

Alberta Labour History Institute (ALHI)

Oral History Interview

Interviewee: Doug O'Halloran

Interviewer: Winston Gereluk

Date: November 17, 2005

Location: Calgary

I went to work at a meat packing plant in 1973, and somebody suggested I go to a union meeting. I went to the union meeting and they needed a vice president to be there if the president wasn't around. The guys said, just say yes, so I said yes. Six months later, unfortunately, the president passed away. I became president, and the rest is history.

Canadian Dressed Meats in Lethbridge. It then became Burns Meats. Still operating today as Maple Leaf Pork in Lethbridge.

I became involved with the Lethbridge and District Labor Council, which then got me onto the Alberta Federation of Labor. I then went to the Labor College of Canada in 1981, and was hired as a full time representative in the packinghouse industry in 1982. In 1984 my boss decided I should go to the retail sector for the future that would make mergers easier down the road. So in '84 I went to work for Local 397. In '85 I was hired as the western assistant to the Canadian director for Western Canada, and held that position until 1989, when I became president of UFCW Local 401, which is the position I hold today. I also sit on the executive board of the international union as a vice president.

Originally the Lakeside plant was organized back in the middle '70s – 1976 or '77. It was actually a merger with an association and Local 740 of the Canadian Food and Allied Workers organized it, which ultimately became United Food and Commercial Workers through a merger with the retail clerks. That plant was organized until 1984. One of the first strikes that happened in the packinghouse industry was in '84. There was 150 workers in the plant at that time. The strike was into its first week when the chief steward of the plant decided he had to cross the picket line, and took some 30 workers with him. We never recovered from that. The union paid strike pay there until 1987, '88. There was 3 or 4 people left on the picket line at that time. Then the union decided there was no point in continuing it, because for all intents and purposes the strike had been lost a long time ago. So it was abandoned. We then started to attempt to organize it in about 1992, because the former local, Local 740P, merged into Local 401 in 1991, so it then became our jurisdiction. We started trying to organize it in 1992. Over the course of the years, we had an office in Brooks. The company kept playing up the fact that the union abandoned the workers after the strike. If you pay strike pay for 3-1/2 years, you don't abandon anybody. So that was an obstacle that we had real difficulty overcoming, because there was some probably 20 or 30 people in the plant that had worked there back in 1984. The legends and stories grow over the course of the years, so that we were just this big bad union trying to get their dues. So '92, '93, Lakeside Packers has now decided to sell to IBP. IBP puts a ton of money into it, expands the plant to some 2,000 workers. Then it's a matter of trying to figure out how you can organize a plant like that. We opened an office for a couple of years, and had Tom Hanson and Lance Hardy down there on a pretty

regular basis trying to organize. We were not successful, so we left it for a year. Then periodically we'd send somebody back to see if the workers were interested. So from '95 on, we had an active campaign every year, whether it was in the summer or in January/February. Up until the year 2000, we were unsuccessful at trying to get people organized to where we could get a vote. In 2000 we were successful in getting enough for a vote. Prior to the vote, the company showed a video in the plant to the workers and captive audience meetings that showed people being beaten on the picket line with chains and bloody, literally scared the people into what we believed would be voting no for the union. We went to the labor board. The labor board ordered that we be allowed to have meetings in the plant, which I thought was a great idea. So we negotiated with the company lawyers that we could have 2 meetings, one in the morning and one in the afternoon. We go down there and go into the lunchroom. There's some 700 people in the lunchroom. You tried to have the meeting. Of course you can't be heard, so we asked the company for a PA system. Their words were, look, we agreed to have the meeting. You didn't ask for a PA system, so you're not getting a PA system. There was a bunch of fights among supporters and non-supporters, some coins being thrown at us and what have you. We decided to cancel the afternoon meeting because we were concerned for our supporters in the plant of being targeted. We went back to the labor board again. The labor board then ordered that they would conduct the meetings, and they would bring the RCMP into the plant to keep order. That turned into a disgrace. As a matter of fact, Dennis Pickowsky, who was the director of the labor board, said it was the first day he's ever been ashamed to be a Canadian, because of the meetings. Swearing, pop cans being

thrown, eggs being thrown at us trying to speak. Gil McGowan, who's now the president of the Federation, we brought him into the meeting. They accused him of being a homosexual. It was all the RCMP could do to keep the peace. We had 3 meetings and then we had another one at 8 o'clock at night on the slaughter side. That one, after about 20 minutes the RCMP shut it down. WE had \$1500 damage done to the projector from flying eggs and stuff. We were escorted out of the plant, and we lost the vote. Surprise, surprise. We lost the vote, I think it was 30% we got. So we were barred from taking another vote for 90 days. So we then went back to work on it again. We signed up the people and got another vote. This time we lost the vote, we only got 27%. So we were actually going backwards in support. You've got to appreciate that a lot of these workers still have the mental vision of being beaten on picket lines, and all this violence. We then get into the year 2001. We try organizing again, we don't get enough for an application. 2002 again we got to the 700 mark of signing people up, just couldn't get it over the 1000. Then in 2003 we get hit with the BSC crisis. We had some calls from them to be organized, because they were having layoffs. We felt that now was not the time to be trying to organize the plant. So that's the first year where we never had an organizing drive. We felt that, with everything the farmers and ranchers were going through, that if we were attempting to organize it and if the industry became a target, then that would not be well for the whole beef industry in Alberta, because they were already under such an attack. So we made a conscious decision not to try and organize during that period of time. Then in 2004 there was some 70 Sudanese workers that were fired for standing up for their rights. There was an incident where an individual had gotten in an altercation

with a white supervisor. This was on the cleanup, and they weren't even eligible to be unionized. But the workers in the plant felt so strongly about health and safety, the working conditions, they walked off the job in protest, and 70 individuals ended up losing their jobs. This occurred February, March of 2004.

