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DC: I'm Dave Coles. I'm the national president of the Communications, Energy and Paper Workers Union. I was elected last October, so that's 2006, in Vancouver at our national convention. I've had a fairly long career in the labour movement. I was local union president on Vancouver Island for 11 years. I did a stint of 10 years in Alberta where I was an officer with the Alberta Federation of Labour. My main responsibility was organizing and political action. I was then transferred as an organizer to Vancouver. Then in the year 2000 I ran for the regional vice president, and was the western region vice president for the CEP for 6 years. Then of course I became the president.

Q: And when did you become president?

DC: October of 2006.

Q: Just a word about the mill you came from.

DC: I worked in a mill on Vancouver Island in a small community called Crofton. It was then owned by British Columbia Forest Products. I worked my way up a progression line and was actually a paper maker, working on a newsprint paper machine.

Q: As such you were a process operator, right? Tell me a bit about the kind of people who worked in these mills, the kind of jobs they do, a bit about the pulp industry and the workers and the members who are employed in them.

DC: In the pulp and paper industry, where I spent 12 years working, there's a combination of workers. There's the maintenance workers -- millwrights, electricians, and so on. But the majority of people are operators, process workers. I particularly worked on a newsprint mill. So right from the labourers, the sisters and brothers that clean the operation up, to those who run the heavy equipment that make the paper itself. That's quite typical across Canada and Quebec. Usually in most cases our membership in the pulp and paper industry are in rural communities. Probably about 80% of our pulp and paper membership live in rural communities, such as the one I came from in Crofton.

Q: Tell me a bit about the state of the pulp and paper industry today, because that's one of the major groups of members that you represent. What is the condition of the industry in Canada today?

DC: The pulp and paper industry in Canada, United States and the Nordic countries is in chaos. Terms like "total collapse" are being used. For our union, we've lost approximately 20,000 members. In the forest sector in the last 2 years, over 30 partial or complete mill closures. Week in, week out, another announcement of another closure, either a sawmill or a pulp mill or a paper mill, or parts of those mills. The industry in North America is in total collapse.

Q: Why? Explain some of that.

DC: The reasons for the collapse of the pulp and paper industry are a number. In Canada and United States, particularly Canada, there's been a capital strike for 3 decades. There's been the lack of investment. Our best equipment is old. We haven't had modernization, upgrading. One of the most recent mills was here in Alberta at Slave Lake; a small pulp mill was built there. But that was 15 years ago. There's nothing new in Canada, particularly on the paper side. The Canadian dollar, the monetary system in Canada, is a petro dollar. It's based on Ft. McMurray tar sands. We've pleaded with the governor of the Bank of Canada, with the prime minister of Canada, to do something about the Canadian dollar. They just say it's a structural change, and quite frankly give workers in the communities the back of the hand. Also, a significant part of the problem is the reduction in demand. People are not buying newspapers, they are not using photocopy paper. In the year 2006 in North America there was a 10% drop in the consumption of newsprint. So it is clearly a cultural shift in North America. A number of reasons, some of it lack of literacy. But primarily it's the younger generation are changing to electronic

media. My son, for example, subscribes to 6 newspapers; only one of them is on newsprint, the rest of them are online on the web. So the access to information is not dictated by newspapers anymore, nor television for that matter. The web is having a big impact, so that's a big issue. Where there is growing and emerging markets – Asia, the New World – manufacturers are moving their facilities there. Scandinavians are building modern equipment around the world away from North America and Europe. So it's a combination of a number of issues. For us it's just a total failure of capital. It is abandoning the very roots of our country. Our country was dependent on the development of the pulp and paper industry. For example, Ottawa, many people do not realize the only reason Ottawa was there is it's a forestry town. It's built on a river, it was pulp and paper mills and sawmills. And look what we have there, one mill left, they're all gone. It's an abandonment of what built the country.

Q: Do you see this kind of collapse and these kinds of developments affecting other sectors of your membership?

DC: Absolutely. I think the situation in Alberta is no different than taking raw logs and shipping them out. If you look at the age of people that are working in the industry now, their children, the time they're of working age, won't have good jobs. Why do I say that? Well right now there's many applications to the National Energy Board to export raw bitumen. Now raw bitumen is tar sand oil, muck, clay, that hasn't been processed. They've developed a method of mixing fluid with it, pumping it straight to the United States to be upgraded and processed. Albertans will get the pollution and the U.S. will get the jobs. The big boom that's happening in Alberta is what? It's exploration and

construction. When that's finished, with the advent of these pipelines being built to the U.S., I expect to have the same thing happen in the energy sector that's happening currently in the pulp and paper sector. Export the raw resources, don't build an infrastructure. We have a very good example of that here in Alberta. When the government approved the Alliance Pipeline, it killed the manufacturing sector. We lost thousands of workers here at Celanese and many other places across Alberta. The industry, the natural gas converting industry was killed, 37 jobs were created to run the pipeline. Chicago got the jobs, Alberta got the pollution, again. In the case of the Alliance Pipeline, it also sucks the natural gas unprocessed out of northern British Columbia. So it's a rape and pillage strategy. One has to wonder where our government's head is at to allow this to happen to our country. That's a huge issue for our union.

