

Terry Dekker

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Blackstone

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TD: I started with Canadian Liquid Air in 1976... My name is Terry Dekker. I am president of CEP local 777. I started with Air Liquide in 1976. I started out as an operator. I attended meetings that were bargaining unit meetings at Liquid Air. One of my coworker's name was Dave Morris. He and I went to a meeting. I was not involved in the union at that time, in 1977. What happened was he asked me to nominate him for president, and he said he was going to likewise nominate me for secretary-treasurer. Nobody was running for president, so I said, Dave, you're probably shoo in. But Jim Kay was running for secretary-treasurer and everybody knew him. So consequently I lost the election. That should've been the end of my career in the union. So what happened was, when the guy came to take his books, Dave told him, well you're secretary-treasurer, you have to do this, this and this. You have to have all this stuff ready, all the money. This guy looks at him like a deer in headlights. He says, well I didn't know there was anything to do. He says, I resign, give it to Terry. That's how I started my career in the union. So I started out as secretary-treasurer. I also started going to Local 777 meetings. I attended them rather regularly, and got involved in the local by just those monthly meetings. I

attended them, I went to conventions. We were quite active in Air Liquide, with Dave Morris as our president... him and I traveled the country. Of course you build up experiences. In 1986 I became president because David left. I went from secretary-treasurer to chief shop steward to steward, and then I was area steward where we were. But when Dave left he asked me to run; so I ran for president. Of course nobody ran against me. I've been president of Liquid Air ever since. I'm still Liquid Air president today. In 1989 I threatened Cec Kereluk, to run against him, because I was a little dismayed at the actions he played in the elevator when I was there. So I said to him, well he used some heavy handed tactics which I didn't approve of. I says, I don't think the local should be doing that kind of stuff, so I'm gonna run. But actually what he did is he decided not to run and he phoned me. He says, put your name in, cuz I'm not running. So basically that's how I got involved in the local – I ran for vice-president of the local. At that time Celanese was a big player. They were always the biggest bargaining unit in Local 777. In the '50s, '60s, '70s, '80s and '90s they were the biggest. They had the biggest influence on the local, also. I ran for vice-president, and I wasn't in the vice-president chair more than 3 months when Bill Colba took a sabbatical to work on organizing. Suddenly I'm thrust into the chair of president. It's a little unnerving. You go to the meetings, that's one thing. But to sit behind a chairperson is another. And to have someone as articulate and as good as Carol Stewart as your secretary-treasurer, it's unnerving to say the least. I had to go to the school of hard knocks, and I'm still president of Local 777 today.

Q: Since 1990?

TD: I think it was '91 or '92.

Q: Describe Local 777, and how do sub locals fit into a local?

TD: It's a composite local. You have multiple employers. What we do in the composite is that we have 22 bargaining units. Air Liquide is one, Celanese was one, Imperial Oil is one. But what happens in these bargaining units is that they have their own autonomy. They don't send all their money to the central body, to the local. What they do is they pay \$6 per member per month for the use of the office and the secretary and the order of the business for Local 777. The rest of the money goes back to their accounts so they can do with it as they see fit for themselves. I don't take part in their bargaining. What we do is they're all separate identities, almost like their own little locals. Basically Celanese looks after their own bargaining, they look after sending people to schools. What we do is we kind of do the, we sent people to schools but we send smaller bargaining units; we help the smaller bargaining units. Celanese was somebody that always helped smaller bargaining units. Always instrumental in that.

Q: What's the value of having this big composite local?

