

Alberta Labour History Institute (ALHI)

Oral History Interview

Interviewee: Andy Marshall

Interviewer: Winston Gereluk

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Location: Cochrane, AB

Index: Journalist - Communications, Energy & Paperworkers (CEP) – 1999
Calgary Herald strike – local union president - editorial independence –
Conrad Black – Labour Relations Board – strikebreakers - picket line
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Q: *Not everyone becomes active in a trade union in the way that you did. Give me an idea of your background. Where do you come from?*

AM: Actually, the background may not have foretold that. I was born in England, near London, but I lived most of my life in southwest England, in a rural existence. I was the youngest of three. My dad was a senior civil servant in local government; quite a real Englishman, with real English values. I was brought up with a lot of freedom, though, ideological freedom. My father did not participate in politics, because he said that as a civil servant he shouldn't do that. However, in the house I remember that we had a variety of newspapers. We had the Right Wing Telegraph, the Times, the Manchester Guardian. My grandmother also lived with us, and she had The Daily Mirror, which was the labour paper.

So, at a pretty early age I became interested in current affairs, and liked to read the newspapers. We had at our house quite a large variety of newspapers to get different perspectives on. I wasn't pushed in any ideological direction. I felt a lot of freedom and lived a life of relative privilege. The only doctrine was the Church of England. We went to church, and the church was a kind of formal doctrine. What was impressed upon me was the idea of service and the idea of helping those that were having difficulty. Other than that, there was no doctrinal or ideological pressure of any kind.

Then I went to university; I took German, in fact, and lived in Germany for a year and a half. After graduation, I wasn't sure what I was going to do with an Arts degree and decided to postpone the decision by coming to Canada in 1965. I did odd jobs in Montreal, Toronto, and ended up in Calgary. While in Calgary I decided I wanted to stay there permanently. I'd been interested in journalism because as a youngster I read papers voraciously, and I'd written a bit at university. What also appealed to me about journalism was the perception that it was unstructured.

So I started at the Lethbridge Herald and then after a couple of years came to the Calgary Herald. I quit and went to the Albertan after which I worked for three years in City Hall with Rod Sykes, who I have to say did have an influence on me. I came to know him through being a City Hall reporter, and although I had philosophical differences with him, he had a character that I admired. I think I'm quite a quiet, even, and certainly then, a diffident person, while he was this man who knew no fear. He would take on anybody, no matter what the odds. I relished that quality in Rod Sykes. He certainly had some of what I considered to be right wing views, which became stronger as time went on. But there was another aspect that appealed to me; his championing of what he called the 'little guy'. He also made sure that he maintained a good relationships with the different unions at city hall. He worked hard and the relationship was good. I think he understood that he could not win a healthy mandate without the support of the unions and his relationship with the unions was generally pretty positive. ...

After working with Sykes, I quit and I went into business on my own, starting two weekly newspapers, the Airdrie Echo and the Rocky View Times, which circulated around Calgary. I did that for five years, and then sold the business. Rod Sykes had become leader of the Alberta Social Credit, and since I was at loose ends, he asked me to help him. After he won the leadership, he didn't have a seat. I went to Edmonton and worked in the Leg for a couple of years, which was a very difficult experience. I didn't feel very compatible with Social Credit, and it got worse over the years. In the early '80s there was a by-election, and a separatist was elected.

So I eventually quit, and went back into the weekly newspaper business again. There was an opportunity in Cochrane, which turned out to be not such a good opportunity after all. Anyway, we came south. In 1987, I was asked if I was interested in going back to the Herald, and I was. So I went back in '87- the third time I'd quit and gone back, which I'm sure nobody else has done. I felt it was a good place to work. We had a publisher then, Patrick O'Callahan, who worked to maintain the independence of the newspaper - an important value that applies to all newspapers. The head office had little to say, for example, in their editorial policy, but that gradually began to change over the years. Conrad Black or Hollinger bought 1000 papers in 1995, and the purchase coincided with a new publisher at the Herald, Ken King, who came from the Sun and is now president of the Calgary Flames. People began to notice a difference quite quickly relating to two or three main things. One was a sense that the bosses wanted to control editorial content more closely. We had what were called the 'Friend of King notes' (the FOK notes) where King would tell us to interview this or that business person because he was a friend.

More sinister in my view was the pretty open declaration that we should be kinder to the Reform Party, which was then trying to gather steam under Preston Manning and the Provincial Conservative Party, the Klein government, during the time of cutbacks. During these cutbacks, when a lot of people were suffering, reporters were told, for example, not to get into 'bleeding heart' stories; i.e., 'we don't want to hear too much about the sufferings'. The accumulation of those kinds of developments began to have an impact on people, and people began to be concerned.

Q: *For the uninitiated, how does this play out? There you are, a reporter, and you've got an editorial staff. How does that sort of change of ideology come about? That's the first question. Then, I want you to get a little more into the mandate that Conrad Black and*

the Hollinger people saw for themselves, as far as making statements about the direction that Canada should be going.

