

Alberta Labour History Institute (ALHI)

Oral History Interview

Interviewee: Ben Swankey

Interviewer: Winston Gereluk

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Index: Depression – Edmonton hunger march – RCMP charge – Communist Party – unemployment – Estevan strike - Canadian Labour Defence League - On-to-Ottawa Trek – relief camps - Ukrainian Labour Temple – ULFTA – Arthur (Slim) Evans – fascism – Norman Bethune – Mackenzie/Papineau Regiment – Labour Progressive Party – Cold War – red-baiting – youth organizations - anti-globalization movement - 1947 Farmer Strike

I was born in Steinbach, Manitoba, which is about 40 miles southeast of Winnipeg. My parents were immigrants. They were Germans, they came from a German colony in Russia. They migrated here in 1913. I was born a few months later. We lived there for 3 years, then moved to Herbert, Saskatchewan. Herbert, Saskatchewan is a small town of 1,000 or so people, and it's a Mennonite town, German Mennonite. They spoke low German. My parents were what they call high German. I lived there and went through high school there. I grew up, I didn't give a damn for school. I was only interested in sports and getting away from Herbert. I finished high school in 1931. About the only progressive thing I learned during that time was the hypocritical role of the church. When I was 13 years old, I quit the church quite consciously and deliberately, and never went back, much to the dismay of my parents. I graduated from grade 12 in 1931, and that was already the 2nd year of the depression. There was absolutely no future in that farming community. So I found a friend, and we decided we'd go around the world. We'd hitchhike and make our way around the world. We got as far as Vancouver. That was the end of that trip around the world. But I came here filled with a complete lack of knowledge of the trade union movement or politics. I was filled with a rebellion against existing society, but not knowing why I was rebelling.

When I came to Vancouver, my brother, who was an unemployed school teacher and on relief, got into an argument with me about R.B. Bennett, who was then the Prime Minister. I said, he can't do anything about the depression. My brother said, I think I'll take you some places so you'll learn something about the real world. So he took me to an anti-war demonstration on August 1st, 1931. At that time there was a campaign against the Soviet Union, all calling for war to overthrow that system. He and I went to this meeting.

It was held on Camby Street grounds. Between 10 and 12,000 people attended it. They had permission to speak, but they had no permission to parade. When the speaker asked the crowd, do you want a parade, there was a big yell of "yes". Everybody pulled stuff from beneath their shirts – banners, everything else, and the crowd started to parade.

Out of one back alley rolled a bunch of city police on horseback. In another back alley a lot of police came out on foot. They just attacked the crowd right and left. They attacked men and women, knocked over baby carriages. It was the most horrible thing I'd ever seen in my life. I was taught to believe in democracy. We had equal rights. We had a great country. Freedom of speech, freedom to parade -all that was dashed to the ground. When I saw all this brutality going on, my brother and I each grabbed a piece of wood from a picket fence and joined the fight against the police. I remember I got one policeman across the neck. The fight lasted about 2 hours. After the fight I was in Victory Square and saw people there with their heads broken and the shirts all bloody. I saw the leader of that meeting, Max Hurtle, a Communist of German origin, lying on the sidewalk with his head all split open, the blood coming out. Beside was his cap, which had been filled with paper because he knew he was going to be clubbed. He was deported later.

I was just astounded and shocked that such a thing could happen in the Canada I knew. I, with my brother, we started going to meetings. I was particularly interested in learning what it was all about. I knew that in the 1930's in California, they were throwing oranges into the ocean. In Brazil they were burning coffee. In the Okanogan they poured gasoline on apples. It seemed such a contradiction that we wanted relief, we wanted work, we wanted food, and food was being destroyed. That was the contradiction that all of us saw who for the first time came into that situation. So our minds were seeking some solutions.

I was led by my brother and by the meetings I went to, to go to the public library. Some of the first books I got were *The Communist Manifesto* and *Engle's Socialism, Utopia and Scientific and Marx's Value, Price and Profit*. I got into the deep stuff right away. I was particularly interested in books on historical materialism. I had liked history in school, but it was just a history of events of kings and queens and wars. But I wanted to find out how this society worked. What made it function, and why did these things function. So I began to study from these books. I went to meetings of the Unemployed Organization. I went to the Saturday night meetings they held on Hastings Street. We both joined the Unemployed Organization on Powell Street. It cost 5 cents a week for dues at that time to become a member. I became more and more interested and enthusiastic. It opened up the whole world to me, because now I saw how history developed, and that there were classes in society. I didn't even know that. I knew there were rich and poor, but I never thought of them as classes. I knew nothing about the role of the state, the police would club people. I'd never heard of such a thing, that meetings couldn't be held, and so on. That was all news to me. My whole system, I was just 17, was shot. I wanted badly to find out what's responsible for all this, what caused it. So I began to think a lot and read a lot the books of Jack London, books on evolution. They all influenced me a great deal.

Becoming a Communist

Then a funny thing happened. On my 18th birthday I decided, I'm going to become a Communist. I'm going to devote my whole life to changing this whole system. I went up to the Young Communists League and said, I want to join. He said, okay sign this book that I pledge that I will abide by the constitution and so on. I said, what's the constitution? He said, I haven't got one. I said, I can't sign it if I don't even know what the constitution of the organization is. Well he said, if you don't sign, you can't join. So I missed joining the Young Communists League.

I went back home on September 17th, my birthday, and studied some more. Right after that the Estevan strike took place, where the 3 miners were killed, on September 29th of 1931. I remember how this shocked the whole labour movement of BC. The police could shoot. They killed 3, and wounded over 40. They told doctors that they were not allowed to treat them. They had to take the wounded way up to Weyburn. That sort of thing just got into you, the injustice of it all. I guess I had, since I was young, a sense of injustice. I was German. There were a lot of people who were English in my town too, who considered us as not equal because we were German. I think I had some of that feeling in me too about the fight for social justice. I became imbued with that idea. I was very idealistic. It seemed to me it was a wonderful thing to work for and fight for.

I moved to Edmonton in October 1932 and lived with my mother. On March 4th, 1932, I went up and joined the Young Communist League. I figured at that time I knew what it was all about already, and I joined. A month or two later, I was elected as secretary of the Workers International Relief, the WIR, whose slogan was "Solidarity, not Charity". Their role was to help people and workers who were on strike. At that time unions had no strike funds. When they went on strike, they depended on what they had and what they could get from the public. My job as secretary of the WIR was to gather food and clothing and money in northern Alberta. We were very successful. We sent half a carload of food and clothes down to the miners in the Crow's Nest Pass while they were on strike. That strike lasted until labour day.

The strike in the Crow's Nest Pass lasted for one year. We kept close track of it in northern Alberta, because we were very sympathetic. One of the remarkable things during the 1930's was the way the public would help workers on strike. This happened all over Canada, particularly among the miners and the people of Alberta because the miners were very close. In Drumheller, for example, a lot of the miners were farmers during their spare time; the rest of the time they were miners. The same thing in the mines around Edmonton; they were farmers in the summer, and in the winter they worked in the mines. So there was a close affinity between them, and a great deal of support for the Crow's Nest Pass. That strike itself made a great impression on the people of BC. It was historic. It lasted till labour day of 1932. There was one instance where the mine in Blairmore, they tried to open it with scabs and a terrible physical fight developed. The miners kicked out the scabs and fought back the police. The mine never opened. There was about 100 miners, though, who were arrested. This was done by the UFA government, was supposed

to be a left wing government. I'll say more about that later, what happened to the UFA. But they prevented that mine from opening.