Q: Just explain for people what this Alliance Pipeline is.

DC: The Alliance Pipeline is a natural gas pipeline that runs from the Peace River in British Columbia right through Alberta to Chicago. It takes the natural gas that is being pumped out of the ground, not processed, not stripped. All they do is remove the water, and they ship it straight to Chicago. Chicago processes it and makes plastic, heats their homes, and once again, Albertans get screwed.

Q: How big is this pipeline?

DC: I cannot recall.

Q: There's been another recent set of proposals that your union has become involved in – the Keystone project. Do you want to tell us a bit about that?

DC: There is a number of pipeline applications before the National Energy Board. The CEP has got 3 applications before the National Energy Board trying to intervene to enforce what we believe the mandate of the National Energy Board is, to see that if these pipelines are built, are they in the national interest? We had very bad news last Friday. The Keystone Pipeline has been approved, which will take 600,000 barrels of unprocessed bitumen, tar sands crude, directly to the United States for upgrading and then refining. We had an independent study commissioned here in Canada that that means a potential loss of creating 18,000 jobs in Canada by not having it processed here. Those numbers were never challenged by the Board. Our documents have never been challenged by the industry. Those 18,000 jobs would've been created by upgrading, by refining, then all of the spin-off that takes place when you create those kinds of industrial jobs. It's a tragedy for Canada. We're not going to give up. We are appealing to the cabinet to overturn the National Energy Board's position. If the cabinet doesn't see the folly of National Energy Board's ways, we're going to take it into the streets to the people of Canada.

Q: What does that say about our national energy policy, or lack thereof, and generally the question of energy security for Canada?

DC: Well the National Energy Board actually has fairly good mandates. The problem is, they're not enforcing them or living up to them. They're not looking at their responsibility

to the citizens of Canada. The National Energy Board has decided whatever is good for private industry has got to be good for Canada. It's a nonsensical view and approach, inappropriate view and approach, to Canada's needs. National energy security has been given away to the United States. In exchange for what? We don't know. There is, for example, no oil pipeline that runs from Alberta, Saskatchewan, to the Canadian refineries in Sarnia and Montreal. All of Alberta's oil must go through the United States. The CEP's claim is that Canada has lost its national energy security, just like what happened with the softwood lumber. So if there is a shortage of oil, gas, any products in eastern Canada, it must come back up through the United States. So we wake up one morning and we have a hostile president, he doesn't have enough oil to run his war machine, just turns the tap and Canadian refineries can't get Canadian oil. It is an absolute crime that Canada does not have a pipeline from Alberta and Saskatchewan where the natural resources are, to Canadian refineries, so that Canadian national energy security is safe. It's a cold climate; we must heat our homes in the wintertime. We must drive our tractors, we must drive our cars to work. We can't ride bicycles to work in Ft. McMurray, in Thunder Bay, when it's 30 below zero. We have to drive our cars or take public transit. We're dependent on our own oil and gas. This government has been more concerned about supplying energy security to the United States and their war machine than they are to working people in Canada.

Q: So you're telling me that we have no security of energy supply. What is the energy policy in Canada?

DC: The issue about how can Canadians find out about the lack of national energy policy – I believe we don't have anything other than building up the American security – they can go to the CEP's web page and click on to the pipeline issues. They can go to the government of Canada's web page and click on to the National Energy Board. The problem is that it won't mean anything to them, because there is no protection for Canadians in our national system now.

Q: Then we're just being Americans, because Americans don't believe in protecting themselves either.

DC: Well I think it's worse than that. I'm concerned that Stephen Harper and some of his cabinet members actually don't like Canadians. I think they'd be quite pleased if there was an American flag flying here. There's a number of issues that have involved our union, where they time and time again do what is ever best for the U.S. Whether it's the foreign ownership of our telecommunications system. Even the Americans won't allow their telephone system to be owned by the U.S. Yet our government, our ministers, are saying we should allow foreign ownership of our telecommunications system. That again is another security issue for Canadians. I'm not being reactionary. We don't have a pipeline to eastern Canada. The refineries in eastern Canada are now getting their oil from Russia, from Venezuela, from Saudi Arabia. We can't even supply oil and gas and natural gas to our own citizens. This government thinks that's just fine as long as the American war machine is being fed.

