

## **Harry Strynadka**

Interviewer: Winston Gereluk

Camera: Don Bouzek

August 30, 2001

Edmonton Public Library

I'm Harry John Strynadka. Now my involvement with the labour in the province actually started on the farm. I was born on the farm and went to the one room school during the summer months. Of course the winters were off because in summertime you went barefooted and in winter we couldn't do that. Oh yes now, this is 28 miles straight north of Vegreville, the Desjarlais School. They came back to, we all started school then at the age of 7. I was born in 1910, so that means that I went to school in 1917. I do remember the beginning of the First World War for the simple reason that my grandmother from the father's side would come to us and cry because she couldn't get her letters from the 2 daughters that remained in the village in western Ukraine. For that reason I remember that something was going on. Also my father was very much interested in the education of his children. So he was a great reader in the Ukrainian language, the various newspapers and books. But he made sure that we had also some reading. He thought the best thing to do is to subscribe to the Edmonton Bulletin. During the war years of course there were pictures, there were comics in connection of the war. It helped me to remember from that age the beginnings of the First World War.

Now the period that I grew up, that was the period when the United Farmers of Alberta were also coming into existence, and also into power. So the area that I grew up in was very political. Because dating back to about, oh before the war, we had the first local MLA. Of course he was a liberal. A.S. Shandro. Andy Shandro. He only lived a few miles away from us in the district of Shandro. Of course Shandros, Hawryliuks, Strynadkas, all came from the same village, Banailiv, in Bukovyna. And the village of course was a very big one. I remember my father saying that the population when he left in 1898 was somewhere around 5,000. So we had 3 big families from that village concentrated in a very small area.

We also had in our district of Desjarlais a man by the name of Mike Chornitz, who came also from the same village. He was the organizer of the United Farmers of Alberta. In 1921 he was elected; he defeated A.S. Shandro. A very interesting story, because Shandro and Hawryliuk manipulated the election and it ended up in the court. But finally Chorniz sat in legislature. Of course Chornitz had certain person difficulties and he was not returned the second time. So we had another neighboring from Boyesn, a Romanian district. So the UFA member was George Meljohn, a Romanian, a schoolteacher, a principal of the Voisin School. During that period you see I was growing up. So I was interested in politics from very early age, as far as I can remember.

A reader of the comics in the Edmonton Bulletin and this kind of thing. So when I was quite soon after, well it was in the '20s, that I organized with the help of Mike Chorniz of course, Junior UFA. It was for a number of years before I came to Edmonton later in that

decade. I was the president of the club, Junior UFA. I had direct exposure to the activities of the farmers movement and the farmers political party, because it was more than a movement then. It was a political party. Being active that way, I was also involved in Boy Scouts. So I was fortunate to come out on my own at a very early age. My first trip to Edmonton with the Boy Scouts. That was very interesting, because the trip that I made, I had to go to Vegreville and then take the train overnight and this kind of thing. You find yourself a new situation with the Boy Scouts. You'd be looked after by certain families. I can still remember the name of the family I stayed with, by the name of Parcels. Later on while I was still in that early stage, I was involved in livestock clubs, like swine clubs. So again I was selected to compete for the judging of livestock in Edmonton. I think it was in 1927. I was only 17 years old. Came out pretty well on my own. Those were the years rather interesting. Because the only thing we saw in the schools was silent films, mostly Charlie Chaplin. My trip to Edmonton in '26 with the Boy Scouts and '27, that was the year that the talkies were out. I can't remember the name of the talkie that I saw or heard, but nevertheless it was one of the first ones showing in Edmonton. I was very fortunate to participate there. All this time of course I was with the Junior UFA, becoming more and more political before, because of course we only had one-room schools. So there wasn't very much help you could get with your high school. But nevertheless I was involved with the correspondence course through the Alberta College, by correspondence. And of course the reading matter we received through mail through the Department of Extension, University of Alberta.

Yes. Now this was very, everything in those years that I've just referred to, they were between 1921 and '29. They were rather prosperous years on the farms. Now my father was regarded as quite a progressive person. He didn't hesitate to take a bank loan if necessary to buy additional land or machinery, or even helping the kids with their education and so on. And of course he didn't believe in the tractors. He was a great lover of horses. We must have had about 30 working horses on the farm. Not all working at the same time, but we had quite a few good horses. So I knew how to handle horses and how to operate different implements on the farm. Yes the plow, the seeder, anything that had to do with horses. I thought I knew how to even get along with horses. But one morning I was the one that had to go the barn and feed the horses and curry comb them quite early in the morning, before you went to school. It was really important when you walked between the horses in the stalls that you speak to the horses. But this one morning I must have been sleepy so I didn't say anything. One of the horses kicked me, there's still a mark, between the teeth. Of course the horse was shod. I was hurt. Of course I spoke at that moment and the horse relaxed and he didn't give a full blow. Otherwise I wouldn't be sitting here. But I learned a great lesson about the horses. So in 1929 before the crash, I already had completed quite a number of high school courses through correspondence.