They won their strike. They were, as far as I know, the only union in Canada that never took a wage cut during the whole depression. As a result of that wonderful strike, they had the solidarity that developed. Harvey Murphy came down to help lead the strike. Harvey Murphy was a labour leader from eastern Canada. He was anything but a miner, but he was a hell of a good organizer and agitator. He could particularly get any audience going against the bosses and the police. He had a very witty and caustic way of picking them out of the audience, standing around in their plain clothes or other uniforms, and centering attention on them until they slunk away. They couldn't stand it. But he was a clever organizer. In the Crow's Nest Pass, they succeeded in mobilizing everybody in support of the strikers. They convinced all those except the very rich businessmen that it was in the interests of the community to win the strike. They would keep work, they would keep money in the community, and they could carry on. They won their strike, and they won more than that. They elected the town council and they elected a school board of miners. They made a union man the chief of police. Then they tried to figure out, how can we get back at these employers, who've been preventing us from getting good conditions all the time. So they found out that the employers and other businessmen owed a lot of money to the town. They had to all cough up with that money. They decided that May Day would be a town holiday, and believe it or not, they decided that November 7th would be a school holiday to commemorate the beginning of the Russian Revolution.

As soon as they took office in the town council, they renamed the main street Tim Buck in honour of the Communists. Tim was in jail at that time, by the way, do that was quite a thing to do. They named it Tim Buck Boulevard. One of the other steps they took, I didn't mention this yesterday. They tried to think of ways and means to tax the rich. They found that the dogs in towns, most of the mongrels were owned by miners and most of the pedigreed dogs were owned by the rich. So they put a tax on pedigreed dogs. Little things like that make you laugh.

That's how left wing they were in their outlook. From then on, it was a labour town, and known as such across the country. The miners always stayed united. During the strike, they lost Coleman, which was a neighbouring town. A lot of the miners were Polish and they were influenced by the Catholic church. But a few years later they got Coleman back into the union. John Stockolack, who was one of the leaders of the left wing miners, became a leader in the Mine Workers Union of Canada. I should mention at this time, the miners already belonged to the Mine Workers Union of Canada, which is a break away from the UFWA. That was the history of the Crow's Nest Pass, which gave all of us a big lift in the labour movement, to think that we could take them all on and win with the unity of the people across the country. I felt particularly good that I was in something and had learned so much from it.

1932 Edmonton Hunger March

The next thing I took a big part in was an Alberta hunger march. In October of 1931, we set up a committee, no '32, an Alberta conference committee to organize the hunger march. I was a member of that committee. I was in charge of bringing young people into the hunger march. The Communist Party was illegal at that time. I wasn't in it, but as a member of the Young Communist League, they allowed me to participate in all the meetings of the illegal party. I was too young to join yet, but they allowed me to participate. They were a leading force in organizing the hunger march and bringing together about 14 different organizations that had organized it. There were miners and farmers and unemployed organizations. We had thousands of unemployed in Edmonton who ate 2 meals a day at soup kitchens. We often had riots. They would destroy all the dishes and throw away the food. They were a big force also. We had thousands of people who were being evicted from their homes because they couldn't pay taxes. We had thousands of people who had no place to go except dirty cheap rooming houses, which were supplied by the authorities. The idea of the hunger march caught on. The fact that we got 12,000 people. Edmonton had a population of 80,000 at that time, so this was an enormous thing. The police tried to prevent people from coming in. The RCMP blockaded all the main roads. But the farmers came in during the night on the side roads. So they couldn't keep them from coming in.

Our headquarters were the Ukrainian Labour Temple. Beside the Ukrainian Labour Temple was an old church that the Young Communist League had made into a youth centre. These 2 buildings became the centre of the whole undertaking, the hunger march. We brought in enough food from the countryside to feed all the people who needed it for at least 5 days. We got terrific support for it. On December 20th 1932, we gathered in the Market Square for a meeting. We were going to march to the parliament buildings. They refused to give us a permit to march. But they said we could meet. So we met.

All the side streets were filled with people, supporters and onlookers. The Edmonton Bulletin said that the whole object of this was to set up a Soviet Edmonton, with headquarters in Moscow, and that the whole thing was organized. They brought some quotes from some papers in Toronto, which said the job of the Communists was either to win it or destroy it, the whole city. That was the type of propaganda that was carried on by the Edmonton Bulletin and other papers. But it didn't have much effect on people, because they knew from their own conditions what they wanted. Our demands included first of all that farmers should get decent prices for their goods, and there should be no evictions on the farms. In the cities there should be no evictions. We wanted jobs for everybody. In the absence of jobs, we wanted unemployment insurance. We were much more radical than we are now. We demanded non-contributory unemployment insurance. We demanded a 40 hour work week and a minimum wage of \$25 a week. Interestingly enough, we demanded better pensions and, we didn't call it Medicare, we called it free hospital insurance, and free medical health. So I was already fighting for the things I enjoy today, as it turned out. So we had a good radical program, but I think it was realistic, that met the needs of the people. At the meeting we had our speakers. Like the one in Vancouver, the last speaker said, what do you think about going to the parliament?

Everybody of course said, sure. We just started moving off the square, and this time it was the RCMP that took charge. They had brought in 150 from Regina alone. How many more they brought in from other places we don't know. But they were on horseback with long clubs. As soon as we started moving, they started meeting us with their clubs. Interestingly enough, we had a battle that went on for at least 2 hours up and down the area of the post office. We were told later they had machine guns mounted on the post office too, ready for anything. That fight went on, and there was only one person arrested during the whole battle.

We couldn't help but wonder why, but the next day we found out, because we had a meeting the next day in the church and Ukrainian Labour Temple to discuss the results of this demonstration, and to learn some lessons from it. The police gathered there, closed the doors, and one by one they arrested us as we came out. There were 40 of us who were arrested. In my case, I was just on the platform in the youth centre speaking. They came in. We halted the meeting and filed out one by one. I was asked at the door what my name was. I said, Ben Swanky. They said, Young Communist League, take him away. They had a bunch of mad black moriahs lined up there. They took us down to the police station. If I jump ahead a bit to tell you that during the trial which took place in January, the police swore that all of us who went to the police station personally and weren't coerced in any way, and we were taken there black moriah. The judge allowed them to say that and get away with us. Well they took us to the police station and interrogated us for a few minutes to find out who we were and what we were. They sent us to Ft. Saskatchewan. Ft. Saskatchewan was a provincial jail, and it was real hell hole. It was small cells, about 4 feet wide, about 8 feet long. There was one little 20 watt light way up high, and one little window that barely let in any light, and a toilet and a wash basin. We were kept there for days, we weren't allowed out to do any activity or to move our legs or anything. I got out in Xmas eve, as it turned.

We got out for Xmas. It had been arranged by the Canadian Labour Defence League. Now the Canadian Labour Defence League had been organized in 1925. It was a big organization in Canada, and its job was to get legal help for people arrested in labour activities. It did a terrific job right across the country and grew until it had 40,000 members, so that's also an indication of all the arrests that took place in various parts of Canada. They set bail for us, and we got out. In January the trial was held. We got us our lawyer, a man by the name of House, who was also the head of the Liberal party. He agreed to be our legal council, because he figured we'd discredit the UFA government, then the Liberals would be elected. He did a good job too as lawyer for us. We were arrested and charged with being in an unlawful assembly under section 87 of the Criminal Code. We saw a lot of perjury on the witness stand, and a lot couple of funny things happened to me. One is that while I was sitting in the audience with the other guys who were arrested, 40 of us, the prosecutor said to Mike Hayduk, he was being talked about. He said to him, Mike Hayduk, stand up. He pointed to me. I looked a bit like him. The judge said, you sit down, you're not Mike Hayduk. The judge intervened just when I was going to prove that they didn't even know who they were talking about.