Q: Could you tell us about the number of members you have in the telecommunications industry, where they work, who are some of the major companies, and what's happening to Canada's national telecommunications?

DC: The CEP represents the vast majority of all telephone workers, except in the provinces of British Columbia and Alberta. So all of the major telephone companies – Bell, Sasktel, Alliant, Manitoba Tel, a number of the smaller telephone companies – their workers are represented by the CEP. So from lineman operators to technicians to people that work in kiosks, computer writers, line installers – we represent all of those members. We're fighting rear guard actions in two arenas right now. The only state-owned, publicly owned, people-owned telephone company is in the province of Saskatchewan. It's the biggest telephone company that's held by the people that use the system. The situation in Saskatchewan right now is that the opposition party is clearly threatening, if they get elected, to sell off that asset. So we have that battle going on. The federal level, the then-minister, Maxime Bernier, was arguing that we should allow foreign ownership of the telecommunications industry. I met with the Prime Minister of Canada on that very subject, and raised these issues with him. What value is it to Canada to have foreign owners run and control Canada's telephone system? There was no answer. Well, says the minister Bernier, think about the equity that will flow to Canada. My response to him is, what about the job loss? As if we were just fodder. Well that's an issue, but just think of the money that will flow to Canada. So they accept that there'll be massive job loss if foreign owners were allowed to take over the telecommunications system. No discussion has taken place about the security of Canada. A foreign country owning our telecommunications system doesn't sound very secure to us. It's a huge battle for us.

Right now the legislation says you cannot have majority control of a telephone company by foreign owners. So what do they do? They create these leveraged buyouts, and the Canadian companies then go to the U.S. and the world market to get equity. So foreign equity now owns Bell Canada. Pension funds now own Bell Canada. They're not interested in what happens to the service to Canadians. There's no discussion about will I get better telephone service. The ex CEO of Bell, Michael Savia, not once talks about the quality of service, but talks about the share value of Bell. We have to do something about the share value. What about picking up your telephone and actually getting service? So this particular government that we have now is more interested in what's good for stock markets, for private equity, for capital, than it is for the citizens of Canada. We're just not going to sit still and let it happen.

Q: You answered the question I was going to ask. Once again, before I get to the NAFTA and the security and prosperity partnership that you were protesting, talk about another sector that you were protesting. I think it's the newspaper sector.

DC: We in the CEP actually represent a multitude of industrial and public sectors across Canada. One of the founding sectors that we haven't spoken about is the telecommunications, or sorry, we'll do that one again – is the print media sector and the broadcast media sector, one of the founding sectors of our union. It's in a terrible state in Canada right now. It's about concentration of ownership, downsizing. The main issue that we're fighting in rural western Canada right now is the lack of local news. It's the CNN, Foxization of Canadian broadcast and print media. One of our issues, and I think should be the issue of all Canadians, is that you can't have democracy unless you have a varied

voice press. We don't in Canada. We don't have television and print media that has anything but a rightwing capital view of society. There is no liberal or progressive or green voice, there's no first nations voice, other than some independent media. We've had to rely in Canada on the web and indy media to get any opposing view out to the citizens of Canada.

Q: Just talk about what this concentration of ownership means. What does it mean for jobs and the state of the industry? What are your members facing now, the ones who are running the television cameras, the ones who are working for Pacific Press and those sorts of people?

DC: The two main segments that we represent workers in communications is broadcast and print media. In broadcast, with the demise of local news and local programming, and going to canned news, centralized news, just mush, is a tremendous loss of membership. You shut down these newsrooms, there's a lack of reporters, out-of-work cameramen, editors. The centralization of news, taking it out of the regions, has meant significant job loss to us in the broadcast sector. In the print sector, what many newspapers have become is a cover to fill with advertising. They've downsized the reporters, the departments, they've turned them into advertising tools and not the deliverer of news to the citizens of Canada. It's meant huge job loss, lack of job satisfaction. Reporters don't get to cover the real stories in depth. You're lucky if you get the PTA. And of course if there's a major traffic accident, we've got to be there and watch the blood and gore. But the in-depth reporting is missing in most cases, in most newspapers and televisions across Canada.

Quite sadly, that applies equally to the CBC. Their budget cuts and the quality of the product produced by Canadian broadcast has greatly reduced in the last 4 or 5 years.

Q: Pretty grim story.

DC: Well I gotta say, the upside of the grim story of the demise of mainstream media has been the explosion of independent media on air, written, web driven. The experience of the actions at Montebello and the impact that the web and independent media can play has taught us all a big lesson.

Q: Just be very patient when you explain Montebello. Most people don't know about it. The media, as you just explained, did not cover that adequately. What was the issue, what was this alliance?