The major working concerns were people weren't allowed to go for bathroom breaks. They'd actually have to work in their own urine. If you objected to the supervisors, you were told to go home. You couldn't go see your own doctor, they'd tell you to go see the plant nurse. If she felt that it wasn't serious, she'd tell you to go take some Ibuprofen and put a pack on your shoulder or wrist or whatever. The problem with that is that initially if you were getting proper medical advice, that might not be too bad. But people then thought, what's the point of complaining, because I can't go see my doctor. The company denies that you can't go see your doctor. It's like the urban legends of rumors, that rumor was out there, especially in the ethnic community. They thought, look I don't want to jeopardize my job here, so I'll do what my supervisor says. Consequently you had a lot of people in situations where they were working injured, and subsequently they would get fired because they claim compensation. The argument was, well you didn't injure it at work. Well ya I did a few months ago. Well where are the records? Well I went to the nurse and complained. Well why are you just complaining now? Well it's gotten so bad. Well you haven't been complaining for the last 3 or 4 months. And they would let them go. They had nobody to represent them. These workers that walked out, they were upset about this whole atmosphere of intimidation, of bullying. A supervisor could come up and

swear at you, but if you returned the answer in abusive language, you were insubordinate. I come out of the packinghouse industry, and if a foreman said, you're an f'ing asshole, your answer would be, go f yourself. It was not a mutual respect thing, but it was just a given that if you were going to be talked to that way, you would talk back in the same way. Here though, the company officials were allowed to talk that way, but if a worker retaliated by using abusive language, they were insubordinate and got suspended or fired. The company had what they called the DRC, which was a group of fellow employees that you got to appeal your discipline to. It was an in-house group of workers. Almost never did the discipline get overturned. But the company said, look, we're fair, we have them judged by their peers. So the idea of getting involved this time...

When the workers walked off the job, people in the town of Brooks looked at it from the aspect, these are just some people from another country that don't know what it's like to work in a Canadian meatpacking plant. This was not the case. This was a case where these workers were not being treated very well. Most of the supervisors, most of the people in a position of authority, ie safety committees, quality control, individuals who make sure the product is being processed properly, were all white people. Very seldom did a person from an ethnic community get promoted into a higher position. So there was this real tier thing. In the plant, you're designated by color of hat. Workers who work on the production floor wear yellow hats, white hats are quality control, maintenance are red, safety is purple, and the list goes on. So you're tiered according to your working. The people who work in production, the grunt work, are all yellow hats. Very seldom did a yellow hat ethnic worker ever get promoted into a position that was easier work. Not

necessarily easier work, but work that didn't have the blood and guts. You didn't have blood over you all day long, you actually would walk around and oversee things. You were sort of like a supervisor, but not a supervisor. There was certainly that perception. The difference in it is that when we actually became involved in organizing, there wasn't a race issue per se in the plant. Tyson was treating everybody badly. It didn't matter whether you were from Nova Scotia or Sudan, they treated you like shit. If you stood up to them, they got rid of you. Also the fact that there was probably 70% of the people from ethnic origin. They're either from Japan, China, Vietnam, Somalia, Sudan, Ethiopia, Nigeria, you have all these different cultures. The company played one off against the other. They'd be nice to a particular group so you had difficulties even within ethnic communities, of saying one group was being favored over the other. To cause division so you could never get everybody pulling on the same team. This hurt the organizing process. The other thing we didn't understand as white Canadians is the ethnic leaders. If you're from Sudan, there's elders that have the highest respect of the people from their country. It took us a while over the years to realize that you had to reach out to the community as well as trying to organize the plant. You had to talk to the elders, you had to talk to the leaders in the community of the ethnic communities. Because the workers in the plant went to these people, either through religion or through homeland concerns and what have you. A lot of these people are sending back anywhere from \$1000 to \$1400 a month to the homeland to provide for sisters, uncles, grandparents. So you're making say \$2800 clear a month, and you're sending half your paycheck home. You're living hand to mouth in Canada. Consequently you don't have the ability to take English as a Second

Language. You don't have the ability to upgrade to try and get higher education. There's individuals working in this plant who are doctors, lawyers from other countries. It's unbelievable how well educated these people are. Out on the picket line, it was so great to be able to talk to these individuals, because you didn't have the opportunity when you're organizing or when they were in the plant. But to talk about how the United States is so great on democracy. This one individual impressed me so much about the fact that he says, here they are over in Iraq bringing in democracy. He said, that's not democracy, that's a very large country forcing their ideas on the people. He was so emotional about the fact that you have the Americans out there solving the problems of the world on the basis of democracy, but if oil is not involved, very seldom do you see them. This is a worker that's working in the meatpacking plant, that supposedly doesn't have any education, that came from a foreign country. I was amazed and thought how little I know about some of these things. The things that occur in the world are so tragic, and yet when you think about it, the US is much more righteous if there's oil involved than they were in Bosnia. These workers understand that. A lot of them that came from Sudan escaped from being literally brutalized and shot at. One of the individuals who was involved in the organizing campaign, who actually had to work in his own urine, his salivary glands were damaged by cancer treatments, so he needed lots of water. In the process of drinking water, you have to go to the bathroom more often. The other thing I should mention, that you probably don't understand, is that in the packing plant there's no set breaks. They have a 15 minute break and a lunch break. But literally in this plant, prior to the union coming in, you could be getting dressed in the locker room and get sent for your break.