TD: That's a good question. Celanese, I think there were some people in that bargaining unit that were questioning that very thing. We're so big we could be on our own. But the thing is, I said to them that a union philosophy is that we're more powerful together than we are apart. The Local 777 is more powerful with all of us together. When we go to a convention, there used to be 24 or 25 of us. When we're talking, those many people, I

think the local over the years has experienced, because of the structure we have, it's able to send more people. If you had a Local 777 with 1,500 members, they'd only send 5 or 6 or maybe 10. We have 25 there. So basically we have the local, there's more experience. These people get to go. Like I think this thing here is, and I haven't got the sheet, but I think we have quite a few people here, because it's in Edmonton. But the thing is that we look after the money also. We take the money from the company and our secretary does the dues deduction. They just look after their own. We look after their dues deduction for the national. We look after the affiliates, make sure they're paid. Because Winston, I'll tell you something. Sometimes they're not paid by these locals. They're in delinquency. But we're never delinquent. In fact, there's been times we've paid ahead to help out certain organizations.

Q: But as far as Alberta labour law is concerned, there's no 777, there's only these bargaining units that are certified with that particular...

TD: Ya, and they're all the same number.

Q: I've asked you what 777 does. What does the union do for 777? Give me some experiences going back. When you joined it wasn't CEP, it was ECWU.

TD: We were Oil Atomic Workers 9-666, district 9, triple six. That's when we started. Neil Reimer was the director, or I think he was the director. Basically we were involved; my first rep was Reg Basken. Myself, I was involved in the union but not as much as

Dave was. But the thing that happens is, in 1981 they merged with Chemical Workers of Canada, and they formed the Energy and Chemical Workers of Canada, ECWU. So what happened to us, this is very interesting. The 9 dropped off, cuz we're not longer District 9; we had 666. So it was ECW local 666. Now here's what happens. We get into some organizing of the Catholic school board. Guess what happens – 666 is a sign of the devil. So I go to the meetings, there's a motion comes to the floor. I talk it against it and say, we're not changing our number, I like 666. What's wrong with the devil? I don't believe in the devil anyway. So I got turned down. They were mad as hell at me. So what happened was they waited until I wasn't there, and brought it up to the floor. It got passed, which probably not a bad thing. I was being a little stubborn in those days. You can actually from the floor run a meeting. It has been done before and it will continue to be done. But the thing is, they got changed to 777. I think it was the only number, and it's actually a lucky number, as far as I'm concerned. But it needed to be done, because now we have the Catholic school board, we have the francophone, and we just got some more the other day. But we wouldn't have got these people otherwise. You move on.

Q: Then you became part of CEP. Talk about your memories of when you became CEP.

TD: My memories were that it was discussed. Some people in the Energy and Chemical Workers didn't think it was a good thing for us. Bigger isn't always better. I had the philosophy that we must do something, and I always was in favor of it. I think merging is something we need to do. We need to grow. When we went to the convention, it was in Montreal. In fact we had 2 conventions that year; it was very expensive. We had one in Regina for the ECW to put this motion forward to the membership, and then we had a

merger conference in Montreal. Basically we adopted the merger and we passed it. I recommended it, but some of our members voted, but I think in their hearts they didn't think it was a good idea.

Q: Which unions came together?

TD: We had the Energy and Chemical Workers of Canada of course, we had the Pulp and Paper Workers, and we had the Communications Workers of Canada. Those 3 merged into CEP, Communication Energy and Paper Workers. Now we have media. I believe media joined the next convention after, so we have the media. But communication covers media anyway, so the name didn't need to be changed. But the thing is that we set up a merger agreement, and we're still following it today.

Q: Who are some of the people you met in the labour movement, and some of the events you participated in?

TD: The thing is that Neil Reimer comes to mind. When he was director, what happens is one guy at one of the area councils kind of spoke out of turn, and I don't want to mention any names. But I'll tell you what, he was in this meeting, we were all there in the hospitality room. Something was said to Neil, and the next year he was run against. Someone ran against him. I thought, someone told me, that kind of stuff will not be tolerated. You pay your dues. So guess what, he got defeated. I was in Local 777 at the time, at the area council, and I broke caucus. I didn't agree with what they were going to

do. In fact I talked against it. Way back in the days I saw that happen. That was in the '80s, 1979 or 1980, just before the merger.

