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KJ: I currently work as a union organizer in Calgary, where I live. I work for the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees.

Q: Talk about your background.

KJ: I also wasn't born in Alberta. I was born in Wales in 1995. My mom is from East Tennessee and my dad is British; he was born in London. I moved around a lot as a kid. I lived in Wales, I lived in Northern Ireland. I lived in Northern California. I lived in Florida, and then I've also lived here. My parents had very strong left-wing values when I was a kid, so that was something I kind of absorbed pretty much naturally through experiencing politics with my parents and hearing about the things that they talked about around the dinner table. Certainly, they always really encouraged me to have political opinions, even as a child. I'm also the oldest of four, and they encouraged all of us to have political opinions. As you can imagine, dinner time was quite an intense debate class in my family. I think that's where I developed the ability to talk about politics and also this process of thinking about like, okay these are my values, this is the kind of world I want to live in, this is the type of person I am. I'm looking at a political situation - how do I behave in it and what do I do about it in a way that is consistent with my values and the values that I was raised up with by my parents? I'm also Jewish, and although my family was not super religious, we were definitely raised with kind of a pride in being Jewish. My dad's family escaped the holocaust by leaving Berlin in April of 1939. I started attending a synagogue and things when I was a teen, being Jewish, participating in Jewish culture and trying to live in a way that for me is consistent with what I see as the dream of the Jewish Diaspora, which was very left-wing and very involved in political projects, very involved in workers' movements. Definitely in North America in the Trade Union Movement, I see part of my work as a trade unionist and as an activist and organizer as being consistent with my culture and my ancestry. So that is kind of also important to me in terms of my background.

Q: You said your parents were involved in left-wing activities. Can you expand on that?

KJ: They were involved in the Labour Party, and they opposed Tony Blair and the invasion of Iraq. I believe when they first met, they were actually boycotting oranges from Israel. They were boycotting jap oranges, because it was right around the time of the invasion of Lebanon in the early '90s, which is when they met. So, a lot of anti-war stuff, which was big in the '90s and 2000s, and then kind of just like a strong... I would say my parents' political views are representative of just the Labour left in terms of the British Labour Party - a strong belief in trade unionism, a strong identification and belief in the power and the culture and the ability of the working class to govern itself and make decisions and be these decisionmakers in society. We were living in Northern Ireland, so of course discussions of Irish liberation and Irish independence was a big thing as well. Those sorts of ideas. My father became a

professor throughout the time of my childhood, which is one of the reasons we moved around so much. He was doing his PhD and then doing a post-doc and then teaching. If people are familiar with academics, you know that it's one of those jobs where you just have to move wherever there is a job, because it doesn't come up super often that people are looking for a professor of Geography. He used to teach Human Geography and the Geography of Disability and the Geography of Blindness. He also studies mining - not coalmining actually, which is an interest of mine, but he studies mining in the Philippines.

Q: Were you politically active as a kid?

KJ: I dabbled in things. When I was fourteen, I was living in Airdrie and I believe the premier at the time was Peter Lougheed. Class sizes were ridiculous. I remember being in Grade 9 and there being maybe like 40, 41, 42 people in the class; just ridiculous. There weren't enough chairs, people were sitting on the floor, people were sharing desks. I thought that was just ridiculous. I told my parents I was very upset about it and they're like, well what do you want to do about it? I was like, well I don't think the government should be able to get away with it. Our MLA at the time was of course Progressive Conservative, and when he came to visit to City Hall in Airdrie I got together with some people from school and we had a picket line in front of City Hall. I was like, you can't cross this picket line until you speak to us. I think it might've been the first picket line he'd ever seen in his entire life. That was something for me - I don't think this is right and I don't think you should be allowed to do it. I think I deserve a good education and I deserve to experience public education. So things like that.

Even smaller things throughout my childhood, like when I felt very strongly as a kid that things were unfair or unjust. My parents did really encourage me to kind of voice those beliefs, and also, I think importantly, to sort of think about ways that I could approach them. So often people would be like, oh that sucks, you should just maybe tell someone about it or write an email. But my parents always encouraged me to be like, okay how can you get that person to change their mind, how do you think you could get that person to stop? So that encouraged me to think about politics as power. Who has the power in that interaction? That was also very humbling as a kid, because when you're a 14-year-old and you're like, I don't think the public education system is working for me, you don't actually have any power to change it. Just like right now as an individual, I don't really have any power to change a lot of the problems that I think we experience in society. But I know that by talking with others and working with other people, we do collectively have power.

Q: Did you go to university, or did you enter the job market directly?

KJ: I went to university. Because my dad was a professor, I had a certain number of free classes per year. I received a scholarship out of high school, so it was very cheap for me to attend university. But I have not, as of the date of this recording, finished my undergraduate degree. I could, so I think I might, but I just haven't done it yet because I've been working for a couple of years now. I studied also abroad at the University of Glasgow in Scotland when I was 21 in 2016, and then when I came back from there I started working as a bookkeeper. Now I'm working as a union organizer.

Q: What were some of the jobs you had?

