

**LUCIEN ROYER**

August 1, 2009 AUPE Headquarters, Edmonton

Interviewer: Winston Gereluk

Camera: Ron Patterson

LR: My name is Lucien Royer. I'm currently the Director of the International Department of the Canadian Labor Congress. I live in Ottawa. I also live in Edmonton, my home town where I was raised. I was born in Lamoureux, which is a historic site in the province of Alberta right now. It's across the river from Fort Saskatchewan. I was born in Lamoureux and it is the first francophone community in what was then the New France, before Canada became Canada. My family was part of the first wave of immigration from France that really never stopped in Quebec for very long, but came west with the fur trade, and on my mother's side, came west with the big cattle drives and then north to Montana. I was born in Lamoureux, which is northeast of the city of Edmonton, then at an early age my family, mostly because of tough economic times that started right after the war, was forced to sell the farm and come to northeast Edmonton on a smaller farm. Eventually my father had to sell that and become a janitor for the Canadian Bedding Factory in Edmonton. I am very much the product of what some have referred to as the proletarianization of agriculture in Alberta in the late '40s, whereby not only my father was required to sell his farm, but many of our neighbors were required to sell their farms, move to the city, get a job, and live in the city as new industrialized workers.

Q: What were the circumstances under which your family came from France?

LR: I don't know much of the details except for the fact that in the mid 1800s in France and perhaps all over Europe, it was really difficult times. There was not enough land available for much of the people, especially in northwestern France. There were very high levels of poverty and there was not very much room to solve individual personal and family problems, at least at the economic level, except to pack up and leave and go elsewhere.

Q: What sort of political background do you come from?

LR: My family background was deeply religious, deeply entrenched in Catholic church ideology, for the most part. Because of the francophone connection, they were largely Liberal, that is political party Liberal, in much of my youth and growing. I think it was born out of being Liberals and the family being Liberals, not really born out of great thought. In the process of selling the farm and moving to the city and my father working for industry, my father did not really ever have an ideology of thinking. My parents did not have a chance to be educated very much, so they operated very much at the level of sentiments. My father, for the years that he worked in the factory after being a farmer, developed a sentiment about the employer that he never had before. He knew that his coworkers, for the amount of work that they were expending in the factory, weren't getting very much in return. He developed over the years a mistrust, if not a complete dislike, of the employer. He was probably among those first group of people that started thinking we should get a union. This would've been the first opportunity in my family of

anybody talking union. My father, I don't think he was an organizer, but he probably signed on to join the first union at the Canadian Bedding Factory, and was fired for it. Actually, all of them were summarily fired. My father, at the age of mid-50s, was basically required to start fresh and start new. So that really set the tone, at least on my father's side, about how the employer deals with workers. I was very much associated with that. The Canadian Bedding Factory, when I was ten or twelve...

Let me just finish the thought about the Canadian Bedding Factory. I was 11 years old now, in the final years that my father was working there. The company exercised a disguised form of child labor. My father was a janitor but he was also a night watchman. The employer would actually create such huge shifts. For example, my father would arrive on Thursday night to work the midnight shift at 11 o'clock, stayed the entire next day, and stayed almost the entire following night without sleep, with a very heavy workload. The only way that the men were able to do the work was to enlist the support and work of their sons, who would come in the factory at night, almost secretly, and help their fathers to do work. It was never recognized as child labour, but that's what it was, and never recognized the role of the employer in enlisting and involving the sons of the workers into production. That whole process of my working with my father really shaped my attitudes about the employer, about industrial relations, and about production and who owns production and who controls production.

Q: What education did you have?

LR: I entered university with a general perspective of pursuing studies in philosophy. I think I was mainly motivated into philosophy because at that time I saw opportunity for more discussion and intellectual reflection about the nature of change, and I was attracted to that. As it ended up, when I ended up in university, I found myself becoming more and more interested in student politics. I think by my sixth year of university when I was in graduate studies, I was more interested in the politics that the Students Union was involved in than, by then I was deeply entrenched in the study of science and neurology and spent a lot of time in Laboratories doing hard science. I found that to be less interesting to me in terms of engaging in change, and it was a conflict. But during the graduate studies I spent more time in student union issues and less time in Laboratory issues. As I spent more time in student union issues, it was the late '60s at that time, the public consciousness about environment was on the rise. I became one of the first generations in that historical process or trend, to actually weave in that environmental consciousness into my own framework of action.

At the university, at the Students' Union, I became involved in the main environmental organization of the day, Save Tomorrow Stop Pollution, or the acronym called STOP. One of the first tasks I undertook was to create a coalition of lawyers and scientists to initiate at least one lawsuit - it actually turned out to be five lawsuits in the end - against what is today Suncor but what was then the Great Canadian Oil Sands, for violations on environment. I spent six years of my life engaging in that process and seeing the lawsuits through the courts, testing the environmental laws, and actually testing what can be done

about multinational corporations. In that process there was a need to develop a relationship with the union that was closest to production at GCOS, so that we could gather evidence. That would have been the Atomic Energy Union at the time, Oil, Chemical and Atomic Union. With them, they actually guided our way. This was basically unofficial relations, because there was no relation between the unions and the environmental organizations at the time. They were mindful of the fact that any information they gave us may have a direct influence on their jobs one day. I didn't know it at this time, but this was to become a pivotal issue for the entire time of my career, in terms of how to institute changes in production without threatening the lives and the work of the workers working there. So, this was my entry into the environmental movement but my first period in it was to develop a connection with the trade unions to gather evidence and initiate the lawsuits. But that in essence, without realizing it, brought me into scope of the union movement clearly. I had worked in the Canadian Bedding Factory but I had nothing to do with the union until much later in my academic career, then I came full circle and now I'm back with the union. That was enough for me to perhaps psychologically be married to the trade union movement until the end of my life. I really entrenched the idea that workers needed to become organized and to collectively shape history, first of all in their own area of work, their own community, their own workplace, but also shape history globally. I think that now nearing the end of my life, this was the mission that I had adopted without knowing it was the mission that I had adopted.

Q: What was the focus of the lawsuits against Suncor?

LR: The main focus was, at that time, first there was an evolution. In the early '60s in the world and especially in Europe, there was a growing level of consciousness about environment. That translated into the Stockholm Conference. The Stockholm Conference led many governments, including Canadian governments as well as the provincial governments, to institute their first departments of environment. Then the big struggle after that was to get those departments to institute environmental legislation. Alberta introduced the Clean Air Act, the Clean Water Act, the Land Surface Reclamation Act, the Water Resources Act, and a number of other significant pieces of legislation. But the especially crucial ones, the Clean Water Act and the Clean Air Act of Alberta, were very weak. There were standards, but there was basically self reporting. It was ruled by - what is it in English, when it requires the approbation of cabinet – an order-in-council. It was basically management by order in council. The standards were very low.

