave helping me out in that. The other thing is that I think all of my life I'd had a really strong social justice conscience and pretty much known what was right or wrong. But we had a servicing rep for our local that was not the greatest guy, not progressive. My outside workers and myself, we found that he got in the way more than he helped us. So there was one ratification vote and I was the president then in '78, and it was a huge turnout and we took the vote and it was 222 to 222. It was a tie vote. So I get the tie vote and my rep is pressuring me that I have to cast the deciding ballot. I was on the bargaining committee and the overall bargaining committee was recommending ratification. But our local did not think it was that great. So I called an emergency meeting on the stage in that hall. I just said to the executive, I know what parliamentary procedure says and I know what it says I'm supposed to do. But I'm not going to do that, because if all of you back me, if I make the decision we have a polarized, we have a split local, we're going to find it extremely difficult moving forward. But if we go out there and say, it's your vote, we're going to do the vote all over again tomorrow night, then it becomes their vote. So that's exactly what I did. The following night, and needless to say the municipality bent over backwards to provide a facility so the voting would happen, and it narrowly passed. So every other municipality in that round of bargaining had massively approved what we considered to be not very good in the way of increases. Our local, which was the largest, passed it by a 52 percent vote. So it was extremely narrow and some of my guys said, we wish you'd cast the deciding vote.

I said, no, we did what was right in the long run. The one thing that Dave always did in the '70s and one of the reasons why he was always a delegate to events is Dave had the capacity to always mobilize. So when I said to the outside workers, if you really wanted to defeat that then you should've brought out more people to the meeting. But I said, really, did we really want to be out there? All the other municipalities had settled. So, in the end, it ended up working out okay. So that parlayed so that when I left Saanich there was a big farewell for me. The mayor was there, the administrators, all of the outside workers. It was a huge gathering and I used it as an opportunity, because the local would go into bargaining the following year. So I used it as an opportunity to remind the mayor and the administrator that we expected a lot more in the next round of bargaining. So overall I think that in the '70s in the past week what has really come out for me, because I've tried to track down some people for you, is in looking at my old address book every trade unionist is identified with their partner, with their spouse. So my old address book reads like Dave and Doris, Tom and Anne, Harry and Joan, Bill and Chum. What it reflects is that in the '70s the trade union movement wasn't a movement of trade unionists, it was a community movement. Everyone was involved. At CUPE functions, if they were in the Vancouver area, all of the wives would be there. So you didn't know just the trade unionists, you knew their spouses, you knew their families. It was quite different, because if I had to list the trade unionists today you'd tend to list them as opposed to listing their spouses. It's also remarkable that I can pick up the phone and phone people that I haven't seen for 25 years and it's like time drops away and you just engage in a wonderful conversation. These were great salt of the earth people that I had the opportunity to be mentored by and work with, and they've gone on to become remarkable people as seniors, community activists, and I think just really well grounded. But it was more like it was a family. I said last week, we worked really hard but we also played really hard. I think coming to '79 when Dave didn't run and Dave Long became the president of the local, I think Dave had realized by then that his little one-bedroom, furnished pad on 20th Avenue, I think it was where everybody knew where the key was hidden, where there was always something happening in that place, where it had reached the point where if he came home because he had gone back on the job so he was actually working in sewers, he would come home and people would be in his place. They were

always in his place. I think he realized that not only was he polarizing in the sense of the local, you either really liked him or you didn't, and he realized that not only did he need to leave but that lifestyle of always being, well he often said if he ever had a book written about him or if he wrote a book, he always talked about writing a book, he always wanted the title to be *In the Eye of the Hurricane*. I think he was the catalyst in CUPE; he was the catalyst and one of the major players in the Action Caucus at the BC Fed. He made things happen, and if you were a newcomer he pressed you and encouraged you, and you didn't even really know it, to take more progressive stands all the time. So I think that wraps up the '70s.

Q: So he's hired in '79 as a CUPE rep in Calgary. What was his assignment there?

MW: Well his initial assignment was just to be a regular servicing representative. But before we left Calgary he became the coordinator for hospital bargaining. I think he did an awesome job in that respect. One of the stories he told me when he came home, they were away getting ready to do some bargaining with the employer, and his committee could not agree. In typical Werlin fashion, he slammed down his briefcase and said to his committee, when you get your act together I'm in room 302, come and get me. But I don't need to be here until you guys are all on the same page. So he disappeared, he shut the door, and I think they were in shock. They'd never had a rep who had done that to them. Dave ended up with probably the strongest bargaining committee as a result of that, because he forced them to be united. I think he really took a lot of pride in that round of hospital bargaining, cuz I think that was the first time that they were centralizing the bargaining in the healthcare sector. But I think there's certainly never been a complaint by anybody that's ever been serviced or had Dave as his servicing representative. I think the other thing that he always did, which some reps don't do and particularly people who lean towards business unionism don't do, is he always has the grievor in the meetings and he always has, because that's an educational process. So while some people would never take a grievor in in all the various stages, Dave always did. That's something that I learned from him. I know you're gonna hate it, but I have one more story from the '70s. I was called and one of our guys had stolen three yards of gravel, and he's immediately

fired. So of course I phone Dave and I say, okay I've got a guy that's fired. He has nothing on his record. This does not seem right to me. Dave says, all you need to do is go in and use the argument that the penalty doesn't match the crime. In my local almost all of our disputes were handled without a formal grievance procedure, because we were pretty solid in our argument. So I went in to talk to the municipal engineer with this fellow and I said, we don't condone theft, this was wrong, but the penalty doesn't match the crime. He ended up with a two week suspension. But then I get all these angry phone calls from members – how could you do this; Maureen? How could you defend somebody who stole? He stole. I said, yes and you work in the yards department and you may leave today at 4:30 with a pencil. Do you wanna lose your job over that? So eventually it died down, but people had to see it in the perspective that proper process hadn't been done and whatever. But anyhow this guy kept his job, but that was thanks to Dave's very succinct advice, and it paid off. That's one thing Dave was very good at. He always cut to the chase of things. He wasn't in for a lot of bullshit; he wasn't in for long conversations. It was like okay this is the issue, let's decide what we're gonna do about it. We don't need stuff clouding our stuff. He always had short conversations on the phone. I think brevity is certainly one of his things. But the other thing that Dave also had, which is probably not that great, is a trigger temper. He had it for people who knew him in Alberta. Let me tell you he was a mellower version than BC. Bill Ferguson I think was a very stabilizing influencing kind of effect on Dave, but Dave did have a temper where he could instantly be angry and then five minutes later he's laughing and people around him are a complete mess. But he's great because he got it off his chest or whatever. I think he had the temper; he probably still has the temper. Patience is not one of his virtues.

Q: You moved to Calgary in '79 or '80?

MW: I moved to Calgary in April of '80 and we got married in October. But when I moved to Calgary I immediately went back to Kamloops and worked for Bill Ferguson, because his administrative assistant or secretary back then was off. I think I worked for him for six weeks. So that was great getting to work with Bill on a personal level. I started looking for work in Calgary and regrettably I turned down a great school board

job to go make more money in the oil sector. That was partially I think I mean Dave and I did discuss that and we also wanted to make the most income. But I think in hindsight, being 20-20, I wish I'd taken that job, because I had a commitment that I would end up as a superintendent's administrative assistant. He was someone I knew from Victoria who had transferred to Calgary. But the difference in the jobs was over \$1000 a month, and in '80 that's huge in terms of dollars. I don't know whether you guys, the week before we were married Dave signed up for, I told you Dave was a spender last time. The week before we got married he amalgamated all of his debts and for the next seven years didn't have a credit card. So I didn't find out about this until after we're married. I remember Dave going back to his attitude was, I give you my cheque, I don't want any questions when I want money. I was sitting in Calgary once and he was getting on an airplane, cuz back in those days all the CUPE reps had to front all their expenses and then get reimbursed for them later. I remember saying to him, you know Dave, you cannot take \$1600 out in four days, and every four days; we just don't have that kind of money. But he didn't have a credit card. I mean he eventually got it, but seven years later.