Q: So you have these unpleasants. People think it's all sweetness and light in the union movement. Not necessarily. What kind of things lead to unpleasantness in the trade union movement and in the local? When are there unpleasant times?

TD: When you count on somebody and they're not there. When they told you they support you, and they turn around and they're not there. That's the most devastating one, for me anyway. When I expected someone to be there for me, when I was always there for them, and to turn around and basically evaporate, they weren't there. That is truly disappointing. It makes you think, what am I doing this for? What is all this about? I've had trips home from meetings at Local 777 and I've had where, my god, what just happened to me? I'll give you a case. It was the ambulance tour that CEP put on for Canada; it was in the early '90s.

Q: What was the purpose of the tour?

TD: To let people know about, I think it was health and safety; oh no it's about Medicare. They were starting to try and dismantle Medicare. It was just in those early stages. Someone said, let's get an ambulance tour and go across and inform people what they're losing. We already knew that. What happened was is that we didn't have a meeting; this thing was came happened fairly quickly. I actually paid for the bus out of my pocket. So I went to the meeting and I chaired the meeting. What happened was my

own executive talked against it, and they turned it down. I had to pay it myself, the \$300 and some for a bus. I hired a bus to bus people from here through the city on its tour, so we wouldn't have people parking and everything else. So they stuck me with the bill.

They said I didn't go through the proper channels. But I had the bill for it. I actually went home that night and said to myself, what am I doing? Do they actually think, would any one of them pay for a bus? I had to pay for, they just said no, it was turned down at the meeting. Here's the interesting part. A month later I'm going to pay this bill. I had to pay it because it was \$355 for a bus for a day, which isn't that bad, pretty reasonable.

Celanese had a meeting. When Don McNeil found out about it, he had his meeting and the very people that were at my meeting were on my executive, but on his from Celanese, it passed. So they gave me a cheque to reimburse me for the bus. There again, your spirits are lifted up and you say, there is some good people out there. But when I went home that night I was second guessing myself that maybe my time is up. But the thing is, you just keep plodding on. But that is the most disappointing. When you think your own people don't support you, you have some trepidation about, should I continue?

Q: Why is the CEP a good union to belong to?

TD: I actually belonged to another union before. I belonged to UFCW at Gainers, not Gainers, I can't remember the number. But anyway it was UFCW. Basically I didn't have any interaction with them at all basically. So I really didn't have much of a union background when I got started with Liquid Air. But when I started, whether it be the OCAW, ECW, or CEP, basically I think we didn't really change. The union changed, but the members stayed basically the same. What happens when you get bigger, it makes you

more newsworthy, because you have the money and you have the ability to change some things with other big unions. So basically I think CEP, the bigger we got, I think it made us more of a focus. We have some influence, with Ontario Hydro, for example. We helped CUPE, and other things. I think on the big scale, we are doing something. But for my members, if you were to take one of them aside and said, I think we're doing poorly and it's possibly our communication skills. When you used to go and collect the money for the card every month you at least talked to the members. Today we just, the money all changes hands, they look at their cheque, and holy smokes, look what I'm paying for union dues. So what we really give our members for that union dues, we give them work insurance. That's basically what they get. It's like your car insurance. It's work insurance.

Q: Talk about some things they're actually getting.

TD: You get a progression, a wage that you start at and you finish at. Everybody in that classification gets paid the same. You have a pension that you're going to have something when you leave this company. It may not be much, but it's going to be something. You have health and safety rules. If you see a job that's unsafe, you stop. If they discipline you, we will take them to court. You have a mechanism that if the company disciplines you, we can take you to court. If you don't have that, you don't have anything. You must represent your members when there is a discipline in the plant site, or an action taken by the company that discredits the union. I don't work for a perfect company. You might find that hard to believe, but Liquid Air can be difficult to work with.

Q: What is CEP doing in Canada? What difference is it making in society at large?

