

Alberta Labour History Institute (ALHI)

Oral History Interview

Interviewee: Dave Werlin

Interviewers: Winston Gereluk (2003) and Don Bouzek (2004)

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My first involvement in a lot of these things was when I was a teenager. I remember people around Winyard Saskatchewan organizing a march to the legislature in Regina. That was the beginning of the Ban the Bomb movement. My mother and dad, we drove of course to Regina, and then we marched to the legislature where we were met by Tommy Douglas on the steps of the legislature. He was then the leader of the CCF

opposition. I have this understanding of people on the left, because my dad and mother were briefly in the communist party, called the Labour Progressive Party at the time. The communist party had been outlawed, so they chose a new name and operated as the Labour Progressive Party, which actually was not outlawed but was treated as if it had been. I don't remember exactly [when the communist party was outlawed] but I'd say it would be about the middle of the Second World War. Maybe a bit earlier even. At one time the Soviet Union did not join the war against fascism because they saw it as a war among capitalists. The Communist Party of Canada was under a lot of pressure at that time, seen as almost sympathizers with fascism. They used to equate communism with fascism. Those things were always spoken of in the same sentence. So it was about the same time the communist party was outlawed. In any event, a great many of the people who got involved in the peace movement, as well as in the trade union movement, were people on the left, including communists. In fact I think some of the early trade union formations in modern industrial era of Canada, the unions were formed by communists and headed up by communists. One of the things McCarthyism did was behead the trade union movement, which at that time had a very strong left leadership. I'll give you an example. The international president of the IWA, the International Woodworkers of America, was a Canadian. He was elected at a convention in Portland, Oregon. A year later, when the next convention was held, he was going back to get re-elected and they wouldn't let him across the border into the US. That's just one example of how anti-communism and McCarthyism affected the trade union movement. You had unions like United Electrical Workers and the Mine Mill and Smelter Workers, who had left leadership and who espoused policies and who opposed some of the harshest treatment of workers under the capitalist system. The trade union movement, having been pushed to the right under McCarthyism, they organized a tax on these unions. They raided them. Mine Mill was finally raided right out of existence and forced to merge with the United Steelworkers, who were a more acceptable union in the eyes of the system. The same thing happened in the peace movement. The peace movement wasn't strictly a left led organization, although there was a lot of analysis that went into the causes of war and the resistance to war was led by a lot of leftwing people. But it was convenient to brand the peace movement as communist sympathizers. There were a great many people in the peace movement who were not communist sympathizers; they just opposed war. Because the Cold War was in full bloom and the enemy was seen as the Soviet Union, it was handy to classify the whole peace movement as being communist sympathizers, which of course had the effect of making it very difficult for people to speak out in favour of peace. The other effect it had was it actually turned the peace movement to the left, because it drove a lot of other people out of the peace movement. It was sort of a self-fulfilling prophecy that the peace movement was a leftist organization. Because the people on the left continued to speak up, where a lot of other people were subjected to this McCarthyism and did not speak up on behalf of peace in the same way they would like to. All the social movements that developed during the Cold War period were affected to some extent in the same way. Anybody who seemed to be demanding too much of the system or opposing what the system was doing, were quite handily referred to as communists and so on. Particularly in the trade union movement there was an incredible setback, thanks to McCarthyism. The communist party, one of the things it did do right was it provided a lot of analysis to the trade union movement that it needed. The

trade union movement has never really recovered from the McCarthyism period. It's never gained the same militancy and the same analysis and the same strengths, and the same understanding of the system that we live under, that it had acquired when communist and other left leaning people played a major role in it.

A lot of the McCarthyism that came to Canada came in through the international unions. The internationals over there were very much persecuted. The international unions in the US became quite rightwing. You'll recall that in the charter of the Canadian Labour Congress they had the anti-communist clause right in the constitution. You could not be a member of the CLC if you were communist. Organizations that were communist-dominated were thrown out of the CLC or the TLC. The local I eventually belonged to in Vancouver, the Vancouver Outside Workers, right in the middle of a TLC convention they passed a motion to expel them. It would've been around 1947, in that era. It was fairly early in this tirade of anti-communism. Then the TLC not only threw them out, but they organized a union run by the TLC to raid them. At that time, the Vancouver Outside Workers not only had the city outside workers, they had the school board employees in the same local. They raided them and took the school board members away from them. They never were able to take away the outside workers, because they remained faithful to their local. But they split them not quite down the middle, but took about a third of their membership away. Then the Mine Mill was expelled. United Electrical Workers were expelled. When the Vancouver Outside Workers were expelled from the TLC, the United Fishermen in Vancouver had a newspaper called The Fishermen. They published an editorial criticizing the TLC for kicking the Vancouver Outside Workers out of the TLC. So they kicked them out as well. United Fishermen and Allied Workers Union. They were out of the CLC for many years. The Vancouver Outside workers were back in the CLC before the fishermen were.

This was happening about the same time as when Hal Banks, who was of course brought in by our friend William Lion McKenzie King to break up the Canadian Seamen's Union, which was the only union the seamen had where they actually held union meetings onboard the ships. It was a very democratic organization. They took a leftwing position. I don't know exactly how left their leadership was, but they certainly were militant and they recognized the exploitation that was going on and talked about it. Seafarers was an international union. The Seafarers union was very corrupt. They were probably controlled by the mafia. When they were brought in the Great Lakes to break up the Canadian Seamen's Union, they did so physically. They actually beat people on the docks with clubs and pipes. It was a scandalous government-supported raid against these people. They actually smashed the union.

I left home when I was just 16. Ended up in Calgary and went from job to job for a while until I finally ended up getting a job with the City of Calgary. The first day I was on the job, the shop steward came along - a guy by the name of Gordie Mitchell. Gordie says, how long you been working for the city? I said, it's my first day. He said, this is the day you should join the union. I said, well does it cost money? He says ya, the initiation fee is \$1. I said, I don't have a dollar. He says, well don't worry, in our contract with the city they take the initiation fee off your paycheck, and by the way, there's a union meeting

tonight and you have to come and be initiated. I had never been to a union meeting. I didn't know what it meant to be initiated. So I went there. There was a fellow by the name of Pat Lenihan, who was the chief negotiator for the union with the City of Calgary. He was there presenting proposals for a new collective agreement, which I didn't know anything about either. So I'm sitting there listening to this great fellow Pat Lenihan presenting all these proposals to settle a new collective agreement. There was a lot of dissent and argument going on. Up jumps a guy by the name of Art Roberts. He starts talking and waving his finger, and he starts telling them how this bloody system works. Little Welshman, and he was going at these guys. I went over and sat beside him after he sat down and I said, you know what, you talk just like my dad used to do. He says, oh ya, what did your dad do? I said, he was in the farmers' union. He used to go to those meetings and they always called him a communist because of what he said. And Art Roberts said, and what the hell's wrong with that? So I said, oh nothing, nothing. Then of course he started encouraging me. I also voted against the settlement, and it got turned down. It turned out that Gordie Mitchell who had signed me up into the union was a member of the communist party. Art Roberts was a member of the communist party. Pat Lenihan had been a member of the communist party, but something had happened along the way. But he was still a lefty, and I think he still called himself a communist. Then my association with Art Roberts eventually led to the point where I joined the communist party. It goes back to my parents in a way that when I heard Art Roberts talk, it meant something to me.

People like Art Roberts and Pat Lenihan and myself, we'd go to the union meetings and get elected even though they had these anti-communist clauses. They were mainly in the CLC constitution and the Alberta Federation of Labour constitution. I don't know that CUPE ever had that clause in the constitution. In a lot of ways it was just ignored. But people would get up and speak about it. You don't belong here. What does it say in the constitution. You're a communist. You shouldn't be a member. But we still had the support of the membership. There were some people expelled, some organizations expelled. But the communists continued to function very well in the trade union movement.

I think I'm probably still the only known communist that's ever been elected to a position like president of a Federation of Labour. I don't even know of any others that were communists. I don't think there's anything special about that. There are a lot of people who espouse many of the things that I would've espoused as a communist. In fact, most all the things I stood for are now pretty standard policy in the trade union movement. A lot of the things we fought for, we didn't fight for communism on the floor of the labour movement. We fought for standing up against the ravages of capitalism against working people. There were some people who were in some leftist organization who used a lot of lingo that wasn't very helpful. But most of us just argued on the basis of an analysis of what we ought to do in the trade union movement. That didn't stop us from being red baited, but we still were able to win the support of the membership. Because we saying things that they understood and believed in.

It took a bit of time to be able to stand up and defend your position. You knew that the people who you worked with, that you wanted to be friends with, were sort of pointing at you. Eventually, as a young guy I gained courage to stand up for what I believe in. But it was tough. Lots of peoples' jobs would be in jeopardy. I had a union. That protected me. Even though there was anti-communism within the trade union movement, I still had a union to protect me. A lot of people who were communists couldn't get jobs or would lose their jobs if they spoke up, especially if they didn't have unions or if they were in a rightwing union. There were all kinds of difficulties and hazards that were put in our way. But by and large, for the most part, people stood up and fought for what they believed in.

It wasn't a bar, but it certainly was made an issue in the convention - not with any great success, because I won it fairly handily. But I'll never forget a woman member whose name I won't mention. While the ballots were being counted she came up to me and said, I hear you're a communist. She said, are you? I said, well frankly it isn't any of your business, but yes I am. She later was on the executive of the Federation while I was there, and we got along very well.

The Vietnam War began to straighten out a lot of people's thinking. It's seen at first as 'over there' attacking these communists. But the advent of television changed a lot of things. When you saw what really happened in Vietnam, these are terribly poor, defenceless people who were hiding in the jungle and being attacked with napalm. That began to change people's thinking. When you start talking about the peace movement with that happening, people began to listen in a different way. The Cold War really lost its effect when the Berlin Wall came down. Change of leadership in the Soviet Union, Paristroika, that started to happen. Now it's no longer an issue. That isn't to say people still aren't anti-communist, but it's no longer an issue that comes up at every turn.