That's the point of history that I come in to STOP. The department has been created, the law has been established, now we're at the stage of realizing that all this decade of work has been not very fruitful, because the legislation is so weak. So, the focus of my involvement and the intervention of STOP was to highlight the deficiencies of the law. We then engaged in this big campaign, which ultimately lasted eight years, to test the law of using various legal mechanisms, and launch a lawsuit against the Great Canadian Oil Sands.

In the end we launched eight lawsuits against the company. All of them were under either the Clean Air Act of the day or the Clean Water Act of the day. Just to give you a sense, one of them was directed against the GCOS tailings dyke. The reason we picked the GCOS company, first of all they were the first ones there. Also, the technology of GCOS has not changed. Syncrude and the companies coming up now are talking about the same level of technology, with higher levels of efficiency, but not much. All they're doing is talking about scale, the scale of the operations. So, we knew that what we would reveal about GCOS we would reveal about the inherent contradictions and problems with the development of the tar sands generally.

Just to give you one example, we launched a lawsuit under the Clean Water Act because CSOS was, through its drainage pipes at the base of the tailings pond, dumping 400,000 gallons of acutely toxic material into the Athabasca River a day. It took 2-1/2 years to gather the evidence and information. When we arrived in court, that particular session lasted a full week. We presented the evidence, and the only thing the company did was to introduce a worker that lived in the Ft. McMurray area, that worked for the company. He testified that he had fished along the river for many years of his life, and at no time during that time did they ever catch a dead fish. On the basis of that defense, the company was found not guilty. That ended the case. All of the charges that we laid have similar stories, and it really revealed the weakness of the legislation of the law. I think we gave birth to a new generation of environmentalists. Thereafter several years, when I look at how things evolved, first of all there was a heightened interest in environmental law. You'd have a lot more young environmental lawyers that were interested in developing that area. I think in about seven or eight years there was another round of legislation. There were environmental amendments that followed, but the law was still not strong, and there was another round among the new generation of environmentalists, and the story continues until we have the Great Canadian Tar Sands today with not much stronger laws, and still the inherent technical problems that existed still exist at the GCOS site.

Q: Who were some key people you were working with at the time?

LR: The key people at STOP would've been Louise Swift and Mary Van Stolk at the time. This would've been in the first years of STOP. Then my colleague Jean Poulin joined the team. We basically built the organization from four people to about 15 people before I left. They were all young students and very committed. By the time I left, this was already eight years later, there were a lot more people interested in the environment. But I was at that time, when we were finished with the lawsuits, I felt that I needed to, first of all my inclination was to put less emphasis on environmental protection and more emphasis on union organizing. I did not see how we could protect the environment in the world without there being a strong union at the level of production in place.

I was by then 28 or 29 years old. I decided to quit STOP and I decided to just dedicate some time to my own awareness and learning. I went to work in Bolivia with the Tin Miners Union. I knew that that would broaden my scope, but also it kind of tied the knot with respect to working with a union. The Bolivian Tin Miners Union have a long

struggle in the tin mines. Whereas in Canada I developed my intellectual framework for union organizing and commitment, in Bolivia it strengthened my psychological commitment to the union movement and also to progressive change.

Q: What was your experience in Bolivia?

LR: At the time, Bolivia was managed by right wing military dictatorship, the Banzer regime. It was also the time of very rapid expansion in the Amazon part of the jungle. If you look at a map, the Amazon actually begins in the high levels of Bolivia and Ecuador. There was high levels of migration into those newly developed areas. What I saw was heavy duty slash and burn. I was near the beginning edges of massive destruction of forest for promoting mineral development in Bolivia. It was also, tin is a strategic metal from a military point of view, and the United States government right after the first World War stockpiled, I don't know how much tin, but they stockpiled a considerable amount of tin and kept their stashes in three different places in the world. But they almost always bought the tin from Bolivia. What they would do is they would control the price of tin. When the Bolivian government or the Bolivian employers in tin threatened to raise the price of tin, the United States would dump their own reserves of tin on the market to depress the prices.

That had horrific impacts for the workers. The workers at Yayagua, which was the oldest tin mine in the world, went on strike because the employer wasn't giving in in terms of increasing the wages. I'm talking about wages from starvation wages to less starvation wages, and literally they were starvation wages. Now I've lost my stream of thought. ... Anyway, my role, I had been in the country for five months, but before I went to Bolivia, I stopped in Mexico to study Spanish. Intensive Spanish, you're not bad after a month and a half. In five months, I was functioning in my Spanish and I was able to interact. I had a Canadian passport and because I had a Canadian passport, I was free to travel within the country without hindrance, whereas the Bolivians were not. They had to cross many military checkpoints and were questioned. Because I was able to travel, I characterized myself as the go-between, the organizing committee of the strike in Yayagua in the tin mine center, with the one in the capital city of La Paz. I just basically traveled back and forth and was the communicating agent.

In the end I was in Yayagua and there were four of us; three of them were from Europe, I was from Canada. Another one was from the UK. Both Canada and the UK were considering a massive amount of money donation to Bolivia for its Bolivian tin mines. So we were kind of treated with kid gloves, although at the end we were both arrested. Instead of other cases, where we would have disappeared, we were just escorted to the airport and told to go home. We were basically kicked out of the country. I had a Canadian passport - white boy from the north - that's all I got. But the rest that remained, the people on the committee with which I worked, especially in the tin mine centers, there were seven of them, six were dead by the following year and the last one died two years after that. They were either massacred or they disappeared, or they died of

unknown causes, so to speak. I came back a very committed trade unionist, and well rounded. ... This would've been about '80 or '81.

I came back. I was away for nearly two years. I landed at the Toronto airport without my bags and without a lot of money, and I wasn't prepared. I didn't want to be in Canada. I was kicked out of Bolivia and I didn't want to be in Canada. So, I came back and it didn't take long after I returned that I heard and was invited to come to a meeting about the People's Food Commission, which was a broad-based coalition with the trade unions across the country, highlighting the contradictions of the Canadian food system and pointing a direction to solutions that were important for activists to engage in in the decades that followed. To make a long story short, I became the commission for the People's Food Commission out of Alberta, but I also became one of the four national commissioners, which meant that we were charged with the writing and production of the final report of the People's Food Commission. It was also my first entry into the development of broad-based coalitions with Labour on issues. For me it was kind of broadening out from environment, from unions, into broader economic questions relating not only to food but many other aspects of the economy. That two-year exercise, I think at the end I wanted to know more about decision making at the international level. I decided I would take three months off and I went to New York. I worked in the library at United Nations. I volunteered my time at Columbia University and I took a few courses there at the same time, but essentially, I wanted to know more about the United Nations system.

