

Alberta Labour History Institute (ALHI)

Oral History Interview

Interviewee: Gib Todd

Interviewer: Winston Gereluk

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His background

I was born in Eli Manitoba. My dad was Irish French and my mother was French. My dad's family had a huge history in the Hudson Bay Company; my great great grandfather was a chief fur trader for the Hudson Bay Co, and worked in various places across western Canada. He introduced smallpox vaccine in western Canada to the natives in the early 1800s.

As for myself, as time went on my father became an elevator agent or grain buyer. Today they call them an elevator manager. We lived in a small community in Manitoba for many years. My first encounter with the world of work was on farms, picking stones and roots, and learning to drive farm equipment. I went to school until about grade 10, and my second job was in elevator construction. I painted country elevators for 6 years, as well as repaired them. After that I got a job with North American Lumber and worked in retail lumber for about 6 years, as well as managed a concrete plant. The concrete plant was kind of interesting, because I took that job not knowing even how the concrete come out of a cement truck, never mind knowing how to make cement. I did that for about a couple of years, then got my job in the mine as a mine labourer at Lanigan, Saskatchewan. From there I tried to get an apprenticeship, but because I was 29 years old at that time, they said I was too old to enter an apprenticeship. We didn't have a union there, so obviously that failed. I was able to get into the lubrication field, and as time went on, every time I got a few hours I would go and write a millwright exam. It was allowed at that time in Saskatchewan and I got my millwright ticket in that fashion. It became another fight because there was no method for paying me as a millwright just because I had a millwright ticket.

Encounter with the trade union movement

So I thought there has to be something different about this. I knew nothing about trade unions, because my parents had no attachments to the trade union movement at that time. A number of us got in touch with the United Steelworkers of America in Saskatoon, and we ran 3 campaigns trying to organize the Lanigan Mine with the United Steelworkers. It became a joke, because every time they came in, the company would advance their wages. Sure enough, that's what happened. So I finally told the Steelworkers that I didn't like to abuse them, I didn't like to see them using their money for a nothing. So I withdrew from the committee. The committee worked toward having an association. My language for an association has always been a 'donkey council'. So I would never have anything to do with it. One day a brother by the name of Dave Mackie gave me a call at my home and said he was from the potash mine at Esterhazy, and wanted to come and talk to me. I said, sure anybody's welcome to my home. He asked if he could wear his union jacket, and I said, by all means. So Dave Mackie come to my home and I told him our history and that it would probably be doomed to failure again. But we agreed to try it.

Dave was a member of the Oil Chemical and Atomic Workers Intl Union. We embarked on an organizing campaign, and within 6 weeks we had the mine signed up and won our certification. The potash mine at Lanigan was owned by Al Winslow, a German French consortium at that time. The potash mine at Esterhazy was owned by International Minerals and Chemicals, which it still is today. Today, the mine at Lanigan is owned by the Saskatchewan Potash Corp.

His first strike

In 1975, we went forward in organizing our union structure. Ironically, I was not the first president elected there, I was a vice-president. Right after our first collective agreement the president went onto the dark side, and I was elevated to president, which I held for some 12 years. In 1985/86 we had a 10-1/2 month strike at Lanigan; just a vicious strike. During that time there was a massive construction project at the mine in Lanigan, so we had all kinds of contractors on the property as well, who saw fit to cross our picket lines every day with the help of the RCMP. The RCMP would escort the mine management into the mine site, and the contractors would all trail along behind. All except the carpenters union, which left the mine site the day the strike started, and never came back.

That caused a lot of problems. The 13th of August we call Black Wednesday; in fact, a film was made about that day in our strike. That was the day they brought 120 RCMP officers into the town of Lanigan, which has only 1800 people to begin with. They arrested 60 of our people and hauled them off to Saskatoon and Regina using dogs and numerous vehicles. The only woman on the picket line that day was strip-searched. It was a vicious bad day and didn't prove anything. There had never been any violence on the picket line, but that's what happened. The film is about a 20 minute film called Black Wednesday, and I'm sure it's in the archives somewhere in the province, or in the CEP office in Edmonton. Along with that strike, being a small town of 1800 people, you participate in a lot of functions with everybody in the community.