KJ: I had pretty much the classic assortment of jobs that you get when you enter the job market and don't have any experience. I worked at Canadian Tire as a cashier and I also worked in the warehouse at Canadian Tire. I also work in childcare out of Good Life Fitness. They're not technically daycares, and the reason I know they're not technically daycares is because daycares have a ratio of adults to children that you have to follow. It's technically a babysitting service, and they called it that so they could get around the ratio of it. So I worked there when I was in college. What else did I do? I worked as a barista at Tea Bono, which was a very strange orientalist Tea Shop in Market Mall. Then I also worked at the student newspaper at the University of Calgary. I was the opinions editor there and then I was the Editor in Chief. Those jobs I did for the most part while I was doing other jobs, because they did not pay great but they did pay a little bit of money here and there. And I worked as a tour guide at Dallas Coalmine, which is a national historic site. So kind of an odd collection of jobs. Since I have lived by myself and not lived with my family, I have always worked kind of professional type jobs. Even when I was using the money to do things like pay for school or whatever, I never had to use those jobs to support myself, which is incredibly lucky that I had parents who were willing to support me. I lived at home until I was 22, so that was very fortunate and definitely allowed me to get a bit of a head start in life, because I didn't have to accumulate a lot of debt or anything.

Q: What about Canadian Tire?

KJ: Awful, awful job. I made minimum wage. I had to pay for my uniform out of the cost of my wage, and I think it was about three hours of work. I made \$9.95 an hour. Really unpleasant. The managers there were very heavy handed with how we were observed. I got told off a lot for leaning, which I think is pretty common in-service sector jobs where, if you have time to lean, you have time to clean. From my hair being too frizzy - a lot of things like that; very heavy-handed management. It was definitely the worst out of all the jobs I'd ever had. Most memorably at Canadian Tire, a gentleman passed out in the seasonal isle and he was having a stroke. No, he wasn't having a stroke, he was having a heart attack, because I did CPR. I remember that because my manager told me that that counted as my lunch break because I had been out of the warehouse, which was my designated work area, when I had been giving CPR to this person. I was the only first aid trained person on staff. I was 17 and 18 at the time that I worked there. So just sort of like ridiculous, to have a teenager be the only person on your staff of dozens who knows how to do first aid, and then to take away someone's lunch break for performing emergency first aid on a customer. That was kind of typical of what I experienced at that particular Canadian Tire. It was just flagrant disrespect. Definitely I didn't take a lot of steps to change that, because it was my first job so I was getting very used to what it meant to be in the workplace. That is a very new experience when you enter the workplace, whether you're 17 like I was or whether you're younger, 14 or 15, or even older. It's just getting used to that experience of like, okay you have to do x, y and z. Your workplace is not a democracy. You have no control over what you're told to do or you're told to go. You had very limited control even over what your schedule was, things like that. We were also encouraged to break labour laws. This was something that even as a new employee I

knew was wrong. Oftentimes they'd want us to clock out and then cash out; they would want us to clock out and then count cash. I'd always no, when I clock out, I'm leaving. That is the end of my work shift. I'm clocking out and I'm walking out of the store. I consider cashing out being part of being a cashier, counting all of the cash. Definitely people were encouraged to work that small 15 or 20 minutes of overtime unpaid all the time, and that really grinded my gears, even as a young adult.

Q: Did any of your co-workers comment on it? Was there some collective complaining? Was there talk of unionization?

KJ: There wasn't talk of unionization, and that was because a third of the workforce was people like me, people who were very young and not there permanently intending to make a career out of it, and then maybe two thirds of people moving through jobs and things like that. Definitely unionization, whenever I approached it, was always difficult in places where people don't feel any permanent identification with their job or don't have any sense that they're going to be in this job for the long term. That's definitely how I thought about it and how I imagined my coworkers thought about it, is what interest do I have in engaging in a protracted struggle to improve working conditions at Canadian Tire when I don't even know if I'm going to be working here in a year. But I did notice that when I started saying, I'm not going to clock out until I cash out, all the other cashiers were like, yes, I'm not going to clock out until I cash out. There was just a basic lack of knowledge that that's illegal. I obviously didn't tell my managers that's a violation of labour law, but clearly, they knew they weren't supposed to be doing that, and had just been getting away with doing it for a long time. It was one of those things where just even being aware of what you're allowed to do and not do at work, whether you're entitled to your breaks or lunches, was helpful.

Q: How did you get involved with the labour movement?