Q: So you're working in the private sector and he's a CUPE rep. How politically active were you guys in Calgary?

MW: I would say hugely active. Dave was in the party and he belonged to the club that Art Roberts, great guy Freddy Zebrun was in, Mildred Roberts, Glenis Roberts, Gordie Mitchell. When Dave originally moved from BC to Alberta the change in the party was a massive culture shock. Bill Twomey was the leader at that time, but Alberta's party was much smaller, much older. The older people in the party came from a very strong working-class background; the younger people tended to be more academics. I know after Bill Twomey died, the next leader was Dave Wallace, who didn't understand the working class at all, didn't understand workers. I think that's part of the reason why there was certainly no encouragement or incentive for me to join the party, because it was in a state of turmoil. But in terms of rallies, events, I would say every single rally, event, either Dave was at it or Dave and I was at it. But coming from my background in BC, pretty much Dave and I we supported whether it was the Chileans or whether, you know,

it was any social issue and also any trade union issue. I know he primed his hospital workers to go out on a, to be ready to go out on a strike. I know back in those days the technology was such that he was fortunate in having great secretaries in Vancouver and he had Pam Smith as his secretary in the Calgary office, Harley Horne as the regional director, but they taped a little message for that dispute. That would've been Dave bringing something; this has never been done before. He goes, well yes, we have so many thousand hospital workers; they need to be able to have access to our messaging. So he did a message every single day so it would encourage the hospital workers to phone in and to always be updated on what's happening. I think he carried this forward into any dispute where you never leave the workers behind, you always keep them informed and updated. But I think he had a blast with the hospital workers. I remember him coming home and he ended up with some towels in his suitcase. What the bargaining team, this lovely little old lady from the Crowsnest, her name was Millie. So the bargaining committee had taken the towels out of her room and put them in Dave's suitcase. So when he gets back Millie is phoning and she's going, oh my God, I don't know what to do, the hotel has phoned me and they say that the towels are gone. But Dave, I didn't steal the towels. I have no idea what's happened. What should I do? Dave says, don't worry about it; it's okay. He never admitted he had the towels, and I still have those towels. They say CP on them. But that goes to the kind of sense of humor that Dave brought into everything. That's kind of a fun thing. You have to have a good time while you're working away at it. But he also attended the Alberta Federation of Labour conventions while he was in Alberta. CUPE had a policy—generally, if you were a rep, you got to go to one convention. Half of you would go to a convention one year and half of you would go the next year. That also parlayed into how people attended national conventions. But Dave always somehow managed to always be there. I don't know how he managed that. The policy was half go, but I don't know whether he could cajole people that maybe they didn't really want to go and so maybe he could take their spot. So he was pretty much at every convention.

Q: Let's start in 1983 then.

MW: Can I go back one more time? The other thing in the '70s, I'm really sorry to do this to you, but in the '70s there was a massive move for, and I might've done this last week, I can't remember, there was a massive move for our municipality by contractors to contract out our garbage. I don't know whether I talked about it last week. So we got wind of this and I phoned my trusty friend and he said, you need to have a brief submitted; you need to write a brief. I said, well I don't know where to start in writing a brief on contracting out. He goes, well I know somebody who is right up your alley and he's just retired from the Trade Union Research Bureau. That person was Ben Swankey. So Ben Swankey and his wife Anne came over to Victoria. We had a meeting with every single shop steward, and Ben, awesome listener, listens to all of their concerns, and he wrote a dynamite brief. That was my first opportunity to really get to know Ben but also to realize the power of his pen in terms of we stacked the city council meeting; everybody was there. We made the presentation and they decided not to contract out. Now we can go back to the '80s.

Q: So Dave's at the 1983 Fed convention. What is it that caused him to put his name on the ballot?

MW: What caused it is the leadership had decided to do a flip. Harry Green. Harry Kostiuk was the president going into that convention and Dave Eastmead, a CUPE rep, was the secretary-treasurer. They had an agreement that they were just going to change places. Well, CUPE has been built on the backbone of local union autonomy and you certainly get the support from your union as well before you embark on some major if you're gonna run for something. So, at that convention, Dave was approached by some CUPE delegates to run against Dave Eastmead in the CUPE caucus, because every circulates, like anybody who's running at a Fed convention back in those days would go to every union and talk to their caucus and try to get their vote. But certainly in the case of CUPE you've got Dave Eastmead, a rep who wants to be the president but hasn't touched base with CUPE, and you've got Dave Werlin, who by this time by '83 he's been in the province for four years, a lot of CUPE members know him, and they really hold him in high esteem and respect him a lot. So they said, would you throw your name in the hat? So he agreed and the caucus vote was something like 110 to 6 for Dave. The

interesting thing about that convention was that catapulted; what that did is one Dave didn't tell me he was running. I knew something was up when I phoned the hotel room and he's not in his room but there's a whack of people in his room and they're all yakking in the background and stuff like that. So I talked to him later and he said, oh nothing was up. I said, you know Dave, when there's a roomful of people I know something is up. You're not talking to an uninformed person. So at 5:30 the next morning he phoned and said, you know, people have asked me to put my name for it; if you don't think it's a good idea I'll say no. I said, well of course I'm gonna say yes, I think you'll be great, and by the way I think you're gonna win. He goes, well how can you even say that? I said, Dave, I know the labour movement – if you're going to run, you're going to win. So he ran. I went to work that day working for the oil sector and it was a Friday. My boss and his wife and Dave and I were good friends because Jim Svenson came from Sweden. So I went in to talk to him and Jim just looked at me and he goes, so what are you planning on doing today? I said, well I was planning on working. He goes, no no, you leave; you get on the first plane. You wanna be there in Edmonton when it happens. So he went into a meeting and he came back out and he goes, why are you still here? I'll even give you the money. If you don't have the money, I'll give you the money for the plane. So I ended up arriving in Edmonton, being met by Nao Fernando with a big sign that had my name on it, Maureen Werlin, because I didn't know him. So we dashed in and so I made it to the convention just in time to hear Dave being sworn in and having the gavel passed over to him. Then, when the convention ended, then of course I got to meet a whack of people. But basically, when Dave got elected, people, workers didn't like the idea of leaders unilaterally trying to make the swap. I think that they felt that decision was theirs to make, and they made it. So coming out of that convention Dave was the president and Harry Kostiuk ended up running for secretary-treasurer. So then Dave is in a situation where the former president is now the secretary-treasurer. So you also ended up in a situation where you have the very progressive outspoken president and you have a secretary-treasurer that has, I mean a decent person, decent trade unionist within his own parameters. I don't think he would've challenged the status quo. I wasn't around during the period and I think Jim you know the story better than anybody about the commissioning of the book, *The History of Alberta Labour*, by Warren Caragata. Harry was the president at that time and I know that

significant chunks of that book were altered because of the background of McCarthyism and not recognizing the role the progressive people had actually played in the labour movement. I think that's a loss. But in '83 we ended up in a situation; we were in a recession. There had been massive layoffs everywhere. I think Dave jokingly said, he goes, oh my God, he says, I'm elected and I don't even know where the friggin office is. What he did is we commuted for the next six or seven months and he boarded with Trygve and Elve Hansen and he found his way to the office. But he was in a situation where he became president but he knew none of the office staff. So he was a stranger walking into a new environment. I think he just took it, he took it in his usual fashion where he wanted to do a really good job, wanted to make a difference. That's what he set out to do and I think that's what he did.

Q: Dave was president for six years, right?

MW: Right.

Q: Let's work our way forward from '83 to '89, the high points that you can remember.

MW: Okay. Well I think '83 right off the bat was the spin-off locals. In the building trades the six-pack major companies had decided on the 24-hour lockout. So right off the bat there were big rallies at the Leg in bitterly cold November weather. But Dave took that on and said it was wrong. It was a battle that we didn't win but certainly it united a lot of trade unionists and educated them that this doesn't sit right; it's wrong.

Q: This is despite the fact that only two years earlier the building trades had left the Federation and CLC.