The local RCMP or whatever, you participated in all kinds of functions, even to the point where my wife at that time ran a small playschool, and some of the RCMP children attended that playschool. Of course they stopped after the strike started. In a small town like Lanigan, all kinds of relationships ended, rightfully or wrongfully. People that used

to visit our house, not because they worked at the mine or because they were friends we thought we had in the community, never come to our place again during that strike. My wife was threatened by the RCMP coming in one day when I wasn't there, saying they would arrest her for being a front person to a picket line, because she attended the picket lines as well. So my wife become very knowledgeable about the trade union movement and the politics that go around, as well.

After the strike ended, for a whole year, whether I drove out of town or my wife drove out of town, we would be stopped and our car searched and everything taken out of the car. We'd have to stand beside the car and all this stuff. This went on for a whole year after the strike. What ended it is my wife was picked up on the way to Saskatoon one day, which was 75 miles away, and charged with driving 135 km an hour. She probably never rode in a car that fast, never mind drive one. So we decided to fight it. We fought it for 8 months. They kept delaying. Then they phoned one day and said, we dropped the charges because our radar equipment wasn't working properly - after 8 months. Then the harassment stopped. So harassment around strikes, and I'm sure I'm not alone in that, but it becomes vicious and affects not only the person that's on strike, but the family and everybody else associated with the. So I don't have a lot of love for RCMP officers or police of any kind. The only other time I had a run-in with the police was here in Calgary was in the Calgary Herald strike. But I'll get to that a little later.

To go back, the mine we struck originally was owned by Al Winslow Potash. Later, [NDP Premier] Allan Blakeney decided to nationalize the potash industry. Most of the labour movement in Saskatchewan was in favour. We espoused it proudly and wore our nationalized potash industry buttons to work and everywhere else we went. Not to say that we didn't have some quarrels during that time with the government of the day, the New Democrats. We had a number of wildcat strikes during that period of time, because of working conditions and things that didn't go well. However, unfortunately we had a period of time in '84 when [Conservative] Grant Devine took over the government of Saskatchewan and it become a whole different process. When we started negotiating, we negotiated for 14 months prior to the strike. During that period of time we built up 150 grievances in our mailbox that the company wouldn't answer. We hung on, thinking there'd be a better day to come, and pushed back on strike action for as long as we could, until the membership said, enough of that, we've had enough and we're going out.

On the 14th of March '85, we left the mine site on a strike, with not only those issues, but with health and safety issues as well. For one, we had an embargo on overtime during that period of time. So one day, the hoistmen were short of people, because one was sick and we weren't working overtime. So one of the managers decided he was a hoistman, not qualified or anything, and ordered the men to go down. They wouldn't do it. We contacted the health and safety department and by phone they ordered our guys to go underground on the whim of an unsafe act. So that became another issue during the strike, which over a period of time we did win and all those people got...they didn't get paid for the time the stood out waiting for the orders, but we did win it and they got their pay during the strike. It was a pretty emotional and significant win during that time. But all those issues were there. The government of the day? Well, of course you always try to get somebody to sit down and talk, whoever it may be. I knew them well. Rick Folk, who we all know as a great curler, was the finance manager for the Tory government. I said,

well his qualifications are high because he won a silver broom, so I guess that's the reason he become a manager But there were all those people in the Grant Devine government who did better than me. I never went to jail, they did. So I guess that was significant. I got pretty close, but most of those rogues were in jail and I was free to go.

That mine was the driest mine in the province. It's the only mine that you could go down underground and not have to wear a raincoat to get out of the hoist. It was absolutely dry, a good place to work. Since they started in '69, unfortunately there was 2 fatalities, but basically it was a pretty good safe place to work.

Well, of course, they imposed one of the harshest injunctions that has ever been seen. The injunction stated that we were not to carry signs to tell anybody we were on strike. We were not to stop and talk to anybody and tell them we were on strike. And we were only allowed 5 people on the picket line. We were sitting out in the middle of the prairie in Saskatchewan, so that was a vicious injunction, which we eventually got overturned. But that's what the injunction said, that we were allowed 5 people on each entrance, couldn't carry signs, and couldn't stop and talk to anybody. We were warned and the vice president and I got a rumour that they were going to arrest us during the strike.