I never ran for a position in the communist party. First of all, I never had any ambitions to run. Secondly, I saw a lot of people who did and their effectiveness in the trade union movement went right down the drain. I admire them for doing what they did, but at the same time we couldn't all do that. And I couldn't afford it anyway. I was raising a family in those days, and I couldn't afford to. In those days you'd almost have to leave your job to go run for the communist party.

I worked in Alberta until about '65. I moved to Vancouver and was there till '79. I came back to Alberta. As I said, a good part of that time I was in BC. But I can remember Ernest Manning and Back to the Bible Hour preaching every Sunday. There was both a religious and an anti-communist attitude toward the trade union movement and toward working people in general. That hasn't changed a lot. In BC when I was there we had wacky Bennet as the premier, and again the religious connection. I remember him saying he had a direct line to God, as if he could just dial him up on the phone. They were both Social Credit governments, Manning and Bennet. So there was an atmosphere created by the government that fostered anti-communism.

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I was brought up in a home where politics was constantly discussed. Some of my first recollections are waking up on a cold winter's morning. My father and grandfather would be up waving the newspaper at the stovepipes to spread the heat around the room, and arguing and talking politics, condemning Deifenbaker (long before he was prime minister), and generally talking about what was going on in the world. My grandfather came from Sweden, and I think a lot of people that came from there in those days were kind of Swedish social democrats. So they were left in some ways, and certainly my dad and mother eventually joined the labour progressive party, which was the name they used in those days. The communist party had been outlawed. From my childhood I thought a bit about politics. Being a kid, I didn't think it through very much, but it puts a stamp on your thinking. I remember my dad had to go and work on the Alaska Highway in order to be able to buy our first tractor. Up to then we worked with horses in the fields. About the time he came back from being on the Alaska Highway, about the same time the vets were returning from world war 2. They came back disappointed. They had fought for something better, and when they came back they didn't have very much. There wasn't much there for them. I'm talking farm community. These were farm kids that came back and basically wanted to be farmers. They found that the cost of living had gone way up in the post-war reconstruction period. At the same time, the price of farm products was still as low as it had been before the war. So there was kind of a militancy that developed. So when my dad came back, along with a whole lot of other people they joined the Farmers Union. I don't remember how old I was then, I'd be a teenager I guess. The farmers had a strike. Of course it's a different kind of strike than a labour strike. What they did is they refused to deliver their wheat to the elevators, and they refused to deliver their cream and butter to the railway station, and so on. It didn't go too far, but at least they made a statement and it's something that I've always remembered. We had meetings in our house, because my parents were in the labour progressive party. In those days the kids sat around. We didn't have TVs or all these games or anything. So when adults were talking, we were sitting around listening. I remember a lot of those discussions. Basically my background, right from when I was a kid, was involved in left thinking. Of course then I remember that, at Winyard Saskatchewan, which is about 15 miles away, was supposedly the biggest rural communist club in Canada. That's because there was a large population of Swedes and Icelanders who all came from that kind of left of centre background, and brought that into the community. I left home when I was pretty young, and worked as a farm labourer for a while, then wound up in Calgary. When I got there, after a while I ended up with a job working for the City of Calgary.

I remember my dad going to meetings of the farmers union. He'd come back and say, it doesn't matter what you say, they call you a commie. You can't get a discussion going because they don't want to talk about things, they just call you a commie. You can't get anywhere. I remember when I was a kid there was a magazine called Awake, put out by the Jehovah's Witnesses. It was banned. I remember people coming to our house distributing that. I can remember asking my parents, isn't that bad to have that in the house? Of course, the JWs refused to wear uniforms or go to war. They ended up being

stretcher bearers or in the medics, because they wouldn't bear arms. So they were being castigated by the system too, and their publications were banned. Which is quite an anomaly when you stop and think about it. I can remember, even when I was in high school, you had to weigh up whether you wanted to be among your friends, or you wanted to talk politics in those days. Because there was quite an aura of anti-communism. That's hard for kids. I kinda grew out of that later, but I can remember that this anti-communism was alive and well when I was a kid.

Oh ya, during the war. I was talking about these fellows coming back from the war and going on strike. Even they had this patriotism. They'd gone and fought for their country, and that patriotism was instilled in them for good reasons when they were fighting fascism. But it carried on and it became part of any debate you had. If you criticized the government, you were being unpatriotic in the eyes of a lot of people in those days. Of course if you criticized the government you were also perhaps espousing communism. The debates were stifled. You couldn't get a decent debate going on about a lot of things. That carried on for years. The easy answer was just to criticize you as a communist, no matter what it is you were arguing about. It really set back social development in that way that peoples opinions, which later on after the cold war was over, were adopted. At that time they were stifled by this notion of any argument that was anywhere to the left of Attila the Hun, you'd be castigated for.

I went to Calgary and got a job working for the City of Calgary. The first day I was on the job, a fellow I later found out was a member of the communist party, came up to me and said, I'm the shop steward, you should join the union. So I did. I didn't have the dollar to get it, but he said, oh that'll be taken off your check. But you have to come to the meeting tonight, he said, because you have to be sworn into the union. So first day on the job I ended up going to the meeting that night. There was a lively debate going on over a collective agreement that they were just about to conclude. There was a communist by the name of Pat Lenihan up there trying to convince everybody it was a good agreement, and another communist by the name of Art Roberts who was leading the charge against it, because it wasn't good enough. I remember walking over and sitting down beside Art. I didn't know him at the time. I said, you know what, you sound a lot like my dad. He said, what do you mean? I said, well the things you're saying are the kinds of things my dad used to say. When he said those things, they called him a commie. Art Roberts said, well what the hell's wrong with that? We became instant friends, and he became my mentor and eventually signed me up into the communist party a few years later. I was about to get laid off from that job. That, by the way, was not CUPE that I was in at that time, it was local 37 of NUPE. Pat Lenihan was the guy who, more than anybody, was instrumental in forming the National Union of Public Employees. First of all starting in Lethbridge, of all places, then into Calgary and Edmonton, then into BC and Sask and Manitoba. That became the National Union of Public Employees. In the eastern part of Canada they had the National Union of Public Service Employees, and the two merged in 1963 to form what is now the largest union in Canada, the Canadian Union of Public Employees. People like Pat Lenihan and Harley Horne and Art Roberts, people that I met when I first got into the trade union movement, were people that on top of what I had learned through my parents and home life on the farm, they were the people

that kind of further inspired me to understand how important the left was. Then through them, in union meetings and in labour council, I became a delegate to the labour council shortly after I started there. The debates in those days, we were talking about hands off Cuba. The disarmament was a big issue, and the nuclear weapons and all those sorts of things. We had some great debates. There were quite a few left people in those days, in the labour council there in Calgary. Of course the majority weren't left, and quite often we didn't win the debate. But there was an educational process that went on. A lot of people learned from those debates what it was all about, and I'm sure later on looked back on them and realized that some of the things we were saying were quite important.

Let's talk about Pat Lenihan, for example. Pat was a great orator. He could stand on a street corner and start talking, and he'd have people gather around him. In those days a lot of that happened. We didn't have TV, in fact a lot of people didn't even have radios in those days. So debate and oratory was fairly prominent. Pat Lenihan ran as a communist candidate and got elected as an alderman of the City of Calgary. Pat was a great guy and a great orator and a communist and great trade unionist. But Pat had a few personal faults as a lot of us do, and eventually got himself kicked off city council. But he also got arrested for sedition, and was incarcerated in Kananaskis in the internment camp there. Then he got out, and it was after that that he became instrumental in forming NUPE. Art Roberts, they became close friends. Art was a coalminer from Wales. His brother entered the coalmines at the age of 12 because his father had been a coalminer and had become ill with lung disease and couldn't mine anymore. So Art Robert's brother went into the mines at age 12, but he refused to let Art go in until after he finished his high school. Then Art went into the mines in Wales. Then he and his brother came over and became coalminers in Drumheller. They were leaders of the communist party in Drumheller for years, until the mines closed. I have pictures of May Day in Drumheller with Art Roberts and other communists and left wingers leading the parade with a communist party banner in Drumheller. Anyway, the mines closed and Art, like a lot of other people, moved to Calgary. He ended up working in the housekeeping department in the Calgary General Hospital, the one that our Premier Kline blew up.

Harley Horne worked at the Calgary General in the maintenance department. They became leaders in NUPE local 8. Then Pat Lenihan, Art Roberts and Harley Horne were elected as the business agents for a council of NUPE unions in the Calgary area. A whole bunch of different locals pooled together and formed a council and hired these 3 people to be their business agents to look after the business of the unions on a full time basis. That's what Art and Harley and Pat were doing when I joined local 37 and met them. They were very instrumental in what became the largest union in Canada in helping to wield it into the kind of union it was. Those locals were quite militant and very much involved in the struggle. We used to go to AFL conventions way back in the late '50s, early '60s. A whole lot of resolutions about nuclear weapons and disarmament and peace, and a lot of other important resolutions came out of CUPE local 8. Of course that was through Art and Harley and Pat. So meeting those people was really a great experience.