AM: We felt that there was an ideological change occurring in the editorial direction at the paper. In any newsroom, you don't get a memo – we made sure that we always interviewed Reform Party people. That was made fairly explicit. Generally, however, you don't get explicit notice saying, 'we're going to be a much more right wing paper'. However, by osmosis, you pick up the idea what is favoured and what isn't. It's journalistic practice when doing stories that have a political implication when you call the government, that you then call the opposition- in the provincial case, the Liberals or the New Democrats - and you get their perspective. However, many reporters found, and I certainly found, that once the story got on the desk, those comments from others might be eliminated.

Then there were deals where our Edmonton reporter would get a scoop from the government on condition that we didn't call the opposition that day; we were to call the following day. That disturbed a lot of people. There began to be direct editorial interference on the desk; i.e., after stories had been submitted (the Calgary Herald is a morning paper, so stories are filed in the evening) and before the paper went to press, the stories would be changed and meddled with by senior managers, which was really quite horrific. There was a sense that our editorial integrity was being threatened. At the same time there was a sense that the company wanted to cut costs. This included cutting the older, more experienced staff for two reasons: for financial reasons, and because older staff were more likely to resist the kind of changes that were taking place. This was very explicit; there was no subtlety to the message that went around. A senior manager went around the newsroom more than once saying, "We could get two crackerjacks for one of you, pointing at one of the old experienced people." So you can see why people started to get extremely concerned.

The Herald, going back into the '80s, had a group called the 'Newsroom Group' that met regularly and talked about issues that came up in the workplace. Then, a chairperson or co-chairs would take these issues to management, or management would sometimes come to the meeting. There were meetings maybe every month, and when all this was happening in '96 and '97, these meetings were becoming more tense as it became clear that people were becoming anxious. We'd hold these meetings early afternoon so that it wouldn't affect people's work production, but then in the last year, management said we'd have to stop these meetings unless we were give permission for them.

So maybe in 1998, you'd hear the odd person say, 'we've got to get a union here'. I was co-chair of the Newsroom Group, and had been for several years, but in my mind, I thought it was totally unrealistic that we would never get the support needed to form a union. I didn't think about it that seriously until one day in '98, as things were continuing to build up, a reporter came to me and asked if I would be interested in meeting two representatives from CEP who were in the city, including Gail Lem, who's the media vice president for the CEP in Canada. We met at a bar, the two of us reporters and the western rep from Vancouver, and talked generally about the climate at the Calgary Herald. Even then it just didn't occur to me that in such a conservative newsroom as the Herald, with cautious and conservative people, we could get a majority to form a union, although it was an interesting idea. However, the managers indicating that they wouldn't let the

Newsroom Group meet without their permission, and a lot of other things really built up peoples' resentment. We talked to people we trusted, just mentioned we'd been talking to a union, and what did they think? We slowly fanned out to people we trusted, and by late summer there were 15 or 20 people in the newsroom of 160 that were interested. The four of us continued to meet every couple of months, and we decided maybe it was time to move, because somebody had been let go under difficult circumstances - somebody who had raised a little opposition and had not cooperated with management - and we thought that this was quite serious.

Q: *You're getting into the nuts and bolts now of how the union was formed, and I want you to remember that the purpose of this interview is to be educational - it's not just a news report. People watching this have to understand how it is that a union actually comes into the workplace. So please be quite specific when you talk about the steps that were involved.*

AM: How the union was formed is actually very interesting, almost the most enjoyable part of the process for me. The CEP, who are experienced in this, talked to me and Brian Brennan, the other reporter. I think that they had also talked to at least one other little group in the newsroom - I found out later. That to me was smart organizing, they way they had contacted several little cells within the newsroom. My strategy was to very slowly branch out with my hierarchy of people whom I trusted. Then in the Fall, I began to approach people outside work, at home or in the parking lot, and slowly spread the message - but on the absolute condition that it not be spoken about, or it would be destroyed. Confidentiality was the key, and the part of organizing that thrilled me, was that no confidence was ever broken. We began to build momentum, getting up to a membership of about 30 out of 160, bearing in mind that we needed at least a majority, a solid majority, for the certification process.

Then came the time we thought we could do a weekend blitz. The further out you fan, the less you know how people are going to take it, but with 30 people, we figured we could do it. So we picked a Thanksgiving weekend when the CEP brought in a lot of their professional organizers. We sat in a hotel room in northeast Calgary and phoned people, then went to their houses and got them to sign up. Before we did that, however, I did one more thing just to make sure. I was pretty committed, but I wanted to be absolutely sure, so I thought of four people in the newsroom - quite cautious people who I absolutely trusted, and who had a lot of integrity, and asked them to be my 'canaries in the mine'. I told them that we were planning a blitz on the Thanksgiving weekend, and asked what they thought. All four said 'do it'; so we did. I have to say that on that Friday before the weekend, I felt a certain amount of tension. The managing editor came by and asked if I was going to have turkey on the weekend, and I said, yes, I'm looking forward to a good turkey. On Saturday morning we started phoning. I was a bit disappointed that nobody came to the hotel with CEP. I was the only Herald person, and the rest was CEP. However, it grew very quickly over the day. By early afternoon we started hearing from people who didn't like what was happening, and management heard about it. I do recall a very difficult call from the managing editor. He was crushed; they absolutely did not see this coming, although they had done many stupid and provocative things in the previous years. But, they didn't see it coming.