KJ: I would say I first became involved with the Labour Movement in Alberta probably in my early 20s, and that for me was kind of the result of a political decision that I see the Labour Movement as one of the best ways we have to make gains as working people in our society. I'm saying working people sort of like very broadly as I understand that. As a professional worker I might not be traditionally what people think of as working class, but I do think that broadly speaking I have much more in common with someone who works at a hospital or someone who's a pipefitter than I have with people who own multi-million-dollar companies and have shares and things like that. For me when I'm thinking about how do we have power in society, how do we make changes, how do we get things done, it's just like, oh you interrupt the production or profit for rich people. That is really at the end of the day what they care about. This came from me reflecting on things I had seen as a kid or things I participated in. Things like the anti-Iraq-war marches - those were some of the biggest marches in history, and they did nothing to stop the Iraq war, absolutely nothing. That's because they're actually pretty easy for powers that be to ignore. A million people can go march on the street, but as long as they all go home at the end of the night and they feel that they've been heard or they've done something and they don't actually disrupt anything or disrupt the process of making war, then you

can ignore them. Sure, you might face electoral consequences, sure there might be repercussions for your party down the line, but overall, it's not going to actually stop their political project. For me looking at the Labour Movement it's like, oh the Labour Movement can stop things. The Labour Movement can just say, we're not going to work on this and therefore you will not make any profit. Even when it comes to anti-war movements, there's examples of that. The factory in Scotland refused to either make or ship - I don't know the details off the top of my head - to the Pinochet regime in Chile. There were dock workers in St. John's in Newfoundland who refused to load military equipment. There's absolutely an ability there. It was sort of when I started thinking more strategically, because I had seen the failure of all of the traditional political tactics like, let's have a protest, let's all write our MLA, let's have a petition. It's just like, this never works and I'm tired of losing.

Q: Do you think there's some legitimacy to those tactics?

KJ: I think they're legitimate; absolutely there's some use to them. They can build capacity, they can let you see where your support is. Take like gathering signatures for a petition - a petition is not going to make someone change their mind. But you can use it to gather contact information, you can use it to talk to people about an issue. That is incredibly useful. Say you were trying to build up support for public sector workers, like a hospital that was going to close. Gathering a petition with signatures probably won't do it, but you'll be talking to people about it, they'll be thinking about it, and you'll be building up support. If those workers did end up taking job action of some kind, people would already have been informed about it from a sympathetic view. Or with protests - protests can be capacity building, they can generate momentum and energy. But ultimately at the end of the day they are not a confrontational tactic - they are a pressure tactic. Pressure tactics have their time and place, but they don't always work. The reason I'm kind of fussy about this is I think for a lot of people that is the be-all-end-all of their politics - the last resort, the last step we would ever take, is a protest. That can't be the last resort, that has to be one tool in your arsenal.

Q: Where did you learn to talk like a classic left-winger?

KJ: The influence of friends, absolutely, and also reading and studying, and doing that with friends. For me a big part of my political development has been talking about politics with other people. I honestly can't imagine if I just had to sit at home every day and just watch the news when I came home from work and then just be, oh so that's what's going on, and then not talk about it with anyone. I think I would find that completely terrifying, because I wouldn't have the ability to make sense of the world around me, so being able to make sense of the world around me through talking to others and hearing the way they talk about it. I'm sure if I sound like a left-winger it's because those ideas and ways of talking transmitted to me through talking with other left-wing people.

Q: Talk further about your development as a trade unionist.

KJ: I started thinking more about the failures of these traditional things. But I was working in a nonunionized industry. I was working at a student newspaper, which does

not have unions. It's a very bizarre form of work, highly unusual. I was sort of not involved in the Labour Movement as a worker. My engagement with it was obviously quite shallow, because it's difficult to be engaged in the Trade Union Movement if you're not working as a member of a unionized workplace or in a workplace that is in the process of becoming unionized. So things like attending pickets, solidarity, things like that, talking with people who are involved in trade union work, that was a big part of it. I also became involved in organizing tenants through a group in Calgary called the Renders Action Movement. That for me was also the same way I talk about thinking about workplaces strategically, also thinking about housing strategically. The tenant-landlord relationship in a place where tenants are organized, you can disrupt the accumulation of capital by landlords. If you just don't pay rent, they can't make any money.

Obviously, I'm not suggesting that we were successful in widespread rent strikes or anything, but it's just like there is a way in which you can have power as someone in that situation. So that was some of the work that I became involved in. I also became involved a little bit in researching and writing about the Trade Union Movement. I definitely have not ever done a lot of writing, but I've done a little bit here and there. I've run a podcast that would occasionally cover the Labour Movement, so sort of involved in it to the extent that I was involved in left-wing politics, and the Labour Movement is obviously a major actor in it. So that was that process for me. I was also at the time involved in justice forums and direct action there, so just sort of a variety of things - a real pastiche, if you will.

Q: When AUPE hired you, were you in a union?

KJ: No, I've never been a member. Well technically I once worked as a research assistant at the University of Calgary, and I was an AUPE member. But it was an incredibly short contract, only a couple of months, so I didn't have an opportunity to become involved in the union.

Q: How did you learn about the history of collective bargaining and all that?

KJ: Because I know people who were in unions and because my parents had told me about it. I guess I got a pretty vigorous education from them in terms of the vocabulary of the Labour Movement. There's quite a lot of it, quite a lot of acronyms. Then also from reading and discussing things with friends.

Q: Who else, besides your parents, influenced you?