But I felt and my parents felt that it was rather a slow process. So we decided that I should go to high school in the city to finish my high school education. So naturally the parents are concerned just where you would be lodging and staying. My father had very close contact with certain people in Edmonton and also at Vegreville, who are connected with certain educational institutions. This institution was the Hrushevsky Institute in Edmonton. I think the building still stands, around 97<sup>th</sup> just close to the CNR station

there. That's where I was enrolled. I started out in the Victoria, at that time was known as the Victoria High School. But of course there were so many students from outside of Edmonton that eventually I was transferred to Eastwood High School under the principal of Mr. Hyde, a military man who was a great friend of was it Griesbach. Griesbach was a very important military man, even in the '30s. Of course he was a J.P. in Ft. Saskatchewan way back from the early century. There was a great Ukrainian struggle in the churches at that time and he was the J.P. that went to the proceedings of the court case arising out of that fight or scuttle way back in probably about 1900 or a few years before that. Then it ended up in the privy council by 1905. So anyway, Griesbach, now in those days we had cadet training at the high schools. Mr. Hyde would invite his friend Griesbach to inspect when the roll call was made by Griesbach. Of course in 1929 the Ukrainian names in Edmonton were not that familiar. I had a long name of 3 syllables. I can't remember the rank of Griesbach, whether it was a major, or probably a higher one in the army. So anyway when he came to my name he was stumped, but he was quite alert at the same time. He spelled my name out. I stood at attention and answered the call. So after the roll call we were mingling, so I had a word or two with Griesbach. In 1929 all during that period, as far as the Ukrainian community was concerned, it was already even before the depression of '29, there were very definite lines established between the Ukrainian nationalist community and the Ukrainian so-called, now this is very important that's why I say so-called, communist community. So when I was in Edmonton, and of course I was enrolled in a nationalist community institution, and I was there from September till about March.

So in that period of course I met people who became very prominent in Alberta politics and Alberta communities. People from the field of law, medicine, agriculture. All my life I had contacts with these people. Because some of them were judges, good doctors, and especially many teachers. So I was exposed to all kinds of opinions and attitudes. And of course I was quite free to develop also in a certain political way. At the Rochelski institute we were obliged to go to Ukrainian Greek Orthodox church every Sunday. But because I was exposed to these different elements, I was inclined to explore a bit farther. I'd go most of the time to the Ukrainian church, but at times I would go to the United church. There was a United Church quite close, within a block from the institution. Of course that was something that I didn't quite realize I was breaking the rules. But apparently I was breaking a very, very important rule. So as a result of that, I found it necessary with my father's consent, there were other grievances, I'm not going to go into that. I left the institution and went into a private home. But of course being at the high school at that time, you met people from all kinds of communities. But especially in Eastwood at that time there were quite a number of Ukrainian students from the countryside. These students came from both communities, the nationalists and the so-called communists. At that time the communists also had an institution connected with the old ULFTA. It's Ukrainian Labour Farmers Temple. An institution was also in that area. I knew many students from there. So naturally I, because I was associating with the students and they went to the old ULFTA hall, whether it was a concert or some lecture.

So I was exposed to the radical farmers labour movement that way.

Yes I would say. Because I remember even going to the, we called it not UFA, we never used that. We used the Ukrainian Torv Dim. Of course Dim means home, home of the ULFTA. I remember a certain speech predicting the coming depression just a matter of weeks before the big crash came. So that was rather revealing. So you can imagine that even the students at high school level had discussions on high political grounds, and I was exposed to that. That was in 1929, just before the crash.

In 1929, my high school days, and then of course the depression came. So I wasn't able to complete my high school at Eastwood. I had to go back to the farm. You couldn't sell wheat, you couldn't sell livestock. So therefore there wasn't that much money to spend on education. So I had to go back and take some of the courses by correspondence in order to qualify for the university. Which I did qualify in 1932 and I went for teacher training at the Edmonton Normal School.

But before that, you see I come from a big family. I knew all the work on the farm and I was able to do it and so on. But I had quite a number of younger brothers who did the same thing. I wasn't really required to stay at home. So there was an ad in the Edmonton Bulletin, because that's the paper we always too, the Bulletin. So I imagine it was the Bulletin. There was an ad from a farmer from the Hardisty district, from the district of Rosyth, just east of Hardisty, asking for a mature farm person who knows farming, to take care of a quarter of land and 4 horses. I thought I was quite qualified for that and mature, so I answered the ad. I was accepted at \$25 a month. That's in the summer of 1932, maybe April.