Another thing I almost got into trouble with was when I was walking down a hallway during an intermission in the strike. Coming towards me was a one-armed guy, who had been a stool pigeon for the RCMP. I said, you son of a bitch. My lawyer grabbed me and said, what are you doing? He said, you could be arrested for trying to intimidate a witness. I said, that's what I was trying to do. He said, don't be foolish, this is a legal place, you can't do that. I was lucky I wasn't charged with intimidating a witness. I tried hard, I was so bloody mad. He was sitting on the witness stand. Out of the 40 arrested, only 6 were actually sent to prison. I was one of those who was let go for lack of evidence, because they had no evidence that I was even there. We were all standing there, and they had no evidence that I was trying to walk off. And I wasn't a leader or one of those who spoke. They arrested all those who spoke. They got up to 6 months in jail hard labour for it. Interestingly enough, that hunger march was one of the biggest factors in the defeat of the United Farmers of Alberta government and a reason that the CCF never got anywhere. The CCF was just being formed at that time, and in 1932 they had affiliated to the UFA. We had a labour city council in Edmonton who were CCF and labour party members. So they got so discredited as a result of that hunger march that the CCF never got anywhere in Alberta after that. The people went down the side road. They took Social Credit. Because they thought we wouldn't have to fight, we just have to elect Aberhart and get \$25 a month. So that was another good experience that I had in my early youth. I was secretary of the Northern Alberta Young Communist League at the time. We had about 1500 members in northern Alberta and this was more or less my full time job. This was just a general form of McCarthyism, anti-communism, where every struggle was charged as being organized by soviet agents and Communist agitators taking their orders from the Soviet Union.

On-to-Ottawa Trek

The next big movement I took part in was assisting the On-to-Ottawa Trek. I wasn't in the trek, but I lived in Calgary at that time, as I had become the Alberta leader of the Young Communist League. I was on the committee that prepared a welcome for the strikers when they came through Calgary. That was interesting too, because we had the support of the people of Calgary. They came by the thousands to support us. We had a committee and we sent it in to meet with the government officials. The government officials said, no relief for you, you gotta go back. So they were held hostage. We kept them there. And when they tried to get out we forced them back in. It took about 12 hours, but then they agreed that they'd give us enough money for 3 or 4 days, then let the men go away. They had a huge tag day in Calgary before they left. It was a very exciting event. I don't need to tell you the story of the...

The Mayor was in a quandary. He had put on the pretence of being a pro-labour guy, but he wanted us to get the hell out of town, because this was embarrassing him, putting him on the spot. He had to go along with some of the things we demanded, for his own political good, which he did. It was arranged that we would get food and lodging for 3 or 4 days. We also had a very strong trade union movement in Calgary at that time. It was a pretty left wing trade union movement.

The Ottawa trek captured the imagination of the Canadian people like I've never seen before. The mothers saw their sons who had to future, saw them marching for a better Canada. It gripped the hearts of women right across Canada, and their families. Everywhere the strikers went, they got terrific support. In the case of Alberta, there was a big contingent of several hundred also came from Edmonton and joined the strikers at that time as they were moving away. The strikers were remarkable for their discipline. I don't think we've ever seen any labour struggle that ever had as strict a code of discipline as the men who were on hunger strikes. They were organized in large groups, but they also had smaller groups of 6 to 8 people. Everybody knew everybody else. The police never succeeded in getting a single stool pigeon in the ranks of the strikers. They all worked together, they made the decisions together, they knew each other. If there was anybody who wanted to join who was a drinker, they kicked him out right away. Everybody had to behave themselves. There were no roughnecks about them, no criminal elements. It was a wonderful example of working class discipline by guys who believed in what they were fighting for. They were imbued with the idea that we're going across Canada to fight for Canada, to make it a better country. It was a real historical part. Should we deal with the results of that, too?

The Ottawa trek, as you know, was stopped in Regina on July 1st, which was interesting. That's Dominion Day in Canada. At a meeting in Regina where the majority of people were Regina citizens and not strikers, the strikers had decided that day they were going to stay away down at the exhibition grounds. The police attacked that one too. There were RCMP and city police. That was one instance where the RCMP used guns. There were about 100 people wounded during that riot that took place. It was a long riot. It started in the early evening and lasted till 1 or 2 in the morning. There was a lot of damage done, but there was no looting. The strikers would never loot. But many of them in their anger smashed a lot of windows of the stores along the street, and in their fights with the police. The wounded were taken to hospitals where they were arrested. A lot of people who were shot and wounded never went to hospitals, because they knew what would happen to them. In Regina too, where they had the full support of the citizens, the police tried to intimidate the citizens by telling them any of you who give any support to the strikers will be arrested under section 98. RB Bennett got up in the House of Commons and said the strikers were using guns against the police, an out and out lie. Not even the trials that followed did they ever say anything about any striker having any weapon except rocks or sticks or whatever they had to defend themselves. Like Bush in the present war, they came up with a lot of exaggerations to convince people that here was an effort to set up a Soviet government in Canada, which Bennett claimed.

A group of strikers went to Ottawa, as you know, to meet with Bennett. When Bennett called Arthur Evans a thief because he had used strike money to feed striking miners in Drumheller, Evans said, 'you're a liar.' That hit the newspapers in big headlines right across Canada. A lot of people loved it, because they felt the same way about Bennett. I don't know if you know, but Bennett had promised that, the election was in October of 1935, he had promised that by Xmas everybody would have a job. Not one family in

Canada would go hungry or without food or clothing. Specific promises like that. Of course, they weren't realized. The strike was defeated in the sense that it never got to Ottawa, but ideologically and in the hearts of the people, the strike won, because they went back in an organized way. An internment camp had been opened for them at Dunder. They didn't go back in that, they went back on the cushions and got their meals on the train. In the elections that followed a few months later, Bennett went down to defeat. Section 98 of the Criminal Code, which had been used to outlaw the Communist Party in 1932 when 8 leaders were arrested the year before, it was abolished. That was a big victory. The relief camps were abolished. That Ottawa trek was a wonderful example of an imaginative form of action that grabbed the attention of people right across Canada. There were actually thousands of people organized ready to join it when it got up to Winnipeg. So it could've been doubled in size. But there too, Bennett said this was an organized attempt to overthrow the government of Canada, and should be treated accordingly. I can tell you a story about how Bennett died. He became some position in royalty after - the same thing that Black became.

Relief Camps/Detention Camps

Maybe I should say a few words about the relief camps. They were organized starting around 1933. The men worked 44 hours a week and were given 20 cents a day for their work. They were given clothes, and were sent to places far out in the wilderness to build roads and airfields and things. They were completely isolated from society. You can imagine how young people felt, who were full of vim, vigour and vitality, and wanted a job and wanted to take part and have a good time in life. They stuck out in these camps. They were under the Department of National Defence. It was illegal to form a union, and yet these boys got together in 1934 in Kamloops and organized themselves into a union, a relief camp workers' union.

In April of 1935 they called a general strike, but only part of the camps went on strike. They weren't ready for it yet. They waited and a little while later they called for a general strike again. By this time the camps came out everywhere in the west and joined the strike. When they went out on strike the first time in March 1934, it was an unsuccessful strike. When they came out again in April 1935, this time they all of came out. They gathered in Vancouver and they organized themselves with this magnificent form of organization that they had. They held tag days, which were illegal. They held meetings, some of them were 10 and 12,000 people, that were held in the city. They had tag days where they were able to get some money because they had nothing to eat and no place to stay. Their headquarters was the Ukrainian Labour Temple in east Vancouver, whose members were their most consistent supporters on all the strikes and struggles that took place in western Canada. I can't say enough about the Ukrainian Labour Temple and the organization, and how they were always 100% behind efforts of that kind.

Finally they decided they couldn't get anywhere, couldn't make the provincial government move, or make Mayor McGeer move. By this time, he had the name of Riot Act McGeer, because when they gathered on the market square he sent the police to

disperse them after reading of the Riot Act. They finally decided, 'We can't win it here, let's move on and go to Ottawa'. Everybody said, hurray, we've got something to fight for. So they started out from Vancouver on June 1st on the waterfront. They took the freights there. Their first place of stop was Kamloops, where they had a great reception organized for them. The women had come together, used washtubs to make stews for them, and had a place to eat for them, to sleep. This happened at every town along the way. The women would get together and organize it.

In the relief camps, the guys who went to them, we had a bunch of guys who became professional organizers. They changed their name every time they went to a camp. They'd be blacklisted. One guy was called Mr. Black, but the next time he went to a camp he gave the name Mr. White. So they kept going through the camps under different names, but they kept going. They really learned how to organize, how to come in secretly. They used the freight trains for travel.