KJ: There is a friend of mine, Joel Forest, who runs the reading group that I have mentioned. This was very influential in developing my politics, because it gave me a structure and space with which to talk about and think about politics and read about politics, and that helped me to develop a better political analysis. I know a lot of people are not super keen on the idea of things like reading groups, because that's not action and that's not taking action. But I actually think it's really important to reflect critically on what we're doing and how we're doing it and what the outcomes are. Otherwise, you end up with just kind of this, and I've fallen into this too, where you've got just action for action's sake. I totally get it, because it feels really good to go do things. It feels good to go occupy an office or march on a landlord. You feel like

you're actually participating and doing politics. But if you just kind of reflexively do these things and do the same types of things and do them with the same small groups of people, then I don't really think that's politics. For me, part of developing politically is talking and thinking about strategies and tactics and ways of understanding the world. Obviously, it's not like when I'm talking to random healthcare workers.

I'm like, yes, I read this wonderful piece by Walter Benjamin which has influenced my belief here, but it does give me new ways of thinking and interpreting the world and understanding other people. Those are really useful skills for an organizer to have. He was incredibly fundamental in my political development in the past couple of years because he created that space where I had the ability to do it and also a space where there could be conflict in a comradery way, where people could push each other and test each other on ideas and strategies and things like that. That was really helpful to me. It's not helpful if it's just like everything you read you're like, yes it's interesting, I guess I kind of agree with it. It's good to be kind of antagonistic and conflictual in the things you read and do, just because that allows you to have a better relationship with them. So developing that healthy conflict in politics and interpersonal relationships, I really credit him with a lot of them.

Q: Talk about the work you did regarding Drumheller.

KJ: I first became interested in the Drumheller Valley coal mines because I was always very into coalmining, being from Wales, a lot of coalmining. I also just think coalminers are one of the most interesting examples of working-class radicals. Like I said, I was born in 1985 in Wales. I was born in the aftermath of the Great Strike. In my opinion, that was a massive defeat for the Trade Union Movement in Britain and it paved the way not only for Neoliberalism and austerity and deindustrialization but it also paved the way for New Labour, which is kind of what I grew up under, and was more of the same. For me, learning about the coalminers and learning about that strike was a way of explaining the world that I had been born into and why it seemed so different to me from the world that my parents had talked about. It's just sort of like, why is there this big break? Why did I grow up in a place that was like this and a world that was like this? It's oh, it's because of this. So, I was always very into coalmining. Someone mentioned to me offhand, because they knew I was into coalmining, "Oh there's this coalmining museum in Drumheller." I literally just went there with a friend on a day trip, an hour and a half from Calgary, and was like, this is the greatest place in the world. It's just one of the coolest places I'd ever been. I really did enjoy it.

I liked it so much that the next summer when I was looking for work, I applied to work there, and I started working there as a tour guide. That is probably, current job notwithstanding, one of my favourite jobs I've ever had. It's just like getting talk to people and kids especially, because we did educational programs about the miners in Drumheller and learning about it. That also for me I think was the start of something quite important in my political journey, which is I started to care more about Alberta and I started to care more about the prairies. I was born in Britain and my dad's British, so I was very interested in postwar British history. But it seemed to me when I

was growing up you did not learn a lot about Alberta or prairie or Canadian history in school. It's like this was a place with 40 years of Conservative premiers and nothing is every going to change, it's always going to be like this. Then for me, learning about the Drumheller coalminers was sort of this window into learning about all of these fabulously interesting things that have happened on the prairies and all these incredible moments of resistance and new ways of living. There's so many, there's too many to mention.

For me it's everything from from Louis Riel and the Red River Valley, which I do consider to be part of prairie history. Things like the wheat pools, a cooperative enterprise, and the birth of the CCF. You have the birth of the One Big Union in Calgary and the birth of the CCF in Calgary, both of which were astonishing to me when I first heard them three or four years ago. You have the miners. You have amazing things like the occupation of a residential school in West Edmonton that becomes the first First Nations college in Canada. There are all these little things that are happening, like the Ottawa trek. I was just like, wow the prairies are actually a very rich, interesting, beautiful place. I think that's also when I became more involved in politics too, because I began to see the prairies as a place where things could change and be different. Before it's just like, it's so hard to do politics, when who the hell was Ed Stelmach or whatever. It's just like someone they got out of the closet to be premier, just pulled him out of a bag. They're like, this is another Conservative we found running around; he can be the premier now. So for me learning about all these things I was just like, oh this is a place with political tensions, this is a place with political opportunities, and we can do politics here. Of course, this also coincided quite neatly with the NDP taking power in 2015. I'm not a huge NDP fan and obviously their term in office was pretty immensely disappointing, but that too was like a moment that was like, things can change. Even if things change for weird material historic reasons or circumstances that might never be repeated, they can change. That was sort of a conference of events and things that were happening for me personally that made me more politically involved in the Trade Union Movement.

Q: Were the demonstrations disappointing?