To this day I remember arriving at the farm. I hitchhiked from Hardisty on Sunday morning to Rosyth. There was a United Church minister early in the morning going to his church and he picked me up. He asked me where I'm going. I said I'm going to a farmer over here, I'm going to work for him. Well the minister said, if you would be wise you'd go right back. He's a terrible person. That's why I'm not giving the name of the farmer. Well no, I said, I'll see anyway. So it's Sunday morning. I had to walk a distance because he was off the main line. And here he and his wife and his daughter and so on, they're working on something, because they were preparing the foundation for a new house. They were only living in a shack. There was a fire so they were going to build that summer. Well he was rather surprised when I came to see him, because he had different idea of a mature man than what I had. He never asked about the age. But anyway we had a chat and he thought he'd give me a chance. He took me out to the farm and he asked me to harness the horses. He watched how I put the harness, and he was satisfied. After a while he was quite prepared to let me take care of his farm for the summer, which I did.

Of course because there's no livestock, there's only work on the land, and the farm was only about 4 miles away. So when I was finished with the farm work he would take me to his home to help him prepare his new house and other work, because he farmed on a large scale where his home was located. So he had a nice comfortable place for me in the hayloft. And again, because there were other people working there for him, because I slept in the barn, I was the one to feed the horses and curry comb. He had quite a few horses too. He didn't have a tractor either, just like my father. All horses. I was quite

handy. Then I'd go and wash up and have breakfast. Of course the person, and I'm going to use his name now, Mr. Blue. The reason I'm going to use his name, because if you read certain literature on the Social Credit movement, not so much the movement but actually the politics of Premier Aberhart, you'll come across A.L. Blue. He was the person who challenged, and it wasn't easy even for Mr. Blue to challenge Premier Aberhart.

Aberhart was quite a stubborn man. So was A.L. Blue. But anyway that was rather interesting. This happened about 1936, '37. A.L. Blue was elected as Social Credit MLA in '35. He, together with a few others, they did challenge. I'm not going to go into that, because you can get that from the literature that is available on the question. So I by this time, or maybe I'm getting ahead a bit here. Yes I think I'm getting ahead a bit here. I think what we wanted. Well anyway my involvement there, now A.L. Blue, and I worked for him. He was an American. He was brought up in the state of Washington. As a youth he was exposed to the IWW. No it wasn't, yes that's right. He worked different mines and so on for a while. He was quite a radical person. So now you probably know why the United Church minister said, now don't go there. He worked on Sundays for one thing. He didn't go to church. That was A.L. Blue. And he was the Social Credit MLA from the constituency of Hardisty. Because we had terrific discussions. He enjoyed, because I was already, you see we had this, because I was connected with the UFA. I was a political person, and he was a political person. For instance, in those years we had any number of people who visited the Soviet Union and then they reported back.

So in Hardisty, I forget the name, but there was a lady who visited Soviet Union and she reported at Hardisty meeting. A.L. Blue was a sponsor. He was the chairperson and so on. So he was a political animal. So we had all kinds of discussions. He had good experience because he traveled through the United States in his early days and he met different people. He did different kinds of work. So that helped to develop me. Here I was ready, because I already had completed my qualifications for entrance to the Edmonton Normal School. I was accepted as a student for the year 1932, '33. So that means that I'm coming back to Edmonton. But at this time I'm a different person, much different person than I was even in 1929. In 1929 I was only 19, now I'm 22. Because I was always a bit older than my fellow students because I was struggling with the correspondence courses. So the people that I went to normal school would probably be 19 or 20. I was 22. So I was a bit older or more mature than the rest in some ways.

Normal school; now this is 1932. We're already the 3<sup>rd</sup> year into the depression. Of course I'm not going to any institution for my board and room, because I'm through with that. Way back in 1929. So I'm looking for my own roots. So I had a boarding place first. See boarding place was very important at that time, because if you were a boarder you were almost like part of the family. I don't know how they treat boarders now. But then if you were a boarder you were part of the family. I had a home, I'm not going to mention any names, in the university area. She was a widow and her husband was a person rather, just before the CCF, but the CCF already was building up. 1932, the conference in Calgary yes. This person was more or less a socialist labour person. But the father of the family is gone, there's the widow and the children. She has other boarders besides me. So

again it's a political situation. You're talking at our table. Politics come in you see, current day politics. Then somehow I didn't last there because it was rather far. So there was another opportunity of coming much closer, on Whyte Avenue, just a block from the Edmonton campus. Just a block away.

The person here was belonging to the - not the Greek Orthodox Catholic - well he was a Greek Orthodox but he worked for the Catholics. He belonged to the Printers' Union, because he was putting out the paper, setting up the type. His name was rather, yes I'll mention his name. Kupchenko, Victor Kupchenko. And he had a brother of course, a very notorious brother. Forgot his name, but actually it was rumored, and I kind of believed, that he was very very anti-communist. So he would appear at different communist gatherings. There was kind of an element of disruption, not very pleasant. Yes, that's right. This was all through the depression years. And here I'm staying with this family, Kupchenko family. Victor himself, the whole family, was very progressive. Victor never spent too much time because he had overtime. He had to get the Ukrainian Catholic paper out. They're still in existence. But his wife, I forgot even her first name. They came from Winnipeg. She, as far as I could gather, was a very progressive person. Because I always joined her in the kitchen after supper, helped her with the dishes. There were 3 of us moved out, a big family you see. I mention again that we are not boarders, we're just all treated like a family. So I made a point of, I enjoyed her company, her conversation. Her conversation always had to deal with the problems of the people. I didn't make any distinction whether it was Catholic or Orthodox or whatever. We had some common ground. Victor was also that way. And of course their young daughter, she was a great violinist. She was probably about 12, teenager, but she was a great violinist. The reason I'm mentioning this is because the person she married later, she married Lawrence Decore. I think I can stop there. But you see, in this year while I'm there, that's right while I'm there, a great event takes place in Edmonton.