TD: I think it's because we're, I think we're a leader in helping the community. I believe that, I look at our little local bargaining unit and our local, for the United Way for example, we have some people that are instrumental. And Celanese was another huge donator. We have Procor is large. All our bargaining units give fairly generously to the United Way. We also give to spina bifida. That is CEP's charity of choice. All the unions have different, and ours is spina bifida. In fact we'll be raising money here tonight for that very reason.

Q: When Celanese went down, a little chunk of that was lost forever.

TD: A big chunk. To me, in the mid '90s, I remember sitting at a round table at a conference and saying, you guys, cuz already by then, by '95 or '94, they'd already shut down LPO. They had a liquid air plant there, they shut that down in the late '70s, '81. We built our plant in '84. Then in '91 we built a pipeline to Celanese. But Celanese had an auction plant. It was cleared out. The LPO was cleared out, and another unit went out. So I said, you guys, you probably only got 10 years left. How did I know? Ya well, they really weren't retooling. They started, what's it called, actually it was methanol. That was the only thing I could remember that they were going is that when they built the methanol plant it was newly built; that saved some jobs in the '80s. Basically it made money; well, Celanese always made money. But the thing is that we knew, at that time I had an inkling, that there's going to be a sunset on this thing, the sun's going to come down on these guys. So what happens in 2000 they shut down something else, I can't remember. But all of a sudden they're in bargaining. I remember this, they're in bargaining, and

they're having a heck of a time. I was in contact with them. Rod Wood and Don McNeil were having an awful time. Actually it wasn't Don McNeil, it was Mike McKinney, Rod Wood. They were in bargaining and it was taking longer than usual. Usually at Celanese it was usually done within; because on the whole, the company wasn't really generous, but they always managed to get money out of them. They basically used to get up to about 5 to 7% of their salary as bonus for Xmas. It was pretty decent, because they did make money. They were very profitable. But suddenly they got the agreement. It was like a real sweat, it was like 6 months later. Suddenly a week later I notice that the plant's shutting down. Not immediately, but in a couple of years, 3 years. Basically there was the basis. We'd just bargained with national bargaining. They bargained 2 weeks severance, 2 weeks, 2 plus 2, plus 15%. So basically people with their years would have a considerable amount of money when they go out the door. They would have 60 weeks of pay plus 15%. But I don't think a whole lot of people in Celanese, some of them, were surprised. I think methanol was the one I thought would keep running, cuz it was fairly new. But apparently it was just worn out. They hadn't redone anything on it. But the thing is, we lost for the local, at high time 480 employees. So when they left, they start taking different plants down. We were down to, this year about 135. Then I think in June it was totally done, they'd shut down the plant, everybody was gone. I believe the 15th of June.

Q: Give me your version of why this all happened.

TD: They had no ownership, they had no ownership. Basically it was because of our dollar. It's a question of our dollar. Also gas prices. I think the thing is that they got bought out by somebody. When Blackstone bought them, it was the kiss of death. That's

because this company, and also we have another bargaining unit that has Blackstone owns them, AG Plastics. So what happens is they come in and I think they start wrapping things down. My thing is that there was all kinds of backers. They were making money, but not enough money. So what is enough? A government that just says, oh that's okay, we'll worry about that when the time comes. Well who turns out the lights when everything's dead. Who's going to be paying taxes to people that are retired, if nobody's working? I think it's shameful that this government didn't try and do something for them. But nothing, just close the doors and move on. There's a big hole there, because I don't think you can put anything at Celanese.

Q: How did government policy contribute to the big shutdown?

TD: I hear this every day at Liquid Air, the bottom line. The bottom line is, we must make profit. At any cost, we must make profit. I think we have to adopt a policy here that you can't just wind down a plant. You must show the government that if you're closing down a plant, there's got to be a valid reason for it, not just close it because I want to make more money over there. Cuz that's what they did. They built another plant somewhere else, and they'll supply from there. And that's what they did. So basically if we don't smarten up in Canada, this is going to keep on happening. Keystone Pipeline is built on that very premise. They're shipping it down there and making it there. So I think that's going to be, for us I don't think it's going to be a resource that's going to help us at all.