Q: What did the People's Food Commission do, and what do you mean by contradictions in the food system?

LR: Maybe take the last question first, which are the contradictions of the food system. It was primarily about the food system in Canada. But the coalition was developed in such a way that there would be linkages, that we would identify the linkages between international trade, food exports and imports, and the significance of the fact that there was ample amounts of food in the world to feed everyone, yet there were great gaps of people that were not being fed adequately. These were the contradictions that we started off analyzing, as well as issues like who controls prices, how are the prices controlled institutionally but also economically? More than anything else, the coalition attempted to raise awareness among its participants. This was its main task. Those people who were involved in the conducting of hearings across the country were primarily educating themselves, although under the guise of a public process that would convince the public. I don't think we did convince the public much, although there may have been some of that. We basically refined our own analysis about the food system across the country.

I don't know if we ever did a count, but I'd say there were 500 or 600 people involved in the organizing of the People's Food Commission, identifying where public hearings would be held, identifying the key players who had information to come and provide briefs, to do all of those logistical things. You involve people for very different reasons, and they come to a hearing and they learn. That was the basis. We looked at

contradictions, but in the process of looking at contradictions we collectively became convinced that, no matter what the contradictions, if you want to deal with any contradictions you have to organize. You have to organize on a massive scale and draw in a lot of people that not only are not convinced, they just don't even know about the issues.

This answers your first question, which is the whole notion of coalition development as a basis of change. For me at that time it was the whole notion of the trade union movement linking itself to coalition development, largely because I did not see, and now I'm even more convinced of this, even globally, that the trade union movement alone will not be able to address the global challenges that are facing us. And the so-called civil society alone will not be able to do it either, because it's at arm's length from production. The only solution is the linking of the two. That was to shape the rest of my life but also to shape the nature of the work that I undertook when I was hired at the Alberta Federation of Labour.

Q: Do you have any documentation surviving from your work in Bolivia?

LR: Yes, I have a briefcase full of documentation.

Q: Do you have any documentation from the People's Food Commission?

LR: Yes, I have some.

Q: It's important that we scan that.

LR: The coordinators of the People's Food Commission in Alberta were only two people, with a volunteer advisory group. So we weren't that many. But despite it, we held more community and union hearings than anybody in any province, in terms of sheer numbers. In terms of sheer numbers, I'm not sure of the actual numbers of people, but we held more small-town local union meetings where the union executive would say, okay we'll give you an hour or two on the agenda, and you can come and ask your questions and consult us. It was basically a consultation process. We really learned a lot on how the price of food actually shapes what workers will ask for in terms of wages. It was very much linked.

The whole notion of food production and availability of food and prices of food is very much linked to the livelihood of workers and what workers will need to survive. All these connections were a product of the People's Food Commission. In the end we produced a document and to the outside observer they'd say, that was that, and everybody went home and we haven't heard from the People's Food Commission again. To some extent that's true. However, 20 years later I see the people of my age that are now working at the House of Commons or other positions, and how that experience has shaped their behavior. In my own behavior, I ended up coordinating the activities of trade unions at the United Nations, dealing specifically with food issues. I realize now that there is a generation of colleagues across the country that have been shaped by that process and now continue to be involved in the decision making about food and food production.

Q: What happened to you next?

LR: There was a gap there. The end of the People's Food Commission... First of all, I had come back from Bolivia, I got involved in the People's Food Commission but I slowly became reintegrated into the environmental movement of Alberta, more or less as a volunteer. By then the environmental movement had branched out in Alberta. Some elements were still there and continued to be resistance, environmental law, questioning the decisions of multinationals and the government. But there was a new wave, which was energy conservation, prevention. Education was much stronger. I got reconnected to the energy conservation leg of it. That was an opportunity for me to bring myself up to date on the technology, particularly the technology that was needed for the future and what role Alberta could play in the scheme of things internationally that it still hasn't played. Those two streams required connections with the environment movement. I had an opportunity at that point in time to go work with the Alberta Federation of Labour in special programs focused on human rights.

Q: Was that in about 1984?

LR: Yes, that would've been about then. To an outside observer, they would say, this is a completely new track. But from where I stood, it was just a continuation of the same track. I had struggled a decade and a half in environment and the trade union movement, realizing that a basis of many of the problems I encountered were human rights problems. The basis of my work with the trade unions were basically trade union rights problems, which are part of the same body of issues. By that time, it was the Trudeau government. The Trudeau government was debating the passage of the Charter of rights of Canada. Is it the charter of human rights? I think I'm confusing some dates, but by the time I started at the Federation of Labour the Charter of Rights debate had not been concluded. It had been put on the table for broad based discussion, and the Alberta Federation of Labour decided that they were going to promote the charter of rights and get the trade union movement to support it. That was my first job.

There was a big debate at the time because the way the Charter was drafted, it evolved into the recognition of the freedom of association. But without further clarification, if the freedom of association incorporated the right of collective bargaining and the right to strike, what exactly did it mean? There were factions of the trade union movement that argued that we should organize a campaign to defeat the passage of the Charter of Rights as opposed to support it. We were among the few, with the Ontario Federation of Labor, to support it and push ahead, arguing that the very historical notion of freedom of association does incorporate those other notions of collective bargaining and right to strike, and that we needed to do our homework with respect to that. Well as it turns out, there were even after that period of time a long string of legal cases that eventually went up to the Supreme Court. But I think for a decade, the court actually held the view that the freedom of association does not really incorporate freedom of association collectively for two decades. It took a Canadian Supreme Court decision to turn that around. In the end, I think that exercise for me was, first of all I was now working for the trade union movement, and second of all it created a floor on which I was standing. That was my



foundation for beginning my work at the trade union movement on the basis of freedoms and rights and human freedom.

Although I only worked in that field directly at the Federation of Labor for two years, that notion became axiomatic to everything I did after that until this day. The freedom of workers to participate remained and continues to be fundamental. Then I was working at the Federation of Labour and there were a number of things that happened. By then I had become special programs coordinator on human rights to special programs director period. Near the end of that period an unruly gang of workers at the Gainers factory decided they would go on strike. That put myself and other colleagues at the Federation of Labour in a completely different political framework. I then became a staff member of the Federation of Labour to actually support in coordinating the strike. That ranged from supporting the UFCW local that was on strike, but also more organizing things like phone banks, the usually things that trade unions do – getting people together, organizing rallies, planning meetings. During the entire strike, the staff people and some of the executives met very early in the morning three times a week and decided on who would do what. That was my work.