So you start work at 7 o'clock in the morning, the line breaks down at 7:10, you're supposed to be on the line at 7:20. You start knocking the cow, you kill the cow, then you shackle it, then the first process is skinning. So when you're down the line, you're 20 minutes down the line. Say something happens and the line breaks down in the first 10 minutes, you're literally sitting in the locker room about to go down the stairs to work, and you get told to take your break. You then don't have your break at 9:30. Well most people who work have their body trained to go to the bathroom at certain times. If you have a break every day at 9:30, more than likely you need to go to the bathroom. So what happened is that you'd have situations where people would be sent for break a half hour into their shift, they wouldn't get another break for 4 hours, and they'd literally have to work in their own urine. That's what happened with this individual. This same individual was a religious refugee to Canada, who literally laid in a cell with 3 dead people for 2 days in Nigeria. This is someone that comes to Canada and realizes what a wonderful place Canada is. You don't have to worry about getting shot, you don't have to worry about getting knifed, you don't have to worry about somebody beating your door down and soldiers with guns. Yet here he can't go to the bathroom. So he doesn't understand Canada. It's the freedom, the great work, the great money. But yet you don't have any rights. His idea of strike was that we'll shut it down and in a day or 2 it'll be done. We were explaining to him that it doesn't work that way here. He said, but over in Nigeria, we had a strike in the school system. There was 3 dead students and 2 dead police officers, it lasted a day, and we got what we wanted. I said, but in Canada you have rules and laws. This was one of the difficult things when we get into the strike aspect, a lot of

these individuals thought you could kill somebody for crossing the picket line. A woman came up to me and said, can't we kill them? She was sold for 100 cows. Her dowry in her country was 100 cows, and that was one of the largest ones that had been paid. I'm trying to get up to speed on this whole situation of not understanding how they don't understand us. Why don't you understand our laws? Why don't you understand that you have to peaceful picket, etc. That's why I was very concerned when we got into that situation that we might have a problem. But in the organizing, just getting back to the signing up of the people, of this individual, he was a great help. He went and talked within his community. When the workers were first fired, we took the position that we could do nothing for them other than help them with EI. We said, look, we'll represent you with EI. They all got denied because the company said that they were illegally striking. Every one that came with us to the hearing, we won. There was 2 individuals that wouldn't come to the hearing, and we lost. Because the only evidence was the company's written statement of what happened. If the individual wasn't there to explain, this is really what happened, I wasn't really on an illegal strike, walked off the job because of health and safety, and when we went back the next day to give our jobs back they wouldn't give them back. We weren't striking, we were simply protesting the working conditions. So we were successful in getting everybody their EI, which really helped us as far as showing to the community that unions do work. The other thing we did this time was as opposed to bringing in a whole bunch of people at the beginning, we put 4 people in on the program. We said to the community, if you want to get organized, you have to do it yourself. In the past we'd send in 20 or 30 people and we were trying to take the horse to the water and

force the horse to drink. This time we realized we're never going to be successful unless the people really want it. So initially they kept saying, you've got to come and organize. I said no, we've tried this before. The Sudanese community here in Calgary reached out to us, and we decided to go down to Brooks and have a meeting. We told them to think about it for a month to see if they were really interested in it. So they got back to us and said they were. We put 25 people into the community in 3 weeks, signed up 1600 people, which is an amazing feat. Out of 2400 people. You have people living in Tilly, Duchess, Medicine Hat, Three Hills. People living in parks. We actually found them living in tents in parks, because they had nowhere else to sleep.

I can remember back in 2000 when I did some home calls. You'd walk into an apartment, there'd be 6 individuals living in a one bedroom apartment, no screens on the window.

You'd knock on the door, it's 80 degrees out. You come in, they're sitting around the living room floor, no table, with their plates of food. The individual that got up to answer the door, there'd be 6 to 10 flies on his plate while he was talking at the door. These were the kinds of conditions these people were living in. Things haven't changed a lot since 2000. I didn't do any home calls in the campaign of 2004 because it went so quickly.

Usually it takes months to sign people up. But we were in there and had it done, it was amazing. That goes to show really that places typically don't get unionized until it's the right time. That's why we kept going back here, which I think it's important for the labor movement to understand. We had a lot of defeats. But every time the workers phoned and said, we want you to try again, we went. As long as there was a commitment from the workers there that they wanted to be unionized, we continued to do it, knowing that we

might not be successful. But yet if there was 10 individuals that wanted to try, we were willing. Consequently, when we ended up being successful, it was when the workers themselves had had enough. That's why I always believed that there would be a union at Lakeside Packers, even during the strike. A lot of people said, you're going to lose the strike, they're going to freeze you out. My position was, whether we're in there in 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, we will be there some time. Because the workers will change, there'll be workers quit, workers get injured, and new workers will come. Because the company will not change the way they're treating those individuals, there'll always be an opportunity to unionize that plant. Someday we'll be strong and successful. That's the belief that we had over all the years, was that even though there was a fair amount of criticism within our organization of spending so much money trying to organize a plant. But when you have a plant that is 40% of the kill in Alberta, 40% of the production of cattle, that's not insignificant. You're looking at 50% of the byproducts of the beef industry in the province of Alberta. If you want Cargil to be successful, if you want Excel Beef to be successful and to keep their wages up, then you have to continue to organize the industry itself in order to maintain that. Even though the Excel and Cargil plants belong to different locals of UFCW, we still felt that we had a commitment 401, because it was or jurisdiction to try and keep unionizing it for the sake of other packinghouse workers. So when we do finally get certified back in August of 2004, we then start the whole aspect of trying to negotiate.

As a matter of fact, when we were signing the people up, the company were putting out bulletins, they call it Cattle Tales, their little magazine. They said if you join this union you're going to be back on strike. If you join this union, you'll lose some benefits. This is a union that likes to strike. They abandoned you in 1984 and they'll abandon you again when the going gets tough. Just retracing a bit, I mentioned earlier that we'd had an office in Brooks for a couple of years back in the mid '90s. That was true. Then when we'd leave, the company would say, see, UFCW ran away. We'd check into the hotel, we'd be there for a couple of months, the campaign wouldn't go anyplace. They'd say, well they've left town again. So somewhere around '97 we decided to buy a house in Brooks and become a citizen of Brooks. We bought this 3 bedroom house, beautiful park area, and we became residents of Brooks. We got a permit to have an office in a house. Then in 2000, because things were going well, we opened up an actual office again. It was Xmas time, so we thought it would be good to give out food hampers to people who worked at Lakeside. All you had to do was come in and give us your employee number, your address, and telephone number, because we thought this was a good way of getting a list of people at work. We weren't as smart as they were. The company sent the people in and told them to give us their wrong addresses. We had a lot of anti-union people that were coming and getting these food hampers, who, when we go to check the address, there's no such place. There was a lot of that stuff going on that we learned over the years. We'd have a draw for a 32 inch color TV, all you had to do was put your name and address down. We did a lot of creative things trying to get addresses and phone numbers. The company always seemed to be one step ahead of us. When the people themselves actually