MW: Ya. They left those central bodies because of the labour movement's affiliation to the NDP. But Dave's attitude throughout his entire life is if there's a worker or a worker struggle, you support it and you try and get as much support as possible. So I think back in those days was Verne Clendenning was the head of the building trades, and I think he

and Dave ended up co-chairing stuff. But that's where Dave often said, you know, you'll often have strange bedfellows. On some issues you'll work really closely with some people and then on a different issue you'll work really closely with other people. So he had that capacity to know when to work in coalitions, when to work with people, and when to rally other people, like put your differences aside that the building trades left, and this is a struggle that needs to be supported. On the heels of that was Bill 44, which was, so this is 1984, and that was a bill that was going to strip all of the provincial government employees from their right to strike. The Federation led a massive campaign. You look like you've got your thinking hat.

Q: Actually Bill 41 was in '77; 44 was the amendments that were going to extend provincial services to healthcare workers.

MW: Right, to all, you're right, it was to all government, all public sector workers was Bill 44. The Federation launched a massive campaign against that bill. I think that was one of the first successes. I know that was also the year that Dave wanted the CLC to take a position on the British miners' strike, but they wouldn't because they felt you had to go through trade union centrals and the bureaucracy, and the dispute would be over before anything would get done in terms of solidarity. So Dave said, I don't care. He just contacted the Trade Union Congress in Great Britain and that started a series of I think there were six couples that came. So the first couple that came were Frank and Val Clark, and they stayed with us. Frank Clark was a great orator. They were members of the mine workers' union that Margaret Thatcher was doing a number on. At this time we're in the era of Ronald Reagan, Maggie Thatcher, and soon to be it was Trudeau initially but soon to be Mulroney. So politically the right wing conservative element had completely taken over and one of their first tasks was to do what they could to gut labour unions. Reagan did it with the air traffic control worker. Maggie Thatcher decided that the British miners was going to be one of her hills to die on. There was absolutely tremendous support for the mine workers here in Canada. The Federation never took things out of their operating budgets for anything that Dave decided was a good campaign. He initiated campaigns, he encouraged or was able to get unions onside so that they would contribute to these

campaigns so he could carry out the campaigns. So that requires a lot of convincing your unions and the leadership, and they in turn convincing their members that these campaigns need to be fought. First of all they needed to be funded, fought, and won. I think that was one of the things he was really good at doing. Eventually the Alberta Federation of Labour brought these miners over, toured them all across Canada, found major speaking spots for all of them. I know Frank Clark, we took Frank Clark to Calgary and he also spoke at the AUPE convention. Dave was kind of saying to him, cuz we're all together and Val's there, and Dave's saying to him, you know this is kind of a different body. They're government employees; you might want to be a little bit more conservative when you're speaking with them. So Dave thinks he's got it covered and maybe Frank will tone down his message. Well I tell you, he did probably one of his most progressive speeches to AUPE and he just flat out said, I know you work for the government, but you know, we don't like the government. Just the way he was so passionate about it, he got a standing ovation at AUPE. But he just really brought home the message and it just goes to show you that a really good message doesn't need to be cut short. But Dave was afraid he would not get a really good reception. He ended up getting a great reception. But the British miners, one of the reasons why we brought all the wives over was in that dispute they organized soup kitchens. One of the things we wanted is we wanted the wives to be speaking out as well. So when we pick up Frank and Val from the airport and Dave's saying, oh by the way tomorrow we've organized a news conference at the Federation offices, and you know Frank we'll want you to tell a little bit of your story, and Val, if you could just speak a little bit about what the women are doing, like the collective kitchens and everything. Oh man, I have never seen somebody just hit with being a deer in headlights. She actually went the next day and she actually fainted. She couldn't do it. She really was really gonna try and do it but like Dave says, oh my God, just before the news conference she fainted. But their culture is they don't leave their little towns, their little mining towns. That's why it was so important to win that because the communities were based on the mines. So they never even travelled to a town 50 miles away. So when we took them to Calgary to speak and they're going, well how long is this drive, and we're going, three hours each way, and we're going down and you're gonna speak and we're gonna come... three hours? We're gonna travel that far? It just showed the

difference in the culture. I think at the Federation convention it ended up with a miner speaking at that convention as well. But Frank Clark is on tape, I have a video if you want it of him speaking out at a Vancouver function. But awesome event, and that's where Dave was quite prepared to say, I don't care what the CLC executive says, I don't care what the protocol is, this needs to be done, and it needs to be done now. I think back in those early days he also played a leading role in the Great Boycott because that's when the initial campaign came out. Dave always made sure that Federation conventions not only were great in terms of policy and resolutions, but they also had people were invited to speak that were bringing different messages, different perspectives. So David Martinez and his wife Sandy from the farm workers in California, I think David Martinez in the '80s was invited twice as speaker at a Fed convention. What was interesting about David Martinez is similar to the organizing way back in Alberta's history, is David Martinez was paid \$10 a day and that's all the money he had. So when he was organizing the farm workers in California, the expectation was that you'd stay in somebody's home or you would do something like that. That unites workers and I think that goes back to in the '30s and '40s when Ben Swankey was in this province, same thing, where you're not getting paid, you're doing the work that needs to be done, but you're staying with people. I think that sense of community brings people along. So we're in '84 with the mine workers. Then the next thing, it was either '84 or '85, defining moment was bringing in the carpenters back into the Federation convention. There was a big, the carpenters all walked in with their hardhats on and stuff like that, so it became quite show of solidarity. It was a major breakthrough in this province. Martin Piper out of the Calgary local at that time went on to sit on the Fed executive for a number of years. It was easier back then too to get things done. I'm trying to think, '84 was also, oh my God, so much happened in '84. Okay '84 was also the year that a lot of farmgate survivals were happening. Dave and the Federation were working really closely with the National Farmers Union in stopping the foreclosures of some farms. There were some people who--there was one person in particular in the party who had a very successful farm. I know that Dave tapped that individual to bankroll the saving of several farms. The labour movement went out on these farmgate survivals. I know George Pare was someone that the Federation saved his farm for him and he was always grateful and did a number of things for the Federation as

payback. So ya, I mean it was the farmgate survival things were happening, the César Chávez was happening, the War on 44 was happening, and the carpenters were coming back in. Throughout all of this I can't remember exactly, '84 was also the summer that we attempted to have a holiday and went out to see Bill and Chum Ferguson. Dave slipped and fell, broke his ankle. That summer was the hot summer where there was talk of the Gainers workers going out in '84. There was advertising.

Q: And they had that lineup of unemployed people.

MW: Ya. So in '84 during that summer Pocklington was prepared, all the scabs were ready, and so that's when the decision that summer was, like the local really wasn't ready then. So Dave's expression was always, you know sometimes you have to step back and fight another day. That was certainly, in his perspective, this is when okay we don't like this but this is the beginning of the fight for '86. So I think that happened and it was very interesting watching Dave maneuver. Of course he didn't stop going to the office. So he's driving with the wrong leg, he's maneuvering stuff at home, he's talking to his executive council, he's getting them to come to our house, and there's decisions being made. But back then also the executive was a lot smaller and I think it was a lot easier to get buy-in because there were five major players. Some of those trade unionists unfortunately aren't around for you guys to interview, but several come to mind for me. Norm MacLellan was one, with the Paper Workers Union. Norm MacLellan was also the slate. The Alberta Federation of Labour didn't have an official slate but Norm MacLellan was the broker. So at conventions where elections were happening Norm MacLellan would talk to all the various unions. So this federation did something very unlike the divisiveness of the BC Fed, is that through Norm's efforts, and I think it was largely because of him and his abilities, there was consensus. You tried to find consensus in terms of who this federation wanted as their leaders moving forward. But this was also back in the day in the '80s when the delegates had the ultimate say. The caucuses did not decide who was gonna go on an executive. So you really had to stand by your record. Dave's attitude throughout his entire life, certainly as president of the Fed, was I was elected, I can be unelected. I'm gonna do my job and if they don't like what I'm doing they can defeat me and I'm okay