In the course of that strike, the then Minister of Labour declared earlier on, review of Labour laws. In the same way that going to court against GCOS revealed the deficiencies of environment legislation, this exercise revealed the deficiencies of Labor legislation. The Alberta Federation of Labour saw in it the opportunity to raise the awareness about the deficiencies of that law, but also see if we could make changes that would favor workers in the end. Because of the Labour Law Review, we needed a little arm of the Federation of Labour that would focus on that, organizing meetings throughout the province with workers to make them aware of the Labour law changes that were being proposed, and to raise the key questions that they needed to either support or oppose, and to see about a collective effort in terms of making changes to Labour law. I was certainly focused, I don't remember, it certainly lasted two years, on organizing regional meetings, distributing information and organizing rallies. Those rallies spilled over into a number of other events, such as the organizing or May Day. Initial Maydays were all about the Labour laws and strikes. I'm not even sure how many Maydays I was coordinating; it must've been five or six. But then the May Days developed other general themes, broader themes, and of course always now in coalition with other groups. I'm just trying to come back to my role in the Federation of Labour now, through what came to be known as the Change the Law Campaign, which grew out of the Gainers strike.

The exercise led me to, or at least in other people's perception, that I would be the person that would contribute most to coalition development, almost on any issue, mostly because there was the understanding that, despite the fact that we never did get the law changed to our liking, there were elements that became more clearly visible that the trade union movement can become stronger if it does associate itself with civil society in the broadest sense. So then change the law, the Gainers strike. We then started engaging in a process to develop a coalition on the free trade agreement. These are all linked in one way or another. There's not like, oh we dropped this issue and go on to the next. We always

continued to work on all of the issues but it was a matter of focus at a particular time. I was then responsible for developing a coalition in Alberta that was part of a national coalition around the adoption of the free trade agreement with the United States.

At that time, what was happening to Gainers was a fundamental shift in the rules of production, especially manufacturing of food. It wasn't only in Alberta but it was manifest in Canada mainly in Alberta and Quebec, because Quebec has a very large pork industry. But what's more important is that it took place globally in the context of an impetus for growing levels of trade and the need for the removal of trade barriers – trade barriers for Canada, trade barriers for other countries to trade with us, and vice versa. It was also in the climate that the World Trade Organization was not evolved enough to actually become the primary body that would regulate trade. You would have a process that would continue that started a long time ago, countries negotiating their own separate trade deals.

At that time Mulroney was making moves with the United States to organize and conclude a deal with the United States on trade. Initially it was touted as a solution to a big problem. The Canadian public was never really educated or sensitized to what the problem was and never really clued in on what the solutions may entail for workers in the country and, in this case, for workers in the United States. I think the moves by Mulroney were to adopt this trade agreement, don't ask too many questions, and certainly don't expect to know very much about it, because it's beyond the scope of the average Canadian. There was a movement across the country, primarily sparked with activists in Ontario and the Canadian Labor Congress, that agreed with the development agencies involved, developing NGOs, those organizations that were very active abroad on finding money for different types of projects abroad, that were in Canada, convinced that the only way to deal with the free trade agreement was to deal with it with the trade union movement. So there you have another national level coalition that was developed and eventually became the Pro Canada Network, and I was the coordinator of the Pro Canada Network in Alberta for the purposes of fighting the free trade agreement. I don't even recall how long that lasted. I think it lasted until the federal election that actually decided the fate of the free trade agreement in the end. I left after that federal election or just before the federal election, to go work in Brussels with the International Trade Union Confederation.

Q: How did the coalition evolve?

LR: The coalition was primarily focused on the free trade agreement; therefore, it raised all kinds of questions about Canadian sovereignty and the Canadian power of decision making. It attracted the likes of the Council of Canadians and others to join in in cooperation under the roof of Pro Canada Network. The coalition, although it primarily focused on the free trade agreement, there were so many facets of it that were not strictly free trade. For example, the development of the forestry industry in Alberta would be severely affected by the free trade agreement. So then elements of the coalition wanted to focus on the institution of the Diashowa pulp mill industry in Athabasca. Although the

outside observer would say, well there are so many different issues you're working on, in essence they were all facets of the same phenomenon, which is the nature of trade agreements and the nature of this particular trade agreement and what it would do.

As the Coalition grew, it also became more complex across the country. There was also the need for, we had various coalitions in different provinces that were named differently. There was a decision within the national coalition that we would consolidate our effort under a new name that would be similar across the country for everybody. So, Action Canada Network was born. The free trade agreement actually was adopted in 1989 and after that followed the debate of the NAFTA agreement to bring into scope Mexico. I was already working in Europe at that time. But what was interesting was that the debates and the discussions about trade and the nature of trade have continued to flourish and become really serious. It's interesting also that Obama has basically declared that he would reopen the discussion about the free trade agreement, and particularly about the Labor side agreements. As a director of the international department of the Canadian Labor Congress, this has now come full circle. As recently as yesterday, I was involved in communications with trade unions in Mexico, the AFL-CIO United States and in Canada towards developing a statement to issue sometime next week about the free trade agreement. So, the thing has come full circle. Now we have across the country quite a lot of people that have been around for some time that know about the free trade agreement, and this puts us in a different position than when we were working on these issues a few decades ago with people struggling to find out what the hell this is all about.

Q: What was the issue with Diashowa?

LR: Diashowa, first of all it was how it was proposing to exploit the forest. Let's say generally it wasn't in a sustainable fashion, which was cutting down the trees, raping the land, getting the hell out, and selling the wood. Basically, that was it. There was a semblance of a reforestation plan but it was really meaningless. It was proposing to extract the resources in the same manner that the Hinton pulp mill had been allowed to operate for two decades in Alberta. I'm not sure in the end, I think that the standards were improved, the legislation was changed. But it still remains as a problem in terms of forestry extraction. We need to come and revisit that project at some point.

Q: What about the issue with the Lubicon?