molded together to join, we were stronger because it was them that were doing it. All these things that the company put out about, you'll be on strike, you'll lose your coffee break, even then the workers voted 51.4% to organize. I got a phone call from the guy that was doing accounting, Don Crissel. I'm sitting in the chair and everybody's sitting around. He tells me, there's 44 votes difference. I thought we lost. I said, so what does that mean? He said, we won. So I keep a straight face, I hang up the phone and I goes, you won't believe it. Then I said, we won. The cheers of the people that were there from the plant, we had probably 12 workers from the plant in tears, they were so excited about it. As we get into negotiations, the company continues to put out the propaganda that you're going to be on strike, etc. We start negotiations in November, and the company will only agree to 2 sets of bargaining per month for 2 days. Anybody that's been involved in the bargaining process, the first day that you meet, usually in the morning you set out the parameters for the 2 days, and in the afternoon you may exchange something. The next day by lunch time you're going home. So this is the process. We meet for 2 days earlier in the month, meet for 2 days later in the month. We're telling the company, look, we're available any day you have. We'll take whatever day you've got. They would only give us 4 days. So we went to the labor board and argued that the company was bargaining in bad faith, they weren't giving us enough days to negotiate. What we believed was they were simply going to string us out to the open period of when they could be decertified. The company challenged the vote, the 51.4%. They challenged the actual vote and asked for a judicial review of it. They had that in the hopper, and they didn't withdraw that until December 16th of 2004. What I didn't realize at that time was

that the open period for where they could decertify didn't kick in until that was gone. So instead of being August and 10 months, which would've been June, we were now October. So we've got some more time. So we continued to try and negotiate. The company cancels a couple of dates. We're getting into the spring, and negotiations are going no place. We basically have agreement that there could be a union under certain conditions. They wouldn't agree to a union shop, they wouldn't agree to shop steward language, they wouldn't agree to union visitation where you could go in the plant and visit. I asked the lawyer for the company, when can we visit the plant? Well, you know, we'll probably let you once in a while. I said, well I'd like to know when we can have the unfettered right to walk into the plant, say we want to observe working conditions. He said, well maybe 4 or 5 years when we've developed the relationship. This was the whole attitude of the negotiations. So in March we filed another bargaining in bad faith charge. So we have a whole lot of charges. In September of 2004 we have one of our committee people fired. She had been put on there even though negotiations hadn't begun. We took it to the board for unfair dismissal. Interestingly enough, in September of 2005, the board finally has the last hearing on it. She's reinstated with full benefits, full everything, except for a 2 week suspension. But it took the board a year. The reason I raise this question is that March we filed this bargaining in bad faith charge. They had it scheduled for December 21st of this year. December 21st they schedule a bargaining in bad faith charge. That is how terrible this labor board is. The company snap their fingers, they get a hearing the next moment. "At this stage we're fighting the company, we're fighting the labor board, and we're fighting the people in the plant that don't want the union. You have

to appreciate, we only won by 51.4%, so it's a very thin line. Some 44 people swung the vote. So we're continuing to do this. The committee is wonderful. We have 22 people on the committee. I would say probably half are female, and at least half are of ethnic origin. So it's a very multi-cultured committee, and it's one of the best committees that I had ever seen. The best committee prior to that was the Shaw. This committee, the individuals were just unbelievable. They're being harassed on a daily basis in the plant. They're being goaded by people who want to get rid of the union, they're being goaded by supervisors. If they retaliate whatsoever, they could be let go. Amanda was a prime example. She was fired in September, we're not into April, and she still doesn't know whether she's getting her job back. So we're progressing along, and we're getting concerned that we're getting into a situation whereby we're losing support. The workers are saying, we want to go on strike. We're saying, no, now is not the time, let's use every avenue that we can. So we end up taking a strike vote in June. A strike vote is 70% to go on strike, so we'd actually picked up votes of support. Which was what the committee was telling us, that if we continued to wait we'd lose support. Because in the meantime, the company hasn't treated the workers any better, they're actually treating them worse. Normally what would happen was when Cargil got a deal, they would pass the money along to the workers. In the midst of this, Cargil settled a contract for a \$2 increase over 4 years. Excel settled a contract for \$2 over 4 years, and they got 75 cents up front. The company gave the workers 30 cents raise. So it was almost as though the company wanted them to go on strike. They kept saying in the literature, if you join this union you're going to be on strike. Now that you've joined it, all they want to do is strike. So we're having these

negotiations. So we get the strike vote, the workers want us to serve strike notice right away. We said, no, let's give it a few weeks to see if there's any movement. Once you're out on the picket line, you're going to be out for a substantial period of time. We're negotiating with the company, and in the back rooms there's some discussion going on between the labor board of trying to see if the government's going to maybe look at arbitration. We're getting into a situation where we're going to be forced to serve strike notice, because we're losing support in the plant, the workers think we're weakening as a union. This is on a Thursday when they opened the border. The border is going to open for cattle 30 months. So the company comes to us at 5 o'clock and says, we're going to change our direction of where we're going. The parent company has listened to us all along, so we think they'll listen to us now. We want tomorrow to come up with a new package. We said, fine, let's get the committee off tomorrow and off on Saturday. At 5 o'clock on Friday they phoned and said, we're not in a position to give you anything, we need the weekend, we can't get hold of our superiors in the U.S. We said, when are you available? They said, we're available late on Monday. We talked to the mediator and agreed to meet on Tuesday morning, and we served strike notice on Thursday for Wednesday morning at 5 a.m. We're in negotiations on Tuesday, the company comes in. The first offer they ever put on the table for money, they offered 80 cents over 5 years, which is a slap in the face. No benefit increases, no union shop, no nothing. We of course rejected, and we're still talking. At about quarter to 4 the mediator comes and says, Mr. Hesse, can you phone the deputy minister, he needs to talk to you right away. So Tom Hesse phones the deputy minister, the deputy minister says, we've decided to send this to