KJ: Oh man, in so many ways. 'Long term care beds' is a really big one. They're approached to negotiating with public sector unions. Even these days, Sharon Philips is on TV bragging about how she gains inroads into public sector unions. Well public sector unions, we're gearing up for the fight of our lives. To have people who are supposed to be our friends on TV bragging about how they didn't give us wage increases, well you don't get a wage increase, that's a cut, because other things get more expensive. That is immensely disappointing. The pipeline, there is nothing here redeemable here for my anymore. They're not just compromising, they're actively pursuing really dangerous politics against the pipeline for three main reasons: A, the climate - we should not building infrastructure, taxable bitumen; B, it's a violation of treaty and also it does not have the consent of peoples whose territory it goes through in interior and coastal British Columbia; and also, it doesn't even make sense economically for a variety of reasons. It's just there is much better pipeline terminals in the Gulf of Mexico, that we're finding capacity does not really exist in East Asia for the specific type of oil that is produced, etc. So, I think it's a completely false

promise that was made to the Albertan working class or at least to segments of it in order to facilitate these massive multinational oil companies making more and more money. The way Rachel Notley and her government talked about it were very disgusting for me. I was arrested protesting against the pipeline back before the government owned it, when Kinder Morgan owned it.

I was part of a group that occupied Kinder Morgan's offices. I was arrested for criminal mischief and also resisting arrest. I felt so very strongly about that and so very strongly about my future on the planet. The way Rachael Notley talked about people like me, like we were completely foolish, wreckers who didn't understand that she's the best thing that ever happened for the environment, and we were just as bad as people like - and she'd say - you're just as bad as people like Jason Kenney; you're extremists. I really kind of felt like a very deep sort of break with the party in that moment. I think they made a huge tactical error to pursue an issue on which the Conservatives were always going to be more credible messengers than they were and to make it the issue of the election. To me it was also representative of the lack of political vision that existed with the NDP and within left Liberal, the mainstream Labour Movement, Social Democrats in Canada more broadly, where so often what they were doing is - and me, I shouldn't excuse myself from this - was just chasing polling, just being like, okay what's popular, we need to do something about it. Or like, what do people care about, we need to do something about it. Instead of what I believe the true work of politics is, staking out a political vision and convincing people and showing them how your politics are going to solve real issues in their lives. They were just chasing a poll that said that Albertans like pipelines. They're like, well I guess if you like pipelines you'll like us, and they did that all the way to losing to Jason Kenney. I also think they wasted a once-in-a-generation opportunity to have a majority somewhat left-wing government in office. Obviously, no one's asking me, but if I had been NDP and had been elected to power in 2015, I would've taken a very different strategy. I would've have just been, we're never getting re-elected so I'm just going to do as much as I can and kind of see what sticks in four years.

Q: What do you think about the Trade Union Movement in Alberta?

KJ: Generally the trade union movement in Alberta has the same contradictions that I think the trade union movement has in the first world or the imperial core, and definitely in Canada and America and settler colonial states where this tension exists where the Trade Union Movement was complicit in the dispossession of indigenous peoples from this area and also in colonization. Very often the people who were brought in to do that dispossession and do the dirty work of it were themselves incredibly marginal and incredibly poor. One of the things I think about when I think about this is actually an article by Walter Benjamin called Theses on the Philosophy of History. In it, he writes about this idea of an angel of history, and the angel of history is looking at history. What the angel is looking at is just kind of levels stacked on top of each other. I think so much about that when I think about people who were in Europe, incredibly poor and incredibly disenfranchised, proletarianized by the same processes that happened to indigenous people here by being cleared off the land, things like the Highland Clearances. Then they came here and did that to other people. So just sort of this stacking of awful things, all just ultimately for the benefit

of a small proportion of people, and we're fighting over the scraps. More generally of course with the trade union movement, I think that tension exists there. Also, the trade union movement does not have a perfect history; we all know this. They would not allow women into trade unions. They thought women were difficult to organize. It took massive strikes, like the uprising of 20,000 in New York with garment workers, primarily Italian and Jewish immigrants. And I'm thinking of the Atlanta washerwomen's strike that happened in the late 1800s, primarily black women going on strike.

So, I'm thinking about the chauvinism that existed within the trade union movement both towards women and also towards people of colour and workers of colour. Then too, the thing I talked about with being in the first world or the imperial core, is that ultimately our entire societies in the first world are built upon the plunder and the theft that happens of colonizations. The Labour Movement is obviously complicit in that, in both direct and indirect ways. In indirect ways, okay we all enjoy extremely high standards of living because other people in the world are forced to eat dirty, incredibly low standards of living. Then also in more direct ways, like people were literally building ships that were used in say the colonization of India. That kind of tension existed in the Labour Movement at large, and I think it's important to confront it and look at it head on. Despite all of that, I think it is still one of the best vehicles we have for affecting change. Just because it was that way in the past does not mean it has to be in the future. Just because a trade union was racist years ago or is even racist now doesn't mean it has to be racist in the future. Obviously those things are not going to change overnight and they have to be addressed through really specific education campaigns. But they can change. If I didn't think things could change, politics would be a very disappointing way to spend my time. Then in Alberta more generally there's the big tie-in of the building trades with the oil industry, which is incredibly problematic when it comes to what I think is in large a manufactured divide between environmentalists and working class people, as if working class people are not going to suffer the most under climate change. A major issue in Alberta and the issue that has impacted trade unions in the world since the '70s is the onset of Neoliberalism, the massive decline in trade union power. In Canada we also have something called the Rand Formula, which I'm sure you're very familiar with. It basically incentivizes trade unions to act as correctives to militancy among their own members. That is a huge conflict that exists within the Trade Union Movement. I don't know if anyone's come up with a great way to get around it. Say, if everyone in the Canadian Union of Public Employees was to go on a wildcat strike tomorrow, the union would be incentivized through the state, through fines or even jail time for their officers, to make sure those workers went back to work. That, I think, is a massive issue that kind of exists with the Labour Movement.