LR: There again, you have all these interlinked issues of economic production, especially in the province of Alberta – a real push to export more manufactured goods or export raw materials such as forestry and oil. It's just a question of time for it to conflict with land use issues with aboriginal groups. The Lubicon Indians were attempting to finalize their claim after many decades of negotiating with the federal government. As part of this coalition, I was then coordinating the efforts around supporting the land claim issues of the Lubicon and in organizing rallies and supporting efforts on the actual site. The issue of the Lubicon, although it lasted almost two years for me before I actually left the country, like many other struggles, the Lubicon people that were involved in that struggle, they didn't have a lot of resources. We were able to engage in support in their

struggle to the extent that they were able to engage in their struggle. So, it was kind of spotty. One month you'd be actively involved in activities, and then there'd be six months where the Lubicon would be regrouping and reorganizing. That exercise for me was a good introduction to what later at the United Nations became basically an institutionalized agreement that indigenous people and therefore aboriginal people needed to be considered as a recognized part of civil society, and recognized institutionally. Later on, in my involvement with the United Nations, and particularly with the summit of 1992 where the United Nations adopted the major groups, one of them being the indigenous people, my experience with the Lubicon was sufficient to shape my understanding about what the trade union movement ought to do about the relationships with major groups generally but also with respect to indigenous people, not only in Alberta but also globally. For me that would be what I got out of the experience of the Lubicon Indians. I know that issue is still going on today; it still has not been resolved.

Q: How did you happen to go to Rio?

LR: First of all, by 1992 there was a conviction globally that there needed to be some sizable strong commitments about what we were going to do about the environment. The United Nations organized a Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. The Canadian government, along with many other governments, decided to participate. The Canadian Labor Congress at that time needed to be represented among the Canadian delegation and go to Rio. I was the Canadian Labor Congress, despite the fact that I was working for the Alberta Federation of Labor. They invited me to represent the Canadian Labor Congress at Rio. The significant part about Rio is that, although it was primarily an environmental summit, it actually identified the key actors that are part of the problems but mainly part of the solutions.

There, for the first time in history, the United Nations adopts a commitment towards the support of major groups, major groups being, as I mentioned a little while ago, one of them being aboriginal indigenous, but the other ones were workers in trade unions. These were reflected in nine major groups. Chapter 29 dealt with workers in trade unions. I was involved in the preparations of the trade union movement with the then ICFTU, International Confederation of Free Trade Unions to first of all entrench the participation of workers in trade unions in future decision making about the environment and also to identify the role of workers in developing solutions about the environment. But it was primarily at that point an environment summit. You can see all the connections of my previous decades of involvement actually come together in a summit of which many of the elements that I recognized I was personally involved in at some level. Two years later, because of that involvement, the International Confederation of Free trade Unions in Brussels hired me as their representative overseeing occupational health and safety environment, sustainable development and eventually HIV Aids globally. That involved coordinating the trade union activities worldwide, primarily at the institutional level, which is trade unions being represented at various organizations like United Nations, ILO, OECD, and others. Primarily that was my responsibility for the next 15 years, first

based in Brussels and then based in Paris. I was going to continue all of the various elements that I had been involved in in some fashion, but mainly to coordinate the trade union movement around them.

Q: What was your experience with health and safety at the Federation of Labor? Also, explain the concept of sustainable development.

LR: Sustainable development, there is a loose definition of it that was put out by Bro Harlan Brundtland that was charged eventually by the United Nations to produce the first fashioning document, discussion document, on sustainable development. That definition, without going into the actual definition, the definition really enforces the need to develop and understand critical links between problems. One of them that has remained key for me and the trade union movement was the link between environmental problems and social realities. Although the earth summit in 1992 focused on environment, that gave rise, well in fact the United Nations at that year also created what is still known as the Commission on Sustainable Development, that would meet year by year. I, with other colleagues, went to meetings year by year, and our primary intervention from the very beginning was that this cannot only be about the environment. The global problems cannot only be linking social issues to the environment or linking the activities of any particular group to the environment. It was more about integrating. The difference is that, in Alberta for example, we have approved a forest industry, let's say for example like Diashowa, we would ask environmental questions but we would never raise social questions. We would never raise, what social impact will this have in our community? What will be the impact on employment, the short and long term? What will be the impact on women? What will be the impact on youth? What will be the impact on aboriginal people?

Sustainable development is a framework whereby all issues become interlinked and the solutions to problems become interlinked solutions as well. From our point of view at the United Nations post-1992, our interventions were really that no matter what the economic activity, that the impacts of employment need to be understood prior to the execution of any decision, and the problems needed to be addressed in real financial and economic terms, so that no environmental or economic activity is allowed to run on its own without a full evaluation of the social impacts. Our activity stretched for 10 years until we reached the next summit, which was the 2002 Summit. That took place in South Africa. There, for the first time, the trade union movement succeeded in making that summit a real sustainable development summit. That summit considered not only environmental issues but also social issues as they are integrated with economic and social issues. For us the key issue was employment, but it broadened out in many other areas. I think now the whole notion of sustainable development is better understood as a common approach that links all of those issues together. I just want to say that since the industrial revolution the trade union movement has been doing sustainable development but it hasn't been calling it that. In England you had the rise of the industrial revolution. Workers were impacted through pollution of their environment, and they reacted with the employer and government. They were in effect doing sustainable development, but not calling it that.

Something does not become something unless you actually call it that. Now it's a new framework.

The elements are not new to the trade union movement. What is new is to put everything we do as trade unions within that framework, that is, to argue with the government that the labor laws need changing, not only because workers should have rights, but also to save this planet from environmental destruction. There's no way we will save it without the activities of workers at the plant site actively engaged with their employers to identify and solve the problems, will we actually get out of this mess that we're in in the world. So, it's a very different approach. The trade union movement globally has still not come to that full realization; it's still a very small number. But the number is there, and that's the difference in perspective.

On the question of health and safety, I arrived at the Federation, and there was a health and safety director who left two years later. There was a big debate in the Federation of Labor about getting a director. Of course, it's not just a question of getting a director; it's a matter of getting the money for a director. It's always a question of, do we have the money to have a health and safety director? I was to learn later that much of the discussion that went on in the Fed went on in many other places in the world, especially the industrialized world.

From what I saw, there was a diminution of focus on occupational health and safety. Because of the diminution there was always this internal debate within the union bodies. There was always a faction that was arguing that we need more money for occupational health and safety, and they were right. And you had the trade union movement that had to deal with the day-to-day realities of being under attack on many other different fronts, not able to develop adequate resources and not doing a very good job of occupational health and safety. Especially in developing countries. The way I saw the problem is that the activists in industrialized countries on occupational health and safety were not friendly to the arrival of sustainable development as a notion.