with that. So I think that was one of his strengths, is that he always took that attitude is this is a temporary job. I'll do it for as long as people want me to do it, and if they don't like it I'm okay with being defeated. I think he was one of the few presidents, at that time John Booth was the president of AUPE and he was one of the major vice-presidents, and he didn't particularly care for Dave or care for his politics. But, at the same time, Dave's attitude towards him, and at that time the Federation was housed in AUPE, Dave's attitude was, you know John, if you don't like it, you can leave. You don't have to stay in the Federation. Nobody is making you stay in the Federation. So Dave just kind of put it out there. Well of course AUPE didn't, they wanted to be in the Federation but they were trying to see if they could influence or tone down Dave by saying this. Dave's attitude was, if you don't wanna be in, leave. If you don't like me, defeat me. So he had very simple messages he was able to convey to people. Ultimately it would be their choice but their members wouldn't have been happy if they'd have pulled out. So a person like that, like John Booth, they missed very few council meetings because they wanted to make sure that they weren't going to be talked about. I think that was true of a lot of the people. I think the Federation, the unions, put their primary leaders on the Fed executives so you weren't dealing with second stringers or third. That table of 25 had the major movers and layers in this labour movement and it also had a way better role for labour councils. One person in particular who I think was awesome was Bill Stevenson, who was president of the Edmonton and District Labour Council and sat on the executive. But there was the miner, there was Phil Oakes who's passed away. So Dave was surrounded by really good, solid people like what we would refer to as salt of the earth. Neil Reimer was always there in terms of advice and help. I know one of Dave's regrets was, I don't think he realized when he came to Alberta, I don't think he fully appreciated or realized who Neil Reimer was as a person and as a trade unionist. So when he went on the CLC executive council in '83 Neil was on that executive. Neil said to Dave, I'll take you around, I'll introduce you to all the media in Toronto and Montreal, Ottawa; I can introduce you to a lot of people. Dave didn't take him up on that because he was considered as coming out of a right-wing union. I think that's one of his regrets, because I think Neil was just genuinely wanting to show the new guy on the block the lay of the land.

Q: Was it '85 when Dave put in the affirmative action positions on the Fed executive council?

MW: Yes, and that's one of the things, that's another historical thing that the Federation of Labour and Dave should be very proud of. This federation did it before the Canadian Labour Congress and before any other federation. It was quite an interesting time because not only did two women go on the council at that time, so there was recognition that the predominance in the labour movement was men and therefore we needed to have a perspective from women trade unionists, and they needed to be sitting around a leadership table. So I think that was great bringing that in. But what's really interesting from a historical point of view is the first women's committee of the Federation was chaired by Bill Berezowski. He was a steelworker, great guy, but you had a women's committee chaired by Bill.

Q: Did he look good in a dress?

MW: Well no but I mean, he felt passionately about women's rights and issues and so therefore he wanted, but I mean today that would never, that would be totally unheard of. I think throughout the '80s, the '80s in terms of work was not a great time for me. When Dave became president of the Fed the standing joke was that I would get a job in Edmonton. So unfortunately I was unable to get a job in Edmonton. His joke was, if the president of the Federation can't get you a job Maureen, nobody can. Well you know what, I didn't have a job in Edmonton until Dave stepped down. What was really interesting is the number of interviews that I went for where people would do their homework rather late. I actually had a job and then it was rescinded two hours later. Then I was called for an interview, I was in Toronto at the time, and so I was going to go for an interview. At 11 o'clock at night they phoned our house and cancelled the interview. At 7:30 in the morning I had them cancel an interview. One of those interviews was with Alberta Health Services. Like Dave says, at that time he didn't hide his politics. He was a Communist, he was progressive, he was out to do all the right things in the labour movement. But there was a price to pay, and in some ways I paid a significant price in

terms of career. But I've always been an activist, I've always been an organizer. So there's a bit of a silver lining in this because I then became cofounder of Citizens Against Racism and Apartheid. Dave and the Federation backed that organization to the hilt in terms of in-kind support. Because Dave supported the struggles of the South African workers, he used every opportunity at Fed conventions to bring out speakers from either SACTU, the trade union congress, or the African National Congress. So he was introducing speakers and stuff. Our first CARA conference Dave sat on the planning committee. The planning committee didn't understand our mentality. We're saying we're gonna have 200 people at this conference and everybody else is saying, you can't say that. It was like, yes if I say there's gonna be 200 people at the conference there will be 200 people. It was like you worked towards a goal. I think the other thing about Dave and being a practiced strategist and tactician, he always had the attitude that when you're talking to the media you always answer the question they should've asked rather than the one that they did ask, so that you're getting the message out. What he taught me is you never go into a meeting not knowing what you hope to get out of that meeting. He always said, if you're trying to convince people to take a certain path you'd better know what your minimum settle point is or what you hope to accomplish. I think that's what made him a great leader is that he had a vision and he was able to encourage others to come along. The other thing too is that Dave Werlin had a phenomenal staff. I don't think Dave Werlin could've done the job he did without me being at home and being his number one supporter. I made it easy for him to be an activist. In our Calgary days in our marriage it was like if you're the most tired person then you don't have to do dinner, the other person does, and you kind of did that flip-flop back and forth. But I think by me unfortunately not working I was able to concentrate on being his best second in command you might say, like always kind of being there doing what needed to be done. I think he made very smart choices in the staff that he did hire. The staff that he did hire, I know he walked into an office and I think he had predominantly support staff. At that time there was a major project happening – Janet Bertineson was working in the Fed office on a health and safety project and also the Federation was undertaking a major initiative on human rights. But then he hired Lucien Royer who took on coalition work, Action Canada, pretty much any major campaign. Phone banks, I think people forget that the Federation had a phone

bank. The phone bank had about 16 phones, and every single campaign, volunteers would come and you had these lists that Lucien would produce; some lists were better than others. But there was always phoning happening. If we had a list you would phone not only the trade unionists that you know about, but everybody else. But those were back in the days when Fed conventions were huge. Initially there were proceedings of those conventions. But when you're bringing together anywhere between 650 and 750 workers on an annual basis, I think it moves the labour movement forward in a way the workers are more in tune. If you're setting policies, you know you need to carry them out. You've got 12 months to carry them out. I think the second staff person he hired was you, Jim. I know that of all of his staff that he hired you were his go-to person. You were the person that he held in the highest esteem, and I think you and him were a great combination. You could totally relate to him and his personality and he was, going back to this brevity kind of thing, I know that he liked to call you guys in, cuz I think Winston was hired later than you. But what he did was he had staff that he knew he could count on. So he could say to you as communications director I think you were when you initially came on staff is he could say, I need a news release and I think these are the main three points or the things that I'm comfortable with – just go with it, run with it. You would prepare the news release and he would be good with it. He edited but I think he was one of the people that was very careful in how he edited so that his staff always felt like they were major contributors, and I think you more than went the distance. I know that there's an old saying that when he stepped down and he's busy thanking everybody, he missed you. You know me and I said to him under my breath, cuz I was up there, I said, you forgot Jim. He says, oh my God, he says, well I can't say it now, I can't un-ring the bell. But his attitude was often, you fail to see the person that's the closest to you. In the early '80s, flipping back to Calgary, when he came home after having this long discussion with Harley Horne about they didn't have any female reps in CUPE, he said Harley and him spent the whole afternoon trying to think of a woman who could be a rep. So he comes home and he says, so we decided that we're gonna make Mary Chuckery a rep, we're gonna take her out of the hospitals and we're gonna spend a lot of time mentoring her. I said, did it ever cross your mind that maybe me? He says, no, but now that you think about it. What he said, and this is what I think it speaks to him forgetting to thank you, is that like if you're in his

line of sight or you're extremely close to him, sometimes he forgets or just takes it for granted you're always gonna be there for him. So it was a major oversight in '89 but like he said, I can't right it. I wished he had righted it because you were the person that brainstormed the best with him and came up with some of the best ideas. You were a really good team. I think you and him were the best team. You and him in a lot of ways worked similar to he and Bill Ferguson in Calgary, where you could bounce off ideas, you could tell each other exactly what you thought of each other, but everything would be okay. If you thought he was out to lunch or if he thought you were out to lunch you could say that and everything would be okay. It was all about moving forward. But your skills were great.