There's no question they were always conscious, as I was later on as I got more developed in these things, they were always conscious of the fact that the RCMP were

always around. In fact, years ago when Art used to tell me in Drumheller when they were out of work, they'd be on what they called relief. It was the RCMP that handed out the relief cheques. The communists didn't always get a cheque. Art told me he spent a whole year, he never saw a thin dime. He lived on bartering, trading, helping out somebody else in exchange for a chicken, or help somebody out in exchange for vegetables. They called it the Red Valley, the RCMP named it the Red Valley. They just quite blatantly, if they knew you were a communist, you didn't get your relief cheque. Obviously those people were always aware of that. Pat Lenihan had been arrested, so he was aware of it. But you asked did they complain. No, they understood the system. They knew the role the RCMP played, they knew the role politics in Canada played. They didn't complain about it. What they did was talked about it as part of the political struggle that had to go on. I remember one night, I was a delegate to the Calgary Labour Council. At 3 o'clock in the morning the phone rang. This voice came on. This was not long after world war II, which I experienced as a kid. This German voice comes on and says, if you appear again at the Calgary Labour Council you'll be shot down like a dog. I was pretty young. I was married and had kids, but I was still pretty young. I was kinda shook up about it. So I phoned Art Roberts the next day. He said, oh never mind I got one too, I'll see you at the labour council. I learned from that. You're conscious of it, but you can't let it bother you. Anything I had to say, I was going to say in public anyway, so it didn't matter.

There were strikes, in those days there were quite a lot of strikes. There weren't any real historical strikes at that time that I can recall in Calgary. I know Local 37 was on strike once or twice, and there were strikes in the building trades. After I got laid off from the city and went to work for the transit system, we had a strike. To me it was a pretty important strike, because I was a part of it. There was a guy by the name of Harry Hayes was the mayor of Calgary at that time. He went on to become the minister of agriculture in the Deffenbaker government, if I remember correctly. And he was the minister of agriculture, and also became a senator. By that time we hung a moniker on him as "Hold the Line Harry". His motto when we were negotiating and eventually went on strike was, we're gonna hold the line on wages so we can hold the line on taxes. So he put us out on strike. He also put other civic unions out on strike. We were out for about 2 months. I remember he publicly said that the Calgary transit drivers to him were like the rickshaw drivers in India, and they should be happy that they've got a job at all, and they're not worth a penny more than the rickshaw drivers. That was the kind of attitude. I had sometime before that come to understand that bosses were a bunch of bad buggers. But that consolidated my hatred for bosses. When he said that. The other thing, when that strike was over, and this taught me a little bit about international unions. Toward the end of that strike the international secretary treasurer flew in from Washington or someplace. He flew in, got a hold of the president and the secretary and took them down to City Hall and signed the agreement we'd turned down before we went on strike. That's a long enough strike, we're not paying any more strike pay. So I quit the transit system after that and went back and worked for the City of Calgary driving a truck in a graveyard so I could get back into CUPE. Because I was ticked off with what later on became the Amalgamated Transit Union. The union has changed considerably since then. In those days there was an incredible influence from the United States through international unions. That had a lot to do with how the trade union movement embraced McCarthyism.

So in the trade union movement, there was a struggle also going on for unions to become Canadian unions. There was a tremendous struggle in the carpenters and many of the trades. Some of them are still in the international, never got out of it. But others did, or at least they got some independence. A lot of these international unions were to some extent a pipeline of McCarthyism into Canada. So you felt a lot of that in the trade union movement, and in the peace movement. You were asking about experiences in Calgary. I remember a handful of us marching up and down in front of the American consulate saying "hands off Cuba", and getting terrible write-ups in the papers the next day. I think at one time they called us the ragged trousered leftists. And there were tremendous debates around the peace movement. But eventually it was the trade union movement that made the difference in the peace movement. Particularly when it got into the Vietnam war, which was quite a ways down the road. I remember those kinds of McCarthyite slanders that went on in those days. Of course you just had to learn to not let that detract you from what you thought was the right thing to do.

Tim Buck was the leader of the communist party for many years. Tim Buck has quite a history throughout Canada, including Alberta. He was an extremely competent orator and had a great knowledge of politics. The kind of person that never forgot a name. If he met you once, the next time he saw you, he'd see you 2 years later, he'd call you by name. Even though he met thousands of people. He had tremendous gatherings of people. He'd go to places like Drumheller or Calgary, Lethbridge. In the Crows Nest Pass, the town of Crows Nest Pass, actually named their main street after him. It's called Tim Buck Blvd. It retained that name until the height of the McCarthyite period, when they changed it. I think it was called Main St. or First Ave. or something. So that's the kind of influence he had. Tim Buck was a machinist. He was incarcerated as well in the Kingston Penitentiary, along with another fellow whose name I can't remember. His first name was Tom, he's from Vancouver. They were both incarcerated in Kingston. Tim Buck was a machinist and Tom was a blacksmith. They built the iron gates that still hang on the Kingston Penitentiary gates. They had workshops in the penitentiary. Tim was a phenomenal leader, just an incredible leader. Whether you believe in what he was talking about or not, you absolutely couldn't question his leadership ability. He was the leader of the communist party, and it was outlawed. I don't know exactly what incident they chose, probably sedition. That was one of the terms they used, or one of the laws they used a lot to put people in jail those days for political reasons.

I didn't meet him until I moved to Vancouver in the '60s. But Ben Swanky had been the leader of the Young Communist League in Alberta before he left and went to... He was also incarcerated before he went to BC. But before that he was incarcerated at Petawawa Ontario. There were quite a lot of people who were either leaders of the communist party or people like Pat Lenihan who were charged with sedition and jailed in those days.

I joined the party while I was on the transit strike. Shortly after that I went back to CUPE. I was working outside and it was terribly cold and I did something not particularly political. I decided I'm getting the hell out of this climate, and I moved to Vancouver. Within a few months I got a job there with the City of Vancouver. In the meantime, in 1963, NUPE had merged with NUPSE and had become CUPE. I should tell you an

experience that was very important to the trade union movement, even though I was in Vancouver at the time. I had become an area vice president of CUPE, on the national executive board. A fellow by the name of Harry Green was a general vice president. The general vice presidents and the secretary treasurer and the president met more often than the larger board that I was a part of. One day Harry Green came back, he gave me a call and said, Dave, the party has to do something about what's going on here in CUPE. I said, what's that Harry. He said, that damn president of ours is trying to pull us out of the CLC. So we got the party folks together and started talking about it. We found out. What happened was that the building trades never accepted CUPE. They never should exist. Because they've got all these guys that are members of CUPE that are doing all kinds of work that should be done by the building trades. So when he was going to the CLC meetings, they would pay little attention to what anybody from CUPE had to say. They short of tried to push them off, and didn't give them any credit for anything. Stan Little was the president. He took umbrage at that. He said, the CLC isn't treating us fairly, and they're either gonna treat us better or we're pulling out. By that time I was a member of the Vancouver Outside Workers, who had been kicked out of the trades and labour congress years before that, probably in the late '40s or early '50s, for being communist dominated. Been hauled right out of the TLC convention, thrown out of the meeting, and the local was kicked out of the TLC. Which of course took them out of NUPE. At that time, when I joined that union, just at that time Stan Little had agreed that they could come back into CUPE. And the CLC refused to accept CUPE's per capita for the entire union, because it included the per capita for that local. The CLC said, no, they've been kicked out for being communist dominated, we won't take their per capita.

The CLC constitution, like a lot of union constitutions in those days, had a clause in it that said you could not be a member if you were a communist or a fascist. They lumped the two together as if they were the same. Under that clause, they'd been kicked out of the TLC, and that clause was still in the Canadian Labour Congress constitution, which had been in the TLC and they carried it right on. McDonald was the president of the CLC. He said, no we won't take your per capita if it includes per capita for that bunch of commies out there in Vancouver. So we went to the convention, the CLC convention, and tried to register as delegates. The secretary treasurer, the president and I met him in the hallway and he said, you guys will get in the CLC over my dead body.

...the beginning of McCarthyism, but it carried on into the trade union movement. As I said earlier, part of that was because of the international union connections. But also, it wasn't entirely that. There was an aura in Canadian politics that it's more popular to be a red baiter than it was to be a lefty. Then we also went to the CUPE convention. Harry Green, as I said, had told us we'd better do something. So we got a whole bunch of delegates elected from my local, and we all went down there. We fought against us being pulled out. One of the ironies of it was that Shirley Carr, who was at that time the president of the Ontario division of CUPE, was leading the charge at the microphone, along with Stan Little, to pull out of the CLC. We defeated it. We forced them to stay in the CLC, and 2 years later she became an executive secretary of the Canadian Labour Congress, or executive vice president. Which was quite an irony. Then she went on to

become president of the Canadian Labour Congress. That's one of the things I'm quite proud of, is the role of the left, that we were able to do things like that. We fought for unity at all times. It was a crime that McCarthyism was used to divide the trade union movement, in fact beheaded the trade union movement. A good example was Craig Pritchette was elected president of the IWA international at a convention in Seattle. A year or 2 later when they held their next convention, also in the US, he's the president of the international union. Gets to the border and they wouldn't let him go back, so he couldn't get re-elected. That man spent the rest of his life, he never got back into the union until they took him in as a retiree after he retired. He continued to fight in the peace movement and around the trade union movement and in the communist party for the things he believed in. That's the kind of damage that McCarthyism did to the peace movement and the trade union movement. It was all shrouded in this aura of being against the Soviet Union who were going to attack us and destroy us with nuclear weapons. But really that's not what it was about at all. It was about keeping politics to the right in Canada and the US and every other country where they practised this McCarthyite anti-communism. It was to preserve capitalism. It had nothing to do with any concern or any fear of being attacked by the Soviet Union. Because the Soviet Union never was prepared to, or possibly not even capable of attacking the United States or Great Britain. But McCarthyism was used to hold back social progress, to hold back the workers and their movements. And to hold back the peace movement so the arms race could go on and create the millionaires it did.

That's right. There was a constant debate going on about the right wing raising the spectre of communism. Anything you wanted to do that had to do with social progress, in those days it caused an anti-communist reaction. Whether it had anything to do with communism or not. If it had anything to do with workers rights, if it had anything to do with fair taxation, you'd get accused of trying to deprive the government of money because you're a communist. It was almost like a religious fervour that got into all the debates, all the struggles. It was a handy tool with the right wing. They used it. If you got into a debate with somebody and they didn't have an answer on the other side of the debate, they just simply resorted to red baiting.