Another issue is the election of the NDP I think in many ways was probably bad for the Labour Movement. Can I swear on this? I was going to say, no one will make unions eat shit, like Social Democrats, because they have a relationship with them so they know more about them, they know more about their weaknesses, where they can push, exactly how much they can get than a Conservative government might. So, you end up with that issue and you also have this issue where trade unions will say, okay these

people are kind of on our side, we want to make sure they get re-elected. So, they might be willing to kind of take those zeros or things like that.

Obviously, all these things ultimately go back to the membership, but the membership of a union is pretty conditioned by structural factors and things that the leadership is saying. So I think those were sort of like the big issues existing. I think AUPE is actually probably the union that did the best under the New Democrats, or at least did the most to kind of push back on things. They were pretty confrontational with the New Democrats with the lockout that occurred in Cold Lake over private long-term care for seniors, over long term care beds. But what the government did quite cleverly is when it came time to negotiate with the public sector, they hired a negotiator who had worked for AUPE to work for the government. Like I said, that negotiator had so much information about AUPE from working in that organization. He's going to know where they're weak, he's going to know exactly how strike ready they are, he's going to know exactly what they're willing to take and what they're willing to do. So they were able to really kind of take advantage of that, and that was a major challenge.

Q: What are you doing for the Union now?

KJ: I work as a union organizer with AUPE and right now I'm mostly doing internal organizing. Internal organizing means that I'm not working with non-union workers who want to become part of the union, but rather with workers who are already part of the union. What I do day to day is I provide support for organizing activities. If you want to phone bank your members about something that's happening, I am the person who gets you the lists and who makes sure there are phones and who kind of does the back-end work of setting that up. Also training people in ways they can work together to take on their bosses, training people in setting up pickets and things like that, and giving people sort of ways of talking about sort of issues and kind of being there to facilitate questions. The model that I have used so far is that oftentimes people talk to local level officers in the union and give them information that they give back to their members through lunch and learns, coffee, meet your local union rep, those types of things. So thinking about what are the top takeaways we want people to be taking away, how do we make sure we are kind of communicating? That is the big thing. We're obviously anticipating a pretty major attack on the public sector from Jason Kenney. I'm not quite sure what to say about that. It is a really daunting task to think about. It's part of my job as a union organizer to prepare AUPE members across Alberta to be able to face on a government that wants to come after their wages and their jobs and our public services. I take that responsibility incredibly seriously. There are so many bits to organizing. I think it's a very important job. These are people's jobs and these are people's livelihoods. These are not things to be talked about or done cheaply. To me it's very important to take it seriously.

Q: How is that working? Are AUPE leaders onboard?

KJ: Yes. I imagine they wouldn't have hired me if they weren't onboard with that kind of strategy. I'm very outspoken about my politics and about what I think, and I absolutely could be a liability for an organization if they weren't actually thinking of taking political action. That, to me, is indicative of it. We are going into convention,

so the union leadership might change. But from what I've seen so far at AUPE, both members and leadership are ready to take action to defend their jobs in the public services.

Q: Could you describe your podcast project?

KJ: I work on a podcast called the Alberta Advantage. I host it and I also do the sound engineering, so that's just basically making sure that it sounds proper when it comes into your ears, then I do the editing as well with that. It is a project that came out of the reading group that I mentioned earlier. It was sort of like we all see each other regularly, we all talk to one another, we've all read some of the same things. We have kind of a common basis of knowledge in the way of talking about certain issues, and we didn't really see left-wing analysis happening of Alberta politics. At the time when we started, this would've been October 2017, if you wanted to go get a podcast about American politics or about things happening in Montreal or Vancouver, you could probably do that. But as far as Alberta came, I felt like that analysis was incredibly lacking. What we do is we provide analysis on Alberta politics from a left-wing perspective, and we also do deep dives into Alberta history and into prairie history. Things like the Social Credit party, it shocked me when I started learning about the things the Social Credit party said and did in this province. I didn't learn about that in schools, and they did absolutely wild things, things about black immigration into Alberta from Oklahoma, which happened as part of a wave of black settlement on the prairies. Things about the Wheat Pool and the wheat cooperatives. So just like history, and then looking at contemporary politics like the budget. What are we talking about when we're looking at platforms of political parties? And then some things that are a bit more abstract, so like what are we talking about when we talk about the median voter?