Q: It's a pretty pessimistic future for Edmonton. But just hold it right there, we'll switch. . . . making a contribution to Edmonton, to the economy of Alberta. Talk a bit about the contribution. Most people don't realize what a plant like that means to us. What kind of contribution was this unit making in industrial terms, in economic terms, and what have we lost as a result of them going down?

TD: I know what the local lost, and we're just a small part of that. We lost members that are active in the local, we lost money that was generated in the local for us to do things for the community and for our members. You have to see the spinoff of this kind of shutdown, and the Beverly area, Sherwood Park, these people if they're out of a job, where do they get money to spend? They have to get a job somewhere else. I think what happened was is that they were instrumental in trying to get the members place. On a layoff on a shutdown, the least senior people go first. I know that was a fight at the plant site, because they wanted to pick and choose who they could let go. That was always a fight. But the thing is, you have to remember that they contributed largely to having Ed Ewasniuk was from Celanese, and were always politically active in local 777. Celanese used to be a member of the New Democrats. I remember they used to pay, they were affiliated. And so we the local, we were affiliated. So they were very active. But at the end, I actually knew that they were and they couldn't find out at the time. You guys were affiliated at one time, just renew your affiliation. Well it might be difficult, because now you're under different leadership. But the local, we've always been affiliated. And we always help. I remember helping Ed in civic politics when he ran civically. We used to go and give him a hand. We'd get the members and we used to send him money, support. He got a lot of support from Celanese, plus he lived in Beverly, so that's where he ran.

Q: Give me some idea of the economic impact when you lose that number of jobs.

TD: I don't know. Basically with that kind of severance package they probably had some money to spend. I look at it, cuz I just ran into Al, one of the maintenance guys at the Harley Davidson shop. He was buying a new Harley after he was gone. I think some of these people spent some money. Al had worked there 33 years, big redheaded guy, 33 years or more. So he would get a nice chunk of cheque at his high rate of pay in maintenance. Probably did okay. And he's a maintenance guy, he's gonna go work somewhere. He's got a job. But unfortunately, some people that didn't have any skills, they're gonna have more difficulty finding a job. But there's jobs out there. But they won't be quite as high paying as Celanese.

Q: So you people were able to get a fairly good severance from these people. What else did the union do? These people are facing a crisis in their lives. Just give me some idea of what people were facing. What kind of people were working there?

TD: I bet it's scary. If you're in your 30s you can get, but if you're in your 50s, nobody wants to hire you.

Q: Were there lots in their 50s?

TD: Some of them, yes. And they're still probably looking today. But we Celanese set up a workers' center that had information, jobs, and a person hired to look after the center.

Her name was Dawn Forrest. What she did is she contacted, the people contacted her, they came in, and she got resumes for them and everything else, and helped them get a standing their foot into some doors. I don't really have the figures of how many got jobs. It would be interesting to find out if we can get that information. But the thing is, a lot of the older ones that had over 30 some years, if they're close to 60 or in their 60s, they may be retired. But some of them in maintenance, they can go and work tomorrow. There's jobs everywhere for those skilled people. And the people with seconds and thirds and fourths, they probably get plant jobs, cuz there's plant jobs in the paper. It's unfortunate, but the thing is I know some of them tried to cry on my shoulder. But I wasn't very sympathetic.

Q: You talked about your local being politically active. How do you justify that? Let's say that I'm a member that you have to justify that to. Explain to me why my local should be politically active. In other words, justify political action.

TD: They're just one party, New Democrats. And because they speak for labour. The problem is that other people talk, but they don't do the walk. New Democrats have historically shown me that they do some things for labour. We need a shakeup in Alberta, because we're in a Tory cesspool, and I'm drowning already. We actually try to motivate. We just recently in the local have the New Democrats in our local, the staff. It's nice, because these people come out and they interact with other members and talk about New Democrats. They're articulate, they're intelligent. These people are good people to promote the New Democrats within the union. They join the union. I thought it was a great idea when they come to ask me if they could join, but there was some fight over

where they were gonna go. But finally they're in Local 777. Because we are, in Local 777. I've been going to New Democrat conventions for 14 years, 15 years. I support them and they phone me all the time to give more. You never give enough, you know what I mean?