They also had a magnificent leader, Arthur Evans, an outstanding man in Canadian history in every way. He had been involved in the Wobblies in the US. In fact he had been shot and jailed there. He was called in to help the Drumheller men when they were on strike. That was where he was sent to jail for a year and accused of being a thief by Bennett. When he came out of jail, the unemployed asked him to lead them in their strike. He was a wonderful figure, a guy who was completely fearless. He had only one objective in mind: fight the capitalist class and let us build a socialist society. He was completely imbued with that; it was his life. He worked, he slept, he dreamed about that kind of struggle. He had a wonderful idea of developing tactics too. He was an outstandingly brave man, and a wonderful speaker. He was a little older than the strikers, close to 40 at the time. The relief camp workers union organized all the relief camps. They had thousands of members. The camps themselves weren't very big, maybe 50 to 100 men. They had a terrific number of camps.

The Rise of Fascism

We in the left wing labour movement were very conscious of the rise of fascism in Germany and what it meant. We were the most vocal voice in Canada among all people who were concerned about human rights, about the dangers of fascism. We knew all about it before Hitler got to power. We were well aware of the strikes of the Communist Party of Germany and the social democratic party of Germany, which between them had more support than Hitler had. When Hitler got to power -he wasn't elected, he was appointed chancellor of Germany - we knew what would happen. He started arresting and interning Communists, torturing and killing people, and started preparing for a war against the Soviet Union. Hitler was supported by financiers from other parts of the world. Henry Ford was a big supporter. Fascism wasn't only a German movement, it was a movement of big capital right across the world, who had seen the grown of communism and social democracy all through Europe, and who were determined to stop it. It's interesting that Hitler's movement, the name of the organization was even National Socialist. He was trying to win those who wanted some form of socialism, but to take

them in a different direction. We had exposed socialism for what it was right across Canada.

At every meeting, we talked about the rise of fascism. It was rising in Canada; for example, in French Canada, a guy by the name of Adrien Arcand had a big movement among the French Canadian Catholics, supported by the Catholic church. There were fascist groups like that organized all over Canada. We fought against fascism, we fought against the sell-out of Czechoslovakia. We fought against Hitler taking over Austria. We fought to prevent Hitler from getting strong and stronger. We knew that his aim was not only to fight the Soviet Union, although they certainly wanted to do that. His aim was to become the dictator of the world. It was a movement to bring fascism to the whole world.

When the people of Spain in 1936 elected a democratic government for the first time, of which the Communists were a part, Franco started his counter-revolution and had the support of Britain, the US and England in doing this in Germany. It was our Communist movement all over the world that organized a support movement for democratic Spain. As you know 12 to 1400 Canadians went over there. I was member of a committee we had set up in Edmonton. Young recruits appeared before us and we went over their history to make sure they were the kind of people who would do a good job if they went to fight for Spain. The support for democratic Spain had a tremendous amount of support all through Canada. When speakers came through, we had huge meetings. When Bethune came through Edmonton for example, we had a meeting of thousands of people. I organized a youth meeting, I was chairman of a youth meeting for Norman Bethune. I remember how impressed we were when we fixed up a stage for him and a table and chairs. I introduced him formally. He came and sat down on the table, hung his legs down, and started talking away. He didn't give speeches, he just talked. And it went over beautifully with the young people. They were so impressed by him. He became a real hero to the people of Canada.

He told them that Nazism and Franco were a threat to the world, that if we didn't win in Spain, this is going to give Hitler what he wants to prepare for a world war. If we wanted to prevent a world war, which we all knew was in the offing, our job was to defeat fascism in Spain. For that reason, we were organizing the Canadian people. It was really a fight to save world peace, not only to save Spain, and the Communists were the ones who realized that more than anybody else, and who did everything we could to stop it. I was not a good speaker, but I remember speaking in Prince George, speaking about the danger of fascism and what it would mean for the world. Bill Kardash, when he came through after he was wounded, he had a meeting of thousands of people in Edmonton. There was such great support for Spain. That was an interesting development.

We organized underground in the Communist Party, set up committees in every major city in Western Canada, and issued a call for volunteers. When young people came forward, we wanted to make sure they were reliable young people, that they really believed in this, they really knew they were going into a struggle where their own personal lives were at stake. They had to be people of conviction and good character. We

would get our recruits in Edmonton and send them to another place. I don't know where, because this all had to be done illegally. The McKenzie King government passed a law that anybody who helped Spain was liable to 2 years in prison. We had to do all of this illegally and very carefully. I never knew who was handling the other provinces. Each province had its own, each had the national, they had some secret method by which they got them over to Spain through France and things like that. It was an international movement because the same thing was done in many other countries of the world. There were battalions named after the leaders of their countries. Ours was the Mackenzie-Papineau, named after two outstanding Canadian leaders of 1837 revolution. The US was Abraham Lincoln Brigade, and so on. Our people played a very good role in Spain; half of them were killed; they gave their lives. Some of the young people I knew died over there in Spain. Canadians did their part, and the Communist Party played a leading role.

Anti-Soviet Sentiment and the Second World War

In the 1930s, while there was a hysterical campaign by the media and politicians and church leaders against the Soviet Union, but it never caught on with the public. It was recognized as a hysterical reaction, and didn't have mass support, because the people knew from their own experience what they were. They knew if they went on strike, they weren't Communists, they weren't Soviet agents. The unemployed knew what they were. They weren't agitators hired by Moscow. I wrote up a story about Arthur Evens in Princeton, where he spread a story that there was Moscow gold coming in and it was under a pile of slag. We let the RCMP there know about it, and they came there with their shovels and started digging, while the miners stood around laughing like hell. Those are tricks that a guy like Arthur Evans would pull, things that exposed the anti-Sovietism.

But there was a terrible anti-Soviet movement everywhere. They broke the strike in 1935 of the longshoremen, using anti-communism. That was widespread. It was different from the McCarthyism of today, but of course it laid the basis for it. The Communist Party during the '30s grew all the time. We never got many votes, because there was a curious division in the minds of people. To change the government, we have to elect the CCF. To lead the fight for better conditions we have to follow the Communists. And that's what happened. The Communists could rally tens of thousands of people in a city like Vancouver in struggle, but get 100 or 200 votes. But the influence of the Communists was great. For example, the Communist Party was outlawed in '32. The leaders were arrested in 1931, 8 of them were sentenced to 5 years in jail, led by Tim Buck. A huge movement started across Canada for the release of the 8 and the repeal of section 98. It reached vast proportions, so much so that Tim Buck, who wasn't due for release until '37, was released in '34. I was one of the speakers at the meeting that we had in Edmonton at the exhibition grounds, had about 5,000 people out. At the Maple Leaf Gardens they had 20,000 people out. All through the West there were huge meetings to greet him. The influence of the Communist Party was very strong during that period, but its influence began to diminish after the German Soviet non-aggression pact was signed in August 1939. Support went down just like that, and we lost a large section of our membership. A lot were intimidated, and a lot felt that the Soviet Union did the wrong

thing. They could understand the Soviet Union having to do something to have a breathing space while they built up their own resources. But as we know since then, the Soviet German non-aggression pact had a lot of secret clauses. The Soviet Union gave a lot of help to Germany in the way of food and munitions, and a lot of other bad things. Stalin was under a lot of illusions about peace with Germany and what kind of world we'd have after. The press was able to use that non-aggression pact to say that we had sold out to the Nazis – that the Communists in Canada and everywhere had sold out to the Nazis.

I remember two meetings, I spoke at the university with university students. Thousands of them. Howls and catcalls, I could barely speak, although it wasn't all antagonistic. The guy who was speaking against me and against the Communists said, we deny free speech,. So I got up and asked, who the hell is disrupting this meeting? I got a big hand for that. A lot of the guys came there just to listen, and to do pranks too. They threw a dead cat on the stage when I was speaking. There was that kind of thing. I also spoke at the Crowsnest Pass in Blairmore in 1939, the only time in my life we ever had to stop a meeting organized by the Party. The Catholic miners under the direction of a priest came in from Coleman and disrupted the meeting. We had to get the police in to save our own meeting. Only time in my life it ever happened to me - in a mining town, too. The miners in Blairmore weren't anti-Soviet, and they didn't take part in any stuff against me. But they brought in a section of the miners who, for national and religious reasons, seemed to take over Poland. The fact that the Catholic church had always supported fascism in Spain and so on, they were able to intimidate and mislead some miners for a period of time. So that's the only time in my life that the police were ever brought in to restore order for a meeting that I spoke at. But it's indicative that it was that strong Communist stronghold that they would even dare to do that.