It was terribly divisive. The thing about CUPE pulling out of the CLC, that wasn't so much a McCarthyist thing. There was a weakening of the concept of unity that took place under McCarthyism. You had all the rage against mine, mill and smelter workers. The steel workers raided them year after year after year, with the help of the bosses. The steel workers would go in where they had jurisdiction, and sign an agreement right in the middle of mine mill bargaining. They'd sign for less than mine mill was asking for. So mine mill then had to settle for less too. Then their own membership were dissatisfied. This went on for years. There was constant debate in the labour councils, the Canadian Labour Congress, and the federations everywhere about raiding. Eventually they actually broke the union. They forced mine mill, under McCarthyist slanders and with the help of the bosses, they forced them to merge with the steel workers. Then there was the United Electrical Workers, who were a left wing union. They were constantly raided by, not the IBW but another electrical organization, IUE. Constantly raided by IUE. The same kind of thing. The UE always took good positive progressive positions. They were constantly

under duress, so that they couldn't get the kind of working conditions and wages for their members that they could otherwise have got if they had unity. The same thing was going on in the building trades. They were constantly raiding one another. They weren't calling one another communists, because they were all pretty right wing. But what you had there was a long period of time in the trade union movement where you had to fight like hell for unity. It was undermined. Part of that was this McCarthyite attack from within. It turned workers against workers, which is one of the real serious casualties of McCarthyism. It turned people against one another.

You mention Ben Swanky. Of course he was incarcerated. It wasn't so much an overt intimidation, although there was name calling and that sort of thing. But you always had the feeling on the job, if you were in a union where the leadership were McCarthyite, you had the feeling you'd better watch yourself, or you'll lose your job. They're not going to look after you. You'd go to union meetings, and you'd get up and present what you thought was a logical argument, but because they were calling you a communist, you'd have a hard time getting people to vote for it. If somebody else came up with the same idea and put it on the floor, it would go over. We used to use that sometimes. We'd get somebody that was left but not known as a communist and never been red baited in the union, we'd get him to make the motion. And it would pass. There was that irritation that went on constantly. But for those of us who were in the party, we never felt intimidated. We just felt we were up against a lot of odds that we had to fight against. The people that were most intimidated were the people that were close to us, who weren't in the party and hadn't developed that ability to take a stand and to develop a thick skin so you wouldn't be affected by all those name calling. Exactly the same as they did in Hollywood, where McCarthy himself and Nixon brought people in and tried to get them to squeal on their fellow actors, and intimidated them in that way. It was really the people that were close to you, the people who were real democrats but were not communists, they were the ones that were most intimidated and held back. Of course it made it difficult to recruit even people who believed in socialism, it made it very hard to recruit them into the communist party. Because they were prepared to support, they'd give us money, they'd buy subscriptions to our newspapers. But to join the party, they didn't want to get put into that position and put their families into that position.

The CCF, along with the trade union movement, in my experience more the NDP, became red baiters. It infected electoral politics as well, at every level, municipal, provincial or federal. A lot of people that were left left the CCF because of red baiting. A lot of people who were actually liberals joined the CCF and NDP because of red baiting, because they found a home there. The NDP were very harsh red baiters. If you weren't a supporter of the NDP in the labour movement, then you were against the NDP. If you were against the NDP, you were against the labour movement. You're against everything they stood for. They were actually very vocal red baiters. The New Democrats in the trade union movement headed up the red baiting to a very large extent.

I remember David Lewis. He was the lawyer for the steelworkers at the time they were raiding mine mill. He then became the leader of the NDP. He was a very right wing influence in the NDP, and a very professional red baiter. He brought a lot of that into the

NDP under his leadership. I never had any personal experiences with him, because I wasn't in the NDP. But I was conscious of it. It turned a lot of communists against the New Democrats. There should've been an alliance there. They're supposed to be left, and we're supposed to be left. But a lot of that red baiting turned people in the communist party against the NDP. Some people went so far as to say they're the main problem, they're the main enemy. I never agreed with that, but I could understand that kind of thinking. That's damaging. Because here you had the workers party supposed to be the NDP, and you have the communists who believe in the workers, and you had this controversy going on because of red baiting and McCarthyism.

It did to an extent. I remember after I had put my name forward to run as president of the Alberta Federation of Labour, a delegate called me over and wanted me to go and meet with her delegation. She put that famous question in front of the delegation. I said, well that really is my own personal business, but yes I am a communist. Of course I didn't get their vote. Then when I finally did win the position, I remember the first day I walked into the office. Grant Notley called Harry Koschuk down and said, Harry, how could you preside over such a disaster, having a communist elected president of the Alberta Federation of Labour. Harry Koschuk was quite anti-communist, he was the secretary treasurer and I was the president. We had just one argument about it. I told him that is none of your business whether I'm a communist or not. I'm here to be president of the Alberta Federation of Labour, and we have to work together. I know he continued to resent my being a communist. I know he talked about it with others, but he never mentioned it again to me. A lot of people thought, oh I'm gonna have a hell of a time there, being a communist among all these. Everybody else was NDPers on the executive. But I just simply stuck to the issues. I didn't talk party politics or anything else, I just stuck to the issues. I had an advantage in that, having been in the communist party, we studied a lot about politics and the trade union movement, and we understood the class nature of society a lot better than a lot of other people did. So it helped us to understand the issues. It may sound like bragging, but I believe that to be true. The whole basis of Marxism helps you to understand the class nature of society. Then you can put things into perspective. If you don't know what class you're in in a class divided society, you can't possibly analyze what's going on. I don't think red baiting bothered me very much while I was president. The main red baiting was in the papers. Mostly the Edmonton Sun and to a lesser extent the Journal. I never paid too much attention to that.

During the FLQ crisis, I don't remember the date now. I was never very directly involved in that except to read about it and talk about it. Early '70s. I remember having a lot of discussions about it in the party, and even in the trade union movement. Although the trade union movement in Vancouver was not particularly in support of Quebec's idea of being, in fact at that time they were talking about being a nation within a country. I remember that. I remember going to a Canadian Labour Congress convention where that issue was in the fore. Not the issue of the FLQ crisis per se, but the whole issue of Quebec nationalism. That convention was in Vancouver. I got up and spoke in favour of the rights of Quebec to self determination. I got a standing ovation, which surprised me and it surprised a lot of other people. That was about the time there was a bit of a turn in peoples thinking about that. You mentioned Pierre Trudeau and the wage and price

controls. I remember being at a CLC convention when the minister of finance came and spoke to the convention. They deliberately had him come and speak, not the minister of labour, sorry. Had him come and speak to the convention about wage and price controls. It had been planned and spread throughout all of the caucuses that we weren't going to boo him. But when he finished speaking, nobody moved. Not one person clapped. Nobody said a word. He just stood there in front of stone silence. Then he walked out the platform and went out a back door. I remember when Trudeau came to Vancouver. Remember the famous occasion during this same period, where he leaped off the back of a flatbed truck and poked somebody in the mouth who had made some kind of remark to him. He was that kind of guy. I remember that period of time. That was during the hippie time in Vancouver. That whole park where he was speaking was just full of hippies banging on their bongo drums and calling him names, catcalls and everything. He was really in an angry mood. But then there was the days of protest that was organized around the wage and price controls. There were trade unions right across this country who turned their members out in a day of protest, basically a one day strike. There again this division between the left and the right took place. I remember the IWA, which was at that time the most important if not the biggest union in BC, 7 of their business agents turned out. They never rallied their membership at all. That was kind of a hangover from this left right division. If you know Vancouver politics, it's always very polarized, both in electoral politics and in the trade union movement. The IWA at that time was pretty much the leadership of the right wing, and didn't even turn their membership out against wage and price controls, which I thought was pretty scandalous. Those are some of the things I remember about that era.

The war measures act was just that. It was simply a suppression of rights. It extended not only to people that they thought were leading the FLQ in what they called terrorism. It extended to the whole province, and had a chilling effect on democracy in general throughout Canada. You can't have that kind of thing happening in Quebec without it having its repercussions in the rest of Canada. A lot of that was the working class of Quebec. It wasn't the bourgeoisie of Quebec that were leading that. It was the leading class of Quebec that were fighting for that nationalism. Over their education programs and over language rights and their culture. It was a repression of their democratic rights. It was an undermining and weakening of democracy generally. Of course, when you stop and think about it, human rights and democracy and workers rights, none of those things are really compatible with capitalism. Capitalism lives with them under pressure as long as they have to. But any chance they get, they will undermine them. So we never win those struggles. We have to keep fighting for them all the time. Because the whole idea of accumulation of capital means that you cannot give more than you can possibly get away with to social services, to workers, or to anything other than accumulation of wealth. Human rights gets in the way of that, democracy gets in the way of that, unions get in the way of that. That's what I have learned from McCarthyism, is that McCarthyism was a means of suppressing all of these rights. Human rights, union rights, workers rights in general.

McCarthyism is not a scientific term of any kind. It's just simply named after the person who spearheaded it. But the whole concept of McCarthyism, under any name whatsoever,

is the suppression of rights and the advancement of the people in power. That same kind of smear tactic is being used right now against Iraq. He's a dictator, we're going to go over there and liberate his people. That's reason for us all to put our hands over our hearts and be very patriotic. It's that same kind of political jargon and political misleading of the people that's taking place. It was no different, whether it was anti-communism or anti-Iraq. It's all to do with power, and the power of capitalism and the power of the states that support capitalism.