Q: *Expand just a bit on that difficult phone call. I think it's good for people to know the kind of messages they can expect to hear when they decide to unionize.*

AM: It was difficult in the sense that, here was this guy, normally quite a bully, being incredibly contrite saying, 'Andy, what's going on?' He was totally bewildered. In a way it was a sweet moment, I suppose as one human being to another. I knew his life at the Herald was going to be hell, because it happened on his watch. Of course Ken King reacted very angrily.

The process occurred over a weekend, and we had to move very quickly. By Sunday, we had close to 80% signed up, so we felt we were sure. After getting 80% of the signed cards supporting the union, we took our application to the Labour Relations, and they set up a formal election three weeks after that time. It must have been that Tuesday morning, because it was a long weekend, that CEP put out a somewhat provocative press release. The Herald had a readership promotion called 'It's a New Day' for people to read at breakfast. So, the CEP put out their release on the successful certification drive saying "It's a new day at the Herald". Ken King, who is quite an imposing character, went ballistic. He was out in the parking lot where the CEP was handing out the news releases to all employees in the building.

This drive affected only the newsroom, because the GCIU had already existed in the pressroom for several years, and the department involving circulation had just certified. So the rest of the building was not part of this drive. It was an interesting time, a very tense time within the building. Very quickly King called a meeting of all employees. One managing manager, Joan Crocket, had been particularly provocative to the staff, and as soon as the vote was in, the first thing senior management did was get her out of the newsroom. They dropped her - not fired - but made sure she was not at work. So for a three week period, Joan Crocket was not around, and Ken King was holding staff meetings saying, 'we're really sorry'. This is exactly what people have to expect and beware: management will say, 'We've really sorry for what we've done. You've given us a very good sign that we're going to have to mend our ways. It's going to be a lot better than having a union. You're going to pay dues, and things are going to be difficult. You're not going to do as well as you're going to do under this new management, because we realize we've gone wrong.'

This is a common pattern in organizations; management gets very contrite as we built up to a certification vote. At the same time, however, there are threats to some people. King was extremely angry at the CEP, and those of us who were obvious leaders. I think, though, that he had to be careful, because things that could be interpreted as a threat. So he was careful with his language. At one meeting, he more or less pleaded with people not to vote for the union. He set up a podium in the newsroom, and turned his back whenever I spoke. Anyway, we had the vote, and once again, close to 80% of the people supported the union. Then the real business began, the formal election of officers. The company had to recognize the union. They appealed to the Labour Relations Board, by the Board upheld the vote.

Q: *On what grounds did they appeal?*

AM: One of the grounds was that we were too small a unit, and that the union should involve all the staff. I'm a bit hazy on these details. Anyway, the board upheld the

election as valid. The union's there, and the elections must occur, but the company would not cooperate at all on allowing elections.

Q: *Elaborate a bit. On what grounds did the company appeal the certification vote?*

AM: One of the bases for appeal against the certification vote was that the unit should include more people, including the advertising department; it shouldn't be just the newsroom. They argued that if there was going to be a union, it should represent everyone in the building - which would be a way of scuffling it, of course. But the Board upheld the vote.

Our first order of business was to elect an executive and bargaining committee for the local. The company wouldn't cooperate, however, and wouldn't allow the vote on company property. So, I had an old Ford car and people would come out at lunchtime, sit in my car and vote. We did have some help from people from CEP, but still, it was such a mickey mouse way of operating.

Bargaining was set for January of 1999. All of this happened in '98, and then in January of '99, we began bargaining. Our professional rep was Joy Langan from BC, who had a lot of experience. She had been an MP in Ottawa for a term, a wonderful woman, who was less than 5 feet, and I'm about 6'4". So the pair of us looked great when we came into a room. She said that what happens in negotiations - and of course this was all new to us - was 'you guys shut up and I do the talking', which was fair enough, because none of us on the bargaining committee - there were four of us - had any experience.

Joan Crocket, who had been removed from the newsroom between the card signing and the formal Labour Relations Board vote, was brought back as soon as the company lost that vote. Not only did they bring her back, they put her in charge of bargaining, which was an incredibly provocative thing to do. The GCIU, by the way, was also negotiating at the same time. They also hired a gentleman named Gary Johansen as bargainer. I'd never heard of him, until the news came out that this consultant, was going to be the main bargainer for the Herald. When I phoned Gordie Christie at the Labour Council to say that Gary Johansen had been appointed, there was silence. He didn't say much, but told me to phone the Iron Workers in Medicine Hat who were the last group to deal with Gary Johansen. When I phoned them and explained who I was and that Gary Johansen was bargaining for the Herald, I heard a peal of laughter on the other end of the line. This guy, as it turned out, had a supreme reputation as a union buster.