The Communist Party started losing strength in August 1939 after the Soviet German non-aggression pact. In 1940 the Communist Party was declared illegal. The position of the Communist Party towards the war was that when the war first started, we supported it. People like Jack Sereda and others joined the army right at that stage in the very early weeks of the war. Then instructions came down from our head office in Toronto that the war had really become an imperialist war, and that we should prepare for illegality wherever we were. I was the leader of the Young Communist League at that time in Alberta. The Communist Party decided, (and decisions were made by democratic centralism, with the emphasis on the centralism), that I should go down to Crowsnest Pass and lead the party there during the period of illegality, because I was known among the miners by hundreds of them, and they would take good care of me. I went down there, and told the leadership, I doubt that I'll last 6 months before I'm arrested, and the same with all of you. As it happened, I was arrested after I'd been down in the Crowsnest Pass for 4 months. The party asked me to take over the leadership in Calgary, because we had some trouble with the leadership there that was being involved in drinking and things like that. So I went to Calgary, but knew that it was only a matter of time. I walked into my rooming house one day, and it was filled with city police. I was placed under arrest, and

charged with distributing anti-war stickers. I was taken to the jail, and I stayed there a few days and then came out on bail. The trial took place a little while later.

I should say a little bit more about our attitude to the War. Not only did we say it was an imperialist war, which I think was a wrong characterization right from the beginning by our leadership in Toronto. But it was a phoney war. What was happening on the world scale is the West wasn't fighting Germany; it was waiting for Hitler to attack the Soviet Union. The vice president of the US made a public statement, in which he said if they fight they'll both get weak, and then we'll take over. That was the attitude of capitalism in many places. The nature of the war changed in the spring of 1940 when Hitler marched west into France and Belgium and so on. Even then, the Communists didn't change their position, which was a big mistake on their part; the Communists waiting until Hitler attacked the Soviet Union before fundamentally changing their position. But actually the war had an anti-fascist and progressive character from the beginning. For example, to save democracy in Spain, Austria and Hungary, Poland, and so on, was progressive. Any action on our part, including armed help for those fighting for democracy, I think made that the war had these progressive elements. Despite the fact that within the capitalist class there were a lot of curs. There were some who wanted the Soviet Union and Germany to fight and make each other weak. There were others, like Churchill, who saw the real world danger of fascism and realized that it's going to take the world to defeat fascism. That's why when the Soviet Union was attacked, he was one of the first to call for a united front of the Soviet Union. But the Communist Party, while it was correct in calling it a phoney war, we should have seen the progressive aspects of it too. Especially after France was attacked, the whole Communist movement in France was under attack. For us to call it an imperialist war under those circumstances was terribly wrong.

The Communist Party, because of its stand on the war, was declared illegal, and its strength was diminishing steadily. They had great difficulty in carrying on in a legal way, which they did of course. That changed after June 21, 1941, when Germany attacked the Soviet Union. Then the Communist Party changed its attitude 100% and came out in support of the war, and became one of the best organizers of the economy and everything else to win the war. Then the Communist Party, which was still illegal when it was doing this, began to get support. At first, it was called the Total Labour War Committee, and the Communists organized around that. Then later it went into the open without having the legal right. It became very influential in the war for its activities. For example, it did its best to mobilize workers to do the best possible job in construction. It even had a policy, which caused quite a division in the labour movement - no strikes, because strikes would disrupt production for the war effort. We took the position that we don't want any strikes during the war, because it would hurt the production and hurt our efforts to win the war. We had many battles in the labour movement over that when the leftists in the labour movement would accuse us of having sold out the workers. But our position was that the bigger struggle has to take precedence over the smaller struggle. It's true, maybe we could get better conditions if we went on strike, but it would sacrifice production for the war. We said On the whole, the Communist Party reached the position where national

leaders in the capitalist world, for example Premier Hepburn of Ontario, would appear on the same platform with Tim Buck, calling for everybody to join the war effort. This went on, and the support for the party grew and grew until the Cold War. I'll just interject for a moment to explain that the fact that we stayed in internment camps a year after Hitler attacked the Soviet Union, showed that we weren't in internment camps because we were pro-Soviet. We were in the internment camps because we were fighting for a better Canada. For the trade union and the economic struggles we had led in the '30s, that's really what we were interned for.

I had mentioned that I was arrested for putting out stickers. I hadn't put out any stickers personally, although I knew they were being put out in Calgary overnight, little stickers on telephone poles that said something about "Take Canada Out of the War". Stickers like, 'It's a phoney war.' I was arrested and charged with distributing stickers. I hadn't distributed any stickers, so they couldn't make that stick in court. One of the interesting things in my trial is that they brought on the stand a man by the name of Roy Coyich who had been the secretary of my party club in Edmonton. This time he was in the uniform of the RCMP and he was on the witness stand, the first time I saw him after I had left Edmonton. Our lawyer said, what the hell has he got to do with distributing leaflets? He can't know about that. We don't need his evidence about this guy being a Communist. So he wouldn't let him testify. So I got away with that. One other interesting thing happened to show how the police can act in an illegal way. When I was arrested, they took from my house a bottle of glue that they used to have in the schools, with the little rubber tips. I knew it wasn't what was used, because I knew the guys who had made the glue made it from flour to put stickers all over. I said to Barney Comoson, my lawyer, we've got them there. They're testifying that that glue was used, but I know it wasn't used on those. I said, ask him to make an examination of the glue that they found on the telephone poles and the glue that they found on the paper stickers. The police said they would. They turned it over to their labs. The labs brought in a report that the stuff on the telephone poles was exactly the same as the stuff they found, a complete distortion of the truth. But that's the kind of thing you expected then.

Second World War Internment

I was found not guilty. So I started walking out of the courtroom and a couple of RCMP grabbed me, one on each side and said, come with us. They took me to the top of the post office building, which was then the headquarters of the RCMP. Incidentally, they had windows like here, all open with telescopes all over so they could watch the population. I was in there a few days, and then I was shipped off to Kananaskis. I didn't know where I was going until I got there. Kananaskis was an internment camp a little bit southwest of Canmore in the Rocky Mountains. When we got there, there were 3-400 German fascists there and about 40 Italian fascists. The Germans were from all over western Canada, Canadian Germans. The Italian fascists were mainly from Vancouver, and they were mostly small business people. In the internment camps, we were called prisoners of war. I was officially an 'enemy alien', although I had been born in Canada and lived here all my life. So I was in a prisoner of war camp. We were on army rations and the type of

discipline and conditions they had in the army. We lived in huts, they sent us out to work. We had to take care of things inside the camp: the cooking, meals, cleanup. If we worked outside, we got 20 cents a day. Because I was always an outdoor person, I chose to work outside. I became a water boy, took water from a spring to the men who were working in the woods. It so happened that this man who took me to the spring to get water belonged to the Unemployed Single Men's Movement in Edmonton.

The soldiers, by the way, were all ex-servicemen, many of whom had belonged to left-wing organizations. One was even a Mac-Pap. So they became our best friends and they helped us. For example, this one soldier who became a very good friend of mine, he gave me a part of his wages every payday, which I could use in the canteen. He brought me newspapers. I would read them when I was getting water. I'd bring the news back to the guys on the job. In every workplace there were incidents of this, of workers, ex-servicemen, who had gone through the depression and who were very friendly and helpful to us. Inside the camp, the Germans, because they were the majority, they ran things. They had the most power. But there was an unwritten agreement between us and them, we wouldn't attack them if they didn't attack us. Considering our size was 40 and theirs was 400, it didn't hurt our situation. They agreed, because they were so sure that Hitler was going to be running in Canada, they had even picked out plots of land in western Canada that they expected to get as soon as Hitler won. So they thought, why bother with these Communists; there's only 40 of them, we'll dispose of them. So we didn't have any fights in the camp. I was fortunate that I could speak some German, so I could at least talk to them, and understood what they were saying. But the hostility was very evident. We demanded that we had huts of our own. The camp commandant refused, but they were building new huts in the camp, so we took them over. Then we had places of our own. We just took them over and we weren't thrown out. We thought we would be, but we just took them over. And we elected our own person to be a spokesperson for us.