Q: That's interesting that you mention that the NDP staff the members of your local. Because I know that the AFL staff are too.

TD: No, the AFL staff belong to 1118.

Q: That's right. Then tell me about it. There's some people that shouldn't be in a union. Why should the NDP staff be in a union? Why should the AFL staff be in a union? I'm playing the devil's advocate. Explain to me why groups like that need a union.

TD: If you want me to talk candidly, they're not supposed to be. Actually the New Democrat staff, cuz they're not recognized by the Labour Board.

Q: No but tell me why workers like that need a union.

TD: Why wouldn't they need a union? Is there anything different for them working? Working for Bill McGowan can't be that easy. Not every employer is a good employer. But if you have your rights in a collective agreement, you have the ability to sit down and straighten things out. If you have an agreement, both parties can sit down and change the agreement any time they want, if it's agreeable by both parties. But if you have staff,

there's always some person in the office that doesn't get to join the union, because they're a personal secretary. So you can pretty well get everybody. So the staff of the Democrats, they have a contract every year that they renew. If the contract isn't renewed, they're done. So basically they're just a fit because they want to join the union, which is a great thing. But the staff of the Fed need a working conditions, contracts. I can't see why they wouldn't. The CEP at one time had a motion on the floor that we shouldn't organize those people. We had some sisters get up to the mike and talk against that.

Q: When you think back to your years involved in collective bargaining, going way back, what are some of the gains that you made in collective bargaining, that you remember the most? What were you able to gain for yourself and your fellow members that you particularly remember as being noteworthy?

TD: Well the one that stands out, because we tried it for 3 bargaining sessions, so it took 6 years to get it, was when I'm on holidays I didn't get 8 hours pay when I worked 12, I actually got 12 hours pay. Because I'm a 12 hour worker, and on my holiday pay I should get 12 hours. So when I work a day I get triple time, so I get paid almost a week's pay in one day.

Q: Do you remember anything else that the employer was titchy about that you managed to get, or that you didn't manage to get? Maybe some disappointments? Things you wanted but didn't get?

TD: There's lots of things we wanted we never got, cuz it's a wish list. You wish you could get it. You have your wants and your needs. Sometimes your wants aren't quite as much as you need. The thing is, I'm trying to remember, there were so many bargaining sessions. But with Liquid Air, in the first time I went into bargaining was price and wage controls. The company said to us, and I was with Reg Basken at the time, we would like to give you more but we can't. That's when inflation was almost double digits. And we got 4.5%, cuz that was price and wage control. It was just wage control, it wasn't price control. So when we went into bargaining again we tried to catch up. I know that achievement we made is we got 30% increase in 2 years. People were leaving. The thing is that that was when the boom went, in 1981. Then it fizzled out in '83. All this oil boom in Alberta just kinda, there's some things for Liquid Air that just didn't happen. Even Alberta was almost like a wasteland. In the mid '80s we started suffering. What happened was is that in the '90s when we were bargaining we actually made some gains. We didn't get big raises, but inflation didn't go up either. Like I said to people, how much money's in your pocket when you get a 30% raise, when everything else went up 40%, right? So basically in the '90s costs weren't going up terribly high, but neither were our wages. We were just making it over. And now we're starting to have inflation again because of the boom in Alberta. Basically I think the biggest gain we made for our members: in 1987 the company came to us and they redid the pension plan. When they redid the pension plan, I didn't belong to the pension plan, because I thought it was a crappy plan. It didn't do much for members, it didn't encourage anything. They changed it, which was somewhat equitable. We made a decision in the union that all the members should join this. It was our position to get all the members, because what they needed is something when they retire. I saw them not putting anything away. They weren't saving for that