We're back to 1932. The big event in Edmonton, which was not talked about, it hasn't been written into the history of Edmonton by any historian, and we had a number of histories written but this event was never mentioned. And the event of course is the Hunger March of 1932, December 20<sup>th</sup>, 1932. Here I have a copy of the Edmonton Bulletin the day after, the original copy. I'm sorry that I have the plastic over it, because the paper is very fragile. ...

Because by this time, as far as I'm concerned and also as far as the history of politics in the province of Alberta is concerned. Because at that time we had the United Farmers of Alberta in power since 1921. We had the city council dominated by labour people. You can't call them the old CCFers because the CCF was just in the process of being set up. But they were labour people, socialists. And the name of course of the premier was John Brownlee, and the mayor was Knott. He was also a labour person, the council was labour. In the process of formation of the CCF, the Commonwealth what is the name? Cooperative Commonwealth Federation process of organizing. Because it was only in July I believe in that year of '32 that there was a conference, first important conference of the Commonwealth Confederation which took place in Calgary. Of course there were other meetings, 3 previous meetings to Calgary conference. But the Calgary conference

was important because something was really set up formally. So there was the real establishment of the old CCF. The important wings of that new political party, CCF, the United Farmers of Alberta, and independent labour party or socialist party, of which the city council was mostly composed of, were the primary branches of the setting up of the CCF. So when hunger march took place in the city of Edmonton in the province of Alberta, and this hunger march being organized by the communist party of Canada, the situation was very, very explosive when about 12,000 people appeared on the 20<sup>th</sup> of December 1932, in the market square of Edmonton next to the old post office.

This is something that I knew about. I was almost, well I knew, and the planning of it. Because by this time I was already a member of the Canadian Labour Defense League, which was one of the organizations set up by the Communist Party of Canada under the leadership of Reverend A.E. Smith. Now of course this is loaded again, because A.E. Smith was a Methodist just like J.S. Woodsworth from Winnipeg. A.E. Smith, in 1919, during the general strike, he was the moderator of the Methodists in Winnipeg, when J.S. Woodsworth was an activist in the strike. Apparently he broke some very important rules of the church and he was expelled from the Methodist church. The person who signed the expulsion for J.S. Woodsworth was A.E. Smith who, by 1932, was the leading person of the Canadian Labour Defense League.

So you see when the Hunger March took place in Edmonton in 1932, I was a member of the Canadian Labour Defense League. Very interesting how I was enrolled. Because it was not easy to join the communist party of Canada at that time. It was illegal. So it took many years. If you even wanted to join the Party you had to prove yourself first. I was approached by one person to join the Canadian Labour Defense League. I can remember to this day, on 101<sup>st</sup> St. & Jasper Avenue, right in the heart of the city of Edmonton, by the person, by the name, now shall I mention the name? By the name of Koyich. Koyich was a member of course of the Canadian Labour Defense League. I had met the man previously, he always had the worker and he always had raffle tickets. They were nickel raffle tickets in the depression. I suppose I bought the raffle tickets and picked up the papers. Then of course the first meeting that I attended of the Canadian Labour Defense League, I remember it was 96<sup>th</sup> street, not too far away from the National Hotel there. The building was something like a barn, wide doors. So I came to the meeting. Well this person, Koyich, he was the doorman. He was looking out for the police. As it turned out later, about 1939 I think it was, Koyich was discovered to be an undercover man himself, RCMP. So after that I met Koyich many times on the streets of Edmonton. We never spoke. He would look one way, I would look the other way. We never had a word.

Now this is really a complicated thing. Now the Hunger Strike of, course, wasn't organized in a matter of days. It was organized over months. So the authorities and the police, they knew, it was no secret. Because the committee of the hunger march, they knew what they wanted; they were going to gather on the market square and march to the parliament buildings. They went to the mayor, city of Edmonton. They went as far as even the premier of the province get permission. It was a very peaceful intention on everybody's part. So the preparations were going on. I knew about the preparations, because Edmonton was a fairly small city then under 70,000. But the majority of the

people at that time still lived in the farming areas. There was a family in every quarter section. Farmers were hit hard during the depression and there were certain grievances, they had certain demands, and they were going to be heard. So naturally it wasn't really difficult to assemble such a large gathering of 12,000 people. And these people required lodgings, they required first of all transportation, lodgings, and food while they're here, even for one day. That was in the open.