What are we talking about when we're talking about budgets or the deficit or equalization, and kind of debunking some of these ideas. I thought when I started it that it would be just a fun side project to do with friends, but I have been pleasantly surprised by how it is being received. It has found more of an audience than I expected it would. Our intended audience is not just a random person or your Conservative uncle. I would suggest if you want a Conservative person to become left-wing that you send them something else. It's just that I think they would find it very alienating and weird. But for us, the intended target audience was like how do we talk to people who are maybe somewhat Liberal? Maybe they like the NDP, maybe they're sort of worried about the environment and they recycle a lot. Maybe they're involved in their trade union but they're not super political. It's thinking about, how can we give people who live in Alberta a language and a way of thinking about politics that is coherent with a larger left-wing project and a larger left-wing political vision? That has been a really rewarding project to work on. I have developed a lot stronger analysis of what is happening around me. I think there is at large a general dearth of people thinking really specifically about where they are and the exact material conditions of where they are. Sometimes I think left-wing people in general, myself included, tend to think really big and abstract - oh these ideas are interesting. But thinking, what would they look like in the place I live? Who are the major employers in Calgary? What is the median income? What are most people's lives like? What are

the major issues that we're facing here, and what is the history of these things? Who has been involved in it in the place I live is really important. I would definitely encourage people, wherever you live, to think about the place that you live in.

Q: Who has access to it?

KJ: If you have iTunes or Stitch or whatever podcast app, you can listen to it. Anyone can kind of find it. Definitely our target audience is sort of people who are like maybe somewhat involved in politics but not left-wing, or they're somewhat Liberal or centre but not left-wing. We're trying to push them towards a more specific way of thinking about politics. I work on it, but I'm one of about a dozen people who works on it. It would also be very rewarding in terms of, like this is something that I was told in high school would be very important, is working on group projects. It turns out that that's true. It's learning to work with other people and other people that you don't always agree with all the time, that you don't always have the same politics with or belief on how things should be done or are involved in the same types of work. So, working on a collective project like that has been really incredible. Also, I would never be able to kind of keep up the level of work it requires if it was just myself and I didn't have other people doing the like administrative work or the social media or the research. I feel very grateful and blessed to have people that are working on that with me.

Q: What has been your experience as a woman organizer?

KJ: It's sort of interesting that you say that, because feminism was something that I thought about when I was a teenager. I suppose I'm a feminist in the abstract, but I think the mainstream feminist movement as it exists - I don't think is very compelling politically or has a lot to offer politically. So much of it is about kind of just like representation, like women can do things. We know women can do things. Frankly, I don't find it very empowering to see women cops or women soldiers or women bosses; that doesn't really help me. At the end of the day, those people are still part of a system that is overall bad for women. I don't need Conservative female politicians doing clap-backs in parliament when they're doing austerity that hurts women the most. This is obviously not the entire feminist movement, but the mainstream depiction of it does very much fall into it, and that is just not appealing to me. As far as my experiences go as a woman operating as a female organizer, I have a pretty thick skin. A lot of it doesn't really bother me. Definitely people will be a bit more condescending and will talk down to you, which is the obviously thing I experience on a regular basis. You really have to go out of your way to prove that you're smart and competent and know what you're doing and that you deserve to be there. A lot of the times people just do not trust that you have that ability or that you have a very deep understanding of what you're talking about. I think that is my dominant experience of gender in trade union spaces and also in society.

I don't like to talk about like when people talk about left-wing sexism or left-wing antisemitism, because it's just like of course those things are present in the left wing because they are structures that define our society. We live in a society that is sexist, that fundamentally devalues women and that devalues our labour, and that is run off our devalued labour. Just like we fundamentally live in a society that is white

supremacist, we fundamentally live in a society that is racist or people with colour, particularly black and indigenous people makes less money, that the society runs off their stolen labour. Obviously, those things are reproduced in left-wing spaces, because left-wing spaces are not outside of the world. That said, I do think left-wing people who ostensibly are creating a better world have more of a responsibility and obligation to tackle those things and to talk about them, because otherwise we're not being true to a political vision. But it doesn't come as a surprise to me. When I experience sexism in left-wing spaces I'm not like, oh you hypocrites, you say you like women and yet you are being condescending to me. I reproduce sexism as well. I was raised in a society that was sexist, and I reproduce those behaviors in myself. Even things like how I dress and how I present myself and the way I talk is a very gendered kind of experience and phenomenon. But overall, I don't really mind having to prove myself to other people. I'm also quite young, which I think plays into it a lot. A lot of people are like, who are you to kind of come in here and tell me to do x, y and z things or to tell me about this idea. You're in your early 20s. I'm like, I guess to an extent that's kind of fair, but I'm sort of happy to prove myself in that way. I fell like there's one more thing I want to say, but give me a second to think about it. Nope, it doesn't come to mind.

Q: Could you describe your interest in the 1919 mining issue?