rainy day, and most people don't. But now they have something, because we got 97% of the people joining the pension plan. What did the company do this year? They made us pay more for the pension plan, and gave the same amount. You know what? They said it was fresh air, fresh air experience. I went to the meeting and said, it doesn't smell fresh in here today. So basically now they're making us pay for us because they want to get out of pensions. They said, we're not in the business of pensions anymore. The unfunded liability when we all retire is gonna cost them millions, so they want to transfer it to us. And most companies are. If you don't have a union in your company, forget it, they'll just come in and change it; it'll be done. If ours wasn't registered in Quebec I think we'd be singing a different tune today. We'd be getting money from Liquid Air to invest for ourselves. If we didn't invest it properly, Liquid Air could not care less.

Q: You've been involved in a few organizing drives. What are the main benefits that you point out to people? Why should they join a union? What are the main benefits that you point out to them when you're organizing them, for joining the CEP? What are they going to get? What do you do? What do you say to them?

TD: Make one thing clear. They want to know what kind of wages they're going to get. I say, if that's why you're joining, it's not the right reason. It's gotta be more to joining a union than just getting a wage increase. It's about dignity in the workplace, it's about being treated with respect, it's about equity in the workplace. It's about basically having some rights in the workplace, not always under the thumb of the boss. The issue is they're treated fairly. The biggest issue is being treated fairly. If I go and we start organizing, I sit at a table and we're having our first meeting, what I do is, just write on a piece of paper

what you make. Not one number's the same. So basically there is no fairness there. They may do different jobs, but I know for a fact that 3 or 4 of them do the same job, but they're not paid the same. But they don't talk to each other. They were willing to join a union for other reasons, but not because of the money. But the thing is, when we finally did organize them, that was all straightened out. Now they're also in Local 777, in Westlock. But the thing is, now you can do that job in Westlock. I'm not sure if you can buy a home with what you make there, but you could probably afford to try and buy a home, because in Westlock they're somewhat cheaper than Edmonton. But today I think that today our kids are going to have some difficulty in owning a home. Even with making the amount of money that we do out at Scotford, that's still a consideration, how you're going to make a mortgage payment on a \$450,000 home if you don't have that much to put down on it. Your mortgage payments are \$2,700 a month. To me, that's a concern of mine, cuz my kids will have a home when I go. But will they have a home other than that? It's unfortunate I think. If you were fortunate enough to buy a home 5 years ago, well you've got some money ahead. You could probably sell that home and still have some money. I know people who are moving from Alberta back to their home provinces. They're moving to Saskatchewan, a couple of guys are going to New Brunswick, one guy went to Nova Scotia.

Q: Why?

TD: Because they could pay for a business and they didn't have to borrow too much money. And the other person bought a house for \$210,000 and sold his for \$450,000 here.

Q: Have you ever been involved with the Alberta Federation of Labour? If so, in what areas?

TD: Basically I attended conferences, seminars that they have, schools. I've been at lots of their schools. Basically ya, but I've never been on the executive of the Fed. But yes, I participated in the Fed in all kinds of things, like pickets, helping them out with money. In fact I remember one time they were having some difficulty when AUPE left, when they pulled up stakes. They didn't pay dues and had trouble making ends meet. So what we did in the local, we paid them 3 months in advance to get them through the hump. We had the money and Bill Climie and I said, we need to do this. We have to pay it anyway, so we'll just pay it upfront. If we got the money let's do it, help them out.

Q: Why did you do that? What good does AFL do in this province? What's the potential for them?

TD: There's lots of potential. The thing is that everybody must, I think it should be CEP rule. I tried to get it moved on the floor that all CEP members must belong to the Fed, to the district labor councils and to the area councils.

Q: What value is it to them?