a disputes inquiry board. We'd been arguing against this all along, because we'd heard rumors. We said, whatever you do, do not send it to the DIB. It's powerless, it's useless, it'll put us in a bad situation. Please don't do that. A few hours before the strike is to commence, they do it. We're all ready for the picket line on Wednesday morning. We're out there at 5 o'clock in the morning telling people, look, you have to go to work. People are pissed off at us, they think we've backed down. They don't understand that you have to obey the government. Earlier on I mentioned to you that people in other countries, they have the strike and if people died, that was the system, and you were back at work in a day or two. They believed here that we defy the government, we defy everyone, and we go on strike and it'll only last a few days. Unfortunately that's not the way the law works. The fine for individuals \$1000 a day, and union officials \$10,000 a day. With having 2400 people, it would've been millions of dollars, the fines over the course of a week. So we decided to listen and obey the law, and we're on a microphone trying to tell people, you have to go to work. People are screaming at us that we're a useless union, that we backed down, and why should they support us? So the government institutes the DIB, puts it in for 60 days. We then spend the next 2 months trying to rebuild our support. The ethnic community abandoned us. They thought we were weak, we were useless. We'd drive down the street prior to that, you'd wave, big smile from the ethnic community. The next day you drive down the street and they turned their heads. We had 15 to 20 people in for the next 2 months, trying to rebuild our support. Cost us hundreds of thousands of dollars to try and build back to where we were. In the meantime, the DIB schedules hearings, we asked for them to be joint hearings. We wanted the company here and us

here, so we could debate the issues in front of the DIB person. The company refused. They wouldn't meet in the same room. The end result is the mediator comes out and recommends a position, the DIB board. We get calls from people in government saying, look, you should accept this, it's the best that's going to be available. If you accept it, it'll look good in the eyes of the public, it'll look good in the eyes of the government. We said, but if we accept it, we're in la la land. They said, but that'll put a lot of pressure on Tysons to do it. You have the labor teachers, Allan Ponack being quoted in the paper as saying that the DIB will be a good negotiating point, even if one side doesn't accept it. My position was, the side that accepts it is screwed, because then you're going to be negotiating downwards from the DIB. So we discussed it with the committee. The committee thought it was good enough to live to fight another day. We had meetings, and it was accepted by 90%. Surprise, surprise, the company rejected it. So the workers now have voted on a contract that they believe is a contract. They accepted it by 90%, so why don't we have a deal? So the company rejects it.

You're then negotiating from that threshold. The employer will say, if that was okay with you, then why should we offer you anything more? There were certain things we didn't get in the DIB that we wanted. So then the process becomes, how do you then put pressure on the company to negotiate? We never do have a meeting. We have meetings schedule with the company. They say, we're still working on it, we're still working on it. Finally on a Tuesday they give us the proposal in the afternoon and say to our lawyer, look, this is a great deal, you'll like it. So we're expecting it to be pretty good. It's a

disaster. They take away 10 minutes of break time, they take away the union shop, from the DIB they take away vacation paid upon gross earnings, they take away sick time – instead of 4 days it's 8 days. The list goes on and on, they literally butcher the deal. The lawyers tell us that it's the company's last final best offer. We meet with the company on Wednesday morning, and I have the strike thing already written up to give to them. I say to them, look, I understand that you think this is a good deal. The company lawyer says, yes, we think it's a great deal. The workers will be happy with it. So we then say, look, are you sure, as I understand it this is your last best final offer. I'm asking you if that's your position. He said, yes, this is our last best final offer. I said, well if that's the case, why would we have a conversation? He said, maybe you need some explanations of it. I said, I don't need any explanation of this shit. If that's your case – and I threw him the envelope – I said, see you in hell. And that's how negotiations broke off. We served strike notice again for the Wednesday. The reason we served strike notice for the Wednesday after the long weekend, Thanksgiving, was that the people would get paid for the Monday the stat. Because if you didn't show up for work, you weren't eligible for statutory holiday pay. You had to work the day before and the day after, unless there was a reasonable excuse. Interestingly enough, the company has a dark day on Friday, they don't operate, they don't kill. They have a dark day on Tuesday, and they schedule production for Wednesday the day of the strike. So they don't have some of the workers work on Friday, they don't have any of the workers work on the Tuesday, so they don't have to pay the statutory holiday because you didn't work the day before and the day after. That's how slimy this company is. Yet then they schedule the production on the first day of the strike.

We get the porta potties out, we get tents set up. We're scheduled to go on strike at 6 o'clock in the morning. We anticipate that the company is probably going to pull a fast one, bringing some buses in earlier. So we start setting the picket line up around 5 o'clock just so that we're prepared for 6. They did try to bring a bus in at 5:30, and 5:30 in the morning is 6 o'clock in Newfoundland. So we decided we were within the strike limit timeframe. We turned the first bus back. Then they tried to bring a bus in later in the morning, and we were able to successfully turn it back. Within hours I'm banned from the picket line. They make an application to the labor board that I've used a pick axe to supposedly crack the windshield of a bus. They had somebody swear an affidavit that it was a pick axe. I had RCMP standing right beside me. There was no pick axe. Anyway, within hours I'm banned from the picket line, the first time in my history that anything like that has ever happened. I've been involved in some altercations on picket lines in the past, things that were sometimes more heated than this. I've never gotten banned from a picket line. They take the union president out of the scene right off the bat. A few hours and I'm gone. We're operating a strike where the president's not allowed on the picket line to picket. The workers are very upset because of this. We then are trying to work within that framework. Interestingly enough though, the RCMP were actually onside. They made a presentation to the labor board that I should be allowed back on the picket line, because of the calming influence. What I was doing was having to relay messages through other people, and the impact was not there. This is Wednesday. The company is trying to bring buses in, they're not successful. Thursday they try to bring buses in, they're not successful. And they start building roads. On the back of their property they