Being in an internment camp in your own country and being declared an enemy alien in a war which you don't know what the outcome will be, and you don't know what's going to happen eventually in the camp, you can imagine everything that might happen. You're not allowed to have any visitors. You're allowed 4 letters and 4 postcards a month, but no other communication with our loved ones. With no idea of what the future is to bring, the maintaining your morale is a key problem. We dealt with that by having discussion groups every day on any problems that arose among our people. We discussed all the current events that we could get information on. People there learned French, they learned German from Alderman Jake Penner of Winnipeg. Later on we learned French from other internment camps. We took up the history of the labour movement - anything to improve our minds and to keep a healthy outlook on life.

Of course daily problems always arise. People are not well, trouble starts somewhere. The Nazis do something, - what are we going to do on that issue with them? They would organize a strike by themselves for their interests, and we wouldn't support it. You had to make political decisions all the time over what to do. I think we succeeded in keeping a very healthy outlook. I and Bill Repka even became composers. We composed music,

songs about the internment camp and about freedom, some of which were later made into a record that went across the country. Some singer in Winnipeg did a job on them. So we did everything we could to maintain a healthy attitude and become aware of what was happening outside, with the limited information we had. We remained a healthy-minded group of people.

The Nazis had a Gestapo working in camp, because desertion started taking place in their ranks. Some of the people weren't as Nazis as they thought, they had been carried away by the idea of national socialism. One guy decided he wanted to separate himself from the Nazis and wrote a letter to the camp commandant in Ottawa saying what he wanted to do. Our commandant turned it over to the German guy in our camp. So that guy went to the hospital. They beat him up, they put glass in his food, they pissed in his soup. Our camp commandant sided with the Nazis always on any questions that came up. So we had that problem. We tried to make alliances with any breaks inside their ranks. We were in the internment camp until a week after the Soviet Union was invaded, after which we had a discussion in the camp, and decided to support the war 100%. There were still some in our ranks who had some doubts of whether or not we could trust our government to really wage an anti-fascist war, even in those circumstances. But we finally reached a unanimous agreement and started a campaign for release on that basis - that we wanted to get back into society and play our part in the army and work in production and so on.

A week after the Soviet Union invaded Germany, they moved us to a new camp. That was in Petawawa. The trip was interesting, because they wanted to move us secretly so nobody would hear of us. They had to take us through Winnipeg, and how are we going to let the people of Winnipeg know that we were going through? I don't know all the methods they used, but I know one that I personally participated in. They would only allow the windows to open this much. We knew that most of the section men were Ukrainian people; they had done that work all their lives. So every time we went by a crew, we dropped a letter outside the window. Somehow or other it got to the Ukrainian people, and they sent information to Winnipeg where people organized a big demonstration. But the police got wind of that, so they moved the time and put us through before the demonstration and we missed it. But it's interesting that we could find ordinary people working on the railway, who would do this and who we knew were friends. It was the Ukrainian people; I sure admire the part they played in this whole business.

When we got to the internment camp in Petawawa, we found a different situation. They had about 70 left wing people there, among them the mayor of Montreal, Camelian Hout. He was interned because he opposed conscription. He was a big guy, 5 x 5; it almost took men to carry him, he was so big and fat. They went to work there, as they did in other camps. We had an experience there which ended our stay. One day Timothy Eden, who was Anthony Eden's brother, came to inspect these prisoner of war camps. When the camp commandant brought him past our hut, he said, that's a bunch of Russians. Joe Wallace, a very famous Canadian poet and a protégé of Sir William Laurier, stepped out in front and said, 'that's a lie; we're Canadian Communists and anti-fascists'. So the commandant said, 'arrest that guy and put him in'. So they arrested him and put him in a

little jail inside the internment camp, a little place about 6 feet by 6 feet. We had a meeting to decide what we were going to do and decided to have a demonstration in the camp. So we organized a march inside the camp. The camp commandant got wind of this. He sent to Petawawa and brought in soldiers armed with machine guns, which they placed all around the camp. They were so afraid of what a small group of Communists would do if they organized a march. Well we kept on with our march, and were told we were given a certain number of minutes; something like 10 minutes to disperse, then if you don't go we'll shoot. I think they must've marched 9-1/2 minutes. I remember how I felt when the last seconds went by. Anyways, we made it back to our huts. Then they put another spiked fence around our little hut. So now we had a spiked fence around our hut. They said, but we're going to send you out to work. We said, like hell, we're not going to work. So they said, we're going to take all your privileges away. We said, we don't give a shit, we're not going to go to work. Then negotiations took place behind the scenes.

They went to work there as they did in other camps. We had an experience there which ended our stay in there. One day Timothy Eden, who was Anthony Eden's brother, came to inspect these prisoner of war camps. When the camp commandant brought him past our hut, he just said, that's a bunch of Russians. Joe Wallace, a very famous Canadian poet and a protégé of Sir William Laurier, stepped out in front and said, that's a lie. He said, we're Canadian Communists who are anti-fascists. So the commandant said, arrest that guy and put him in. So they arrested him and put him in a little jail inside the internment camp. A little place about 6 feet by 6 feet. We had a meeting to decide what are we going to do about this. We decided we were going to have a demonstration in the camp. So we organized a march. The camp commandant got wind of this. He sent to Pedawawa. They brought in contingent soldiers armed with machine guns, and placed them all around the camp. They were so afraid of what a small group of Communists would do if they organized a little march. Well we kept on with our march, and we were told we were given a certain number of minutes, something like we'll give you 10 minutes to disperse, then if you don't go we'll shoot. The guys who organized our march, I think they must've march 9-1/2 minutes. Because I remember how I felt when the last seconds went by.

Anyways, we made it back to our huts. Then negotiations took place behind the scenes to ship us to a camp of our own, which we had demanded all the time. We demanded our release., but until then we want a place of our own, because we're anti-fascists, we're not Nazis, we're not Italian fascists, we're Canadians. They decided to send us to Hull Quebec where we had a jail built that was called a white elephant. It was beautifully finished, 4 floors, all the facilities, but had never been used, because for some reason it was considered unsafe. We were all given cells there. I took a cell on the top floor, the death cell, because it was the biggest and had a private lighting system and a view of the parliament buildings from my window. So I had a preferred place in the jail. We ran the place completely, set our own hours, did our own cooking, had our own recreation in the prison yard. We set up our own system of making whiskey and making wine. I made wine in my room. We got one quart of grape juice and one pound of sugar. You put that

together for 14 days and you get wine; if you leave it to 15 it turns sour. Downstairs in the kitchen they developed a method of making whiskey, because it had all the facilities.

So we were well supplied with liquor. It never led to any trouble. If the camp commandant knew about it, he never said so. We tried to keep it as quiet as we could too, of course. But we used that on all our holidays. We celebrated May Day and Labour Day and July 1st, Xmas and New Years. So in addition to having a regular program with speeches and music, we had drinks along with it, which was rather nice. We had a radio too brought in secretly from Winnipeg. They brought in a big tub full of some Ukrainian dish, and they put this radio right at the bottom of it. When it was poked around they never found it. So we set up a radio there, but it was conditional on a wire. We put out a wire from one window to another window, two sides like this. One day some guy who didn't know we had this secret business, one of our people, hung out some clothes on one of the wires. The guards saw it. They charged upstairs. We saw them coming, so we took the wire down right away. They found it in our cell and took it away, but we found another way of keeping it going. For awhile we got all the news that way, through this little set that had been brought in. They had some other ways that I wasn't involved with. In a camp like that, when you find some way of making illegal contact with the outside, you don't make it public knowledge. So there were other methods that I wasn't familiar with. But they got out letters and the Ukrainian paper came in regularly, Canadian Tribune and other publications. So we were kept pretty well informed.