TD: It's another body to have lobbying for workers' rights. To lobby the government, to make people aware of the issues that are on our table on the time. A lot of people don't

care, but we have issues all the time. Pension issues like I just mentioned, health and safety issues. The thing is, if you need to know something and you phone, sometimes you just can't get a hold of your rep. Phone the Fed, there's someone there who can help you out. I'm sure Jim will give you a hand. The thing is they've got professional people there that I can contact on any given day, and they'll get back to me and have the right answer for me. Not just about CEP, about other issues. It's not always just about CEP. There's some locals out there that build a fence around themselves and they don't venture out very often. It's not good, it really isn't. You must be active. If you're going to be active, don't just build a fence around your plant and say, this is fine, this is what we're gonna do.

Q: You've painted a pretty gloomy picture for Alberta after the Celanese shutdown. What are the prospects for this city and this province and this country?

TD: I don't think the future is bright. I really don't. I read the paper when they were distributing the municipal tax. Something like that to me, if it happened in my plant site I'd have a grievance there. Mandel, I think they should've treated everybody fairly and the same equally. As far as I'm concerned, it's crap. We're getting crapped on again, and it's because Edmonton doesn't support the Tories. It may come back to roost for them, but myself personally think that's just a small tidbit of it. They're sitting there in their ivory towers watching all this oil go down south. To me, it's going to be a black day. They'll be running down there and hiring their people. I think myself personally that the dollar, I remember in the '60s when it was \$1.10. Down there they wouldn't give you any change on your dollar. The thing is, I believe that for snowbirds, for people retiring, I think it's good for them, because they'll be able to purchase more down there than when it was 64

cents. But other than that, to us it won't matter. But I think the problem is that Edmonton needs the funding to get some of these roads repaired. The infrastructure is absolutely, I know it's so nice when I finally get on a road that, what happened, my muffler's not falling off or I'm not dragging. They don't need speed bumps in this city, they already have them built in the streets. Like I said about the housing, I think that's going to create a serious problem. People need to live somewhere. Us people that have been around long enough and been fortunate to purchase something, we're sitting better than most people today.

Q: You've been involved in the union for a long time. How has it affected you personally? How have you gained by being active in the union?

TD: I meet very interesting people. You grow. For every time you go out, you never come home without something. You go to a convention, you meet people, you talk to people, you share ideas, you share experiences, you talk about issues. Generally you always have an opinion on something. It may not be the right opinion, but you do have opinions about something. That's why we like to send new and different people to conventions so they can experience. It's like a growing thing. You nurture it, and hopefully they will become involved in the union and take up the torch. Someone's gotta take it up after I go.

Q: So it's not all sacrifice. The person who gets active actually benefits personally, is that what you'd say?

TD: Ya. The thing is, your family, like my wife always, she belongs to the union too. But she's not active in her union at all. She goes to the odd meeting. The thing is we both belong to a union but she always said to me, I think you're probably more married to the union than you are to me. So I said, oh what's that supposed to mean? Because I'm always gone. Some times of the year you're busy, like this time of the year is a busy time. You're at one convention. Like this is my week off. I could be out riding somewhere. I'm here at a convention, learning about organizing, something I don't have any experience at. But anyway, I think organizing is important and that's why I'm here. I take it seriously that a lot of people in there, like 10% of the people here will take up the torch for organizing, and the rest don't care. We have to nurture those 10 so that those 10 can get another 10, and the other 10 get another 10, and that's what you do. But the thing is that you can take a horse to water but you can't make him drink. It's like organizing. If there's a person or a team of people inside, you can organize. If there's no team inside, you're just banging your head up against the wall. You may as well take your money and put it somewhere else, because it's for naught. That's why I'm here at this convention, because I believe in the union and I think if you're paying dues to this union and you're participating, you should be there as much as you can and help it out. That's what we do. We have lots of members here. Just because it's in Edmonton, like some members only go if it's out of town. And if it's on a day that they're working, they'll be going for certain. But these are the members that have, what's in it for me? Well it's not about you. It's for every member. I always say it's not what the union can do for you, it's what you can do for the union.

Q: Did you have anything else you'd like to say?

TD: Nope.

[END]