KJ: The question is about my involvement with 1919 and also the conference here and also a conference in Winnipeg. I became interested in the 1919 strike because it is the large industrial dispute that occurred in the Drumheller Valley and also because I was very interested in the time that a man name Arthur Slim Evans, who was a major western community and labour leader who was involved in Drumheller, and really is just one of my absolute favourites. He once told the Prime Minister of Canada that you aren't intimidating me a damn bit. I think that's a great way to live your life, so I'm a huge fan. That's kind of how I became involved in kind of thinking about the 1919 strike in Drumheller. It's a very striking story. It has a lot of elements of things that interest me about the Labour Movement. It has people experiencing really bad working conditions combined with really bad living conditions, sort of like these exacerbating problems created by capitalism. It also have the influence of the state, because the state is really involved in the heavy-handed repression of these miners. Also, something that

I think sometimes gets a bit conflicted when we talk about the labour movement. It has a very conservative trade union that is honestly as much the enemy in the story as the bosses are. The United Mine Workers of America that was taking the union dues from these miners, they weren't doing anything for them. They weren't even negotiating for the things they asked, and they were trying for force them back to work. At the end of the day, they gave information to the bosses and they gave information to the state. They were a craft union, which at the time tended to be more conservative, more dominated by the eastern provinces. The One Big Union that the miners joined was an industrial union, more western, definitely more left-wing in outlook, kind of outwardly Socialist. When they were formed, they were like, we support the Bolsheviks in Russia and we call for the release of all political prisoners - very much involved in Communist and Socialist political movements. Just seeing all

these factors occur in one place was really interesting. Also, at the time I was researching it, I was living and working in Drumheller and reading about coalminers forming barricades in the hills of Drumheller and self defense patrols to protect themselves from special constables hired by the mine bosses. They were beating people badly, threatening to kill people, taking them out of town. People were tarred and feathered. Just to be in that place and think, oh my god, this was happening here - today it's a pretty sleepy town - to just kind of think about the ways in which that was happening was very interesting for me.

So that kind of became sort of a source of interest for me in terms of coalmining. It was also a link with a research interest I'd had for a long time and something that for me had really sparked my interest and love of the trade movement, reading about the Great Strike. You asked me in this interview who were some of the people who influenced me, and I talked about people in real life. But as far as people I've never met, Arthur Scargill, who was the leader of the National Union of Mine Workers during the Great Strike, he's one of those figures that to me is just kind of larger than life. In my mind, he's ten feet tall and a giant. He's one of those people that I sort of always read about, him and the Saltley Gate, shutting down Saltley coke depot during the 1972 strike. I really fell in love with the Trade Union Movement because I saw the potential of what it could do. I saw how it could be just this place for such immense solidarity and community and struggle. Tying that into my own life, I saw what happened when it was defeated; I saw what was left behind. I was just like, oh this one of the fights that is incredibly important. But in terms of my involvement with this conference, Alvin Finkel, who I believe is the director of ALHI. . .

Q: President.

KJ: President, there we go. That's the word I was looking for. He asked me to speak, because he's familiar with some of my work on the Drumheller coalminers. I live in Calgary, so it's a pretty easy drive. My partner's family lives in Edmonton, so you can tie a whole bunch of things into one, which was nice. When I was in Winnipeg I actually was not presenting there, I just attended randomly, me and five friends from from the podcast, and drove there from Calgary. There's no way to say this anecdote without sounding a bit nuts. We drove to Winnipeg in our rented van to attend this academic conference on the 1919 centenary strike, because we thought it might be fun. It was very fun. We stopped in Saskatoon on the way there and Winnipeg on the way back. We went to the Potash Interpretive Centre in Esterhazy, Saskatchewan, which is a great museum if you ever happen to be in Esterhazy. We made a podcast about it and talked to some people there. That was just sort of a mini vacation type road trip that I did. It was certainly very interesting to learn about. . . My favourite part of it was not the conference itself but was seeing the Ukrainian Labour Temple in Winnipeg. It is an incredibly beautiful building. "Workers of the world unite" carved in stone is on the door, there's these textiles inside from all the different regions of Ukraine. A choir sang us Lenin's favourite song. They were like, this is Lenin's favourite song, and then they like sang it to us. We heard Jane Macalena(?) talk about strikes. At the end of the night they were like, we could use some help with the dishes in the basement. A friend of mine went down to see if he could help with dishes in the basement, and he came back and was like, there's too many people

already helping with the dishes. I was like, now this is a society, this is the good stuff. That was my favourite part of that experience.

Q: What was Lenin's favourite song?

KJ: I don't know, because I don't know any Ukrainian. But yes, that's what they told us, this is Lenin's favourite song. I hooted and hollered from the back of the Ukrainian Labour Temple.

Q: Is it the one. . .

KJ: I think so; you know it very well.

Q: What kinds of things have you written?

KJ: It's an interest of mine, as I've spoken of before, but I wrote an article for *Briar Patch Magazine*, which is based out of Regina, Saskatchewan in Treaty 4 territory. ? is really wonderful to work with and does a very rigorous fact checking process and a very rigorous editing process, which is really great because I do not. I'm not a writer by trade or a journalist or anything, so I don't get the opportunity to write a lot. So getting to be a part of that process is really nice. I've written for them a couple times. I have an article coming out about the Toronto airport workers' council and I also wrote about the certification of the Helen Holman suites in Calgary. It was this very odd case where someone was fired for being a union organizer, and it ended up being a test case for some legislation that the NDP had brought in about retroactive certification. It was since of course just repealed by the UCP, but it was nice while it lasted.

Q: Was there anything else you'd like to say?

KJ: Yes, I'm trying to think about sort of things that would be. . .

[END]