DC: A lot of questions have been asked about Montebello – why were we there and what was it about? First off, Montebello is a resort on the Nodaway River that's been there for a century. It's a luxury resort. The governments of Mexico, United States and Canada had a meeting there of their presidents to discuss the SPP. Now what's the SPP? It's a security prosperity partnership that was created out of confusion and angst that the markets had after 9-11. It was big capital's way of reacting to the security wall that the United States wanted to put up after 9-11. So they were meeting in Montebello to have a discussion about the SPP. So why would have citizens and the CEP been in Montebello to protest the SPP? Well what the SPP is doing is discussing the economy of our 3 countries, but not in our governments, but in private with big industry there, big government, and no

one from the citizens of Canada, U.S. or Mexico. We're upset about it as the CEP, because of our issues around energy security. There were 9 working groups in the SPP working on what to do about Alberta, Canada's rich resources, the tar sands. We objected to that taking place without having our inclusion, without having the citizens included, and without having the politicians. It wasn't being raised in the House of Commons. So we were there with our social partners, primarily the Council of Canadians, to deliver a petition of approximately 10,000 signatures from ordinary working-class Canadians, that we didn't agree with having these kinds of secret meetings, and we wanted it out in the open. The politicians weren't about to allow us to do that. The RCMP, the Canadian government, the Prime Minister, decided to send in thousands of armed police to ensure that we could not deliver these petitions to the politicians who were meeting in Montebello. You have to understand who were delivering this petition. This was the president of the Council of Canadians, Maude Barlow, my wife, Barb Byers, the first vice-president of the Canadian Labour Congress – many other men and women in suits and dresses and sandals, trying to peacefully deliver a petition to Montebello. The CEP believes that there were direct political instructions by the politicians to create a scene, a riot, havoc, at that protest to make us look bad, and to stop us from getting our story out – the fact that there is no national energy security in Canada, that the SPP was going to allow the Americans to have all of the excess oil and gas that's being produced right now in Alberta, and that Canadians in eastern Canada had no protection if we ran out. They didn't want that story out, and they sent the police in to cause a disturbance, to cause a riot, to make us look bad. And they got caught. The government of Canada sent agent provocateurs into the peaceful crowd to try to incite a riot. They had, as I mentioned earlier, been shoving and pushing around the men and women that tried to deliver the

petition. They had thousands of armed policemen that looked like Darth Vader, with teargas masks on, clubs, batons, pepper spray guns, fire hoses, every piece of armament imaginable to police, to deal with 1,500 peaceful protestors. A number of young peace activists had blocked the street off to stop the armed police from marching down onto the protestors. A group of us, myself included, and our union and staff, had stepped in between the young protestors. These are just kids, no masks on, sitting down in the middle of the road just saying, we're not moving. Complete peaceful protest. The police were moving on them with their truncheons. We were very concerned for the safety of these guys. For several hours we held off the police and stopped them from beating up these kids. A number of times through the day there had been provocation from the police. They had stolen the CEP flag from the flagpole and ran. There's a graveyard right beside where we were protesting, where all of these armed cops were all gathered up. They ran through the graveyard waving the CEP flag, trying to taunt us to come inside and confront them. There had been a number of incidents where people that we didn't know were trying to confront the line. I had been all day long trying to ensure that we didn't give an excuse to these armed police to lay a licking on us and these peace protestors. These 3 very significantly built men came around the corner in masks and black hoodies on, one of them carrying a rock. My French isn't very good, but I could pick up that a couple of the young kids were yelling at them that you're not ours, that you're police. I moved forward about 100 feet down the line to stop these guys. I asked them to take their masks off. I confronted them. I noticed that one of them had a big boulder. I'm a union activist, I'm a union leader. I've been on picket lines and peace marches all my life. As soon as you saw these guys you knew they weren't young starving kids off the street. They were either private goons, private industry cops, which

we'd been warned about. There's a tendency for big industry, when they want to stir up trouble on our picket lines and everywhere else, to send in private security cops. I knew they were either private security cops or they were police. They looked like it. Just because I've been around them all my life – Calgary Herald strike – I just knew. So I put my face right in his face and yelled at him, you're a cop aren't you? Right away his eyes dilated, dead giveaway. Then I just got aggressive with him. I told him to take his mask off, put the rocks down, and it's our picket line, get away. They had a boulder in their hand, they're masked, they're big men, and they're pushing me back towards the police line. The whole picture was bizarre. If these were protestors, this wouldn't be going on. A number of my staff got in behind me to try to assist, to stop these guys from approaching the line. They were there to try to create a false impression that there was about to be a riot started, so that the riot police could move in on us. What happened was, there were independent media around, people with cameras running. One chap's mask got pulled off, and when you look at the U2 video you can see one of them is talking to the police line. So they pushed me back right up against the line, shoving me, carrying this big boulder. All of a sudden the police line opens up and they walk through. The police lay them on the ground. I've been around a lot of picket lines. If I walked up to a picket line with a boulder, I'd still have the bruises and I'd still be in jail. It's a criminal act. You cannot, under Canadian law, carry a boulder and a mask and push somebody. It's an assault with a deadly weapon. They put him on the ground. The independent media and camera people were around taking all these pictures. When we took the bus back after the rally were over, people were starting to realize we got these guys. We held a press conference the next day because one of the videos shows, while the police are laying on the ground -- they're supposed to be provocateurs, they're supposed to be rioters, whatever they were