Many perceived that more focus on sustainable development meant less focus on occupational health and safety, and to some extent in the initial days that was true. However, I saw that if we were able to integrate it within the framework of sustainable development, that would more deeply entrench it into an institutional process whereby a focus on occupational health and safety could survive. As it turns out, it was 10 years of struggle at the international level to deal with that conflict within the trade union movement. Despite the fact that when we say, okay there is a strong link with occupational health and safety. Take the example of chemicals. It is an occupational health and safety issue. The chemicals become waste, it becomes an issue for the community, therefore it is a sustainable development issue. What are the social repercussions of that issue? We weren't able to convince occupational health and safety activists in industrialized country, at least not sufficiently. I think in the end it has resulted in the demise of occupational health and safety, that has gone down because of resource allocation by the trade union movement, because the trade union movement is not

capable, given the current economic crisis, to actually focus on occupational health and safety as a separate issue. Now it is not fully integrated in the sustainable development context and I'm not sure if it's going to survive, because it's not that strong either. The occupational health and safety activists for the most part don't give a hoot about sustainable development and is engaging in a process that is quite isolationist. As history shows, the more you are isolated in your struggle, the chances are that you won't survive. I think that's what's happening in the industrialized world now, a reduced capacity and reduced focus on occupational health and safety. There are exceptions.

Q: What are the various focal points that you are involved in and that shape the agenda of the international trade union movement when it comes to sustainable development.

LR: When you ask the question, I visualize umbrellas. There's one main umbrella that we call sustainable development. Under the main umbrella there would be a parallel umbrella that's as important but serves a different function. That is the umbrella that I refer to as the International Labor Organization. The ILO is the oldest agency within the United Nations family. It was developed after the second World War – sorry, after the first World War - when the parties recognized that to ensure peace and harmony that workers and employers needed to be engaged with their governments in decision making about the future. That led to the formation of the ILO, it led to the formation of a tripartite process of decision making of the ILO and in the institution of various instruments, international conventions regulating work, regulating the relationship between workers, trade unions and employers.

What is key in terms of the work that I did was that it has already produced a framework by which workers and trade unions can be engaged in social questions, environmental questions and other questions through activities at the workplace. The framework is beautiful but it has not been recognized by the other United Nations bodies yet. If we want to protect the environment, the argument went, we needed to first of all raise the awareness of workers at the plant site, we needed to have more insightful employers that are prepared to engage in a relationship with their workers to identify problems, to set targets and to work together towards making those changes, and that workers in trade unions already have an institutional capacity to do it that has been evidenced by occupational health and safety. That is, the occupational health and safety committee on the site has a tradition of being able to use a check list, go to the plant site and check it off, report, evaluate, feedback.

All of these what seem to be simple minded processes can be the building blocks for much a larger capacity of workers to be involved in decision making with their employers and with their governments. Now we have all those tools but those tools are not being effectively used outside of the arena of industrial relations. So that's the second level. Throughout my entire career, no matter what issues I worked on or no matter what institutions I worked in, it was always with the idea of actually promoting the ILO and promoting the ILO instruments that currently exist, and also pushing the ILO into new realms of activity. The ILO was not interested in environment for a long period of time

and was not terribly interested in economic issues, but was interested in industrial relations primarily.

My field of activity probably was linked to the decision making of various bodies. For example, the World Health Organization was dealing with public health but also workers' health. There's a large component that deals with workers. There it was to make the connections between the activities of the World Health Organization and with the ILO. These institutions are large institutions that don't necessarily talk to each other. There's the WHO. There was the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development in Paris, which is probably the leading intergovernmental body focusing on economic questions. There I coordinated the trade union interventions and participation in those decision-making processes that related to environment and sustainable development. There was also the large evolving picture with respect to climate change. There was first the round of debates and discussions about the adoption of the convention, the United Nations framework convention on climate change. That was also adopted, not ratified but adopted, at the same time in 1992 at the Rio summit. Then three years later it evolved into the adoption of the Kyoto protocol, which is expiring at the end of this year. It's being negotiated at the end of this year for a new Kyoto protocol. So climate change and the role of trade unions within that framework was my responsibility.

Then as I mentioned earlier, I was also responsible for the oversight of trade union activities on HIV Aids. So, my work also involved the coordination of trade union activities with UN Aids and with other institutions that did work on Aids, and that included the WHO in some respects and the ILO in some respects. Those were spokes in different wheels. At the center of the wheel was our role in the Commission on Sustainable Development at the UN. Although that body does not make decision that it can execute, it executes policy that other institutions can be guided by. For us it was a forum for self reflection, education and action. Trade unionists came every year for a decade and a half to the processes and that connected them to many other issues that they were involved in. Occupational health and safety was connected to the ILO; the ILO issues and conventions and occupational health and safety became connected to decisions that were being made at the OECD and other institutions. The role there was at the hub of the wheel, with the ILO instruments on the outside rim of the wheel, and the middle always being focused on what can the worker do at the worksite, what is the role of the unions? If the unions don't exist, why don't they exist? There is a need now to beef up the support of creating trade unions where they don't exist, and strengthening them. Not for the sake of industrial relations, but for the sake of saving the planet. This is now a new challenge. In industrial relations we do need to do what we're doing already in terms of defending the rights of workers. But I think we'll very soon shift to what we need to do to save the planet. If we don't have aware, conscious, deliberate workers at the plant site, we won't save our planet.

The trade union movement internationally is structured along the following lines, and most people will recognize it from their Canadian point of view. For example, the Canadian Energy and Paper Workers in Canada is affiliated with the Canadian Labor



Congress. The Canadian Labor Congress as a national body is then affiliated to the International Trade Union Confederation based in Brussels. About 140 countries and national bodies are affiliated to that international body. However, the CEP in Canada is also affiliated to its sector based international organizations, so therefore it is a member of the ICN, the Energy and Chemical and Associated Mining Industries Union now based in Geneva, and also others. There are 12 sector-based trade union confederations, called global unions, that stand as another body of trade unions along with the ITUC. The ITUC represents unions globally and the others represent unions sectorally. In addition to that mix, there are the regional trade union organizations, which are the ITUC component in Africa that represents workers' unions in Africa, one in Asia, one in Latin America, and one in Europe. For historical reasons, the European Trade Union Confederation is not affiliated to the ITUC but now in the last three years they're regrouped under the council of global unions. There we have for the first time a formation of trade unions that actually are meeting together on a regular basis, which brings together ITUC, the sector unions, and the regional unions, including the ITUC. It doesn't have much power. It's a very new organization but I would say that it's the new formation for the future.

Along with the regional organizations there is ITUC and the regional organizations and the Trade Union Advisory Committee to the OECD (TUAC), which is basically the richest industrialized countries making decision on economic principles have created after the Marshall Plan, an advisory committee to the OECD. There's a similar business advisory committee to the OECD, the Trade Union Advisory Committee (TUAC), which is also a member of the council of global unions.

Q: What is being done in the meetings on climate change?