From day one of bargaining, it became apparent that they were not interested in reaching an agreement. We were debating, arguing for hours over whether the agreement would be called Term of Agreement or Terms of Agreement. It quickly became apparent where this was headed; they were going to stall and not negotiate in good faith. They were subtle enough. Johansen was clever enough that we'd just make a little inch of progress, so we couldn't say they were totally not bargaining in good faith. There are now a number of people who are expert at stalling negotiations, with no intention of reaching a settlement. To outside eyes, however, and to the board, to whom CEP later appealed the process, it is difficult to find that the company not bargaining in good faith. Bargaining soon became very fractious. For example, they wouldn't let us bargain on company time. We'd have to go and put a full shift in.

Joy Langan had a few tricks up her sleeve, however. She said, okay, the only time they can bargain is 4 o'clock in the morning, so we bargained for a month or so at 4 a.m., which was nuts. There was quite a hostile relationship in the room, as you can understand. Eventually, we asked for a mediator in our negotiations, a person I had known him through the school board (I can't remember his name). The process was very disappointing, and it appeared that the government appointed mediator really didn't think there was much hope. Maybe he was just seeing the reality of the situation, that the company was not interested in a first contract. We were just so far apart as when we started. Certain things become apparent. One was the difficulty of bargaining a first contract in Alberta, which other unions have found before and others have found since.

In the time leading up to our certification, there'd been a bad strike in southern Calgary at a building plant. I remember thinking and it giving me a bit of a chill, because the company there had also refused to bargain in good faith; just as in ours. But the CEP was always optimistic. They said, we'd win in the end, because the company didn't want a strike. At that time, we thought locally, thinking more of Ken King than Conrad Black, who was sort of this figure out there that we never imagined would be directly involved in this. Later on, it became apparent that he had been quite involved, and had given people pretty clear approval to bust this union. So, we went through the spring, summer, and then by summer we hadn't made any progress through the mediator or in any way. 'Crunch time' was coming, what were we to do? Strike was the next step to take, which for this very conservative newsroom was a very difficult step.

Q: *Before you get to the strike, tell me if the union took any legal action to force the company to bargain in good faith. Were there applications being made to the Board or any efforts of that nature?*

AM: Yes, there were, and we lost two or three of these in a row. I had covered the Board as a labour reporter, I knew a little bit about it. But in the end, it was somewhat disillusioning to see how careful the board was not to rock the boat. Obviously, I came from a biased position, but I felt it was fairly clear that the Herald was not bargaining in good faith, and had no intention of achieving a first contract that would mean anything. Also, as a union, we were quite conservative in our approach, because our main desire was to get a contract, and go from there. So we weren't demanding a lot; e.g., we were demanding a very basic grievance procedures. An issue that the company made a big deal about was security, which was important to us because the company had made so many threats before.

Eventually, we began moving towards a strike vote. CEP was still saying that it would just 'rattle their cage', that they'll come around after the strike vote. We held the vote in October and 76% voted to strike. So now we're into October. The same thing had happened to GCIU bargaining and they were also in a strike position, and held a strike vote. Still, nothing happened, so eventually we gave strike notice on November 5th, 1999. We were bargaining, and made the announcement to their bargaining committee that we just weren't making any progress, and we would be taking other action. So we gave strike notice for November 5th, which was a Friday or Monday, November 8th, under the assumption that work would carry on the weekend. I worked the Saturday shift, covered an NDP convention on Saturday morning, and when I went back, was told to get out of the building, that everyone was out.

We maybe should've known much better that the company had prepared very well for this strike. They had lined up people, mostly managers, from across Canada to come and work at the Herald newsroom, and work in the other departments to overcome any impact from it. And of course, there was also the 25% of the newsroom that did not want to strike, and they counted on them to cross the picket line and go to work. This reveals one of the basic difficulties in Alberta; the ability of companies facing a strike to hire 'replacement workers'. They brought in managers from across Canada, and had them all primed and ready to go; in fact, they locked us out on the 5th, just before our strike. We went to the board and said it was an illegal lockout, but that was an academic point. They locked us out, and we officially went on strike on Monday the 8th. Then the fun began. By then we had made preparations, which included booking a strike headquarters and organizing ourselves, always thinking and always hoping, 'we're not going to use this, but we've got to have this in our pocket.' We had a building two blocks from the Herald up on Barlow Trail, where we all met and marched down to the Herald on the Monday. It was a very emotional time, and spirits were quite high. Here was a group of very cautious, conservative people, out on strike, marching down the street to the Calgary Herald. It was maybe a moment of exhilaration, and of course intimidation, associated with it to began our strike. The Herald is pretty well a 24 hour operation, in that the press goes at night and the paper comes out about 4 o'clock in the morning. We made the decision that we would picket 24 hours, for seven days a week - quite an obligation.

At the same time, the GCIU unit is also out on strike, about 60 of them. At the beginning there was probably 110 of us and 50 of them, 160 in total. We soon found that our 24 hour picket was going to be difficult to maintain. This was November, and we were heading into winter, although by luck, it was the beginning of a series of very mild winters. Another intimidating aspect for the strikers was that the Herald, as we found out the first day on strike, had hired a security company under its auspices, and this is where we began to see the Conrad Black connection. His personal body guard, this mammoth man, was quite frequently on the line. He was Conrad Black's personal guard, and they had hired this company from Ontario to protect the building. The guards wore black uniforms and boots that looked paramilitary, and there were many of them – and they were very belligerent in their behavior to picketers.