have a road called Airport Road that runs across the back of the property. They start putting in new entrances into their property, and they start building roads into the plant with gravel. We go to the labor board and argue that they shouldn't be able to do this. In the back it looks like about 4 roads that might be actual legal roads, because they have culverts. So we're trying to get hold of municipality to see whether they're legal or not. On the Thursday they actually brought some buses in across the cornfield, so they were able to get them into the plant, some 6 buses. Then the question became, how are they going to get them out? We weren't going to let them out. The meat inspectors went in in the buses. They phoned us and said, we're coming out. We said, too bad, you're not coming out. You want to be in there, stay in there. So we finally made a deal to let the inspectors out providing they agreed that they wouldn't cross the picket line. It was awful trying to get them out. I'm trying to hold people back, people are upset that they crossed the picket line. We got RCMP and there's an altercation. We're literally shoving our picketers out of the way. Just a terrible situation. That's fine, they get through. About 10 minutes later the head of human resources comes walking down the road, stands by a post about 50 feet off the picket line. Somebody says to me, Doug, Kerry Cops is over there standing looking at us. I start to walk over where I'm not supposed to be to tell him to get the f out of there, because he's just antagonizing the people. I get a phone call. I say hello on the phone, and one of our picketers says, Doug, they have Gun Club Road blocked. They won't let me get down around. I says, who has it blocked? He says, some of the company black hats in their trucks. So I turn around and walk over to the RCMP and said look, we have an incident up on Gun Club Road, can you go up, because it's getting out

of hand. I go to get in my vehicle. I get another phone call saying there's an incident on Airport Road where the company has blocked access to the road, and they're bringing the buses out that way. So I holler at the RCMP, there's also an incident on Airport Road, and I'm going to Airport Road. I get there and there's a big melee going on. There's cars in the ditch, there's picketers all upset. But there's no company officials. The RCMP and the picketers, and one company supervisor in a car in the ditch. So we go up and get it sorted out and everybody calmed down. We told our people, look, go down to the police station, give your statements. Then I leave to go back into town. I'm going down the highway that runs between Brooks and Duchess. All of a sudden the police cars go by me like crazy. I come over this little hill and there's flashing lights and traffic backed up. So I follow the police cars through to where the incident is. I get up there and here's this same car with the supervisor, being surrounded by picketers trying to get into his vehicle. What I didn't know was that there'd just been an incident where the company sent a bus full of supervisors out a different entrance, and we only had 4 picketers there at the time. The supervisors came off the bus and beat the shit out of the picketers. So then as other picketers were trying to get there, we had the different areas being blocked by company officials. So this was a staged setup to send a message to the picketers. You screw with us, we're going to teach you a lesson. So when I get on the scene, I think they're trying to take action against this individual because of what happened back up on Airport Road. I'm saying, no guys, he's not the problem, let him go. They're saying, fuck you, you don't understand. I said, no, let this car go through. So they listened to me and let the car go through. Then there was all kinds of milling around and 3 picketers laying in the ditch.

They're trying to get over to the picketers and we're holding them back, because the emergency crews are working on them, because they'd been beaten up. We're just more or less getting it settled down, and all of a sudden around this bus comes these guys in riot gear and guns. They just come marching through, and I'm the first person they come to. They're waving this gun under my nose and saying, move right now or else. My first reaction was, fuck you, I ain't moving no place. Move or else. I literally thought the guy was going to shoot, so I stepped to the side. They marched down the center of the road, they stand there, they've got the guns out waving at people. This is a situation where 90% of the people are black. You have 10 or 12 riot police with guns that are white, that are yelling, move back or else. The black community are saying, we're prepared to die here, shoot me. So we have this going on, and we've got the regular RCMP. I'm screaming at the RCMP staff sergeant, get these assholes out of here. We don't need this, we can look after it ourselves. He said, Doug, it's out of my hands. I said, bullshit it's out of your hands. We don't need them, we had this under control. He said, I'm not in charge anymore, they're in charge. So we were able to, they just stood there brandishing their guns. I remember this guy looking at me, and he had a mustache, and he was the most, he literally made me afraid. He's there, he's got goggles on, he's got a helmet on, he's got a shield on. And he looked to me like he was somebody that was going to shoot. I said to the people, stay back, stay back. They're trying to come forwards. We had people standing, shoot us now, we're prepared to die here for the cause. We're saying, look, this is not the time, trust us, trust us, trust us. Well we trusted you before. I said, trust me, we'll deal with it, it won't be a problem. So they agree and we finally get it settled down.

But there was no need. It wasn't even the riot police, because the riot police have the billy clubs. This is some kind of elite force that they had from Edmonton city police and from Calgary city police. I forget the technical term of it, but they come in with guns. They don't come in with shields and billy clubs and batons.