All these preparations were being made by the people from the Ukrainian Temple, or ULFTA and other ethnic organizations. The Finnish people, the Polish organizations and people here in the city, and many others - I can't really say. But the support was terrific to handle that kind of situation. Just to provide the food and lodgings and that sort of thing. Because everybody knew that the event is taking place. The authorities knew, the governments knew. So the premier of the province made certain restrictions when people were coming in from the country to the city for the march. They were stopped on the way and interfered with their entrance to the city. So it was a breach of very democratic principles. Almost unimaginable what was taking place, because the march was forbidden. This was only a few days before Christmas. Christmas was coming on, just a matter of days. So the marketplace was filled with Christmas trees for sale. The old market was quite a large area at that time, extending from Westin Hotel to almost City Hall, and almost as wide, so a big area with a wooden fence around for the horses to be tied.

The authorities made very powerful and very severe intention of attack. Police mounted on horses. There was display of cannons. I wasn't at the march, I was attending classes, probably writing exams just before the Christmas vacation. But nevertheless, right after the class I was determined to get on the streetcar and over the High Level bridge and see what's going on. So as soon as I crossed the bridge I could see cannons, police at the parliament building. So I knew there was something terrible happening. I didn't expect that. Then of course when I reached the city - well there were people all over the marketplace. Just one complete havoc. Christmas trees were all scattered because the police were attacking on horseback and the only protection the people had was to get under the trees and this kind of thing.

Oh no, I came after it was over. Of course the fight lasted about 2 hours, from about noon till 2. I was probably there about 4 o'clock but the people were still there. But of course you had a very clear idea what happened. Here I have this copy of Edmonton bulletin the day after. The Bulletin reported very, very extensively. It's a complete report. The most of course political thing there, all the demands are in that issue. Perhaps we can end up this discussion by just saying, by just repeating some of those demands.

Those demands the question of unemployment insurance was one of the demands. Free medical attention. Free education for the students. Some of the things that became realities. I also have access, I have the possession with me, but I'm just going to, of the formation of the CCF. In there I have the documents of the Edmonton of the Calgary conference of July 1932. I find no evidence of unemployment insurance, medicare, or education mentioned. Now the Hunger March was one of the first events when these



things were wide open. I am quite sure I have heard somewhere, and I believe it is right, that J.S. Woodsworth, who already had been member of parliament for a long time in Ottawa, together with others like ... [tape ends]

Somewhere in there actually ... see it was difficult to get a school. When you graduated in '33. Because they were all local school boards, and there's a certain arrangement. For instance the minimum salary was \$840 I think it was. Yet the local school boards, every one, tried to get teachers for as low as \$500, \$550, and this kind of thing. There would be for every position in some schools there'd be maybe 20 teachers after the job. So you see it was kind of a nasty affair, even to get hired as a teacher.

1932, '33 yes. That's where we are. So you see I had to face that. I had no difficulty, because I was hired in my home school. They remembered me as a few years back, you see. Good boy, going to church. But when I came back as a teacher I was a different person. So there was quite a bit of opposition. I lasted there 2 years nevertheless, because I had a lot of support too. But then of course I moved on. I was picked up by a school. I'm just giving the process here, whether I should deal with it or not. I was picked up by a school board in the Myrnam, St. Paul, Elk Point area. That was solidly, at that time, a communist area. And I was there for 5 years you see. And that brought me right to the beginning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> world war.

Well sure. There was the Spanish Civil War in that period. Dr. Bethune you see. And another thing that you don't know anything about was the Youth Congress. You've heard of it before, youth congress? I was involved in both at that time, even from the rural area.

The Spanish Civil War started in the mid '30s. We had committees throughout Canada recruiting people to fight on the side of the loyalists. By the word 'loyalists' we mean that there was a government elected. General Franco was the person who wanted to take over government in a very dictatorial manner. We had a very famous person in Canada, a medical doctor who was already with his initiatives known internationally. He felt he could really do something for the cause of freedom. Because at this time we already had fascism in Italy and Germany, and Franco was another element of fascism arising in Spain. So there were many casualties in Spain, and Dr. Bethune thought that these lives had to be saved. So he organized a unit of blood transfusion. Of course up to this time the blood transfusion took place from arm to arm. But that wasn't a very satisfactory thing in times of war. So he was working on a method of transfusions of storing the blood. It was stored and taken out to certain places in vehicles and help would be given instantly. So he was the first medical person to come up with this method. Of course there was required for a wide campaign for France?, because it took quite a bit of effort to have vehicles and certain instruments for a proper kind of operation.

I vividly remember Dr. Bethune because I did attend a meetings that took place here in the city. He was a very informal person. Even sitting down or standing, his audience would always be, not only of the working people, but they would include all sections of the community - other doctors and lawyers and so on. So the gatherings were quite

interesting and very important, because it was important to go into any community to ask for France to defend the events in Spain.