I came back from Vancouver to Calgary in 1979 as a CUPE national representative. It was a bit of a shock. Even though we'd had the whacky Bennet in Vancouver, there was a polarization there. They weren't all sheep like they have been under the social credit and PCs here in Alberta. I found it very strange and different to realize how far right the politics was in Alberta, without any apparent strong left. Maybe that's an overstatement, but there wasn't much of a strong left that was apparent to me in Alberta. I think a lot of it, we've been talking about McCarthyism as a political tool. I don't think that's a lot different than the tool that has been used here over the years. Whacky Bennet used that in BC, and it was a religious approach to it. That was the same here under Aberhard and then Manning and right on down into the progressive conservatives today, who are perhaps less strident about the religious aspect of it, but still have that phenomenon that they're unchallengeable. It's almost like a kingdom, in the sense that how can you possibly speak out against Ralph Klein. Very different. I don't know how long that's going to take to change. I do feel a change beginning to take place. It can't go on forever. I relate it to McCarthyism because it's the use of propaganda that has kept these people in power.

CUPE, as we discussed earlier, was formed through a merger of the western part of Canada, NUPE, and the east, particularly Ontario and Quebec, of National Union of Public Service Employees. That merge took place in 1963. At that time, the whole idea of public sector unionism was relatively new. I can't remember the dates, back in the '40s and '50s government employees were not allowed to unionize. Up to 1966. NUPE was formed earlier, NUPSE was formed earlier than that. But CUPE was formed in '63 at a time when provincial government employees still weren't organized, or federal government employees. So it was a fledgling union without a lot of history. But there was a difference between NUPE and NUPSE, between the western region and the eastern region. I remember the struggle that went on over what kind of structure we would have. Those of us in the west were fighting for elected union representatives as opposed to what we used to call roadrunners, who are appointed by the national union. Given a car and told to go out there and service the membership, without any form of recourse or any say in the members who they would be. I became one of them. But that was a more democratic approach to how the trade unions should be run, that the members have some say about who their representatives are. And if they don't perform, they won't get re-elected. And in many other ways the western area was more progressive. I remember being in the party when I was in CUPE. There were almost no party members east of Saskatchewan. Not even in Manitoba. The party membership in CUPE was in Alberta and BC primarily. There was the odd one, and we finally began to connect up. But the left of CUPE basically came from the west. Not just party people, but left generally. I

remember a lot of the debates about the use of strike action, for example. Whether we should have strike pay, whether we should have a strike fund, and all that sort of thing. It was the west saying that we don't necessarily need a strike fund. What we need is militant action. The workers will strike, the workers don't need to be paid to strike. Well that may sound old fashion now days, and maybe it wasn't even correct then. Now days it's traditional that when workers are on strike they get strike pay, in every union I can think of. But there was a different kind of attitude. I remember the debates about such things as disarmament and nuclear weapons and the Vietnam war. Most of that debate was led by the west. There was quite a struggle for policy in CUPE. It wasn't always progressive in every way. But over time it developed some really positive progressive policies. Not only is it the biggest union in Canada, but it became one of the more progressive unions. That's something that had to be struggled for and developed. The problem with CUPE is that you can pass all kinds of resolutions, but under the structure it's hard to get them carried out universally. Because of the local autonomy. That local autonomy is a double edged sword. It has a very democratic part of it that nobody can sit in Ottawa and tell workers in Vancouver or anywhere else what they're going to do. They have to work with them. But the other side of the sword is that you can pass wonderful policies at a national convention, but you can't necessarily get the locals to carry them out, because they're autonomous. That's one of the things about CUPE. It makes it a pretty democratic union in many ways. And if you have a democratic union, generally speaking you'll have a progressive union. CUPE over the years has developed some very good policies about politics, political policies. And has played a role where they have never, CUPE has never succumbed to this notion that the NDP is labour's party and therefore we can't criticize them. That was a struggle that went on in the trade union movement for years and years. The problem with that was, people would get up and say, we can't do anything until you elect the NDP. Which means, well go on home and don't do anything now. As opposed to get out there and struggle for what you want. CUPE didn't fall for that, the way a lot of unions did. That's why they developed some pretty strong policies. But they're supporters of the NDP, there's no doubt about that. But they developed some pretty progressive policies that were ahead of some of the other trade unions, and ahead of the NPD in many ways. We also had some pretty good leadership from time to time. Grace Hartman was a left winger. I guess I can say this now that she's no longer alive, and neither is her husband. But her husband paid her communist party dues secretly for many years. A lot of people don't know that. A lot of people don't want to know that. She was not active in the party, because she felt she couldn't be and hold the position she held. And probably she couldn't have in Ontario, she would've got elected as president of the Ontario division, and never would've got elected as secretary treasurer and then president of CUPE. So we had a lot of debates with her, those of us who were party members, and tried to get her to do more than she would do. She always had her reasons why she could only do so much. I think we worked it out pretty well. You can be too leftist in a union, and you can get way to left for your members and then you don't accomplish anything that way either. And Judy Darcy. I don't know what party she belonged to, she wasn't a member of the communist party. But she was a member of a very left wing party. I remember her at the microphones when she was just a delegate, up there talking about arms race and nuclear weapons. Always was a progressive. As president of CUPE she has taken some very strong progressive positions. Sometimes quite far ahead of a lot of the

Canadian Labour Congress. But she's managed to work with the CLC and leaders of other unions. Worked very closely with Bob White, both when he was director in Ottawa and when he was president of the CLC. I think over the years there's been a left influence in CUPE that has resulted in some pretty progressive policies.

CUPE has been a leader in the fight to preserve public services and against contracting out. One very recent and quite notable gain that they've made is to stop the privatization of Ontario Hydro. That was an incredible struggle, and a very important struggle at a time when privatization is rampant and you have a government in Ontario who's hell bent to privatize everything, just as they're doing in BC. But they've also fought for schools, for education, and for public services generally. And fought for proper funding for people on social assistance. And have taken, not just a union position, but they have members in all those places. But they're not just talking trade unionism, they're also talking social issues. They have some very good policies and have had quite an effect. Sometimes you wonder when things aren't moving ahead as rapidly as they ought to. But if you didn't have unions fighting those battles, things would be a lot worse than they are. I think CUPE has played a pretty honourable role in that sort of thing.

It's the same concept, that the less money you put into social services, the more money goes into the private sector, the more money there is to turn into a profit rather than serving the people. That is a common theme in any capitalist country. A union that represents workers who work for the public sector has an understanding of it, and cares about that. There are a lot of other unions that don't want all those public services. For example, the building trades. It's pretty hard to get them, they have progressive people too, but as a general rule, they're more worried about money going into construction. Which is the private sector. So it follows that a union in the public sector should take a lead in those things, and CUPE has. Not only CUPE, other unions. The provincial government employees in one province after another have fought those battles. CUPE was in it a bit earlier because they weren't allowed to organize prior to that. But the public sector unions generally have put up a pretty good fight against privatization. Certainly not winning it all the time, in fact losing ground rather consistently, unfortunately. But have battled, have won a lot of the fights, and have slowed the process of privatization to a large degree.

Unions are very political. An important part of trade unionism is the struggle within your own union for policy. McCarthyism engendered a culture of fear. . . .

An important part of trade unionism is the struggle within the union for policy. Not just the fight against the employer. That has to be your end gain, but if you don't have the correct policies, if you don't develop the correct level of education and understanding and militancy, you can't take the boss on either. . . .

McCarthyism helped introduce into the trade union movement a culture of fear and a closing the door on debate. In the trade union movement the left had been beheaded. So the right were running the unions. So if you criticize the union, you're known as a lefty, that ended the debate. You were just a commie and you were written off. Over time it developed a culture of not having constructive criticism within the union. At the same time, on the other side of the coin, when the unions did some things that were pretty

reprehensible, you also closed ranks and protected that from being known to the outside world. Because that's the dark side of the unions that a trade unionist does not wish to expose to the world. You try to keep it from the media and other unions. Unions are in competition sometimes. You try sometimes to keep it from your members. They're gonna become disillusioned, and you want the union to remain united and strong. So as a result of that, a lot of the policies that the trade union movement guided themselves by weren't properly debated. You never really got the kind of policies you should have. There was this culture of not debating issues like that. . . .

12 November 2004

When Joseph McCarthy started his anti-communist tirades, he started in Hollywood. In those days, the people that were watching were watching Hollywood. They didn't have televisions. He picked a spot where many of these actors were called liberals. They tended to be somewhat left, and were well educated. They had a pretty good understanding of what was going on. He targeted them because they were where the people would focus on what he was doing. Then he moved off into the labor movement. Ultimately, probably before they even got these hearings started, people behind him understood that the main target was the working people of the United States and North America, who were the ones that would have some interest in socialism, some fundamental wish to change things. I think quite cleverly he started in a place where he could get a lot of attention, and then moved off into the attack on the labour movement and the people's movements generally.

I think it started in the labor movement in the United States. It was because of the international unions that were dominant in Canada at that time, it was an easy pipeline to bring it into Canada. Many of the trade union leaders were social democrats. They were spooked. They thought they'd have to cleanse themselves. They don't want to be part of this attack. So they turned on themselves, turned on the trade union movement from the leadership angle. McKenzie King was right, he didn't have to bring in legislation, he didn't have to unleash the cops on the trade union movement. They did it to themselves. The social democrats picked it up and ran with it.

When I came into the trade union movement, when I really got to the point where I recognized I was a trade unionist and was attending membership meetings regularly, would be around 1956, '57. Anti-communism was rampant at that time. What it does is it causes you to stop and think. Can you stand up to this? Are you afraid of it? Yes you are. There's a certain fear, because you're putting yourself in a position of being unpopular. You're a young person, you're being attacked by leaders of a movement that you care about. You have a wife and family, and these things all come into it. In my case, I happened to meet people who were strong and who helped me to understand that you can and should stand up for yourself. You carry on and do the best you can. It's a damper on the people's movements. It isn't just young people that find themselves wondering whether they can handle this or not. A lot of really strong people would be left, then they just opt out. It has a chilling effect, which is what they intended.