We then disperse, and everybody's concerned about what's going to happen in the morning. I meet with the RCMP, suggest to the RCMP that they should talk to the company about not operating. Our lawyers at this time are before the courts in Calgary and the labor board, working into the night to try and not get us – the company was looking for zero picketing, like that you couldn't hold the cars up at all. So we asked our lawyers to talk to the company lawyers about not operating. They agree to not operate on Friday to let things cool down. So basically we have a situation where the company's not bringing anything into the plant or out of the plant, except for they want to bring in 2 feed trucks to feed the cattle. I agree that they can bring the feed trucks in, and of course the people are upset. My attitude was, look, the cows have got to be fed. Their attitude is, the cow ain't gonna die in a day, and it's going to die anyhow whenever they get around to killing it. So I said, no, let's do it. They let the first feed truck through. The people taking the feed truck in, there's a passenger sitting on the side. When the feed truck comes back out the passenger is different. So they were switching people in and out. So then the workers just took the position, you lied to us. I says, I didn't lie to you, I said let the feed trucks in. Well they're moving people in and out. I just said, fine, forget it, the cows aren't going to die anyhow. The longer the strike goes on we're actually saving their lives. So

that's fine. I'm driving around to different picket lines trying to keep things under control. Somewhere along the line, Shane Dawson was with me, who's with the international. He says, why don't we have some fun with these hardhats? We had 3 company supervisor hats that were what we called the loot from the night before. I put on this Tyson hat. I go up to the picket line and start yelling at people, you lazy bums, get back to work, you're a useless union. People first of all started screaming at me, and then they realized it's me having fun as a supervisor. I'm saying, don't talk to me, I tell you what to do. So it's hilarious. We go around to all the picket lines, and the morale is sky high. So we come back to down to the main gate, and Shane decides he's going to walk one of the hardhats like a little dog. So he's got it on an elastic outside the vehicle and we're walking it down to the picket line. We then give one of the hardhats to the people to play soccer with. So they're kicking this supervisor's hat around saying, I just booted Barb, and I just booted Scott. This is fine. Then the company comes and they've got their injunction and they're posting it. I leave the picket line. They decide to follow me. So I go to the next picket line. I stop and tell the people, look, they're coming to serve us with the papers, so just take the papers, don't worry about it. Then I drive on to the next one, and I'm just going ahead and ahead. They're stopping at each one, serving the notice. This is around 12:30, 1 o'clock. Then in the afternoon, because nothing's going on, the guys had told me about all these home calls they were doing in places like Patricia and Duchess outside of Brooks. So I thought, I've never been to those places. Shane, who's usually driving with me, him and Archie, they decided they were going to go back to the house, because they didn't want to go for a drive out there. So I go out there by myself. I'm thinking there can't be

that many people live in these places. So I drive out to Patricia, because they're saying how many home calls they did. I never did find Patricia. I think I drove through it, because there was a sign. But if there was 2 farm houses there, I'd be surprised. So I thought, I'm going to have some fun with the guys when I get back to the office. They're scamming me, they're telling me how hard they were working out here on these home calls. So I go back and visit a couple of other small towns. It's about 5 o'clock and I'm coming back into town, and I decide to go visit the picket line again. As I pull up to the picket line, one of our people comes running over and says, Doug, they're following you, get out of here. I'm not sure who he's talking about, whether it's the RCMP that are following me or whether it's the company that's following me. So I leave and go down #1 highway west, and come up on Airport Road. As I turn into Airport Road, a truck across the highway that's been sitting there pulls across and starts following me. A truck that was coming towards me sees who I am, flips around. It turns out at the time I didn't recognize him, because he had short hair, and the last time I'd seen him he had long hair and a beard. But it was Lance Edwards, a company black hat. So they start following me. When I come down to the first picket line I stop and tell one of our staff, Natalie, I says look, there's 2 or 3 vehicles coming. The first is a car, let it through. Hold up the next 2, because I think they're Lakeside people. So I go on down the road, driving about 80 km on the gravel road. All of a sudden I come up on this white van who pulls over to the side, and I realize it's the RCMP. I stop and said, geez guys, I didn't mean to come up so fast on you. They said, no problem. I says, I think I have a couple of Lakeside people following me. The guys says, is that a DVD player? I'd forgotten to shut the damn thing off.

Because when I'd be sitting on the picket lines or whatever, I have a DVD player and I'd watch movies. I says, it's actually really good. People think you're working really hard, and you're sitting in here watching a movie. Him and I had a laugh and I said, gotta go. So I continue on, I come to the stop sign, I turn left back towards Duchess. So I'm driving back there and I decide to go back over to Hwy 1 and come back into town where I'd just been. As I'm driving along I notice 2 vehicles further back that seemed to be pacing me. As I come up to the stop sign, I realize I'm lost. It isn't Hwy 1. I thought, this is the last thing I want, to be lost here. So I flip around. As I flip around to come back down the road, I see a brown truck go by who's the head of security, Andy Crocker. I thought, geez that's interesting, where did he come from? It wasn't one of the vehicles that I seen behind. So I start driving back, and here's this silver car that had been following me, all of a sudden pulled off to the side. So I go by, give them the finger. It's a couple of people that look like they have a Tyson hat on. I come up to the stop sign and the car is behind me. I thought, I'm just going to drive out into the country. They'll go to Brooks and this silliness will be done. So I start driving out into the country. I realize, well I've already been to Patricia once, this is stupid. So I stop and back up to see if they're really following me or if they're going to pull and go around. As I back up, they back up. I decide, obviously they're following me, so I drive ahead. Come to a driveway and decide, look, I'm going to go back to Brooks. So I flip around and come back. I'm coming up to the stop sign and I'm watching them in my rear view mirror. I'm watching how close they're getting. I'm thinking now that obviously they're pissed off because of the hardhat thing, because we made fun of them. They'd just beat the picketers up the night before, so