Then of course he at the same time was recruiting people to volunteer as fighters and helpers in the loyalist cause. Of course it was against the law to do any recruiting. So this all had to be done underground, secretly. I know myself I almost made up my mind to join, but I did not. But many, many of my friends did. Some of them did not return, but many did. One of the important persons who did return with a missing leg was Bill Kardash. He was in Edmonton at that time. Later he moved to Winnipeg. But there are many, many others that I could name.

The regiment was very much connected with the Canadian history; the battalion of 1837, the beginning of the democracy and representative government in Canada, in lower and upper Canada. 1837, MacKenzie Papineau, 1837. Because MacKenzie came from upper Canada and Papineau from Lower Canada. 1840, '41.

Now in the '30s, at beginning of the depression, the youth were very badly hurt. So there was a movement started with youth coming from all over Canada, gathering at annual conference in Toronto. That's why it was called the Youth Congress. There were many people involved, also from all walks of life. Communists couldn't say that they organized it or the CCF because it was a very broad movement of the youth. Although the communists gave full support, the CCF gave almost as complete support, and there were many individuals who became prominent political leaders, not only in the CCF and the communist movement, but also in the Liberal party. Now I won't mention any names, but we can go into history and find out who they are.

Yes, they were always, before the public's mind, you heard about Youth Congress. Because the young people involved, they were very creative it seems to me in that period, as far as their condition was concerned. It was always brought before the minds of the public through various individuals and groups that represented different communities in the country. It was widely known and accepted over, well up to the time of the beginning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> world war.

As a Communist I was deeply affected, because at the beginning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War, the Communist Party was again made illegal. So the whole thing, there was a very dramatic change. Because the leaders of the Communist Party could not function anymore. The party was illegal and a leader cannot be an effective leader when he's not heard or seen. He was practically watched, there was no movement. About the only thing he or she could do was stay at home and not meet any other people, especially people of his or her following. So my own position was difficult. I was going to solve it the best I could. I knew that the best, now I did stay in the teaching for another year. I tried to do the best I could. I was rather fortunate because in the school I was at, I had the full support of the community. I did not mention before that I used to be a member of the Junior UFA.

Now as a teacher in the community, I couldn't very well work in the existing communist organizations like the Young Communist League. So in my community I had a Junior

UFA club organized, way back from 1935 which was in operation. I kept it going at the beginning of the war. Of course the beginning of the war was not a real war. It was a kind of well - only Hitler forces had been moving and taking over like Czechoslovakia and so on. But the so-called allies were really not involved. So here we were functioning through the Junior UFA. But of course the authorities knew what it was all about. So previously in my work, I was called I remember once by my school inspector to have a discussion just what I'm doing. Then, once I was called to Edmonton by the deputy minister of education. But that was when I was just beginning teaching and they treated me very nicely just like a father would speak to his son. Just a discussion with the file - my file, on the table. I saw that there was a file on me. But everything else was very nicely dealt with. This time there was a different deputy minister of education, a different government.

When I started it was the United Farmers of Alberta, but in 1935 we had the Social Credit. So we had not only a different minister of education, but the previous deputy minister was getting really in age. So we had a new person there. I received a stiff letter that your Junior UFA is no cloak, we know what you're doing. So you stop it. Which I did. I was wise to do that. So I knew that my elbow room was over with. So at the end of the year I decided to go to the University of Alberta, which I did. I had a very good year at the University.

At the end of the session, I had a number of jobs at those depression years. Somehow the students and perhaps for other reasons I did have an opportunity to have a job in the packing plant. But I felt it was a heavy job. My wrist was sore, so within a week I said, no I don't want the job. But I was very fortunate and I got another job with a dairy pool. This was depression years, the depression is on. This is 1939, '40 you see. I lasted all summer but I said, no, I've got to go east. So I hitch hiked in the summer of '41 to Hamilton, Ontario. I was employed there with the Dominion Foundries, a very notorious steelwork company. But of course Dominion Foundries was one foundry where the union activity came to an end quite a number of years. So you could not even mention union to this day, I believe. There's no union at Dominion Foundries. That was the place I worked. I first worked right in blast furnace. You'd work for 15 minutes and then you'd take a salt tablet and have a rest for 15 minutes. They didn't keep me very long. They thought that I was capable of doing something else, so they put me on the press. I survived for quite a few months.

In the meantime, I did get in touch with the person who tried to organize a union there. A well known Communist, Harry Hunter. Now of course it wasn't that easy to accept his recognition of me, because I could have been a police agent. But nevertheless, he took time and I formed a certain friendship with Harry. But I couldn't talk union or anything in Dominion Foundries. So Hamilton was just the beginning of my stay in Toronto for the next 5 years.