Q: So on to '86.

MW: On to '86, my goodness; '86 is the Gainers strike. It's '86, '85, the Zeidler strike would've started in '84. Oh yes right, the Zeidler strike was '86 as well, thank you. The Zeidler strike, Gainers strike was '86. It was a time when it was time for workers to get back what they had lost from the early '80s, cuz the early '80s and the major recessions, major cutbacks, freezes, very limited wage increases, layoffs, that kind of stuff. What happened with the Gainers strike is the workers went out on June 1st and the Federation of Labour, I can't believe. I think it was, I thought it was 48 hours later but it must've been longer, but mobilized close to 7,000 people for that rally outside the plant. Now the first day of the strike I'll never forget, because normally I go to picket lines. That's the day where Dave says, I don't want you on the line. He knew it was gonna get, he knew. He said, I don't expect to come home today – those were his words. So I'm not wearing a belt today, I'm not wearing a wedding ring today, I'm gonna be careful about whether I wear laces or not. So he went there, he went to that picket line knowing that what the labour movement was gonna set out to do was block the buses and stand in solidarity with the workers. I think it's a testament to the relationship between the building trades and the Federation that Verne Clendenning and Dave were both arrested in the same group of people. But also they arrested so many people that first day that the courts couldn't handle them, so they actually had to release everybody. But I think the pressure was on. What the

Federation was able to do or help in that particular dispute was to continually keep the morale of the workers up, continually mobilize other workers and unions in support. The courts moved and the governments moved really quickly to monitor the pickets, where pickets could be. First it was five or six feet from the gate and then it became 42 feet and then it became you could only have six picketers. There was a trailer across the street and Vicky Beauchamp busy singing O Canada on the roof of it. The Gainers strike made national news. It was a watershed victory in the sense that the mobilization was, I don't think there was anything similar since 1919 in terms of the entire labour movement and the community rallying behind that. I think at that time Dave and the staff, I mean the brainstorming and the creative ideas, because when you know that, cuz generally when a strike, the minute they start limiting how the workers can picket, that limits their ability to get together; that limits their ability to stay strong and stay solid. The Boycott 18B campaign, most successful in the history of Canadian labour. The Federation would organize buses, they would organize other events that people could go to. That's the one where, I don't know which one of you came up with the idea, maybe it was Dave's idea, to go to the racetracks, take all the Gainers workers to the racetracks, and paid to have a plane fly over there because Getty was entertaining all of the other premiers at that racetrack. But during the Gainers strike Dave had a core group of people. We had more midnight meetings, more late night meetings, more constant meetings, more early breakfast meetings with a core group of people who represented various unions, and I know that the staff were there; you were there. I sat in these meetings and it was remarkable the commitment of the labour leaders and the commitment to go the distance. But I also remember it was in our basement when the brainstorming over the campaign started. It was Jim's idea to come up; he coined Change the Law campaign. So when we went to that racetrack with Gainers workers to embarrass Getty, the plane that flew over was Boycott Gainers on one sign and then it flew back and it said Change the Law. The Change the Law sign campaign came out and I think that what it did is it built morale. But also any attempt or if Dave heard that there was a possible settlement that the workers might not have known about... I mean he thwarted some management people that came from back east because he mobilized so that people would be in the lobby of their hotel, made it very difficult. I know when Pocklington took his buddies on a fishing

trip--back in those days it was easier to have brown envelopes and stuff like that--so you'd find out flight manifests and there'd be a demonstration out at the airport when his people were going up fishing. I mean just really creative, always finding ways to support the workers, and also bring on the entire labour movement. I think that the campaigns during that period were absolutely brilliant. I think the amount of media coverage that was generated by that strike, that was one where when that instant demonstration happened like with a very short period of time that people were walking down on 66th Street and that was huge. But to follow that up a week later with that massive demonstration, I think that was the middle of June and I know Shirley Carr came out and spoke at that. It's almost as though Dave was moving the rest of the labour movement. If we can do it here, you can do it anywhere. I don't know whether it was the union's idea; I think it was the Federation's idea to tour the workers. But I know that the Gainers workers, a selection of them, were chosen and they got to travel all across BC and the Maritimes. But also when the government had decided that they were gonna change the labour laws, then the Federation took the initiative and said, well we want our brief to reflect what's happening in the world. So the Federation not only went out and touched base with the rest of Canada, they touched base with the rest of the world in terms of labour legislation. So when the Federation prepared their brief, and I think Winston prepared that brief, and that was in '89, no sorry it was in, ya by the time the hearings and everything were held I think it was, no it was more than a year later.

Q: It was '87.

MW: Okay and then there was another supplemental one that went in in '89. But right the Reid Commission. I know that back to the lawn signs, you talk about mobilization. The Federation's offices were in AUPE, firefighters were instrumental like Marushny. The basement of the Federation was a factory where picket signs and the saws are going and the staple guns are going. It's just bigger than a municipal campaign. It was remarkable when you think back how much was accomplished in such a short period of time. The labour movement had finally in its entirety been brought on board in December and there was scheduled to be these huge Santa trucks arriving. It's unfortunate that, I mean I think

for any worker who's been out for a length of time it's a tremendous financial hardship. But if those workers had been able to hold out for two more weeks until all of the massive support from the rest of Canada came, I think it might have affected the outcome of their settlement. I'm not sure. I think that in terms of their actual-- did they walk away with great increases or great language? No. But what that strike did was mobilize the labour movement to a point that you couldn't turn back the clock, where people knew that these struggles were possible, that they could be fought, that workers could be mobilized. To see the '87 convention that followed that was like I mean the camaraderie; it was always good but it was just so much better.

Q: At the '87 convention wasn't that when Robin Campbell ran against Dave?

MW: Yes, Robin Campbell ran against Dave. When Dave went in he ran against Eastmead. Nobody contested him in '85. In '87 Robin Campbell contested him. It goes back, Dave's attitude was, if the delegates aren't happy with me they'll defeat me. But Dave got 494 votes, Robin Campbell got 112, there were 6 abstentions. I think there were 685 votes counted out of 684 delegates. I wrote it in my daytimer because, back in those days, Noreen was married to Don Aitken, who was the secretary-treasurer at that time. So there would be a wives' club. It was Norm MacLellan's wife, myself, we'd all be sitting in the peanut gallery or the guest section. So my daytimer has written in it what the vote count was. He overwhelmingly won and I think largely because of his willingness to go out, and then during that period of '86 you had all sorts of disputes happening. That was one thing. If there was a picket line where the Federation could mobilize support, out came the phone banks, out came the phones, out came the requests for people. It's kind of one of the things that I have learned from Dave is that there's only really two answers people can give you. One, you need to ask the question; if you're asking for support, don't be afraid to ask the question. They can answer yes or no, and you know a maybe is usually no. But if you never ask questions or if you never ask people to come out and support you, then you won't. So you've got nothing to lose by asking the question. I think back in that time, '86 was the Gainers strike so we're talking labour, but '84 and '85 were also the free trade fight back. That's when the Federation, I think it was in '85, organized

the 4,000 strong it was a panel of people who would be prepared to speak out against free trade. So Stronach, a businessman, he was one of the speakers and Bob White was one of the speakers and I think Mel Hurtig was another speaker. The cross section in terms, and Dave was one of them, but the cross section in terms of the panelists was so wide-ranging to fill the Shaw Conference Centre on that key issue. The Federation had not only the free trade fight, they had the campaign against GST. That's when Action Canada kicked in. The Federation, all across Canada, people supported the Action Canada network but nobody supported it to the extent that the AFL did. The AFL lent Lucien Royer, their staff person, to be a key person on the national and provincial. We had Action Canada components all over the province. We also in '84 as part of that War on 44 kicked off Solidarity Alberta. Solidarity Alberta, the Federation hired Pam Barrett, who was in that position until '86. So not only in '86 did we have Gainers strikes and a whole bunch of other things happening, but we have the provincial elections. Here you have a Federation president who's a communist. Don Aitken was the president; he stayed the president of the NDP. But Dave and Grant Notley co-chaired, there was always the labour-ND liaison group that would meet on a regular basis. Dave recognized that it was in the progressive movement and workers' best interests to elect a lot of NDPers. I think he was key to the election of those 16 people in terms of mobilizing support, mobilizing like getting people to provide money and volunteers and everything that could turn that around.