This was in Calgary. It was a funny thing. I had been going from job to job like a lot of young people do. Got a job as a letter carrier, we called them posties at that time. They had no union. At that time government employees didn't have the right to bargain collectively. They had an association. Starvation wages. My son, my second child, was born while I was carrying mail. It was a pretty tough go. Then I got a job with the city. Union wages, I got a big increase as a laborer starting with the city. First day I started, a fellow by the name of Gordie Mitchell, who was the shop steward, comes up to me and says, hey, you have to join the union. I had no problem with that. My parents had been socialists and I understood a little bit about it. I said, that's fine, but I have no money. He said, don't worry about it. The initiation fee is a dollar, they'll take it off your paycheck. Fine, I signed up. He said, oh by the way, you have to come and get initiated tonight, there's a union meeting tonight. I got into it both feet right off the bat. So I go to this union meeting. There's raging war going on between a couple of really wonderful people. Pat Lenihan was the union rep, and he had negotiated an agreement for the outside workers, local 37 of NUPE. A fiery guy by the name of I Roberts, a short, dapper little Welshman was up there fighting back. It's not good enough. So I listened to all of this, then I voted with the majority who turned the agreement down. Then I walked over and sat down beside Art Roberts, because I'd heard him speak and I was really impressed. I said, you kind of remind me of my dad. He used to talk like you do. I said, he was in the farmers union. But I can remember whenever he talked like that people used to call him a communist. Art Roberts says, and what the hell's the matter with that? Then art sort of took me under his wing. That's when I began to learn about the struggles within the trade union movement for what you believe in. He was a wonderful guy. I learned a lot from him.

I remember him talking about a lot of things. I didn't understand enough of it at that time for it to register. But I learned very quickly that he didn't respect the leadership very much in the trade union movement. I remember the first chance I ever got to go to a convention. I don't remember the fellow's name now, he was always around, he was kind of a lefty to, a funny guy. He says, now you'll get to meet all the phonies. Interesting, the first convention I ever went to was an Alberta Federation of Labour convention. I'd never been to a convention before in my life. I got elected to the executive, which is a pattern of flukes which I've manage to follow all my life. A guy from the IBW, they had a staff in Calgary. He had registered all his clerical workers, who were not members of any union at all. He'd registered them as IBW delegates and brought them there to vote for him. When Pat Lenihan found out about that he called all the NUPE delegates off the floor and we went and had a caucus. He said, we're going to have to run somebody against this guy. Somebody pointed to me. Next thing you know, this guy's been around for years, a big shot in the labor movement. This guy is at his first convention is all of a sudden on the executive. I didn't know what the hell it meant. 1956. No it wouldn't be '56, 65. 1965. I wasn't there very long because I moved to Vancouver. My left friends gave me hell for moving. You're elected to the federation, you're supposed to stay there. But I did anyway because I couldn't handle the cold, being an outside worker. What I do remember is that everything seemed to be set. You'd go there and there'd be blocks of voting. I remember the laborers table. The business manager of the business local. He'd put up his hand, every hand would go up. If he didn't put up his hand, none of them would go up. That

was true in a lot of cases at that time. Part of that was the influence of the international unions. A lot of the people around them were people who were either business agents or wanted to be business agents. They were able to hand out a lot of money in that way. Also McCarthyism. They were very clear that you don't vote for anything that smacks at all of socialism. Most of the resolutions that were controversial at that time were not necessarily what you'd call socialist. They had to do with the peace movement, which of course most of us that were in the left were involved in, because we believed in that. We had resolutions against the arms race, and various international events that were taking place, we'd have resolutions based on that and we'd be up speaking to them. These guys were very careful that their delegation didn't vote for any of that stuff. It was considered communist dominated, communist inspired. It's quite ironic that people would associate peace and communism and be against both.

It seemed we're opposed to war in general. The resolutions that I can remember supporting didn't choose sides. They just simply were against war and against the continuing spending of billions of dollars in arms, while at the same time we had people that didn't have adequate housing or health care of anything else. There was a propaganda war going on, that if you were against arming anybody who was in the capitalist system or country, then you were obviously pro communist. Quite a simplistic approach to it, but it was very effective. The media were carrying that line, and the politicians were carrying that line. And so were the top leaders of the trade union movement. You didn't have to worry about somebody from outside the movement red baiting you, there was sufficient of that right within.

That is a struggle that still goes on. The difference between business unionism and social unionism. I can say this about the left, and various degrees of the left, not necessarily communist at all. But people who have an understanding, understand that peace is paramount in this world. Social issues, an organized section of the working class has to fight for what they want for themselves and their families. You can't get it all at the bargaining table. How many times have we seen a great struggle and even a strike to win something at the bargaining table, and then with a stroke of the pen, the government can take away from you all that you've won. So you have to be involved in politics. When I first started in the trade union movement, and it went on for a long time, there were many sections, particularly in the public sector unions, that said, keep politics out of the union. They would always say, keep politics and religion out of the union. Nobody was talking religion, but they'd throw the two together because it's a nice coupling to convince people. This went on for a long time. In 1979 when I came back from BC and was looking after a school board local in Calgary as a CUPE rep, I showed that quite innocent little movie to them, that Tommy Douglas thing, Mouseland. I showed them Mouseland. There was a hell of an uproar and they were going to report me to the national union for bringing in socialist doctrine and trying to bring politics into the union. So you see how long some of this went on. That's not the way it is anymore. Fortunately things have changed. But it took a long time to overcome the damage that McCarthyism did. One of the things McCarthyism did that I don't think we talk enough about and understand enough about, it also introduced the notion in the minds of people that to talk about class distinctions was some kind of a leftist plot. The communists would always talk about the

working class, and the vanguard of the working class, all the slogans. It was quite effective, to the point that you think about the United States right now, there is no working class. Everybody's middle class. When they talk about what issues affect the middle class, who are they talking about? People who earn \$3000 all the way. . .

The whole notion of the fact that there are different classes in society. There is a working class and there's an ownership class . . . But what happened is a part of the way in which McCarthyism and the anti-communism affected people, is that they were convinced that to talk about classes was basically talking about socialism. It was something foreign. We have a classless society, everybody's middle class. We just listened to the American election in the US where they talk about the affects of the middle class. Who are they talking about? People right from \$300,000 a year all the way down. There seems to be no break, there's no working class. I have argued so often with members of the NDP, why do you talk about ordinary Canadians? Why do you talk about ordinary people? Why don't you talk about the working class? Well it's become something you're not supposed to talk about. If you don't understand that, how do you now which side you're on? How do you know what you should be for and what you should be against if you've allowed yourself to be a part of everything? If you're a part of everything, you're a part of nothing, you have no grounding. You have no starting point in determining what you want and what you need, and how you should argue to achieve it. That's one of the achievements of McCarthyism, was to imbue the people of North America particularly in the sense that we're all the same. We're all in it together, so we don't have any class enemies, because we don't have a class. If you don't understand that you're part of the working class, then how would you develop a class analysis? You can't, because you're in denial.

I've always tried to tell people that when somebody announces something is going to be done, or they're going to introduce something, you should always have one question in your mind: in who's interest is this being done? But if you don't have that approach in your thinking, if you bought into this classless society, you don't ask that question. Oh I guess it's in everybody's interests. You don't know what you should be for and what you should be against. It puts you into a position where you're nullified. Especially when you're talking about organizing people. You can only organize people around issues. You have to get them to understand that these are your issues. They're not the issues of the boss, they're your issues. You and the boss don't have a lot in common, except you work in the same place. You work and they're there. But when it comes to issues and the kinds of things you're going to be engaged in in collective bargaining, but also the kind of social developments they're having around you, you have to know where you're at. You have to know which side you're on.

What the party did for people was the party would always ask that very same question, in who's interest is this happening? Then you'd have to discuss it and analyze it. So you learn a process, you learn how to analyze things. You learn how to pick up a wave that's coming your way. You get to know that this is something you want to think about and talk about. You develop an analytical mind that way. One of the great contributions of the communist party was in providing analysis for the trade union movement and the peace movement. Not that we were any smarter, some of us I wonder how bloody smart we

were at all. But the fact remains, that first of all we worked collectively. We debated, we discussed. We didn't just have our own ideas, we examined other people's ideas. It's a process of collectivism. You get a number of people analyzing and talking, and you're putting together a whole lot of brains at work, rather than operating as individuals. That's what the party, it was a class approach to it and a class analysis. It was for that reason that many times the people that were red baiting would still elect you into positions in the party. Because you had an analysis, because you showed the leadership. Because you brought the answers to a convention, you brought the answers to a debate, that were in their interests, that they maybe wouldn't have come up with. Not because they're not as bright, but how did they learn to dissect the issue and look at all of its ramifications, and then come to some position? Mostly based on a class analysis – is this good for the working people? I've always said, if it's good for the working people it's pretty well good for everybody. It might cut somebody off at the top who isn't very happy. But the overwhelming majority of the people, if it's good for the working class, if it's good for the trade union movement, it's good for most of the people. I think we brought a lot of that analysis into the movements.

That's one of the things that happened under McCarthyism. If you go back far enough, before I was involved, it was the left that organized the trade union movement. It was people who had learned through struggle which side they were on. They became the leadership of the trade union movement, right from the shop steward on the floor and in the mills and bush and everywhere, right up to the top leadership of the trade union movement. For example, Harold Pritchett was elected the international president of the IWA, at a convention in Oregon or Washington. A year or 2 later when the next convention took place, he couldn't get across the border to get to the convention. He could get across the border because they were stopping communists from going across. That happened through a large part of the trade union movement, that one way or another the communists were weeded out. That's why I used the term that under McCarthyism they beheaded the trade union movement, and replaced them with the people that had bought into the McCarthyite anti-communist ideology. A lot of opportunists took those positions. Not necessarily bad people, but people who were badly misled. So the trade union movement suffered from that, and it continues to to this day.