Now in '41, there was a crisis as far as the war was concerned. There was the Battle of Stalingrad. These are the old names. The names have been changed in Russia since then. I knew that, although my age I really didn't have to join the army, because my age was

already almost beyond the limit of active service at that time. What they required at that time was young men of 19, 20, 21. Well my age was already well into the 30s But nevertheless I thought I should enlist, which I did. As a matter of fact, before I enlisted I joined the reserve army. That was very useful because I met many people from Hamilton. Met every week. Then of course we'd go to Niagara Falls for certain bigger maneuvers. We met people from Toronto and other places.

Many of these people I met, some of them were leading CCFers. So that was a new opening for me, because we had some very pleasant discussions, friendly discussions but very useful discussions. Of course I joined the army. We had our basic training at Simco. Again here, our platoon, which consisted of about 30 men, we had a good number of good leading CCFers in the same platoon. Of course in '41 the Canadian army had a practice of encouraging political discussions in these units with the commanding officer present. Not participating in discussion, but he would be present. So we had discussions, very open discussions with political. Most involved would be the CCFers and the Communists. That was very interesting.

Of course basic training only lasted 6 weeks. But at the end of the basic training, all of my comrades, because I was with the signal corps, so they all went for further training to Kingston. I was sent to the Horse Palace in Toronto. Now the Horse Palace was in the exhibition grounds. Now this was rather...and then of course I had a posting from the Horse Palace to the Christie St. Hospital. They said I wasn't fit medically. My vision wasn't good or something. So said you're not going to get any more training, but you can have a military post in Toronto. You won't have to live in the Horse Palace, but you'll have a living allowance. So that was very interesting and I enjoyed that. Because my position there allowed, I had to wear the uniform at work. And after work, weekends and this kind of thing, I can either wear the uniform or my civil clothes. This was very convenient for me because I already established good connections, and I was active politically in the news sales of the Communist Party. And of course the way I was situated there, I could participate quite freely. So as long as I wasn't in my uniform - because although the party was illegal, but there was all kinds of activities that the Party organized. Even some very big rallies. It was very wise for me not to be at one of those rallies in a uniform.

For the war, that's right. This was the period when the Soviet Union was already in the war. So we were all out for it, we had no scruples about the organization of the military. We gave our full support, so it was no problem there whatsoever as far as the government was concerned. Or everybody else.

Well my experience, see I came back as soon as the war came to an end. I asked for, what is the term when you ask to leave the army, for my discharge. Which they gave. Because I was back at the university for my second year you see. So there's no problem, they gave a discharge almost at once. So I was back in Edmonton already in '45. So the university here in Alberta, it was very, very active. There were all kinds of clubs. The communists had their club, the CCF had their club, the Liberals and Conservatives. Very active clubs. So it was even rather difficult to study, because there's so much political activity going

on. As you have mentioned, it was a very important year, 1945, '46. That's where really the beginning of the Cold War. Churchill's speech at Fulton - 1946, early in the year. Well there was cooperation. There was great admiration of what the Red army was accomplishing. Then of course, the United Nations was set up at that very time, right after the war. So it was very important for the Soviet Union, Great Britain, the United States and Canada to work together. Which they did from the beginning, you see. But this speech terminated the whole process in many ways. There's no real cooperation anymore. There's all kinds of differences of opinion on many things. Because after the war there was so many things that they had to do. The war criminals and division of land in Europe. All kinds of very fundamental things that had to be settled. There was no clear agreement anymore. Of course at the same time there were divisions created among the people throughout the world, including Edmonton and every other community. So that was, it was so different than the previous 5, 6 years you see. There's hardly any division. The only thing is for us was to win the war. Nearly all of us believed that this is the end of wars. We had that feeling. And now we knew that the process is beginning in the same way all over again, to this day.

Well that's a very important question. I could be thinking back now. Back 50 years. Well my own experience, you see soon after I went out teaching again. I just spent a year at the university. I went out to the Wainwright area. I was there a principal of Ribstone High School, that's east of Wainwright. The Mormon district - not the Utah Mormon but the Ontario Mormons. I allowed everything to come through the mail. They knew exactly where I stood politically. The postmaster knew. And in the community, I suspect the postmaster, he had conversations with certain people in the community. So the people generally knew where I stood politically. But there's no problem really that way. Because this was about '46, hardly a year after the Fulton speech. But nevertheless you could hear the people talk about Soviet Union and what they're doing and this kind of thing - the communists you see!

So although you could be treated nicely and yet you knew there were things in the minds of people. The minds of the people are changing. And you knew the direction that it's going to. It wasn't cooperation, but it was all the people everywhere felt insecure. And you were together with them, insecure. I'll just give an example. In those days I never stayed in a school more than a year. I just kept moving. Because it was good for you. So the following school I did get a school in the Pincher Creek area, very interesting area. Twin Buttes school, half ways between Pincher Creek and Waterton Lakes. Andy Russell was my neighbor. He's still living, yes Andy's still living. I was treated very nicely in that school both by kids and parents and the school inspector. But I never hid anything. Through the mail I would receive communist paper and so on. So they knew exactly. So the only thing that I noticed was there would be certain things in a community. Something like, oh yes, the Masons. They would have some kind of celebration. Usually in some of the other districts, the teacher would be invited to that for a dinner. But they would invite me to all kinds of things in the community, but you never received that invitation. Because they knew my exact position politically. It was a good thing they didn't.