We ran into picketing problems right away and the company appealed our picketing practices to the Labour Relations Board. There were two entrances where the trucks with papers came out, and then an entrance where employees entered with their vehicles. We would try and slow up traffic in and out of there. We had people who had never picketed before, so this was quite a new experience for people. I also have to note the support from other unions in Calgary. To me one of the most heartwarming aspects of the strike, was the support from other unions and individuals who really put themselves on the line, because as the strike wore on, things became nastier on the picket line.

Conrad Black's involvement became apparent in March of 2000. We had been on strike for three or four months, and people were starting to get frayed at the edges. I don't think anyone had entered the strike thinking it was going to go more than a few weeks. I don't think we understood the implications of companies being able to hire replacement workers and just carrying on as if we didn't exist. The inability of even well-organized picketing and rallies to work was astounding. Gordon Christie from the Calgary Labour

Council was an incredible help with rallying people from across Calgary, in fact from across Canada. We were lucky in that we had a certain amount of publicity. Being a journalist, there was a certain interest in the peculiarity of this strike in a Calgary newspaper. The downside was that the Calgary Herald is located in northeast Calgary, bringing in another reality; it's really out of the public eye. Initially we did get pretty fair media coverage, but as the months went on, coverage dropped. I spoke with reporters who had been told not to bother with the Herald strike. Reporters from the Sun, for example, said it was strongly hinted that they shouldn't bother with the Herald Strike.

Q: *You had mentioned involvement of Conrad Black. How did that manifest itself?*

AM: We went into Christmas, and were striking still in January. Things started to get very tough, and I saw people feeling quite hopeless about the situation. Here we are in the dead of winter, picketing. What happens during a strike, and I saw it in other strikes, is that people go off and get other work. Strikers go and take other jobs, because they have to survive, they have families to feed. I will say, however, that thanks to incredible support from CEP from GCIU and from other unions across Canada, we had an incredible amount of donations come into our strike war chest. We also went on speaking tours across Canada. I hate to single out unions, but locally CUPE was fantastic. So was UFCW. Maybe I shouldn't have started naming unions, because there were so many who were just fantastic.

At the Herald, I had covered labour, but for others it was an eye opener. When there's trouble, unions come together in a way that is actually quite inspiring. People who had never seen it in their lives now saw it, and I hoped at the time, that would impact them for the rest of their lives. They would see how people and unions came in a on our line and in rallies, and sat down in front of trucks. They risked their lives for the Calgary Herald strike, and they were extremely generous with donations. Over the course of the strike we had more than \$1 million donated to a small unit. We started off strike pay of \$200 a week, and it went up to \$225 and \$250 and \$275. At some point in the strike it was \$300 a week, which is amazing. The strike was important to win, but by February, people were losing a little heart. What kept them going was that the contract for the press bargaining unit expired in April. We had worked closely with GCIU, and felt they could be in a strike position by April, as would the production people.

I met Conrad Black that March, on just a regular March day in 2000. We were at strike headquarters when Gordon Christie from the Labour Council phoned up to say that Conrad Black was in town. He advised us to go down and picket where he's at, a Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce shareholders meeting in Calgary. So, a handful of us went down to the Inn on 4th Ave., and sure enough, we heard Conrad was in the meeting room with the shareholders, maybe 150 of them. So we began picketing on the street. There were some media there, because Black was there and they wanted to talk to him anyway, possibly about the strike. Gordon came up to where we were picketing on the street and said, 'you've got to do more than this; this isn't enough'. I thought of going into the meeting and disrupting it, but that's not really me. So I didn't, but I thought, 'I've got to talk to Black, I've gotta catch him'.

So I waited at the doors, and he was the first out, him and his great big bodyguard. I said, 'Mr. Black - he wasn't a Lord then - I'm Andy Marshall and I want to talk to you. He said,

'I've heard all about you,' and strode off. So I went along behind him. He stopped at the steps, and we talked some more. I said, 'I think we could solve this strike quite easily'. He went into a tirade, and it was lucky that there was a CBC cameraman, and that a few reporters came. That's when he said, 'you're a gangrenous limb that we've got to chop off. In fact', he said - and I've got the transcript - he said, 'you have two choices'. He sort of wagged his fingers in my face and said, 'you've got two choices. You come back to work tomorrow, because we're going to wait you out, we're going to decertify you.' Now you have to understand that in Alberta after two years on strike, a decertification process can occur. So right there he proposed that he had absolutely no intention of bargaining with us. He said, 'So come back tomorrow, with no contract - or we just wait you out, no big deal.

What he said on camera with absolute impunity was illegal. Since then, he's maybe been caught with much bigger illegal issues, but impunity is a word that I associate with Black. It was totally against even Alberta's labour laws, which says you have to bargain in good faith, but he was saying that he had no interest or no intention of doing so. That interview really knocked the stuffing out of people. They thought, 'oh my god, there's no hope'. The CEP said that it was an obvious contravention of labour law, but to take it to the Board would take such a long time, and the strike was already five months old. So we delayed doing anything about it. Two weeks after that conversation, we had arranged to go to Edmonton with the CEO. The deputy minister of labour had agreed to speak with us. First we went to the Legislature and were introduced by Raj Pannu and Ralph Klein, who I had known from days going back. Then we met with the deputy minister and some other officials in her office. I just shake my head - dhe volunteered at that meeting that what Conrad Black said was illegal, but didn't do anything about it.