I'm thinking they're going to give the president a bit of a shit kicking here. Coming up to the stop sign, I'm looking in my rear view mirror like this and I see them coming. I'm slowing down and thinking, I have lots of time to stop and then proceed. All of a sudden I look up and see something white coming out of the corner of my eye. Here's a truck coming right across in front of me before the stop sign. I'm driving like this, this truck comes across like this. I put the brakes on and then I realize what's happening – they're going to box me in. So I decide to go around him into the ditch around the stop sign, and continue down that way. As I go to go around, I run into them, they run into me, and there's this crash. My cell phone, I was trying to dial now the RCMP, because I know they're only a few kilometers away from the picket line. My cell phone falls out of my hand. There's 2 people in the truck in front of me. This car drives into me from behind, so now I can go anywhere. I try driving forward, I can't. I try backing up, I can't. Then I realize, well if I put it in 4 wheel drive I'm going to have more power. So I put it in 4 wheel drive and I was able to get 18 inches back and forth to bring the truck out. As I was trying to come out, they kept ramming the truck into me to hold me there. Finally, over the course of the road, I was able to get around them and come out onto the highway. I'm driving down the highway and the mirror on my driver's side is smashed in in the accident, or on my passenger side I should say. So I can't see anything out of that mirror. I see some people behind me. All of a sudden this car comes up beside me on the wrong side of the road. I think, geez this must be somebody else. So I pull over to the right, they go down into the ditch and come up around. The truck now is beginning to make all kinds of noise and smoke. I didn't realize at that moment, but the fender must've cut the tire.

There's pieces of rubber now starting to come off. This car is in front of me. This brown truck now is back on the scene beside me, and they're trying to box me in to stop me. The car in front would keep slowing down and I'd keep driving. I probably could go 80 km, because I had it in 4 wheel drive. I went back and did the measurements so I would know – 2.5 km the tire comes off, goes into the ditch, so I'm just on the rim. I continue on.

What they're doing now is boxing me in. There's cars coming towards us on the highway, so I can't go that way. So I realized they're going to have me stop. So what I decide to do is I believe if you're driving at someone and they see you coming, they will pull over to the side. So I drove half in the wrong lane, watching the cars coming towards me. That's what they were doing, they were pulling onto the edge of the road and we were going by. The car in front, he just stayed in the lane. He didn't pull in front of the cars like I was doing. So I was protected, because I continued to drive along because they weren't stopping me. These cars kept switching over. In my mind, if a car didn't, I was just going to pull into the guy to the right, the truck that was beside me. I assumed that was somebody from the company, this Andy Crocker. It was the same color truck. As we continue down the road, I'm trying to hold the truck on the road. Then all of a sudden there's no more cars. So this car comes in front again, this truck comes in from the side, and I thought they were going to ram me. So I go down into the ditch. Where I went down into the ditch there was a house that was set far back. The first thing I thought of was kids. So I looked, there's no kids, there's nobody out, there's this big lawn. So I go down into the ditch and I'm thinking I may roll, because there's no front tire now. But I thought there was enough of a slant. So I get down there, and then I try coming back out

the driveway. This Andy Crocker pulls up in his truck, blocks the driveway. So I then go over the driveway like the Dukes of Hazard. I hit my head on the roof, because you're going over this culvert. Continue on down for quite a ways, and then realize that there's a telephone pole coming up, so I'm not going to be able to keep going straight. So I got back up onto the side of the road, and I'm driving along maybe 300 feet. All of a sudden there's this smash, and next thing I know I'm slumped over the wheel in the vehicle. I'm in the ditch. I look up, there's a car in front of me in the ditch and there's a truck behind me in the ditch. I try to back up, the vehicle's screwed, it wouldn't go, it was dead. The lights were on but it just wouldn't run anymore. So I looked for this bar that I have in the vehicle. It's one that you get at a hospital for if you get a knot in the back, it's got little points. It's got a bend on it, so I thought at least I can protect myself with that. So I reach for the bar, it isn't there. So then I lock the doors, because I think I'm going to get the shit kicked out of me. I then look up again, and here's the guy that was driving the truck, this Andy Crocker, with a camera or video thing, videoing me through over the top of this car that's in front of me, through the windshield. There's now a bunch of people standing beside laughing. I'm thinking, oh fine, this is the end of it. I then notice somebody come up and say, is he okay? They said, ya he's okay, he's fine. I put the window down a little bit and say, no I'm not, would you phone 911? He said, I'm already on 911. Then I realized that I had a cell phone in the console that the battery was dead on. I always have 2 cell phones. I thought maybe there's enough to phone the RCMP on it. We're only a mile from the picket line, just over the hill and we would've been there. That's where I was trying to get to for safety. So I get the cell phone out. I thought, if he's on 911, why

don't I just dial 911. That's what I did. They come on and they're sort of talking to me. Then the phone falls out of my hand. The next thing I know there's a knocking on the window. I look up and there's an RCMP there trying to open the door. I thought, that's strange. Why wouldn't the door open? I didn't think there was any dents. But then I realized when we went into the ditch that we must've hit something. So I'm think, well they'll get it open. Then I realized that I'd locked it, and that's why it wouldn't open. So I opened the door, or I should say unlocked the door. The police officer opens the door. I see this person comes running in from the side. I turn like this to protect myself and see who it is, and here it's the head of human resources, Kerry Cop, running in with these papers. He throws them in my chest and says, you've been served. I go to grab them and fall out of the truck. As I'm laying on the ground, he looks at the RCMP officer and says, you're a witness, we just served him with papers. And he left. I thought there was something strange about him. He had one of our picket signs on. He had actually put a bib on to get closer to us, so nobody would notice who he was and they'd think he was just a picketer. If you can imagine a company official stooping to that low. So they take me to the hospital in the ambulance and do some xrays. I end up with whiplash and post concussion syndrome. So then I'm still not allowed back on the picket line of course, and I'm having somebody drive me. So we're going around to the various picket lines. The strike is going on. The company's now got 14 entrances into the plant. They might as well have filled the whole ditch in, and just had people drive over it. They were able to hold the vehicles up for 3 minutes. But where there was 2 entrances, we were holding each car up for 3 minutes, we now have 14 cars at one time being held up only for 3

minutes. The company were telling people to carpool, so we had 3 or 4 workers in each car. We were continuing to picket. The workers, after my accident I was really proud of them. We asked them not to do anything stupid. On Saturday and Sunday I wasn't able to get out of bed, so on Monday I went and visited the picket line. They were really good, the workers, we're in this for the long haul.

[end]