I was in the Party at this time. But because I was removed from Edmonton large center, I was only a member at large. I just had discussions with real communists when you were in the city. So you actually were not involved. I wasn't personally involved, because you weren't going to revolutionize the community you were in. It wouldn't be realistic. But you read your paper through the mail and this kind of thing. And you met the people at weekends. And you had your discussions with people on these various questions. But they weren't dealt with in a, they were just social discussions. So the only time I would be in contact with real communists in this period, and this was a long period, since my leaving the university in '46, I was not admitted into a club until 1959. Although I was in the city here from '55 to '59, I was not admitted into a club in that period.

The reason, well actually that was Edmonton. But actually in 1950, I should point out that from 1950 to '55 I was in Vancouver for 5 years, because I practiced practically all through my teaching career to be 5 years in school and then 5 years off. So I had my 5 years off in the army and my second 5 years off were from 1950 to '55 I was at the coast. Well I considered myself as a professional loafer. But of course in loafing you still have to eat and be warm and have good living quarters and so on. So you take up different jobs, whatever you can. But you have your choice. So I worked in the pulp at Powell River for a while, pulp and paper. I was in the union there of course. But I didn't stay very long. Then I went, because naturally there you want to go back to Vancouver where the action is - which I did. So again I had to look for some kind of a job. I did strike a job with the CPR as a cook on the railway. Of course these were the good old days yet, because the diners were still in the steam engines, and the meals and all the tourists still traveled on the trains. The dining cars were famous throughout the country, both CNR and CPR. So it was hard work, long hours during summer months. But nevertheless the work was quite pleasant. That's right, the Korean war and so on.

Now here I am. I'm in Vancouver. So of course I went to the Communist Party there. I was a communist, I had my membership card and so on. Vancouver operated in a very businesslike manner. They had very fine people in the communist party. Nigel Morgan and other people. They just practically grabbed me and took over the Ukrainian community, Russian, and Yugoslav. Of course the halls there were one block in Vancouver. But being Ukrainian Canadian, I landed in the AUUC hall. So I not only worked with the communist club that was organized around the AUUC hall, but I was also very closely connected with the Yugoslav community and the Russian community. It wasn't long before I became a member. I was asked to join the AUUC. They had the English-speaking branch of the Association of the United Ukrainian Canadians. The organization is still in existence to this day. I blended very well in that Ukrainian community. Of course I worked in the St. Paul area, in the farming area. They had an AUUC hall there, but I never was a member. I had my own organization. . . .

I'm a member of the Communist Party in the club functioning in that community. One of the clubs, because there's more than one. Before long I was appointed as a - I forgot the name of my office - but I was in charge of looking after the affairs of 4 or 5 communist clubs in that area. Taking in the Yugoslavs, the Russians, and the Ukrainians in that east Vancouver area. And of course within that year there was an election, federal election. Of

course I've mentioned that Vancouver they were very fast pacing party there. So here was appointed to be the manager of the election headquarters for 2 members, for 2 candidates. Now I like to mention the names of the candidates but I don't think it's important. But anyway it was a very rewarding experience that I had in the election office in Vancouver - in 1951 I think it was. As a communist out in the open politically you see. It was legal, yes.

Oh yes there were problems. But we were moving, we had terrific problems even within the AUUC and within other organizations. I found myself in the midst of it. I was supposed to be, well I was a communist representative and I was bringing different factions together and this kind of thing. You found yourself confronted with problems here and there you'd never faced in your life. You just had to use your common sense. But nevertheless, I had very good cooperation from the leading people of the communist party in Vancouver. We had to deal with such things as musical directors at the halls and this kind of thing. I don't want to mention the names there, but there were certain conflicts, this kind of thing.

Tim Buck was still the leader. I met Tim Buck many times when I was in Toronto. We already had the Labour Progressive Party and the clubs were not small clubs. Everything was in the open. Our club branches consisted of as many as 50. I think our club maybe had 100 members. Of course we had 2 members of parliament to Ontario legislature. McLeod and what's his name. From our constituency where I was located, these two people were the representatives. And Annie Bowler, a very famous communist woman of Canada at that time. She was a terrific organizer. She was the organizer of the election campaigns, and I worked under her. As a communist in Toronto, you were assigned a certain area and you worked throughout the whole year. That's why those two communists, McLeod and Salsberg, Joe Salsberg. And I think Joe is still living. That's very interesting, very important. Because it was very important for me to be connected with the leadership. I wasn't a leader myself, but I had the connections with all the leading people.