I'll back up here. When the strike started, we knew they were going to get an injunction. So the vice president and I took off and hid in Saskatoon for a week while these guys walked. We finally give up because they were parked in front of our houses and watching every move our family made, sitting there waiting for us. We went into Saskatoon and hid in various places. Some of our brothers and sisters in Saskatoon kept us there. Finally it got to be so much pressure on our families that we decided we'd phone the sheriff's office so he could deliver the stupid injunction. But we set them up. We phoned the media as well. We went to the union centre and the media were all there. The sheriff's office sent these 2 junior guys down, dressed up in their white suits. We were sitting in the lobby and the media was all there, the TV cameras. We made them read the whole thing. Their hands are shaking and they were more nervous than anybody. It was quite a sight to see.

We had injunctions, the sheriffs were out there, we had court every week. We had probably 20 or 30 guys charged with breaking the injunction. It was like a zoo. We had our own building in Lanigan, our own union office just across the street from Beaver Lumber. A lot of people would park in front of Beaver Lumber. We saw the sheriff's rogue parked in front of Beaver Lumber, so we knew he'd be coming into the union office. A couple of guys went and parked behind him. He come in and sure enough he was looking for Doug McCorkindale, who was the guy doing all our news releases. Doug was standing right beside me and the sheriff guy comes in and asks, "Have you seen Doug McCorkidale?" I said, "No I haven't seen him for a couple of days" - and there's Doug, standing beside me. Somebody else takes a run out of the door and gets in his car. Of course it's all blocked in because people have doubled parked behind him. So he drives up on the sidewalk and takes after us. We informed the RCMP and he was charged with dangerous driving and stuff. We thought, well one up on you guys. We did all kinds of things like that. It was pretty funny in some aspects. I'm not so sure we won. We come away with our union intact, and that was a win in my view. A 10-1/2 month strike, winners and losers, I'm not so sure how we can identify those. When you come away with your union intact, that's a win in my view.

The Calgary Herald strike

We organized the Calgary Herald editorial staff and started negotiating [in 1998]. I was a co-bargainer at the bargaining table, and Joy Langan from Vancouver was here because of her experience in the newspaper industry. When we organized them, Ken King, who's now president of the Calgary Flames, was the CEO of the Calgary Herald at that time. Right from the get-go I knew that bargaining was going to be very difficult. They seemed to be very anti anything that even resembled a collective agreement or anything of that nature. They wouldn't pay the bargaining committee, and they would only allow a very short period of time to bargain.

So I said, here's a game plan. If they don't want to give you any time off for bargaining, when is it best for the bargaining committee to be off? If we bargain from 4 in the morning till 8, if this is what they want to do, I think that's good for us. I can come and go at any time. Four in the morning sounds like a hell of a good time to bargain. So the bargaining committee said yes, that's good for us because we've got to go to work at 8 o'clock in the morning anyway in order to get our pay. So we bargained from 4 in the morning until 8 o'clock every day. The management at times looked like bloody hell. That was beyond them. The company hired a guy by the name of Gary Johansen to bargain on their behalf - the most rottenest individual I've ever met in my life. We as trade unionists have run into some hardnosed people periodically, and I can deal with that. I know when I sit down at the bargaining table, that they're on a different agenda than I am. At the end of the day, the guy that can sway and move people around is going to come out on top. It didn't matter. There was no common sense with that individual at all, however, none whatsoever. It didn't matter what kind of position you put forward to try and move the agenda, it was no good. That was the cause of the strike, in my view. He came with orders from on high (Conrad Black) to never get a collective agreement in Calgary, which he won. We never did get it, and the union decertified at the end of the day.

But getting to the police, which I talked about before, I remember one evening when we were all down there demonstrating, and I turned and looked and here comes 12 of them on horseback. Not a very nice scene. We tend to think that we live in this free country and you're given the right of free collective bargaining. That's a farce if there ever was one. The right to sign your name on the paper for somebody to take it away, that's what the right is - it's not free. Anybody thinks that it's free has got to be drinking something pretty good. There's no such thing as free collective bargaining. I learned a lot in those 2 situations, and I'm sure there's other people in this country and province that have witnessed a hell of a lot more than I.