Q: Dave Durning...

MW: Dave Durning, when Pam Barrett was elected as an MLA in '86, Dave Durning was then hired as her replacement. Dave had quite a bit of, unknown to Dave Werlin, Pam had in some ways misused Solidarity Alberta more as an NDP. It started out as a very broad coalition of churches, communities, labour, etc. So Dave Durning was hired in '86. So I think he really solidified that as a community activist group. We had a conference in Red Deer in '85 and I think that's when the charter, the Solidarity Alberta charter was adopted. I'm trying to think, was this before or after Poland? It might've been Poland in '83, Solidarity Alberta in '84. But I mean the BC Federation of Labour went on later on to then coin the BC coalition and the Solidarity coalition out there. . . .

Ok I wanted to tell this interesting story of our actual wedding day. We weren't married in a church and Dave said, don't worry Maureen, I'll take care of it. Terry Burke, who's a 1004 member and he's a garbage collector, he was a former minister so he could marry us. So that's kind of all set up and then my mother finds out that he can only bury people; Terry Burke can only bury people. This is two days before our wedding. So we made arrangements for another minister to come in and do the actual signing of the paper. But Dave's kids phoned from the ferry our wedding day, and they missed the ferry. So we said, well we'll postpone, we'll just wait. That's back in the days when you don't get together on your wedding day. So I'm in a back bedroom with a bunch of friends and Dave is downstairs with a bunch of buddies watching the World Series. The minister who's doing the paperwork has another engagement and he has to leave. So he comes into the back bedroom and he says to me, Maureen, do you take Dave to be your lawfully wedded husband? I said, yes. So then he went downstairs to the rumpus room and he says, Dave, do you take Maureen to be your lawfully wedded wife. He says, yes. He says, well consider yourself married. He signed off on the paperwork and he left. So when I walked down the hallway at my parents' house, Dave and I were already married. The paperwork had been signed. But Terry Burke, he was a 1004 member and Dave thought it would be a really nice touch and he was a great guy. But I've never heard of anybody being married before they actually got married.

Q: So we left off with the strikes of '86. You recall that Dave was involved in negotiations with the government trying to broker a settlement that they could force on Pocklington.

MW: Ya, there was this fellow who actually had approached Dave and he knew Pocklington very well and had actually been in Pocklington's office and overheard discussions between Pocklington and Bolanes about the strike. He was also very high up in the Tory party and he was a friend of Getty's. So there were numerous meetings between Dave and this gentleman on park benches, never in houses, because back in the days of the Gainers strike when it got to be so, the profile of the strike was so high, any important conversation that Dave was having was outside away from buildings, because

we figured it was tapped. Towards the end of the strike when Dave was in these discussions Getty was actually sick and tired of what Pocklington was doing in terms of giving the Tory party a really bad name, cuz he was a Tory member. I think if those negotiations had gone on a little bit further we might've seen a slightly different outcome to the strike.

Q: So they were still ongoing when the settlement was reached?

MW: Yes.

Q: That brings us to '87 and the tail end of the Reid Committee hearings and the tail end of the Change the Law campaign.

MW: Well I think that the tail end of the Change the Law campaign was the culmination of more than a year's work in terms of mobilizing the labour movement, mobilizing people for the lawn signs, mobilizing people for presentations to the Reid Commission, giving people the information so they could make their own submissions. The AFL submission was in my opinion probably the best submission that the Federation has ever made, the most comprehensive one. There's nothing that affects workers more than labour laws. So in terms of wrapping up that Change the Law campaign, we then had a number of other ongoing strikes. But I think that Gainers is always gonna be seen as a watershed, not necessarily because of what they did at the table, what they got in terms of the settlement, but how they were able to mobilize not just their own union but the entire Alberta labour movement and actually the Canadian labour movement. We set the standard and what we were able to say is this is what Alberta was like in the '30s; we're going back to our roots in terms of engaging members. That's what Dave was really good at is engaging members. He always had a saying: workers instinctively know what's in their best interests. One of the things that sort of sets Dave apart is whenever he was speaking or making any speech, and he was a great speaker, probably one of the last great orators in the labour movement, but he would always address workers. He would talk to them as it's a workers' issue, it's workers' rights. I think people felt in the audience that he

was talking directly to them, and they could resonate with that. Basically it's like whose side are you on. If you're on the workers' side, well you're here and you're gonna do this. I think that's why Dave was able to accomplish so much.

Q: In the Gainers strike, he reached way beyond the labour movement.

MW: You're right. I think the first spontaneous demonstration that was arranged in virtually two days, to have the number of people out, the vast majority community, all the trade union banners, and we even had the church community and they're carrying the big cross that they would normally carry when they were doing their regular inner city walks. But ya, the Gainers strike resonated with everybody because it was about fairness.

Q: So there was a backlash inside the AFL from the more conservative elements at the '87 convention.

MW: That's correct. There's always been a difference between business unionism and social unionism. Dave has always fallen on the side of social unionism in terms of engaging members, seeing the bigger picture, engaging in international issues as well, but always pushing the envelope. We all grow and the labour movement grows and we learn from our mistakes. But I think the pushback in '87 was because the standard had now been set. You've got all these strikes that have happened in '86, not only Gainers but Zeidlers, you've had postal workers, you've had flight attendants, you've had Suncor workers. In other words, workers were saying, we've had enough, we're entitled to more, and we're prepared to fight for it. So in some ways they're then a little bit ahead of their leadership if their leadership is on the right or is a little bit more conservative. There's an old saying, and Dave used it often, that if you're a leader but you're not really leading, sometimes if the workers press you, you elbow your way to the front, because you're then led by the workers. I think the challenge was for some unions, they didn't want to engage in that kind of struggle. Some of them it might've been monetary, the amounts that were paid out in strike pay. But I don't think they had the vision or they weren't as forward thinking. They didn't see the big picture. What this labour movement needed was a more

sustained pressure because coming out of the Gainers strike I think you have to link it to the election of the 16 NDPers. That labour liaison committee that Dave chaired, political gains were made because the trade union movement was doing the right thing and was on the left. But we also had a Communist Party that was also pushing the labour movement to the left all the time. So what we were seeing is there were much more progressive things happening.

Q: At the '87 convention, who ran against Dave?

MW: That would be Robin Campbell from the Mine Workers. He was up in Hinton and had never been a Dave supporter ever. But he had the support of the most right-wing element of the Federation of Labour. I don't think there was any doubt that Dave was wasn't gonna lose that election, but certainly the campaign was "get the red out of the Fed". Now when you had the red in the Fed since '83 and it seems to be working and first you're acclaimed and then you have somebody running against you, I think you're obviously doing some right things that are resonating with people. with trade unionists.

Q: Do you know what the vote count was?

MW: Yes I do. The vote count was 124 for Robin Campbell, it was 487 or thereabouts, I have it in my notes, 6 abstentions and there were just over 650 that cast ballots, and 684 eligible voters. I know it's a bit of an aside, but I wanna go back and talk about how those conventions were huge and they were annual. You're talking about anywhere between 500 to 700 in that range every year getting together and talking about their struggles, their issues. You can't have a better forum than that. I was also noticing that the registration fees for those conventions were like \$30 per delegate. You compare that to what registration fees are today and it's astronomical, the difference. The other thing about '87 going into that convention and another reason why I think Dave would easily win is Dave had already started planning the centennial activities way back in '86, because '87 kicked off with a special dinner and that dinner focused more on right to work. Then there was another even two months later and then this was the first big year too of reclaiming May

Day linked to that convention at the Butterdome. So Robin Campbell lost; he probably garnered less than a quarter of the votes. I think that speaks to the support that Dave has in the labour movement. I also wanna say that Dave was not afraid to tap into the use of the media or he wasn't for ads, cuz he did that lots of times with Gainers when Getty was out golfing and something significant was happening. But he would do that around campaigns. The papers were much more accepting of labour messages. But also, when Robin Campbell ran, Dave had a slate of leading trade unionists that were backing him. Virtually ever major player, including Bill Stewart from the Mine Workers in Calgary, had backed him. Great support, people like Phil Oaks, Norm MacLellan, what used to be the precursor to CEP, ECWU, and CUPE, PSAC. Dave had PSAC's support even during the most tenuous times. This is when you're talking free trade, the arms race in United States, and Dave is able to talk to PSAC members in a way that we don't want you to lose your job; we want a just transition. It would've been very easy for PSAC members to say, we're walking outa here because you're anti-military.