LR: The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) was adopted in 1992. It wasn't until three years later that the Kyoto Protocol created arms and legs for the convention. Climate change was setting initial targets, setting the initial mode of operation at the international level for dealing with climate change. The trade union movement was really late in its involvement in climate change. It was really not involved in the initial decision making with respect to the Convention. For the most part, it was absent in the discussions. It was also absent in the adoption of the Kyoto Protocol. Because it was absent, there was nothing, except maybe a grouping of a few words in the convention, that really addressed the concerns of workers and the social impacts of climate change. This was kind of 'Johnny-come-lately' trying to fix the leaky boat - that's the feeling I had when we were involved.

The second year of the Kyoto protocol, there were a lot of governments and a lot of components engaged in the discussion in what became a very complex debate. In comes Lucien Royer, the sole representative of the trade union movement, a year after the Kyoto protocol, going to an international meeting that lasted almost two weeks, heavy on the cost to the trade union movement and for the trade union organization that wasn't convinced that I should actually be going. That was the reality. To go into these meetings with 5,000 people, you're not prepared, you don't have the resources to be prepared, it's

an overwhelming experience to say, well what can I do as an individual and what can we do as a union movement here, what role do we have to play?

For six or seven years, the strategy was two-fold. One was, first of all, to get more trade unionists involved and more concerned about climate change. Institutionally this was a big barrier within the trade union movement because it meant introducing a new agenda item to the ICFTU that did not exist before. The group that was most against our inclusion was the occupational health and safety activists, because they saw in it more focus on climate change and less on occupational health and safety. It was just not possible to integrate our work together when it could have happened. But it didn't happen.

Our main focus for three or four years was to create a presence of trade unions at the meetings and in the issues wherever we could, and to start talking about two things. One was the whole question of employment transition, that governments and all the other actors involved in the debate needed to recognize that no matter what, first of all, climate change itself, but our activities to address climate change, mitigation effects, are both going to have enormous employment impacts that needed to be addressed. Therefore, there was a need for sophisticated research on the issue with a capacity to identify what areas of interventions were needed in the near future and the long future. The second body of notions was related to green jobs.

The notion of 'green jobs;' we introduced the notion of green jobs about six years ago, where we started talking about that workers and employers can actually do a lot about climate change. If only doing the simplest things of agreeing that they would mutually do an analysis of energy consumption at their plant site and to identify the simple things, the basic low-cost things that can be done. That's the starting place. Then you go on from there to the broader discussions that they would have, for example in the Scandinavian countries, where workers and employers actually get together and decide what technology is being introduced at the workplace. That's a different level of discussion. But it is taking place and we do have the capacity in the trade union movement to deal with those questions now. So those were the two main areas. Over the years we went from one person to five people to 10 people. I think last year there were 125 trade union organizations represented at the annual meeting on climate change. I know that many of those now have become articulate in climate change. They know the background and they know the process that is in place, and they know the repercussions. They know that trade unions, it's no longer a question whether or not trade unions are involved in the climate change issue. It's more a question of how and to what extent and what are going to be the impacts.

Q: Did you have trouble getting the other agencies involved? How did they accept the involvement of trade unions?

LR: Universally, people came from ... I guess in any country, they responded to the call of the trade unions to be involved with disbelief, and to some extent with a question. We are used to having unions in our country; they go on strike over wages! What business do

they have here in climate change? Almost universally, there is not the understanding that workers can be involved in production and decision making and making change. There is not the understanding that, if you involve workers in decision making about something like energy conservation, that the results are a huge spillover effect. The worker actually develops an awareness about energy conservation generally and there is a modified behavior when he or she goes back home.

There is modified behavior with respect to how they vote, how they become involved in their community. That notion is just starting to catch on. There are tremendous barriers in seeing the potential of the trade union movement and in restricting the trade union movement to the perceptions of what they were in the past. That's really where it's stuck. So those were the biggest barriers. Our activities within these various institutions was to create a presence of the trade union movement as articulate and concerned, and to really convince others that by linking up with us it strengthens their position, and more fundamentally, that it's the only way that real change will take place. We did succeed. We have succeeded in actually creating those initial tremors, so to speak.

Q: The meeting in Nairobi about five years ago, the first international trade union meeting on sustainable development issues that you were part of organizing; do you want to say a few words about that?

LR: The meeting in Nairobi was a culmination of a decade and a half of work by myself and many other trade unionists working together. It resulted in the plethora of activity that were involved in many different institutions, and raising awareness, primarily within the United Nations system, of the role of workers and trade unions in the future body of change. It was the United Nations Environmental Programme that decided to host, along with us, a special meeting of trade unions within United Nations on what trade unions would do with respect to environment primarily, but also within the context of sustainable development, and to develop a body of United Nations principles with how to work with the trade union movement within the current physical climate context. That led to an assembly of trade unions in the United Nations center in Nairobi and for the first time, consolidated the notion of sustainable development and trade unions, with the future activity with trade unions. So that was significant. But that was already 3-1/2 years ago and we still don't know what the aftereffect will be. It has certainly done a number of things. One, it has brought the ILO into scope of the environment. It has drawn the ILO into discussions about climate change, for example, about chemicals management, about other issues connected to, but not primarily focused, on industrial relations. It also made it possible for other United Nations agencies to actually connect, primarily the WHO, OECD, and even the European community to some extent.

Q: What are the origins of International Commemoration Day?

LR: The international commemoration for dead and injured workers historically is bound to the activities of Canadian trade unionists. I'm not going to go into that history except to say that, at some point, it was adopted and created a national day of mourning in Canada on April 28<sup>th</sup>. It was a year or two later that the AFL-CIO adopted for itself April 28<sup>th</sup>; not

the American government, but the AFL-CIO. So, we had two trade union bodies in the world that made it a Day.

It was in the context of our discussions at the United Nations within the context of sustainable development that we decided we would bring April 28<sup>th</sup> into scope as a way of strengthening occupational health and safety, but also as a way of integrating it with the rest of sustainable development. We had our first international ceremony within the context of the Commission on Sustainable Development in 1996 in New York, thereby kicking off an international process of sustainable development. Our focus was always for the purposes of integrating occupational health and safety within sustainable development, but it never worked. It never worked for the trade union movement because the occupational health and safety experts in industrialized countries would have nothing to do with it. They would stick with their occupational health and safety agenda come hell or high water, and that's what they did. However, the attempt to connect it with sustainable development mixed with incredible results.