I never met Carl Berg. I never heard about him till I'd been around for quite a while. He certainly wasn't the only one. We had lots of people that seemed to be directed into certain places to head off any left development. I saw it within CUPE. I can remember CUPE reps who were hired for the simple reason of sending them out to put them into an area where they were representing the workers in a given local that needed to be "straightened out". One of them was in Kamloops. They sent 3 different reps in there. The workers pretty much put the run on them, because they figured it out. One of them was sent out there and he told us the whole story. You gotta get out there and get rid of that commie Ferguson out there in Kamloops. He was out there a couple of months and he told Fergie, to hell, you're one of the best trade unionists I ever saw, I'm not going to fight you. So then he left. He took off and went back east. But there were at least 2 or 3 other guys who were sent out there afterwards. One of them ended up being the national organizer of CUPE. He's still there and still a right winger, and pretty well paid for it.

I was talking about how a lot of people came into leadership that weren't necessarily bad trade unionists, they were good trade unionists, but they were strictly business trade unionists. Under McCarthyism a lot of those people were really paranoid. They honestly seemed to believe that there was this cadre out there that would take over if they didn't do something about it. I can remember thinking, geez, if they only knew how few of us there are and that most of that stuff is propaganda. I remember one incident that just spelled out paranoia for me. The Calgary Labour Council, there was a bunch of us that used to sit in the back row. It was funny in those days, everybody seemed to have their own spot. The transit leadership sat there, CUPE leadership sat over there. Us guys, we all sat in the back row, a bunch of lefties. Maybe we were pretty arrogant. We used to raise hell with these guys. We were putting forward motions and resolutions about social issues and peace and disarmament and all that. It just freaked these guys out. At that time I was a bus driver. The secretary of the transit union called me Little Kruschev every time he saw me. One meeting we were all sitting back there, and the executive council brought in a resolution to eliminate the back row. Amazingly, the resolution passed. So there we are still sitting in the back row. They sent the sergeant at arms back there, and he was supposed to do something about it. So we all moved our chairs ahead a little ways. I got a kick out of that every time I thought back on it. But the fact is, it really did demonstrate the paranoia that seeped into the trade union movement, and how foolish it was. I remember one time in the BC Federation of Labour when I was out there. The party was quite strong in the trade union movement there, but it wasn't as strong as some people thought it was. I remember one of the leaders of the trade union movement, I think he was from the government employees union. We were having quite an effect in the convention. We could pass lots of resolutions, because we had an analysis, we presented information. But we never could get elected to anything. But it had gotten to the point they thought some of us were going to get elected. The rumor started to develop that there were 250 communists at this convention. It was a convention of around 900 people. I didn't want him to know it, but I don't think there were 250 communists within 150 miles of that place. But that just demonstrates the paranoia and how effective the propaganda was. The radio, the TV, the newspapers, just bombarding you all the time. The bosses loved this. People with money really gained from it, because they caused the trade union movement to have in-fighting. They put the militants into a minority position, they couldn't hold leadership, including militants who weren't communists at all, not necessarily even socialists. But if they didn't like you they just called you a communist. That's all there was to it. And if it stuck, then you were put into a position where you couldn't attain leadership. A silencing, a deadening of the movement. That's what the powers behind all of this were about. Yes, of course they had some concerns. In the early stages, the '20s and '30s, there were a lot of people that were in desperate positions and were turning toward socialism for an answer. But they weren't Marxists, they were just people who were looking for something better. The powers that be wanted to clamp down on that. That was the target, was to take the militants out of the movements, and to silence them.

We had a discipline. I don't mean an imposed discipline, it was how we worked. I used to say, people complain about the number of meetings. Join the party, and you'll go to 3

meetings for every other meeting that's going on. Let's take a federation convention, just as an example. We would always have meetings months ahead and talk about what do we expect of this convention. What should it do? How are we going to get the convention to take positions in the interests of the working people? We'd talk about it and draft resolutions and get them submitted by various unions that were willing to do that. We would talk about the whole issue over and over. Then when we got to the convention, we would caucus. We'd meet in the morning before it started, we'd meet again at noon, and we'd meet after it adjourned that evening. We'd analyze how it was going, and then we'd talk about who should get to the microphone and go over the arguments that need to be put forward. We used to try to set a tone at the very beginning of the convention. So it didn't come out as a flat thing, but try to set a tone so there was some inspiration. It didn't have to be a socialist kind of thing, but have some kind of what's going on, what's the government up to, what does the trade union movement need to be fighting for, and what do they need to be fighting against? Try to get that injected into the convention at an early stage so that the convention is lively and the people are involved. Nowadays you go to a convention and sometimes it's like going to a funeral. Nobody's saying anything. What is this convention about? What tone is it going to set? How's it going to show in the media? Is it going to demonstrate that the workers know what's going on and they know how to do something about it? Or is it going to be a convention that doesn't attract any attention, it doesn't inspire working people? All those things went into it. The communist party played a very good and important role in the trade union movement.

That was part of the paranoia. I guess they thought communists who were in charge of the trade union movement were seeking to undermine society. They said that. On the contrary, I was a member of Vancouver Outside Workers for quite a few years. I didn't go around talking about communism. I went about my job of solving grievances, preparing for negotiations. You have to do the business of unionism, you have to do that part of it. But what we did do in our local was we organized in a way that we had lots of shop stewards.

I remember after I left the federation, a left wing journalist, he'd been with the Journal at one time and was freelancing. He wrote an article about me when I retired. One of the things he said was that I didn't proselytize. That's true, we didn't do that.

I was talking about how we organized within the unions. Some people seemed to think if there was communists in leadership of the local union, that they spent all their time trying to conspire against the society we live in. The fact is, you don't get re-elected by the workers by doing that sort of thing. Nor did we want to. If people become socialists and want to join the party, they'll do that. But why would you spend your time talking to the workers about that. Of course we'd take a little different approach. An issue come up, we'd take a position that would be one that was based on our understanding and training and analysis. But the propaganda that was out there that made it seem as if anybody was a communist and got into the leadership of a trade union, they'd turn them all into Balzeveks and they'd all be out there trying to undermine society. That was all just paranoia. Partly paranoia and partly a handy way of attacking. They join in the propaganda of war and attack the communists in that way.

You try telling workers what to do. You've got to win them over. You can only win them over in their own interests. You can't win them over over some ideological thing. If you work with them and they appreciate what you're doing, and they talk with you, you can have some influence in that direction. But that isn't how trade unions operate. You have to organize workers in their own interests.

We all had Moscow Gold and we were all being told what to do. I was the secretary and business agent for Vancouver Outside Workers. I was elected by acclamation 8 times in a row, 8 terms. Then all of a sudden the whole executive was thrown out and a whole new executive took over. One of the things they were using behind the scenes is not that we were getting Moscow Gold, but that I was sending money to Moscow. I can just imagine Moscow sitting there waiting for their cheque from this little CUPE local in Vancouver, so that they could continue with their part of the cold war. But that's the kind of thing, when you have the kind of political atmosphere that had been created under McCarthyism, that's the kind of thing you can sell to people who have no understanding. I remember when I got the union meeting that night where I knew we were all up for reelection, I couldn't find a parking spot. We don't usually get a turnout like this, something's wrong here. Sure enough, a whole bunch of people that never attend union meetings had been organized and came out, and they threw us out of office. It was all because somebody used that communists are taking over, and they're sending our union money to Moscow. Of course we have our books audited every year. If they wanted to be there they'd hear the audit, but they never did come to hear that. What it demonstrates is the culpability that was created by the propaganda. The people just buy into the weirdest stories. That's so damaging to a society, when people are buying that kind of malarkey. It affects everything they do. It affects how they live, it affects whether or not they are involved in a fight-back in their own interests. It's extremely damaging. We haven't recovered from it yet.

We had to regroup and find a different approach. Yes, we made mistakes. Sometimes we were leftist, sometimes we didn't take into account the audience we were talking to sufficiently. We didn't understand that you can only go so far. We were fighting for great things. It was the left that fought for unemployment insurance and Canada pension, and that fought for peace. But sometimes you do it in a way that it's beyond the level that they're prepared to accept. But by and large, communists were quite popular in the trade union movement. Despite what the leadership was saying. Talking about that back row, almost every one of us eventually ended up on the executive of the labour council. You can't kill ideas. You can't stop people from thinking. You can cause a period of time when it doesn't go forward and doesn't advance. But if the analysis is correct and your ideas are correct, and if you're actually speaking in the interests of the working people, they remember that. When they want somebody to do something for them, are they going to go to some guy that's paranoid and has no idea of what to do, and he's in leadership because he can use propaganda to keep himself there? If they want somebody to do something for them, they go to somebody that has some analysis.