The decision to go out was made because they wouldn't even talk about seniority, which is the most basic thing in collective agreement; they refused to talk about. It was just no. You couldn't lower yourself to put stuff on the paper that would form a collective agreement, I guess that's the best way to put it. Absolutely nothing. It didn't matter. You could smooth out the waves as much as you tried, and it was just never there.

We had them in court on numerous charges of bargaining in bad faith, and unfair labour practices, but there's a pretty big pit when you're up against Conrad Black. We did slow down the sales of newspapers, but not near enough. I'm sure that in this situation if we'd

had them all stopped, we'd never have gotten a collective agreement. I believe that Conrad Black would have shut the paper down before he would've given in to a collective agreement. That's my own personal view. I don't believe we'd have ever got there.

Scabs? If there was half a dozen of our members that broke ranks and crossed the line during that whole period of time, it would've been a lot. They had scabs come in, though. The media today is pretty high tech, and there was another group in there bargaining at the same time, GIC unit. A lot of us know about solidarity of 2 groups, so we've always done the hand holding until the first nickel drops down on the table. Then for some reason or another, solidarity kind of fades away. That's unfortunately what happened in that situation as well. I don't know what that was about. I can't put a spin on that. I was disappointed, but I wasn't surprised. Over the years I haven't been involved in any of those hand holding things, but I've been witness to lots of them over the years. People talk about we'll all hunker down here and we'll all get a collective agreement. All of a sudden, whatever happens and one by one we're separated out. Unfortunately the labour movement seems to be good at doing that.

It was pretty close to a year that we were out on the line. They got strike pay right from the start, and payment for all the legal bills, etc. The Calgary City Police, on the other hand, were not good. They played the role of what you perceive them to be. We had a number of people arrested on the picket line for various things. They made sure that the injunction where you could only talk to people for 2 minutes was kept well. They were there every day, just like the picketers. Where there was a picket line, they were there. You could only hold up a car for 2 minutes, then you had to let them go.

We had massive support. Sometimes on some of those evening runs we had maybe 300 people on the picket line - massive support from the trade union movement in Alberta. People came in on buses and things. The support was incredible. I don't know whether anybody ever said it, but I'd have to say thank you to the trade unions throughout Alberta, because they come from all over. There was no question. We said you have lots of support, they knew they had lots of support, not only from our union but from all the unions across Alberta.

Ironically, we went to Suncor after it was over. We were still on strike in Lanigan. My wife and I went up. We did a tour of western Canada begging for money. I met with Dave during that period of time. We did a tour, and we had other brothers from Lanigan went to Ontario and BC. That's the most gratifying thing that ever happened during that strike. We had 300 people on strike and our strike pay at that time from the national union was \$90 a week. We paid 300 people \$145 a week for the whole duration of that strike. That was from the good hearts of the trade union people across this country. I can never repay or say thank you enough, just incredible. We had some people on a monthly stipend. There was x amount of dollars coming every day for the duration of that strike. We were able to put our own store together for that strike. We had a fight with the local storekeeper when we went and asked him if he'd give the strikers a better deal. It wasn't forthcoming. So we went to the wholesalers in Saskatoon. He had the audacity to go there and try to get us cut off from buying groceries.

I think the 'open for business' sign says it all, and that business is the corporate world. Whatever the workers can eke out from the corporate world is where it's at. We all know

that in Alberta if you organize somebody, the chances of getting a first collective agreement are pretty slim. If the corporate world wants to take those people on and deny them that privilege, they will win. The corporate world will win, because there's no protection for those folks whatsoever.

Coming to work for the Union in Alberta

In 1979 I went to Labour College in Ottawa for an 8 week course. From that day forward, I kept writing applications to become a staff rep. Along with that, I took various labour courses within our own organization. After the strike in Lanigan, like most leaders in the trade union movement, I lost my position. I was defeated in an election. So after licking my wounds, I then ran for a position on the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour and become a vice president and chaired the Health and Safety Committee till the time I come on staff in '90. I also took a labour relations course at the University of Saskatchewan with Bob Sass, and got a certificate in labour relations. So whether that was what tipped the scales of me getting a staff job or not, I don't know, but it was shortly after that that I got hired and come to Calgary. My first post, I worked temporary staff and covered Saskatchewan and Manitoba. When I come to Calgary here, we organized the Telus Mobility group, and I was assigned as a staff person there. That was a new community that was new to me, because most of my life had been done in mining and the oil industry. So that was a new bargaining group that I had to get my head around and learn all those tricks in the communications industry. These workers come from another union that was an international union. They wanted out and wanted to get into a national union. How they picked us, I don't know, because I come in the middle of what was going on.