supposed to be – they're wearing police issue boots. The video shows it. The identical pattern, the identical insignia, they're wearing police boots. So we held a press conference the next day and a lot of media showed. They made a lot of fun of me. They liked the fact that this happened, but they didn't believe our position that it was police. So we used the independent media. We told everyone who would listen that if the police don't come clean, we were going to use the web and we were going to Facebook these people, and somebody in Quebec would've recognized them as their neighbour, their relative. Within 24 hours the police had to admit in fact they were provocateurs. But their excuse was that someone had given them the rock and they were holding it so that they blended in. That was the first police report. Of course nobody would accept that. They were there to cause a riot. Everybody knows it. We've written the Prime Minister demanding that he hold a judicial inquiry. They've treated the citizens in Canada with the utmost disrespect. It's a real assault on democracy when your government sends in police to start a riot to cover up what ordinary citizens are saying is not acceptable. The SPP is not acceptable, if Canadians understand it. They didn't want that message out. The politicians sent the police of Canada in, those that are supposed to be protecting us, to commit criminal acts. There's something wrong here. And what does the Prime Minister do? Gives Canadians a slap across the face and says, I've given it to Stockwell Day, he'll look into it. Not acceptable. We think that the citizens of Canada must demand of the Prime Minister that there be an independent judicial inquiry into the circumstances at Montebello. This is not Pinochet and Chile. This is the state sending their police against their own citizens. This is a crime against the citizens of Canada, a criminal offense, and somebody's gotta be held accountable. So people, ask again and again, so why was the CEP at Montebello and the SPP, the Security Prosperity Partnership – why would workers, CEP members, be

interested? This government has only one goal, and that is to have deep integration of our economies with the United States of America, to have one currency, to have one army, to have one energy program. It is a threat to our sovereignty. It means, for example, that people that work in the pulp and paper industry can't have an economic strategy to save their interests, to save their industry, to save their community. It's about what does the United States of America want, This government, Stephen Harper in particular and his ministers, are absolutely driven to ensure that we are lockstep with the American economy, the American foreign policy. It's an issue of Canadian water, it's an issue of Canadian resources, Canadian security. I think that this federal government and some of the provinces are not being truthful to the citizens of Canada. They're not telling ordinary working people that are losing their jobs that this is all part of a national strategy to integrate the United States. It's incumbent upon us to ensure that working class people, soccer moms, people who are just interested in democracy, understand the seriousness of this and other trade agreements that are done in secret, never brought before the House of Commons, before the provinces' legislatures. This is a very sinister and, in my personal opinion, evil approach to the way that they're treating Canadians and the Canadian citizens.

Q: Job loss. We had a situation here in Edmonton, Alberta. I want you to repeat that and tell us a bit about the Celanese plant, your view of it. What role did it play in what would've been the economic policy? Why was it shut down and what implications is that bound to have?

DC: Here in Alberta we had a classic example of how Canadian and provincial policy has failed the citizens of Alberta, but directly failed the CEP and our members. It's a long history of not taking care of the resources in the province. A natural gas pipeline, built from northern BC through Alberta to Chicago to draw natural gas, it was called the Alliance Pipeline. It created 30 or 40 permanent jobs. But what it meant was that the raw resource, the driver of the converting industry in Edmonton and in Alberta, was gone and gone forever. What it meant very quickly was plants like Celanese would run out of feedstock at a reasonable price. We no longer had a price in Canada for Canadians. It was a global price. Let the free market decide. What it meant is that that plant could no longer get feedstock at a reasonable price, problem one. Problem two, private equity bought the company. The company was making money. Blackstone bought it, private equity. They're not interested in jobs in Canada, they're interested in profits for their shareholders, those who have private equity invested in that company. So there's no Canadian value to the company. It permanently closed, throwing over 1,000 workers on the streets. One would argue it's a boom time, they can get other jobs. But what it really meant is that the industry, for all intents and purposes, is dead in Alberta, and we'll see a withering of it as the gas flows out of Alberta, and not the creation of the jobs, like the Americans are getting with Canada and Alberta's natural gas. It was a huge impact. When our children are of working age, the exploration and construction will be finished in Alberta, and we'll be in another bust. Why? Because the feedstocks that ran the Celanese mill and plant are gone. The bitumen will be being pumped, the raw tar sands crude will be pumped directly to the United States. They have the technology. So we will be the hewers of water and the miners of bitumen, with no industrial jobs in Canada and Alberta. Particularly Alberta is getting screwed. This is not the end of the job loss. Boom in Alberta, and we're losing

members to closures in the energy sector. How can that be? Because the politicians decided it was better to fuel the American economy than to have industrial jobs in Canada and Alberta.