We kept up the campaign for our release by volunteering and sending letters and petitions to parliament and so on. It led to our release eventually, a year later. In the late summer of 1942 we were released one at a time, we never knew in advance when. We were simply released and given a ticket to a place where we came from. When I was released I had a ticket to Edmonton. I phoned Edmonton right away, and when I got there I had 600 people waiting at the station to give me a greeting. We marched down to one of the restaurants and had a little get together. I gave a speech and of course everybody was overjoyed that we were back out. We had to at the beginning report regularly to the police, but after awhile we just gave it up, and they didn't enforce it.

Joining the Canadian Army

I joined the army in 1943, and within about 6 months of that became Sergeant in the Canadian artillery. My mother lived on the south side in Edmonton in a little house. I went home to visit her, and she was so proud of my having become a sergeant that she wanted to have a picture taken. That's the house I lived in when I was in grade 12 in Herbert, Saskatchewan. [pointing to picture] I think I was about 16 coming on 17 there. I was long and lanky, and I was old enough to take my teacher to the movies.

It happened this way. I decided I was going to take a holiday after being in camp. I wasn't going to join the army the next day; I was going to wait. So I got a job as a bartender working on 97th Street, and was doing very well. One day Coyich came in with a group of detectives and started talking and pointing to me. I went to my boss and said, I'm not

going to serve the son of a bitch, you get somebody else. He said, okay never mind, leave them alone. Even there they wanted to keep track of what we were doing.

So, I volunteered to join the army early in December of the year I was released. It took a month before they could decide on my application. They sent it to Ottawa. Colonel Brown was in charge of recruiting there. I told him all about my history. I was enlisted and went to Grande Prairie to take my basic training. In basic training we had a day every week that was devoted to current events. The officers were supposed to keep us up to date on the war. Most of them didn't know a damn thing about what was happening. So Sergeant Roberts, who was kind of progressive guy knew who I was and proposed me for a speaker. I gave a speech on why the Italians were like they were. They weren't whole-hearted for the war, I knew about all that. The camp commandant, all the officers, all the sergeants were brought down to listen to my speech. I got a standing ovation, which is unheard of in the army. When basic training finished, I was the only guy who was given a 3 day leave out of the whole bunch. Somehow or other they figured I was a good guy, a leader of some kind. I had experience with young people.

I went to Shiloh, and when I got there the funny part begins. They lined us all up, guys who just came from a training camp. Sergeant Major Sirotuk, a Ukrainian sergeant major, I think the only one in Canada, went by us one at a time. When he came to me he asked where I was born, and when I joined. He fired a bunch of questions at me so fast I got flustered and couldn't answer them. He says, sergeant, take that man to my office after this parade is over. I thought, I'm going to get shit for being in the internment camp, being a Communist. The sergeant brought me in to Sirotuk's office and he said to me, sit down Ben, have a smoke, and tell me about the internment camp. I was flustered and floored. He was such a nice guy. This friend of mine who was a Ukrainian school teacher from Mundare, and was given the job of reporting on me every 2 weeks. So we had a Communist reporting on a Communist. So I got reports to the RCMP of what a good guy I was. He also managed to get a look at my personal files, and I was never allowed to become an officer. But in a few months I was made a sergeant; I learned the ropes pretty quickly. I knew how to lead young people and was also sent to a two-week course in Nanaimo on chemical warfare. I was the only guy in western Canada the camp commandant wrote that ever got 100% in all his marks. So I had a good reputation as an instructor. Things went well in the camp, and finally they decided, late in the war, in '45, to send us to Europe to send us to England in a training camp where there was no cold water and no heat. Things were pretty tough for the English people. I remember on VD Day we had sticky lamb from New Zealand 3 times a day that day to celebrate.

Then I was asked to run in the Crowsnest Pass as a candidate for the LPP. As the war went on, the Communist Party remained illegal. The government wouldn't change that, so it changed itself; just called itself the Labour Progressive Party, and formed a new party. We no longer belonged to the CPP; we belonged to the Labour Progressive Party, the party of Canadian Communists. The content was not much different, perhaps a little broader, because the war was a broader thing, but the leadership remained the same. In the 1945 election I was asked if I would be a candidate. I said yes, so I was sent back to

Canada. That was lucky for me, because having just been in England for a few months, most guys had to stay there a year or two afterwards. When we got to Canada, our plane ran out of gas so we landed at Millinakat in the US and had to stay there for a few days until they brought in a new plane. These goddamn officers wouldn't let me eat with them at the same table. I had to go to a corner of the restaurant and eat by myself. One of them was a guy who became Minister of Justice here, Fulton from BC. His wife became a very good person in the seniors' movement I worked with her later. I went down uptown in the evening. The officers had their own place to drink. So I went uptown and found a place where the loggers drank. Millinakat Maine is a loggers town. We started drinking and became good friends.

I was eventually shipped back to Edmonton. I was elected leader of the Labour Progressive Party of the Province of Alberta, and kept that job until 1957. By that time the party had declined to such an extent we couldn't support more than one organizer. So I left and Bill Toumi became Provincial Leader of the Party. That was in 1957. The Communist Party never became legal; the Labour Progressive Party took its place.

The Cold War

The Cold War started in 1946. What was the real reason for McCarthyism and why did it arise at that time? I conclude that the first reason was that during the war a tremendous sympathy had grown up for the Soviet Union, for all the sacrifices they made and the fact that they were the decisive force in defeating German fascism. The second reason was that they wanted to keep the arms drive going. The idea of having peaceful world and losing all the profits that they made during the war was a dreadful thought for those who were making billions of dollars in profit during the war. The third reason I think is that they wanted to put a brake on the CIO unions that had grown up during the war, those tremendous organizations of the working class into militant left led unions. I think those were the 3 basic factors that motivated capitalism and the big powers into starting a Cold War. They devised their own tactics to do it. They used the Gouzenko case, which was just a means, a false means. They had found out about this guy Gouzenko a year before they announced what he was guilty of. In the meantime Churchill had gone to Fulton, Missouri and made his infamous speech about the Iron Curtain. Then in a sudden blast of notoriety, they said he was a Communist from the Soviet Union spying on Canada. They had him appear dressed in a white mask and shroud, as if even the Soviet Union didn't know who the secretary was in the embassy.

They put Canadians they arrested for espionage on a trial that lasted 2 years of unending anti-Communist propaganda, not only against the Soviet Union but against the Communist Party of Canada - an international war of capitalism against socialism, and a national war for the reasons I've cited. They decided in the top circles, first of all in Canada, on the trial method of Gouzenko. They enlisted the support of social democracy and got the NDP leadership to support the Cold War. They started on an anti-Communist campaign in the unions, which benefited only the employers and which led to efforts to destroy every left led union; to kick every Communist or left winger out of the trade

union movement and remove them from the leadership and, if they couldn't do that, to destroy the unions themselves. In 1948 McKenzie King said in the House of Commons that we must pay tribute to the leaders of the trade union movement in Canada for the way they helped us fight Communism during the Cold War. So the tactic they used in Canada that contrasted that in the US was less state interference. Because they had a ready-made group inside the trade union movement who would do the job for them, the right wing leaders in the CCF. Many unions were taken over and many left wingers removed from leadership. That happened in every province. Here and BC we had 3 unions that they couldn't take over. One was the Vancouver civic workers, who did the outside work. The 2nd one was marine workers union, the ship yard workers, but they couldn't take them over. The 3rd were the fishermen, but they couldn't take them over.