The work in Alberta is pretty frustrating, because you're always running into gateposts; you never get to walk through the gate cleanly. You're always rubbing up against the posts - very frustrating. Even today after being in Alberta for 12 years, I still think back to my time in good old Saskatchewan, even though we had the strike. I still think what we had there is better than here. Being pretty naïve when you start into the trade union, I think "Geez, how horrible it was out in Atlantic Canada." - but Atlantic Canada probably isn't any more worse off than we in Alberta. The people that succeeded in getting a collective agreement off the bat, going back in years, we've got locals here with a lot of history, 30 years. We're going to one this spring in Lloydminster that's been there for 50 years. Those folks come through some difficult times to get to where they are now, and being able to keep it. That's my concern today, is being able to keep those collective agreements. I worry so much that the government in Edmonton could just rip the paper and say, you have none. I just wonder, with this 'Open for Business', how far would they go with it.

I organized a small plant down in the Crowsnest Pass. We were to the point where we were pretty close to applying, when all of a sudden, somebody said, well these technical engineers are part of the collective agreement. I said, no they're not. So we had another meeting and they signed cards. I said, well if they are they have to sign, and we can bargain them out maybe, but I'm pretty sure they're not. The board allowed them, and they voted against the union of course. It was a small gas plant, about 40 people.

There's a whole raft of them [gas plants] in this province that should be in a union. It should be ours, going with tradition. But I say union. We as unionists sometimes shoot ourselves in the foot. We'll start a campaign and maybe another organization will come in and run a side by side campaign. At the end of the day, nobody wins. A result of that, and I go back to Roganville Saskatchewan, which is a potash mine next door to Esterhazy. When we got organized in 1975, we started working on that plant. After the first organizing drive we made an application, and our brothers from United Steelworkers filed an application as well. During the time, a donkey council got going on the inside, and when the vote come, the donkey council won. It's still like that today.

It's unfortunate that we as trade unionists allow this stuff to happen. I was talking to Audrey Cormack [President, Alberta Federation of Labour] one time and I said that if some organization was going to take a run at Walmart for example, it would be in our best interests, whoever that was, that we from all the organizations go into those stores and sign people up in half that organization. Then maybe we'd win a few. But as long as we have 2 groups going in knocking on the same doors, we're all losers. I've always taken that position. Yes it should be ours, but at the end of the day they're going to be trade unionists. That's the importance. As long as we're divided off they're going to beat us. It might be a small win, nothing significant. I haven't wrote any great super language that set the patter for anybody. I've always been hanging on looking over the fence and hoping we can advance the day a little longer.

The Union at Shell Oil

I look after Shell Oil, which likes to play the role of mother to their workers, and their workers believe that Shell is their mother. As a Union, we have 2 roles. We try to steer them away from that concept, which is difficult. We merged an association with a plant west of town, and they have not the idea that unions are together. They won't even talk to some of the ones we've had for 25 years. They seem to think that they have to live under the bubble and Shell will do the right thing for them. It's a constant battle with them.

Since we got them, the individual that came to us and said we should talk about merger has since gone to the dark side. t's interesting that this member of management came to us and he was with us for 7 months before he went to the dark side. A very good individual, but then he got into this bubble thought that Shell would look after us, to the point where they don't really feel at ease when I was there at the bargaining table. I might say something that might not be nice to Shell. For the most part, when you look at the energy industry, you can go back to the time of Neil Reimer, when have they had a big fight in terms of collective bargaining in this province? The last time was just a couple of years ago at PetroCanada, but for the most part, well they had the big fight out at Irving Oil in New Brunswick. Suncor, yesm but for the most part, the energy sector has bubbled along quite well, because, for the most part, it's always about money. In the minds of the workers, it's all about money. So money's never been an issue at the bargaining table, it's all the other things. The benefits, all those other things, are big things. Unfortunately, those workers find them the easiest thing to throw away at the bargaining table to get a collective agreement.