Q: As I understand it, the private equity venture is not quite the same as a normal company doing business. Companies of course serve their shareholders. There's something about a private equity firm that's a little more evil than that. Do you want to just explain private equity?

DC: There's been a debate going on in our society. . . Private equity, unlike companies that are owned by the stock market, and we've got no love for the stock market – it isn't interested in producing a product, whether it's a filter for your car, or pulp or paper – the stock market companies are only interested in their share value. But there is some opportunity for us to put pressure on shareholders. Private equity are companies that are not on the stock market. They're held by private individuals and private money coming from all kinds of sources around the world, and are accountable to no one. The history of private equity in our belief is about buying up publicly traded companies, slashing them apart, taking out the value, and then dumping off the pieces. That was clearly an example with Blackstone at the Celanese plant. Private equity bought the company, ripped it apart, sold off, closed down, and moved the manufacturing to offshore, where they have cheaper access to natural gas from Russia, from Saudi Arabia. How the hell could you have a plant in the middle of Alberta not have access to natural gas? They gotta move the plant somewhere that's closer to Russia or Saudi Arabia. That's an example of the kinds of things that private equity companies would do. It means that there is no process in law

or public pressure that we can get at these companies to try to convince them to not close the plant, or to invest.

Q: What do Canadians have to do? What do Albertans have to do?

DC: The whole issue of what should we do next, right from the issue of the Montebello situation, where I would recommend that ordinary citizens just email the Prime Minister and demand that they hold an inquiry into Montebello. I think ordinary citizens need to pay attention to the words that politicians are saying, and to get active in their community, to ask questions, right down to the municipal governments, about what's going on in their community. I think this is at a point in history where ordinary citizens must, there is no choice, must get involved in the politics of our country, or quite frankly, we will not have a country. This is a threat against our sovereignty. When the boom is over in Alberta, she'll be another bust. We've been through it. I've lived in Alberta, this is a rollercoaster. I know peoples' lives are busy, they've got families to raise, they've got to go to work. But our issue right now is if we don't do something, who will we have to bargain collective agreements for? And who will we have to bargain collective agreements with? In the last 2 years we've lost 400,000 manufacturing jobs in Canada, with no end in sight. Where are they all going to work? Are we all going to work in construction in Ft. McMurray? Are we all working for Walmart, Canadian Tire? We need industrial jobs. There needs to be an industrial base in Canada. So I think we're at a crossroads. I'm not defeatist at all. I think with the opportunity to use independent media and the web and the social action groups that are going on and parent teacher organizations, school boards. Wherever citizens get involved, they need to ask questions

and not necessarily accept the answer. That applies to the union, too. It's time, if we are really going to put an end to this scourge, the loss of our sovereignty, ordinary people need to ask questions and demand answers.

Q: What's your union's action plan?

DC: The CEP has a multi-faceted action plan. We're coming at this in a number of ways. Direct communications with our members, direct involvement with a whole series of coalition partners, environmentalists, First Nations, other trade unions, political parties. Direct action against our government. The applications before the National Energy board, appeals to the prime minister, direct involvement in big P politics. Run CEP candidates in elections, municipally, in the school board, in the provincial elections and federally. Get people to support political parties that are of the same mind as we are. Look for progressive candidates. We've got a multi-faceted approach. We belong to a lot of organizations that are trying to turn the tide. I'll give you a very good example. There's an organization in Canada called Fair Vote Canada. It's trying to change the electoral system to proportional representation, so that every person's vote counts, so that a government can't get elected with 33% of the popular vote and completely dismantle our society. The CEP is right out in front in Ontario, it's on the ballot. We're putting thousands of dollars, hundreds of hours of work, to try to make sure it has a running chance to change the electoral system. Right now we've got what's called First Past the Post, where, depends how many parties are running, you could win the election with 30% and then dismantle our country. That's not right. They can get 30% of the vote, 70% of the seats, and change our country. We don't think that's fair. So there's all kinds of different things that the

citizens of Canada can do, right from the smallest like send a card, to run as a candidate. So I'm not disappointed. I'm pissed off at the way our politicians are treating us, but I get a sense there's change in Canada.