Her name was Johnson. She went to Health after and was quite a respected deputy minister there. She said, yes what Black said was illegal, but - and she nodded toward the Legislature - there's no political will to do anything about it. Essentially, you're out of luck guys; there's nothing we can do to help you. At that stage we were asking for binding arbitration, which is another thing about Alberta law which links back to first contract bargaining. When an employer has no intention of concluding an agreement, there must be some sort of legislated framework to work in, otherwise the company has no incentive to comply. The Herald had no incentive. There was no stick or no carrot that was directing them to bargain a first contract. In Alberta there is a huge gap in the legislation regarding first contract bargaining. It was a very sobering experience, as we began to realize that there was very little we could do.

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As I mentioned before, the company had hired a security company from Ontario that demonstrated quite aggressive tactics towards strikers. Just their appearance; they wore dark uniforms with boots. In fact the intent was to look paramilitary. They didn't carry guns, but they had... I saw that they had dogs at one point, and they would follow the picketers. We knew some of the scabs were staying at hotels up in the northeast, and so we might pay a visit the bar there. The security people would follow us, and they'd follow people home sometimes and there were stories of intimidation.

One of the worst aspects of the strike was the involvement of Calgary city police, however. We held our first rally a month into the strike, in early December, I think, and with lots of help from the Calgary Labor Council and from other city unions, we assembled a couple of thousand people at least, in northeast Calgary one evening. The whole idea of a strike is to make things difficult for the company, and we intended to make it difficult for them to get the trucks out. This involved a big sacrifice, because the trucks don't come out until 2 o'clock in the morning, with the first papers coming off the press at 2 or 3 in the morning. When everyone showed up in the evening, there were four or five mounted police on another street, which was very intimidating. During the evening we had a rally and speeches, and then we lined up on the road at the entrance to the Herald. That's when the police came, walking down the street in a line, tapping their, slow-step by slow-step toward these very innocent, gentle people, who just wanted a first contract. It might've turned a little nasty that night.

On subsequent nights, it was even nastier, when the police manhandled people, were very rough. I've got photographs here, showing the police manhandling people. That's when I saw such courage from people like Joy Langan, Clancy Teslenko, and many others, who sat with us on the street. Some of the police were quite vicious and seemed to enjoy it, and it was clear that they had strategies for dealing with people, which is to go for their pressure points, to temporarily knock them out. I was sitting on the ground and a policeman came up, and the first thing he did was to knock my glasses off so that I couldn't see. He went for my eye, that's right, and started putting his finger into it. I'm not a particular friend of the police, and I'm not hostile, but it was quite staggering to see the role of the police in a strike. We were by far not the first and we're not the last to feel the police take an advocacy role on behalf of the company, and that's not supposed to be their role. We were delaying trucks, we were not a civil threat in any sense, I felt. In fact, we did go as a delegation and visit the Chief of Police sometime in the New Year, but saw a guy who was one of the inspectors, and is now the police chief. He was very smooth, very sympathetic, but we didn't get anywhere. We complained bitterly, and it's a complaint I feel strongly about today. It's something people should be aware of. In my view, the police are co-opted by companies and by the authorities to act against people who are legally striking. That's a little shocking.

Q: It's a long strike, and you were sure to be suffering some attrition of support. Talk about that.

AM: People are suffering, they're going off to do other jobs. They have families to feed. Then the 'Black conversation' comes along, and as well, the GCIU does go on strike towards the end of April. We wanted to believe that this would then make a difference, but the company had done the same thing. They could bring in replacement workers, and there might've been some delays and the work on the press was not so good, and there were scabs, of course. That's something that hurts a lot in a strike, when you see co-workers who know how important the cause is, but they are taking their own self interest first, and crossing the line. There were 20 or 30; in fact, as the strike went on, we had six or seven people who crossed from our editorial group, including reporters, editors, photographers, library assistants. That hurts when you see people crossing the line. As soon as the GCIU were out on strike, the pressmen joined us. I maybe should be careful what I say, because they've been in existence for a while and they were offered a deal

they probably might've accepted, but they went out on strike. It was very apparent that their hearts were not in it; it was an act of solidarity with us, and they went back within a month - they struck a deal.