Strikes in the energy industry

I've spent some time thinking about strikes, and the toll they take on people. I thought, that it might be better to stay on the inside rather than the outside. I believe in 1947 in the Ford strike that's what they did, and that's how they won. I'm not great on dates, but I do have a little bit of history in reading and stuff like that.

I don't know of any examples where they have done that here in the industrial plants. I say if you're going to shut down a gas plant or refinery, would you not go to the electrical box and pull the switch? It seems pretty simple in my mind. In Lanigan when they tried to run it, we went out on the power line and threw cables across the power line and it didn't run. I don't want you to broadcast that, because there was a lot of police activity around that. It didn't only shut the plant down, it bumped all the way back to Regina, which was 150 miles. We did that on a number of occasions, and it caused management, because they were in there trying to run it, they didn't have scabs but they had management... Of course when they plugged everything up, who was the worker and who was the boss? They were all bosses, so it caused a great fight within the plant between management. Nobody knew who the boss was and who was the worker.

Especially in the gas plants now, where at one time a lot of valves were hand controlled, you have to go out there and physically open and close them. Not anymore. The workers now sit in a nice control room and do all that by just touching the computer screens. You've got operators and maintenance people. They could probably run one of those for a fair length of time before it would crumple down. Some of the employers now though have got rid of a lot of middle management, got rid of that level. So you have upper management and very little in between. I wonder if you got into that position if they'd just shut the plant down. That's the other thing, not run it, if you got into a strike.

The Energy & Chemical Workers' Union (ECWU) came about with a merger after the OCAW had been trying to get a merger, even at the international level. They tried with International Rubber Workers and that failed. Then they went on to the International Chemical Workers. The Canadian director of the International Chemical Workers addressed our Convention in 1978 thereabouts. At that Canadian district 9 convention he said, if the internationals fail on the merger, I will work to no end to see that it happens on a national level in Canada. With that statement, he and a number of international chemical workers staff were fired from their positions. They come to OCAW and we provided an umbrella for them till such time as they were the merger. I'm not sure of all the legalities there in regards to how they got there, but I'm sure there was legal hurdles that I don't know anything about. You'd have to talk to my friend Neil Reimer about that, because he'd know all about that.

It was a political thing. Our political strings in Canada didn't mean a whole lot in the US. My first example of that, most of the time we like to think the trade union movement in Canada is pretty solid in terms of how they vote. We both know that's a fallacy, but we like to think that way. Down in the US, we had Mrs. Martin Luther King address the international convention. I remember her standing on the street waiting to cross there, and some workers from the US saying, what are they bringing that black bitch here for? She's a Democrat and she's black and all this stuff. I was appalled. I thought the US should be supporting the Democrats for the most part. I found that the US politics in the convention

hall were as much black and white as anyplace else. It was really divided there. Whether that was the whole issue around why we left the international, I'm not sure. We still deal with international corporations. We still have an organic relationship with the American Union. They come to our conventions, and we go to theirs.

The Communications Energy & Paperworkers Union (CEP)

The CEP: What all three unions were talking about at that time - the Communications, the Paperworkers and ECWU - was our ability to service the workers we had. We were a fairly small organization and believed that if we didn't go in that direction, we'd be eaten up by other organizations or because we couldn't provide the service that people would leave. That was part of the issue of the day.

I have my moments when I think we've come from looking after working people to somewhat looking after political people. Under our former organization, we only had a couple of positions were elected. Now our executive board is made up of 16 people, and they're all looking for votes. I don't pay a lot of attention to them up there, because I do my job and I really don't care what they do. But I see in the organization that politics is a big issue.

Technology of course, is running rampant in all three; more so in the energy and communications than in paper. The paper sector is still pretty much labour work. There's a lot more labour work than in the other two. Whether that was part of it or not, I'm not so sure. I don't see it as that - probably in the two sectors. And we've also got the media now as well, but the energy and communications obviously was hi tech.