Q: Besides the fact Dave was a Communist, were they citing any other reasons why he shouldn't be the president anymore?

MW: I think beyond that you had people who had bought into the concept of tripartism and bipartism and you had people who were saying he's a little bit too far out there and we need to have working relationships with these people. A little bit of a lightning rod. we're never going to have really good relationships with governments if you're always trashing them. So I think it was along those lines.

Q: That brings us to '88 and '89.

MW: Well there were ongoing struggles. I know when the Zeidler struggle was still going on, in '88 by then a lot of the strikes were tapering out. In about June of '88 Dave was approached by Fred Wilson, who was a party leader in BC, to take on the job of being the executive director for HEU, Hospital Employees Union in BC. Dave always thought it would be nice to one day end up back in Vancouver. So anyhow the two of us

went out and he was interviewed. While he's off for his interview I'm busy reading all of their resolutions, policy papers, salaries, statements, all that kind of stuff. So Dave comes back and he sounds pretty good. I said, how much did they offer him in salary, and they gave a figure. I said, well you know Dave, it doesn't wash. That's like \$50,000 less than they're paying Jack Giroux, who was the current executive director. Jack Giroux was married to Bill Stewart's daughter, and Bill Stewart used to be the labour secretary of the party. But they were gonna pay Dave a lot less and they were gonna retain Jack Giroux as a consultant. The convention documents from HEU clearly indicated that they wanted to embark on a policy of hiring from within. So I said to Dave, you could end up being out of a job and you then have severed a lot of your connections in terms of back to 1004, like CUPE 1004. Dave was on leave from 1004 to be a rep, he was on leave from CUPE to be the Fed president, and this would've been a gamble to go work for HEU. So what happened that evening is we called Fred Wilson down and had a knockout fight in the Georgia Hotel because Fred had promised that Dave would accept this job. I was saying, and by this time Dave was saying the same thing, you had no right to promise that we would accept it, because the salary is not the right one, they're keeping Jack Giroux on, which maybe Fred may have known or might not have. So Dave would've ended up an executive director with a consultant over his shoulder. We met with, I think the officers at that time were Bill and Mary, president and secretary-treasurer, the next day for breakfast. I think if they had compensated Dave for house relocation he still might've gone for it, but I think it would've been a gamble at Dave's age to be taking on that kind of job and possibly being unemployed. Not such a great thing. But I think his anticipation was in '88 he got psyched that maybe he'd be going to BC. You know how you almost begin to distance yourself and you're thinking, okay I'm gonna end up in BC. He actually, the news release for his resignation came a lot sooner than I think people would've expected, because it came in November. He stepped down the first week of May.

Q: That's six months in advance.

MW: Yes, six months in advance, which is quite a distance. I think, like in terms of '88, '89, what Dave used to say is, how many times can you make the same speech? How

many times can you psych yourself up to make a similar speech? He felt that Gainers and so many of the other disputes and some of the other issues were such a high that it's kind of like he peaked. He always said, it's best to go out when you're on top and they still want you rather than stick around and they're saying thank God he's gone. So I think there were a lot of people disappointed that he didn't run in '89 but in terms of '87 he had a very strong mandate to continue the work. But at that point leaving after the '87 convention he had not only done all of the disputes and the Gainers and whatnot, he'd done the 75th anniversary of the Fed, which was a big splash. He'd reinstated May Day that year and I think he was thinking, how much more is there that I can do?

Q: So when the HEU job failed to materialize, then what happened?

MW: Well I think he was discouraged. Then he's back in a job at the Federation and he knows exactly what kind of a job it is, and he could pretty much do it with his eyes closed by that time. I think Dave has always been a person that has looked for challenges and has always wanted to be stretched. When you look at even his tenure at 1004 and his tenure within CUPE, there are breaks. Six years as Fed president--I think he wanted something different. HEU didn't materialize and nothing is really gonna come along for someone with his profile. You're not going to be appointed to a whole bunch of boards of directors, and he wouldn't have accepted them. But some presidents, that's what they do. They step down as president and they sit on boards and stay connected that way. That wasn't gonna be the case with Dave.

Q: How did he become the CUPE director?

MW: That would've been on a seniority basis. When he initially went back to CUPE, when he stepped down from the Federation, he would have just been a rep. Then I think it was Clarence that retired. Clarence was the director. Clarence was also the CUPE rep that managed every one of Dave's campaigns and did a phenomenal job. Regional director is strictly on seniority basis, and Dave had been accruing seniority the whole time he was Fed president.

Q: How much seniority would he have had at that time?

MW: He had '79, so he went back in '89 and probably became regional director in the early '90s or thereabouts. But I also think another reason why Dave stepped down is Dave was not--Dave's health took a tremendous toll over the Gainers dispute. Our doctor used to always say that his genes, he was always 10 years, his internal clock was ten years younger. But I think the Gainers took quite a toll and '89 was an extremely difficult year healthwise. Dave was off an awful lot. That was the year in the summer he had already been off for three or four months and his doctor wanted him to stay off. He was diagnosed as clinically depressed and Dave did not like the D word. In other words, he went back to work because he didn't want people to know that he was clinically depressed; came from that era. I think that summer was really tough on him, and this would've been just after he stepped down. So when he stepped down I think everything kind of hit him in '89. It was like the whole culmination of everything he's done and then it affected his health. Then we planned, well I planned a huge 60th birthday party for him later on, but that's years later. No that's a correction, you gotta edit this. The depression was '94. So you'll have to flag that. Sorry, it's '94 he was clinically depressed. In '89 when he stepped down from the Fed he actually, the Fed officers at that time, Don and Audrey, agreed that he would be the spokesperson that would go up and speak to the northern territories. He had never been there. So he went and spoke there. I'm gonna backtrack to '88, cuz that's when he was on a CLC delegation down to César Chávez. Now Dave had never entered the United States. We had gone through a lot of people who'd been stopped at the border. Harry Rankin had been stopped at the border, Farley Mowat the author had been stopped at the border. So at that time Dave had to drive to Calgary to the US embassy office. He had to answer a whole bunch of questions and one of them is, are you or have you ever been a Communist, to which he answered yes. So what the United States was prepared to give him was a special three-year visa that would allow him entry. If he hadn't have gone and done that, although he was part of the CLC delegation, he would've been stopped at the border. Now years later he was successful in getting a

passport, but I think the first passport he had he still required stamps if he went into the United States. But ya, so he needed that special visa.

Q: I'm trying to think where we haven't tracked on this.

MW: I think where we haven't tracked is we haven't tracked in some ways my role when he was Fed president. We had a very extensive library. Whenever Dave had to do anything, and because I was always interested in these things, like I mean if he had to write the forward to the women's book for '87, then I would do research on Clara Zetkin and the women's movement and stuff like that. I would give him some notes or I would put stickies in books and say, I think these are good things if you wanna take a look at them. Our library was full of political science. We had the works of Lenin; we had every progressive book that had ever been written going way back. We had everything on free trade, we had stuff on peace, women, antiapartheid; it was all there. Deregulation, all that kind of stuff.

Q: Can you summarize those six years as president?