By this time, we're into May, and I was hearing from everybody that it was over, that there's nothing left here. So then the question becomes, how do we finish a strike like this? I recall a meeting of the CEP in Vancouver. I went out, and I asked Brian Brennan to come with me because I didn't want to go alone. I knew that CEP would not accept easily the news that Calgary Herald editorial group were not prepared to stay out much longer. I know there have been longer strikes and tougher strikes, but I could see the suffering. People were coming unglued; I could even see mental illness among some people - it just got to them. People should be aware that when you're out, you've lost all your status, you're out on the street in front of the company and being treated like a criminal. The company that you could walk into, you're now totally barred from - you're sort of on the edge a little bit. Although again I will say we had wonderful support, with a lot of people from across Canada picketing with us. That's the wonderful thing about the labor movement; it's how people come together and support a group of workers who are in trouble. By May, the vice-president said to me, we've got to finish this, because it'll just peter out to nothing. So then how do I do it? In Alberta there's legislation that says a company has to take you back after a strike, whatever happens. It was one little ace in the hole I felt we had, because by then, there were probably 90 of us still out on strike. They've got to take you back into the newsroom, at least legally, and CEP was prepared to file a whole bunch of suits if they messed around with that. So this creates a major headache for the company, allowing people to go back, wven if we went back without a contract - although the thought of it was pretty horrific to some. Then out of the blue, Dave Coles from Vancouver, a great guy that I really liked, was negotiating with Gary Johanssen on how we were going to do this. Finally CEP accepted that they were going to have to help us go back in. I have to say about this meeting in Vancouver, however, that there were some people there who said, "No, there's some more strategies we can do here." We had to say, no, I'm sorry, I think we've reached the end of the line here. Which we didn't enjoy saying, especially after all the support CEP gave us. One day Dave gets a call to meet with Johanssen in Edmonton. Two or three of us went up and sat in a hotel room when Dave met with him in a hotel room - just the two of them. Gary said that what he was about to tell us wasn't official at all, but the company was prepared to offer a package. The reason was Black was selling Southam to CanWest. I think CanWest was worried that a deal with a Calgary Herald strike was just one little mess that they didn't want to inherit. So Hollinger said, okay, we'll offer a buyout to the workers.

Q: The package you were being offered wasn't a collective agreement?

AM: No, they were offering a buyout; three weeks per year of service, which is sort of average, nothing great, and with the condition that the union decertify. This is all probably as illegal as hell, and the company would probably never admit to making that offer. So Coles came back sort of stunned by this. I have to say that I thought, "So be it, that's the deal." And so we presented it to our members."

They didn't want people to return to work, but the had to offer it. People wanted to go back if they could, and the company had to take them back, but the union would be decertified - that was the package offer. So this was eventually presented to the

membership in a very emotional meeting. I presented some of it, with Dave Coles and Joy Langan. We all presented it in a neutral way. It was very painful for the CEP to say that we had been offered an average sort of package, but it means decertification of the union, and that whoever wants to go back, there would be some form of protection for people them. Others in CEP, however, thought that this was an absolute betrayal of what the strike had been about. This included Gail Lem. Early on, when I first met Gail Lem, I was mesmerized by her; she's a very interesting woman. But at the end, I regret to say, we had quite a falling out.

I recommended to people that we take it, because by then I had no stomach to go back to the Herald in an uncertain situation and carry on. Who knows how the company could again act with impunity against people. They talked about protection, but I felt that there would be absolutely no protection, and that everyone would get knocked off. At least this way, however, people would get a little cash, and it was seen as this for the older guys. So we had a vote, and I think it was about 75-25 in favor of accepting the deal. In the end, about 10 people went back, but the 10 who went back were very angry. One of the people who had been a stalwart in the whole exercise was David Climenhaga. I know he was bitterly disappointed that we would fold our tent and end the strike, but in my heart, I can justify it, I felt people just didn't have the will or the strength to keep fighting. Maybe there was an important principle that we should keep fighting, but the bodies weren't going to be there to carry on that fight.

Q: There was probably good reason to believe that you had to chance of winning?

AM: Exactly, and that we would get picked off in the company, and many people would end up with nothing. Here was a chance of walking away at least with the deal resolved, brushing the dust off and getting the heck out of there, and never wanting to go back. Over an eight month period, you build up a lot of hostility and anger. That's something I wanted to touch on. It worried me how I felt by about April. We got training delivered by a group from BC in passive resistance, how to resist arrest and all that sort of thing. We were becoming radicalized. It occurred to me more than once that with labour laws in Alberta as they are, and with the lack of support from the government and the LRB, we couldn't win a strike, unless we turned to more serious means and tactics.

Q: Is there anything that could've been done differently, to win this strike?

AM: No, I couldn't think of what could we have done differently, because of course I've gone over this many times,. We obeyed the law, in fact the Labor Relations Board said we were such a legal, quiet lot. The thing that entered my mind was that we have to be more intimidating. You think about violence after a while, because they won't listen. We're legal, and the board says what a wonderful group we are, but we can't stop a vehicle for more than 6 seconds. How the heck are we going to get anyone's attention that way?

Q: Is there anything the CEP could've done differently to help you?

AM: As time went on, we realized that we were a bit like innocent lambs to slaughter. We'd been around a little bit, but CEP said right up to the end, it won't be a long strike. I'm not sure that CEP assessed the situation as well on our behalf as they might have, but

one of the assessments they should've made, was that this came from the very top, and that Conrad Black would act with impunity to destroy the union and prevent it from getting a foothold there.

Q: Why were they so determined to remain non-union?