I also look after a roofing plant here in Calgary and a printing press outfit in Medicine Hat, all small organizations. The roofing plant is highly labour intensive, but I enjoy working with those people more, because they have a desire to believe that the trade union movement is going to help them. The higher paid people, I sometimes question why they belong to us. I've been in positions where I've went and asked for assistance for these smaller ones and the high paid people say they're getting as much as they're capable of earning, which disturbs me. But that's the kind of answers you get from the people that are making \$150,000 a year. Quite a few. It bothers me to no end. I enjoy working with the smaller people because they have a desire and a commitment.

Leadership & activism in the labour movement

I think that anybody who steps up to the plate and puts his whole life out there, takes on issues, whoever they may be. Whether it's the guy at the roofing mill and he says, I'm going to be the president and I'm going to take issues, or the president of the Canadian Labour Congress. In my mind, those two people are doing the same thing. Maybe not in such a grandiose style. I think back that the first person I met from the Canadian Labour Congress was Shirley Carr. I've always had a deep appreciation of her. I always thought people knew in Canada who the President of the labour congress was. She didn't live in a vacuum. She was out, very much in the forefront in the media. I don't see that now, for whatever reason. Whether it's the media blocking it out or whatever. But we don't see that. We don't see Ken Georgetti. We saw a fair bit of Bob White but not a lot. Not like Shirley Carr. Shirley Carr was on the television every week I thought. Politics and the media have taken that away from us. You talk to a lot of trade unionists and say, who's

the president of the Canadian Labour Congress? Don't know. Is that because they don't want to know, or because we don't have a profile? I'm not sure. When I go to local union meetings and I talk about the president of Canadian Labour Congress saying this, who's he? I have a great deal of frustration with that.

Organize, organize. How you do that, I don't know. When I was VP of the Saskatchewan Fed of Labour, we put together a group that would go talk to high schools if we got asked. An interesting thing was when I went and talked to school, and because we had crown corporations in our organization, like SaskPower and SaskEnergy and stuff like that, I know that when I went into a community in rural Saskatchewan, somebody there had a father or mother that was attached to the trade union movement. But to my chagrin, they didn't know that. You'd go into the schools. The first thing I'd say is, when I say union, what do you think about, and the first answer was postal workers and strikes. That's what they knew about unions. Then I would ask the next question, who in this classroom has parents that belong to unions? Nobody. Which I knew was wrong too, because obviously there were people in the community that worked for SaskPower and SaskTel and those things. We as trade unionists sometimes don't talk to our children, I guess, about what union is. I'm not so sure how we get that done. We have union meetings, which we don't get a whole bunch out unless it's bargaining time. They don't want to talk about things of the day, they want to talk about the new collective agreement that they may or may not get. Talking to my family about union isn't high on the agenda.

How we do that, I don't know. I know the Federation runs a newspaper. In all likelihood it stays in the union office that it's sent to and never gets distributed. How we get that way, I'm not so sure. I've spent a lot of time thinking about that since I went on those speaking tours. Interesting, my kids, I have 3 daughters. Black Wednesday, the day of the big arrest, my 2nd daughter turned 16. That's a pretty important day in a girl's life, turning 16. But what did she do that day? She stayed home and looked after our youngest kid while my wife and I went into Regina and Saskatoon respectively to get our brothers and sisters out of jail. My kids know very much about the trade union movement. They have been part of that.

The trade union movement has been very good to me. If I live to be 150, I could never pay it back. It's been a wonderful ride of education and experience, and meeting the greatest people on earth. We're not sure. We go to conventions and take a strip off each other like no other being, worse than you'd experience in any house of parliament or anything. But at the end of the day we can walk shoulder to shoulder and arm in arm, and take on an issue. That's the proud part of being a trade unionist.

I think about going to Labour College, and I think about going to the labour studies course in Saskatoon. We don't get to a lot of people that way. It's kind of an exclusive club. I've wondered how we can expand that and get it to more people. I'm sure other people have thought about it too. I said to Bob Sass when I took his course at the university, I said this should be done on satellite so John Doe in some community can hook in there and do that. We're kind of behind in technology in that way. I think Athabasca has a course similar to that. How do we get that to people that want it? It shouldn't be that I can only go to Ottawa and that's what I'm going to get. It's always been a problem, and I'm not sure how to fix it. But it plagues my mind.