I don't think it was that prominent anywhere, except at the leadership level. In elections, there was a competition for the left, between the party and the CCF. But in the everyday life that we all lived, most of my friends were CCF or NDP. A few of them were liberals, and a lot of them were apolitical. It was an error on the part of the communist party to center so much in their opposition to the NDP. I don't think this competition for the left was played out in a very realistic fashion. Those of us in the trade union movement, who operated quite differently than the leadership, in fact I was often criticized. They said I was lost in the trade union movement, as if this is a terrible thing. I had wandered off somewhere ideologically. But where are you supposed to be? If you're in a working class party that says it's the vanguard of the working class, where else are we supposed to be except in the trade union movement? There were people at the top level of the party who thought that if we went to a convention and didn't spout a whole bunch of jargon and make sure we were preaching communism, that we were somehow letting the party down. Nothing could be further from the truth. If you were thinking from the point of view of recruiting people to the party, you'd never win them that way. You win them only by being a good trade unionist or being a good person in the peace movement, or being a good person period, if you can try to do that. And by advancing policies that people can relate to. But there was a constant fight back and forth at the leadership level. I think that the communist leadership always had the feeling, and perhaps rightly so, that the NDP was in a position where they could work for change in a better way, but that they would only go part way. That was true, it's still true. If you look at it from the point of view of class analysis, the NDP has never been very good at that. So there was a friction there. But it wasn't something that affected people in their everyday lives. The trade union movement, that's who you're working with. Who's going to be the best job of being a shop steward, who's going to do the best job of fighting for the workers, and who's going to be prepared to sacrifice himself and go to meetings? I've always had a lot of good relationships with people. Sure, I could debate with them. At a convention I'd perhaps be taking a position where I'd say that isn't right, I disagree with you. But then we'd go have a beer. It was mostly a fight at the top. However, it has to be said, there's a legitimate fight for ideas, and legitimate struggle in the peoples movements for what ought to be done and how far you ought to go. There's a legitimate struggle over ideas, that's a quite proper thing. But if it becomes more of a struggle between whatever party label you're under, then it becomes destructive.

The trade union movement, including some of the most rightwing elements of the trade union movement, are very good at collective bargaining. They're very good at solving grievances. They're very good at understanding labor law. But what has to occur, and what doesn't sufficiently occur, is to have an understanding of politics. Not just, ok we're all NDP. If you don't vote NDP you're not supporting the trade union movement. Without any critical analysis, if you're going to support a party, you should give them critical support. I don't care if it's the communist party or the CCF or the NDP. Critical support is absolutely the most important thing. Otherwise how do you develop the ideas? How do you decide what needs to be done if you just leave it to somebody else? That's something that was very harmful to the trade union movement. It came out of McCarthyism, but it also came out of the fact that the Canadian Labour Congress and the CCF got together and formed the NDP. Then the notion came, it's our party. Any criticism of that,

including constructive criticism, was taken as an attempt to undo all the good things that the NDP was supposed to do for you. In conventions you'd be arguing what must be done, and that we need to organize and fight back. Then somebody would get up right behind you and say, there's no point doing any of that until we can elect the NDP. Well the problem is you're never going to elect the NDP if you're not in struggle, if you're not doing things. So that was one of the great difficulties that I experienced in the trade union movement, was getting people to understand that you are involved in politics. If you do nothing, you're still involved in politics. You're contributing to the failure of politics if you don't take part in it.

Religion has always played a major role in the struggles of the people, and it's played a major role in governments and how they're formed and who leads governments. Alberta is a pretty good example of that. We had Aberhart and Manning. Combine that with the McCarthyism, equating godlessness to communism. Yes, the communists in the Soviet Union were anti-religion. They had fought back against the dominance of the church in that country. Socialism and religion do tend to conflict in many cases. You have a province like Alberta where first of all you have a Mormon element that, trace the immigration. The difference between Saskatchewan where I was brought up, and Alberta. Part of that is the immigration pattern. A lot of people that settled and homesteaded in Saskatchewan came from the Dakotas.

Religion has always played a big part in the politics of this province. You go back to Ernest Manning and his son, and go back to Aberhart. They've always used the bible as a weapon. If you are a socialist or left of any kind, you're part of the godless socialists. They've used it as a means of keeping themselves in power. It's a great propaganda tool. They preach all of these wonderful things that the church is doing, and anybody that isn't involved in that religion is somehow the other. There's them and there's us. There's still a lot of that in Alberta even today in politics. I don't know where Klein sits, what religion he has. I'm not sure he has any. But there has for many years been a religious background that's always put forward as this is the kind of person you ought to elect. It has an effect on people. They feel if you speak out against that, that somehow you will be looked down on. It has a chilling effect. Not that religion necessarily has a chilling effect, at least a lot of people wouldn't look at it that way. But when it gets to the position where it becomes a fundamentalist religion and everything is hinged on that, that has a chilling effect on how social change takes place. It's almost as if you're fighting for something for social change that somehow you're not adhering to a doctrine that's very important.

NUPE was the National Union of Public Employees. It was pretty much a union in western Canada. Then in eastern Canada you had the National Union of Public Service Employees. NUPE operated on the basis of everybody was elected. There were no business agents, no business managers. For example, in Calgary they had the district council, where a number of locals got together and hired people. They formed a council and the council actually hired representatives. Pat Lenihan was one of the, Art Roberts was another, and there were 2 or 3 others that were for many years in that position. When it was decided that NUPE and NUPSE ought to get together and talk about coming together, one of the things that had to be decided was how are you going to structure

yourself. Is it going to be like NUPE, where you have your hired, anybody that's going to work for the union has to face an election. Whereas in Ontario and Quebec under NUPSE, they were appointed by the national executive or the president. There was quite a long debate about that. We used to refer to them as road men. Once they were appointed, as opposed to people that were closer to the membership, because they came out of the membership to start with and they had to get reelected. One interesting thing about CUPE that has to be understood, is that CUPE actually is responsible for the fact that bargaining rights were granted to federal government employees and provincial government employees right across the country. When NUPE and NUPSE merged and put together CUPE, it was a very large union by the standards of those days. It was all public sector. All of a sudden the powers that be thought, oh my god, this union's going to organize everybody, and all provincial employees across the country are going to be caught up in this thing. The federal employees are going to be caught up in this thing. So they responded by getting together and talking this over, the various premiers, and they decided it's time to give bargaining rights to the government employees so they don't all end up in CUPE. What they did, they enacted special legislation. In Alberta you have the Public Service Relations Act, which was enacted so they had a different set of labor legislation than CUPE or any of the other unions in the province. One of the clauses in that act was that unionized government employees all had to belong to the same union. In other words, you couldn't raid them even, because they had to stay in that one union. So that's quite an interesting aspect of the effect that CUPE had. As CUPE was being formed, and I was talking about this struggle back and forth about what the structure would be. People like Pat Lenihan, who had been in the leadership of NUPE, ended up being employees of CUPE rather than elected as leadership. Same with Art Roberts and a number of other people, and many of them from the left. The left was fairly strong in NUPE, it was almost non-existent in NUPSE. As a consequence, people like Lenihan weren't elected to leadership. Lenihan was the western regional director, so he had a pretty influential position, but not an elected position.

One of the people who initiated the coming together of NUPE and NUPSE to form CUPE was Pat Lenihan. He was very prominent in that he understood and he voiced the expression that the public employees had to unite and come together. That they had to become a national union in order that they would be able to first of all be effective, and secondly that they would not be subject to raids by other unions. In other words, they had to have a stronger union, a better union. That was one of the great accomplishments of Pat Lenihan. He had the ability to talk to people everywhere. He traveled. He went to Manitoba, he talked to the leadership of NUPE in Manitoba. He talked to the people in BC. Then he organized a meeting with the people in Ontario, primarily in Ontario, although they had membership right from the lake heads through to the coast. There wasn't a lot in the Maritimes in those days, but they had membership in Quebec. He played a major role in pulling that together.

He had great organizational skills. He had a great analysis. He wasn't in the part at that time, but he was a Marxist and he understood the role of the trade union movement. He understood how people must organize together, and he was able to articulate it. He was a

very outspoken and well spoken person. And I should point out, he was very much admired and was very popular, even by people who disagreed entirely with his politics.

I remember when I was a kid, my mom and dad talking about war. I remember the first time my dad said that war makes money. I couldn't understand that. No dad, that's got to be wrong, it must cost a lot of money. Then he explained how the arms race works and how people get rich off it. I always had this in the back of my mind. I was fairly young when the Korean war was going on. I remembered people coming back from that war. I had cousin who'd had their legs shot off, not in the Korean war but in the 2nd world war. I always thought it was a horrible thing. When I got into the trade union movement and I met people from the left, I heard communists and left people talking about war and peace, and nobody else seemed to want to talk about it. I was really attracted to that. I was involved when I was very young. My mom and dad and brother and sisters went to Regina and met Tommy Douglas on the steps of the legislature. One of the very first ban the bomb marches that took place. So I had that bit of a background. Also that was one of the things that convinced me that I should join the communist party, is how they acted within the trade union movement and the leadership they gave to the peace movement. Which I always thought was incredibly important. I could never understand and forgive the inhumanity of man to man, resolving differences by killing on a mass basis. It's something that's so repugnant. That was a great attraction to me to join the communist party.

That must be incredibly humiliating. If you believe in something, whether in the final analysis it's the right thing to believe in or not, but if you really believe in something, you should not have to deny it. I've been fortunate, I never had to deny that I was a member of the communist party. I didn't go around shouting it from the rooftops, and I don't think that's the right thing to do in any event. But certainly under McCarthyism it wasn't a very strategic thing to do. But I certainly never denied it. I think it must be really humiliating for people that would have to do that. And why? Because somebody would take advantage of you having a belief, and would do harm to you because you had an analysis that they didn't share. It's a terrible thing that people do that to you.

I think we've covered quite a lot of ground. One thing I will say though, and that is that I have never regretted being a member of the communist party. I've never regretted the analysis that I shared with so many fine people. I've never regretted being a part of a very courageous people who stood up in a minority position and fought for what they believed in. I have a lot of good memories and a lot of good friends. Even though I'm not in the communist party any longer, it's not because I have in any way changed my point of view. It's simply that the party got caught up in the end of the Cold War, the disaster that was created in the Soviet Union by people who were alleged to be communists and who turned the thing on its ear. The Berlin Wall came down and everything came to a stop as far as the party was concerned. There were disagreements on how to democratize the party or not democratize the party. I was on the side that wanted to democratize it and open it up. I don't regret that for a moment. I think it has helped a guy who's a grade 10 dropout to become a little bit self educated, and have a view of the world that I might never have had.