MW: Okay, if I had to summarize Dave's six years, I would say that they would be a very exciting time to be a trade unionist. From the get go, from the minute he walked into the Fed office in '83, he had a vision in terms of moving the labour movement forward and taking on the right. We were coming out of the recession; it was time for workers to make gains. So what Dave was able to do is he had an extremely solid executive council. He was able to engage the progressives. He was able to identify who's allies, who could be an ally on a particular issue. He actually had mellowed significantly from the Vancouver days. He had an approach that you could be an ally today on this issue; so let's work on it. In a lot of ways he worked in a lot of coalition politics, because that's what the leadership of the Federation is. You're actually leading a coalition but you have to lead it, you can't just facilitate it. I think that's what Dave did, that's what set him apart, is if there was a dispute. I think this goes back to learning from the Gainers dispute; that's when they instituted the Alberta Workers Rights Action Committee, which Norm MacLellan

chaired. That was introduced at the '87 convention. So I think everything that Dave did was what can we do to advance workers' rights, what can we do to help out in the international community, what can we do to help out in our community, how can we make governments accountable, how can we elect more progressive people? In other words, reclaiming that activism element of the labour movement from the '30s. I think Dave did that and I don't think anybody in Canada has done it in the way Dave has done it. The only one for me that comes close is Bob White at the CLC.

Q: You've suggested how busy Dave was over those six years and how many things he was involved in. Did that affect his health?

MW: There wasn't, Dave, those six years; it wasn't just trade union issues, it wasn't just going to work at the Federation. It was every strike, every picket line he was on, it was every international event, it was fundraising for the party, it was throwing brunches, fundraising for the party, working with the progressive movement, the AUCC, working with the Chileans, you name it. I don't think we had very many free nights between CARA, the labour movement, the party, and being active and being out there. People always wanted to have Dave there. He rarely if ever turned down a speaking engagement. He rarely turned down a speaking engagement that would engage workers. He had no problems turning down invitations to tripartite bodies like the Congress Board of Canada, those kinds of things. He didn't really have time for those. He wanted to focus on what could advance workers' rights and international solidarity.

I have one more thing that we should say about Dave, and that's changing the constitution of the Fed.

Q: Okay.

MW: Okay. Well Dave stepped off the Fed executive in '89 and he stepped back. He actually went a term without sitting on the council. But then the labour movement had become polarized. That was something that when Dave came in the labour movement was polarized – there were public sector unions and private sector unions. Under his

leadership they were united. But two years after he stepped down you have again divisions happening within the labour movement and unions, the major unions are upset at the composition of the council, and they don't want to have the full elections at a convention anymore. They want to be able to name their representatives in caucus. So it was agreed that Dave Werlin would go and talk to all the public sector unions and Ralph Nilson would talk to all the private sector unions. I actually typed those constitutional amendments and they were taken to the '94 convention. They were pre-approved by the CLC as a way of keeping everybody in the Federation, but they were huge changes. They changed what was a tight knit group of 25 to what would be a group of about 70. They changed the whole role of labour councils and the affirmative action women's positions. They became very clearly second tier and not as engaging. When Dave had campaigns, he really relied on not only unions to carry it out but labour councils to carry it out, and they did. So I guess time will tell whether that was a positive move or not, those constitutional changes from '94. So Dave, after he stepped down, there were some disputes that he was either brought back in, and I think he might've done the firefighters one when he was president of the Fed. But the Edmonton Firefighters were extremely active in the Federation and the international body wanted to force them to become part of the international. Constitutionally under the CLC they had to belong to the international. So Dave tried to broker a deal and tried really hard with the Congress but was unsuccessful, and unfortunately we lost the Edmonton Firefighters from the Federation because of that decision. He also brokered deals with the staff union at AUPE when they went out on strike. So I think people, and he also was brought on, even though he went back to CUPE in '89. Mike Pisak said, we really need your help at Zeidlers; so he actually was seconded to Zeidlers when he went back to work on that strike. He often said, with the Zeidlers strike the potential was there to have a way better outcome, but it had been left for too long. It was a strike that you wouldn't be able to win. You wouldn't be able to turn public opinion. The Gainers strike, when you have a huge plant in the centre of a city, it's a lot easier to rally the community and rally other unions. With the Zeidlers plant, part of their operation was up at Slave Lake and things like that. That didn't stop Dave from chartering buses and doing all sorts of stuff, but the outcome on the

Zeidlers strike was a disappointment for those workers who'd been out on the line for so long.

Q: What year did Dave run for CLC president?

MW: Dave ran for president of the CLC in 1990.

Q: So he was already back at CUPE?

MW: He was back at CUPE. He had tried very hard. He had wanted Bob White to run against Shirley Carr in 1990. He spent probably months trying to get Bob to agree to step forward. But most CLC presidents, it's almost like they're anointed. Their predecessor has agreed that they're gonna step down and then the slate is selected. So Bob felt if Shirley wanted another term then he wasn't gonna run against her. He was definitely gonna run, probably the next time around. But anyhow in the end Dave decided to run. A very exciting campaign. Unfortunately I had just been hired by the Federation on May 7th and Audrey Cormack would not give me leave to go to the CLC convention. But I heard from Dave every single day and also heard from you, Jim, every day. So I knew what was going on. Very exciting campaign, very short term. I know some people think that I didn't support his campaign; I did. But I just flat out said to him, you know Dave, I didn't have a job when you became Fed president. So my only rider on this one is I fully support you but I'm not moving to Ottawa until I have a job. But the potential for Dave to win was really good at that convention. Dave wanted to clean house in terms of some of the staff. He thought some of the staff were not doing what CLC staff reps should do. I think a lot of the staff reps were afraid of their jobs. They had not belonged to a union before, and they unionized the night before the election. They played a role in the ballots, although you're supposed to stay neutral, but they certainly had a vested interest in the outcome. But having said that, when somebody decides to run very late and is still able to garner 40 percent of the vote, then that's a pretty significant challenge. It's a double-edged sword. If he had started earlier, the right would've been able to mobilize more. I don't think the outcome of that election would have really been changed if he had thrown his name in the

hat sooner or later. But very exciting times I know for the Alberta trade unionists that were part of the campaign like the buttons and the slogans and the energy. One particularly button was ABC, and it was Anybody But Carr. There were a limited number of those that were printed; so they were auctioned off at the convention and went for pretty high amounts. I think it was a very exciting time. The Quebec trade union movement, a huge chunk of them were supporting Dave. I think that speaks to Dave's ability too; having come from BC he had BC support; he had support in Alberta. Because he knew so many people through unions or Action Canada, had support in Ontario, Quebec. So in other words Dave had support from across Canada; he just didn't have the 50 percent plus one. But I think he would've made a great president. It would've been very difficult for Bob White to become president then.

Q: Do you know what year Dave retired?

MW: No, I don't know that because he was off so much. He actually didn't work very much in '93, '94, '95. I think he probably stepped down in about '96 or '97. He actually didn't go to work most of the time. I mentioned earlier, in '94 he was off work for a long time and should've stayed off work longer. That summer we had a huge 60th birthday party for him in Vancouver. It was a surprise, and all the 1004 gang was there, the Dave Ferrys, the Jim Sinclairs. Pretty much everybody that was at our wedding was there. Winston and Judy, Dave Coles. His kids were involved in the planning. I mean it was a really good time. That was the summer of '94 and then we split in January of '95. There's one other thing I wanna mention, and that is I don't know how you're gonna play this in, but Dave Werlin doesn't do anything that Dave Werlin doesn't want to do. When you think about it, he first picked up roots and moved to Calgary and left everything behind. I did the same in going Victoria to Calgary, and I did the same going Calgary to Edmonton. Now when the CLC had a job opening in '94 for a women's director of human rights and women's issues, it was a one year position and I applied for it. Dave didn't want me to apply for it. He said that would be too difficult, even though we had commuted when he first became president of the Federation of Labour. In the '90s when I was very active in the trade union movement twice Dave said to me, I think we would

spend more time together if you just quit everything. So twice I did; I quit everything. I quit my local position, I quit my labour council position, I quit everything I was active in for the better part of a year twice. I said to Dave, you know, I quit everything and it's almost a year, we haven't spent all that time together that we supposedly were, so I think I'm going back in. So I think Dave, his strengths are unifying people, but on the other hand he's self-centred in the sense that he only really does what he wants to do.

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