Q: Tell me about the members who are being affected by all these layoffs and plant closures. I know you have a feeling for them. Describe, just from the information you're given, what kind of people are getting laid off. What are their job and life prospects after that? And what is the union able to do for them directly, when people are laid off?

DC: The hard question is always asked to me, what do we do when we have just one after another of a pulp mill or sawmill closure in a rural community where there is no other employer? I'm living through that right now, where the whole community of Miramichi, New Brunswick, 4 of our mills are down. Thousands of CEP members are out of work. The government's answer, both provincially and federally, they should move to where the work is. The problem with that is, the demographics of our membership: a lot of our members are in their late 40s, early 50s, close to retirement. Their roots are in those communities -- their retirement plans are in those communities, their grandchildren are in those communities. I think it's gross. . . . The government, both provincially and federally, their approach is actually quite gross and unfair. They say, well our members should move to where the jobs are. Look at the work in Alberta or Saskatchewan, shortage of workers. The demographics of our union, and I think of a lot of industrial unions, a lot of our members are in their late 40s, their mid 50s, they're close to retirement. Their grandchildren are in the community, their homes are in the community. You've got to remember, when you shut a pulp mill down in a one-industry town, the

value of your house collapses. That's your nest egg. It's now worth usually nothing. For a government to suggest, as the Prime Minister did, that they should move to Alberta, is just totally unreasonable and unfair. What's wrong with Canada having a rural society? It's part of us. So that gives us a real huge moral dilemma. One of the primary functions of the union right off the bat is to try to save the mill. We do that in a number of ways – trying to find new owners, cooperative ownership. We've got a 40 year history now of trying to find new owners, create ways that the mill can get back up and running. We try to find work for our members. We represent a lot of construction workers. While it may be difficult to work away, a short term fix is to have some of our members work in the patch and commute back and forth. We have a collective agreement that allows our members to fly in and out, and not have to sell their homes. We fight a political battle, both within the municipalities, the provincial government, federal – to find alternative employment in the community for our members. We supply job counselling to our members. We just never give up, not until the day that they actually tear the mill down. We just don't walk away, and there's a long history of that. Here in the Prairies, we've worked tirelessly with our membership in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, where a very modern pulp mill was closed by Weyerhaeuser and sold to Domtar, not because it was losing money, just because a corporate decision was made in Tacoma, Washington, that they wanted to take the product off the market, which put 600 of our members out of work directly, and some 15,000 workers in Saskatchewan out of work indirectly, because it shut the whole forest industry. We've looked for buyers and we're now in the process of making arrangements with Domtar to at least start up part of the mill. An announcement was made by the premier of Saskatchewan, one of the only governments in Canada that actually stepped up to the plate and said, we're going to do something to ensure that rural

Saskatchewan, about that pulp mill is going to run. They've taken a courageous step. They've taken from the forest companies the right to harvest those trees, away from the forest companies. The forest management agreement has been given up by Domtar, given back to the people of Saskatchewan, to be managed by the people of Saskatchewan for the people of Saskatchewan. That government has taken a very, very bold move. They've committed investment into the community, they've agreed to finance the First Nations so they can build and start up their own sawmill and try to divest by having one giant corporation. Weyerhaeuser controlled the whole province in the forest industry. Have it broken up so that mom and pop operations, First Nations, can utilize the forest. Those are the kinds of things we do in the forest sector and other sectors to try to assist our members when their plant or operation has been shut down.

Q: ?? and Ft. McMurray and CEP's presence there.

DC: The whole story of the CEP in construction has been very controversial and all kinds of stories told. The story actually begins in British Columbia where an international union had control over the B.C. members, and for 30 years tried to get their autonomy. They left the BC international, it was the BC Carpenters Union that represents all kinds of construction workers, came and joined the CEP. That's where the story starts. The workers said, we've had enough of international unions, we want our autonomy. They came to the CEP and said, would you defend us, back us up? We did that, and those members left. That created a construction base for the CEP in Canada and in Quebec. The next thing we did is we developed a fraternal relationship with the Quebec construction federation, the FTQ, part of the federation's regime, some 50,000 construction workers,

where Quebec workers could work in a CEP jurisdiction and have their pension and benefits sent back to the Quebec Pension Plan. So now we had two pools of workers – we had Quebec workers at the pool end. Then the real issue is that 80% of all construction work in Canada and Quebec, and when you take Quebec out of it, which is heavily unionized, the numbers grow higher. Take out CLAC as a union, and the construction industry is virtually non-union. We said, we're going to organize non-union construction workers of Canada, and we're going to target CLAC. We went about organizing non-union contractors to work in industry, particularly here in Alberta but not just here. We have not raided any other union. We've signed up contractors, taken votes, bargained collective agreements. The CEP in Alberta files more grievances in one year on job sites than all of the building trades combined in 10 years. The record is clear. We arbitrate, we grieve, we act like a union. Workers want to join real unions. We're going to continue to organize in the non-union sector right across Canada, except for Quebec. Atlantic Canada, Alberta, Saskatchewan, we're organizing. We're organizing the non-union sector, and if people don't like us organizing non-union workers, they can go organize those workers themselves. It's a big field, and they should get at it.