Rank-and-file trade unionists that became connected to sustainable development were eager to make the connection with occupational health and safety, whether or not they were occupational health and safety activists. This is primarily true for developing countries because of the trade union activists in developing countries. First of all, there are very few occupational health and safety activists. The activists there do all kinds of other things. So, it suited the climate of developing countries to integrate occupational health and safety, because they in their minds already saw it integrated. But in any event, that phenomenon, April 28<sup>th</sup> as an international date grew, not because of the occupational health and safety activists, but despite them. It grew because of the trade unions that became involved in the sustainable development framework. They're the ones that actually pushed it ahead. They're the ones that went back to their national centers and argued with the person responsible for occupational health and safety in their own organizations to do something on April 28<sup>th</sup>.

So now, to make a very long story short, we have the situation where 21 countries have formally adopted April 28<sup>th</sup> now. We are very much on the track with key bodies of the United Nations to actually move ahead now with the special resolutions to the General Assembly, to make it an international day recognized by all nations of the world. This again, despite the occupational health and safety activists that really lost out in the end. What's happened in the end is a diminution of occupational health and safety and a restricted place within the sustainable development framework. What has survived really well is April 28<sup>th</sup>.

Q: How is it being observed around the world?

LR: Now we have a situation where we have meetings of United Nations agencies that are taking place, in fact, the ILO, the WHO and many other organizations. We have trade union activity in about 120 countries. Two years ago, we estimated that about 14 million people were actually involved worldwide in April 28<sup>th</sup> activity, so it's really quite broad, quite strong. We could probably safely say that the level of participation and involvement

has far exceeded May Day. May Day, although it is a major activity, is an activity that is not organized in as many countries as April 28<sup>th</sup>. May Day is almost like organizing a rally, whereas April 28<sup>th</sup> is actually connecting a process to a wider framework. So, it's very different in that respect.

Q: Has the ITUC adopted April 28<sup>th</sup> in any serious way?

LR: The ITUC has adopted it at the founding convention. First of all, the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions was regrouped 3 1/2 years ago into the International Confederation of Trade Unions. The new formation, which by the way now involves all of the trade union bodies that were not affiliated, that body actually formally adopted April 28<sup>th</sup> as its day for occupational health and safety. So, it's entrenched in policy. Now the question is, will it survive in practice?

Q: Why did you leave and come back to Canada, and what position did you accept?

LR: When I came back, I only came back for a year and a half when I left the ICFTU. Then I returned to Paris to work for ITUC and TUAC in Paris for 10 years. When I came back for a brief stint, I was given the occupational health and safety portfolio to focus on, with a very strong element being workers compensation. That was kind of a new issue for me to work on. But it wasn't very long and it was kind of, for me, was a refresher of the realities of working within a local context and how the problems of dealing with issues within the trade union movement are similar right across the board. We tend to think that they're unique. We come into conflict with our colleagues at the office, and we conclude that these conflicts that are part of every day's work are unique because so and so is like this or that. We tend to individualize when in fact they aren't individual. They are inherent problems that exist everywhere. For me, that highlighted the importance of the personal dimension that never really is discussed in the trade union movement.

Q: But why did you leave? What's your mandate now?

LR: When I left, I think the dominant factor was that I was exhausted and tired of traveling. Also, I felt that in many areas of my work, whereas I was never really alone, there were just a few of us at the beginning, that there was sufficient participation of workers and trade unions worldwide that work could continue. It didn't need me as much. I was always committed to coming back to Canada for a number of reasons. First of all, it's my home and I like Canada, and I like the people living here, I have a community here. But, also,

I was always of the view that, although the frameworks for international frameworks of trade unions are possible, and we did create them - we did create formal frameworks for action - that the real meaningful action takes place at the national level. I always wanted to go back to the national level. I came back to Canada and I've been working at the Canadian Labor Congress for less than a year. I realize, and this is not a situation with the Canadian Labor Congress only, that national centers are very much entrenched in their own issues. They see international problems not as part of their own problems but as other problems that belong to somebody else. With the Canadian Labor Congress, as the

Director of the International Department, I keep thinking how things come full circle in my life. I started off at the Alberta Federation of Labor many years ago as the person responsible for pushing trade union rights through the provisions of the Canadian charter, and now I'm back at the international department of the CLC engaged in a process of educating workers in trade unions about the ILO and the ILO conventions and how to use the ILO conventions for domestic issues, not only international issues. This is part of my need to come back to Canada but part of my need to actually do work in Canada because this is where the real change takes place.

Q: What has been the problem historically with Canada's implementation and ratification of ILO Conventions?

LR: What has been the problem with recognition of ILO instruments and the ratification of instruments, including convention 155 to some extent - there is a problem when a country ratifies an ILO Convention. It commits itself to a tripartite process for the implementation of that Convention. In Canada, that's managed by Human Resources Skills Development Canada through the federal Minister of Labour. But for the process to work well, and we're talking about a tripartite process now, and also of significance is that the conventions that Canada has ratified almost 50 conventions out of 240, but the conventions it has ratified require then that the implementation be guided by a process that the trade unions and businesses involve with governments. Historically, what has happened is that despite the fact that this option of involvement for the trade union movement - the Canadian Labor Congress - was always there, there were no resources.

As an organization like the Canadian Labor Congress, you require considerable amount of resources to actually follow what a country is doing with respect to one Convention, never mind 50 of them. Part of the problem with Canada is that the social partners, ie. employer organizations and the trade union organizations, have been only minimally interested and involved in the process not only of ratification but of implementation. That meant that it has remained the purview of the Canadian government to do whatever it sees fit. In most cases, it has chosen not to do very much. Highlighting the fact that most of the most significant conventions that have been adopted were adopted by Liberal governments. Now we're in a phase where those instruments are coming back to haunt the Conservative government, which is required to report on the progress they're making with respect to each one of those conventions. My challenge is, this first round in the last six months with the Canadian Labor Congress has been to engage in a process with raising the awareness of the ILO in Canada, of the ILO instruments and how they can be used. That's the first step. Also, of opening the doors, making the government aware that the Canadian Labor Congress is henceforth going to be involved in the process and we will be insisting on the tripartite approach with respect to decision making.

I can give you an example. Canada has ratified convention 122. Convention 122 is the convention on employment policy that was adopted by the Pearson regime. That Convention commits Canada to a policy of full employment. That policy of full employment needs to be integrated with socio-economic policy. At the very minimum,

the country is obliged to make citizens aware of that policy. At this stage, I think most Canadians don't even know of Convention 122 and they certainly have never heard of the policy of the Canadian government for full employment and to engage in a process of identifying the impacts of unemployment and addressing those impacts on a full-scale level. This is now a new arena whereby we have rules, the country has adopted them. Now we have to push the envelope. Despite the fact that it's a Tory government in place, it has obligations and it must fulfill them.