AM: I think one of the reasons was the ability of the union to prevent management from acting with impunity, whether it be Conrad Black or the local management and publisher, Ken King. King was actually dumped early on in the strike and replaced by Gainer from Ontario, who had been involved in another long strike and was sort of publisher who specialized in that sort of thing, came in. I think he had less ideology. King and Black, had this ideology that was determined not to accept a union. Calgary was the heart of conservatism, and the Calgary Herald up until then had been one of their best money producing newspapers in Canada. It was smaller than others, but the money from the Herald had made it a cash cow for the owners. So here was the union (and the union certainly was provocative, which was fine by me) using the Herald's promotion slogan on the first day after the certification. The company had an \$8 million lawsuit. They hated CEP, because they dealt with CEP in other newspapers, particularly in Vancouver. The Vancouver locals were a huge help to us.

A lot of our members complained over the months that CEP wasn't ready for this in mobilizing other newsroom units across Canada. But, it's hard where the rubber hits the pavement. People can give money, which is a lot. They can give their time, and many union people did. They risked their physical health so bravely. But the real crunch comes when you're asked if you will put your job on the line on behalf of this union in Calgary? Of course they weren't ready for that, and it wasn't broached - although the Vancouver unions did do a few things to embarrass the company. They had byline strikes and they sort of semi-work to rules. But what was asked as the strike went on was, "Where is everyone else here?" We felt increasingly tiny, this group of people up in northeast Calgary trying to carry on a strike. I understand, that this is about as big a sacrifice as a fellow union member can make to say "I'm prepared to back your strike up, when I've already got a contract." Is that too much to ask? It's a lot to ask of people, but without it, the strike was somewhat misguided. I have no regrets, because what happened was that about 10 people went back, 93 took the package. We call ourselves 'the group of 93'. There still is an e-mail communication. Last week I still got emails. Brian Brennan runs this e-mail communication. Some started a new newspaper in Calgary called 'Business Edge'. Several wrote books that have actually been successful. Others got into magazine editing and publishing. The majority of the 93 who didn't want to go back have actually ended up healthier and in jobs they enjoy, leading good productive lives. To have gone back would've been sickening. I cannot pick up the Calgary Herald today without feeling slight nausea about it. It was an emotional time.

Q: These days, it's clear that the Blacks did not escaped unscathed, did they?

AM: No, the Blacks are in serious trouble now with the laying of eight fraud charges in the United States. His impunity - it still surprises me. He didn't do that surreptitiously, because it was reported in the Globe. I remember soon after the strike, when the sale occurred with CanWest, and the Globe business section reported on these non competition payments made to Ravelston. I thought that it was odd that there wasn't a

murmur about it. This was the fall of 2000 - not a murmur. It took shareholders in the United States to ask, what's going on here? In Canada we were very passive. He didn't hide it. I wonder if that's going to be a defense for him, that there was no attempt to do this under the table. It was very transparent what he had done, but everyone said, sure, that's the way things operate. It's quite stunning. But now, because some American disaffected shareholders went after him, he's in trouble. There are all kinds of ironies in his downfall.

Q: But what about the willingness of our government to uphold its own labor laws?

AM: Right. In Alberta they were not interested in upholding their labor laws. When I recall this conversation with the deputy minister of labor - it was her job - but she said, "I can't do anything." There's no political will, end of story. "Nice to see you, good luck, we're really sorry, goodbye."

Q: So what are you doing these days?

AM: In summer 2000 I was 58, and I carried on. I did some freelance writing for a few years, and drove a school bus, which is good exercise. You get up early in the morning, do things in the day, and then do the afternoon run. I became quite involved in the community then. I suppose I'm semi-retired, which it kind of hurts to say. But I became involved in the local community and community association, helping start one here. Then I ran for Council in the last election, and I'm still on council now. It's a very full life. I will say.

This may sound weird, but I have had dreams. I dream a lot about being back at the Herald. I think that's unresolved in my mind. My last encounter with the Herald was a company with dogs and guys in black boots. But a month or so ago I dreamt that I met Conrad Black, and I asked, "Have you had lunch, can I offer you lunch?" I woke up and said to my wife, I must've forgiven him now. I don't want to carry it on, it's silly, no point. In a way, in that experience of the strike, people came together. The comradeship during the strike with my fellow workers and with other union people - and again I must mention people like Gord Christie and Clancy and a whole host of people - was just marvelous. You have this great human relationship, I wouldn't miss it. In a perverse way, I'm so glad that I went through it. The end, of course, was a little ignominious, in that we decertified. Sometime in July, when the deal was signed, as president of the union I signed a letter to the Labor Relations Board saying, "I hereby request to decertify local 115A of CEP". I remember going to the Board and talking with the person there. They opened the letter and looked at it and asked, "What are you doing?" They couldn't believe it. I'm not sure if there was any precedent for it in Alberta - not much, thank goodness. That's not a proud moment, to be that part of history, thinking 'My God, what's this going to do for other first contract negotiations?' There have been some fights, the latest one being the one in Brooks, which may now be resolved.

Q: It's a victory for the union, at this point.

AM: They have a contract, and that's important. As I said, UFCW were very good to us, and Doug O'Halloran, especially.