Q: So what does that unit up at CNRL look like?

DC: First off, there's a unit at CNRL, but we have about 10 unionized contractors in Alberta working in a number of sites – Shell, Suncor, all across Alberta. It's an all-employees collective agreement. All of our collective agreements, outside of the craft of carpentry in BC, all of our collective agreements are all-employee. That means we represent everybody from the secretary to the janitor to the millwright to the pipefitter. So

they're all-employee agreements. It's heavy industrial construction. We're now organizing in commercial resident where, by the way, 100% non-union in Alberta. We're there organizing, and where are the other traditional unions? Why aren't they organizing non-union workers? We're going to step into the breach. We think it's wrong that many workers in Canada not be represented by unions, and we're going to organize them.

Q: ???

DC: The time when I was an officer with the Alberta Federation of Labour was a very exciting period for our union, but it was also a great growing experience for me. I had come from British Columbia where at the time the labour movement was very powerful and where the word scab was something that happened somewhere else. I get transferred to Alberta and day one I meet Dave Werlin, who's the president of Alberta Federation of Labour. He says, by the way, we're going to the picket line, we're going to Gainers. I came in right in the middle of the Gainers strike. As a personal growth experience, it's nothing I ever imagined to take place in a democratic society. I learned so quickly the value of solidarity. Poor, underpaid workers that the union had a hell of a time mobilizing, went to the Federation of Labour, asked for our support. The leadership of the Federation united the whole labour movement, in fact in the end united the province, against this ruthless owner, Peter Pocklington, who was ripping the workers off, ripping their pension plan off. We won the damn strike. It was amazing, being run over by cops and beat up by Pinkertons, and all sorts of unbelievable activities that took place. We won the damn strike, in spite of it being Alberta. It just cemented in me the whole value of solidarity and good leadership at the Federation. From that day forward, I've been a

complete supporter of labour councils, the Federation, the CLC, the global federations of unions, of which I'm an officer of two of them. You just need to have a strong federation to deal with governments and employers who think that they can do whatever they want to workers. I spent a lot of time working on the Zeidler strike, which didn't have as good an outcome as one would want. But it was such a solidarity-building action. You don't necessarily have to win a strike to build solidarity amongst workers. I'll never forget all of the hours I spent with various unions trying to make sure that we were able to screw those scabs up, and to give the company a rough time. I think those were very informative years for me, for our union. We are absolute supporters of the federations, of the labour councils. We don't think we do enough. We're not a union that has a lot of money. We quite often have to supply people, don't have the money to throw at it. Our local unions are good. If anyone was to say that a federation has outlived its usefulness, they really are denying labour history and labour future. It is the center of the activity of fighting back against tyrants, whether they be governments or employers.

Q: Is there anything you want to add?

DC: If someone was to ask, what would I like to say right now, I would say that we are in many ways in the world in very deep trouble. The war in Iraq, global warming, the rightwing religious zealots, whether they be Muslim or Christian, that fundamentalism, has put the world at risk. I think it's time that all of us stood up and paid attention. It does go back to StephenHarper and the SPP, it goes back to the debate in your municipality around a garbage dump. The whole issue of the environment, of war, of the economy, is of paramount importance. It's time now for civil society, for labour movements, for

church groups to unite and say, we're not going to let this world go down the tube because of another experiment of capitalism. I once thought that capitalism would collapse in amongst itself and we'd get some free ride to some new panacea of socialism. Clearly that's not what's happening or will ever happen. Damn capitalism keeps reinventing itself, recreating itself, and it's our fault. It's progressive society's fault for not coming up with a model that people will believe in and trust. I think we have to do it now. The Kyoto Accord was a good example of how our governments turned on us. They don't care that the icecaps are melting, they don't care that farmers can't plant their crops, that we don't get enough ice to have winterlude in Ottawa. We're at threat. Am I pessimistic about it? I am absolutely not. I see these young people today. I saw them at Montebello, I see them at university, I see our members. I think that we're on the cusp of a new wave of social action around the world. The internet has given us a way around the control of the media, where people, where citizens can actually have a say. Is there a great danger? Absolutely. I think we're in deep. We're on the 99<sup>th</sup> yard line and it's 2<sup>nd</sup> down. But I think we can win this sucker, because I just see a lot of compassion and energy in the fight back.

[ END ]