So BC did pretty well in the Cold War in defending itself, although it was a very difficult time. In Alberta, besides doing their best to remove Communists from leading positions in unions, the RCMP went around to everyplace where a Communist worked and told the employers they had a Communist working for them – they should know this and do what they want. In some cases, the employers would dismiss the person; in other cases they'd just tell them to be careful, because we know who you are. If you don't act right we'll kick you out. When people started organizing, they tried to pin the Communist label on the growing CIO too. Also, they conducted a terrific campaign against the Ukrainian movement, especially in Alberta, which was probably strongest place for the Ukrainian movement in Canada. They took away its halls, special discrimination against them in their places of work. The RCMP went around to everyplace where a Communist worked and let the employers know about it. Word got around and there was a great deal of intimidation. People were afraid, justifiably so, of losing their livelihood through their political persuasions. This led to a great drop in the membership of the Communist Party. We always kept some, of course, but there was a steady loss of membership over the years. It was harder to get big public meetings or do organizational work.

On the other hand, the Communist Party led the campaign for the Stockholm Appeal, a worldwide petition for peace. The membership did a wonderful job going out door to door, a most difficult thing, to get signatures. This was also the period when the Rosenbergs were put on trial in the US which lasted until 1953 when they were executed. We had a terrific campaign of support for the Rosenbergs, again carried on by a lot of courageous people who had to fight the whole system to do anything progressive. In Edmonton you couldn't even hold a public meeting without the consent of the RCMP. The RCMP went around to the homes and told all the owners not to rent the halls to any of what they called 'Communist efforts'. We brought Pete Seeger to Edmonton and tried to get the Legion and some of the big theatres, but they wouldn't rent to us. If a guy would agree the day we went over, his boss would see it the next day, look up the instructions, and not rent to Communists. So we had Pete Seeger at the Ukrainian Labour Temple, our favourite place. We had a wonderful concert there. Displaced persons, mostly guys who had sold out to Hitler during the war, organized a gang to attack the

Pete Seeger meeting with 2 X 4's and rocks, but we had placed guards outside. Nick Alexyevich came in with his head damn near broken, blood running all over his face.

We went ahead with our concert, but they succeeded in narrowing our field, because at stake were their jobs and livelihood. People suffered a lot this way. The children of Communists sometimes were branded in the schools, called reds, which became a problem for families. We had a very famous astronomer in Alberta, Roy Jenkins, one of the 3 astronomers in Canada, and a highly educated person. He had joined the peace movement or signed the Stockholm Appeal, I forget which, and was fired from his job. He had to go back to the oil industry and work where he had some skills that could be useful there. So it was a very tough time. When Gouzenko was placed on trial, an Edmonton Journal reporter came to me and asked if I had anything to do with Gouzenko. Of course I had nothing to do with him, but they wrote a front page article saying Swankey denies that he's a spy; that's the kind of stuff they did. They don't say it... but of course everybody thinks that if they asked him, maybe he did have something to do with it, and of course he'd deny it. That was the form of red baiting they used.

During the Cold War I was able to maintain very friendly relations with Bill Irvine, the leader of the CCF, who was one of the better people there. He also went to Stockholm to the Peace Conference that led to the Stockholm Appeal. In Alberta, we also had Elmer Roper, the editor of the CCF paper and the leading printer. On the other hand, we had Bill Irvine, who had a more progressive outlook on life. We met regularly to have discussions on things, always in a friendly way. However, things went from bad to worse until finally we decided that this was actually no way to carry on a living. The wages I was getting were \$30 a week for the family, and you can't live on that anymore. Even in the packing industry, they were getting over \$100 a week. We decided we had to move.

Red-baiting in the Unions

In practise, wherever a union was under attack, like the inside workers, the fisherman's union, the people in the ship building industry, it was CCF leaders who were union leaders who did it. Often those people were put into these unions even if they had never worked in the industry. They were just appointed. So it was mainly in the trade union movement that they did the greatest damage.

I worked on a history of the electrical workers union, Jackson's union. He came up against this all the time. The UE was one of the top unions attacked. As well, the Mine Mill and Smelter Workers Union was attacked here. Finally some deal was worked out in the end where they maintained the union and kept Harvey Murphy on the payroll. But in everyplace like Sudbury and so on, the leadership of the Canadian Congress of Labour and the Trades and Labour Congress, the 2 national trade union bodies, supported the Cold War 100%. They supported rearmament, the foreign policy of the Canadian government, and they supported anti-communism. They led the campaign to prevent militancy in the unions, and to kick Communists out of leading positions. They smashed the Seaman's union, with no help from those unions. So, they hurt the trade union movement very much, but the interesting thing is that in spite of these things, the CIO

unions continued to grow in Canada, and many new ones were organized. We were able to carry on the campaign for peace and bring about a turnaround in the situation in foreign policy. And, we kept up the fight for social programs like Medicare. On the one hand there were all these campaigns against the left and what they stood for and we were still able to make some social gains in Canada in spite of the war and in spite of this role of some CCF leaders. In 1933, the CCF had the Regina Manifesto, which called for socialization of all the means of production in Canada, but they cancelled the whole thing, and retreated to nationalizing 3 banks. Then they retreated even from that, and dropped the whole idea of nationalization from their program, under pressure of the Cold War and for the help they got from the powers that be.

While this campaign was carried on to get rid of the leadership at the top union level, at the bottom level, Communists stayed on their jobs and carried on, fighting for things they've always fought for. It's only because of this that a change finally came around in 1973 in attitudes at the top. Campaigns for things like Medicare, they were carried on by Communists inside unions, as well as the right to strike, unemployment insurance, and pension plans. Those were all part of the Communist program during that period.

Organizing Youth

In Alberta, in March 1932, there was a school held at Sylvan Lake. I don't know what you'd call it, perhaps a labour school or a Marxist school, but we had 30 young people from all over the province. Our instructors were Frank Weir, Frank Grant, Johnny Weir who was a school board member, and Emil Miller, who was also from Alberta. We had a one month school where we discussed the labour and farm movements, socialism, Marxism, class struggle, Canadian history and dialectical materialism. It was most enjoyable. What's significant is that many of those young people later became leaders in their communities; people like Bill Tuomi, Dan Sharun from Innisfree, etc. The Finnish people were well represented there, and soon became provincial leaders in one way or another. So the school was a real training ground for leadership, and for me, a big step ahead.

All my reading and study had been individual, and now it was organized in a school. I appreciated it very much. Right after the school they figured that I was a guy who had grade 12 education and was now given a Marxist education, so they'd make me an organizer. I was promoted to northern Alberta organizer of the Young Communist League. We had 15 or 20 branches in northern Alberta, as well as the mining towns in which included the Coal Branch and Edmonton. In the farm areas where the Finnish and Ukrainian movements were strong, we were able to establish branches, because they were the most progressive elements of the population. The Finnish people came as refugees from the Mullerheim dictatorship after World War I, as radical people fleeing a fascist state, a military dictatorship. They quickly established locals of their organization, co-ops and young people's organizations. We had quite a few branches of the Young Communists League throughout northern Alberta. As well, there was another equally strong youth organization, the youth section of the ULFTA, the Ukrainian Labour Farmer Temple

Association. They were very strong and very active, and worked together with the Young Communist League locals. We took up issues like recreational facilities for young people and their educational problems, but more than that, we endeavoured to involve young people in the struggles that were going on in the farm areas and mining camps and cities, a sort of educational organization which prepared them for other activities as they got older.

So our organizations played a big role in the training of leadership, but also in another way. By 1935 and '36 conditions for young people were so bad, they considered that working by themselves across Canada wasn't getting them anywhere; they wanted jobs. They were attached to democracy because they saw the rise of fascism, particularly in eastern Canada, and were very opposed to war. At that time the demand for war against the Soviet Union was going, and they were concerned about the rise of fascism. After Hitler got to power, the government of Quebec officially endorsed fascist groups like those of Adrian Arcand. There was a lot of concern amongst young people, and Calgary was one of the first in Canada to bring all youth organizations together under the leadership of the YMCA and the YWCA in 1935 in a very successful move to bring together dozens of organizations there. The same process was going on in one way or another in other big cities such as Toronto and Montreal, so by 1936, we called a meeting of all groups that had come together, and formed the Canadian Youth Congress. It was our first congress with about 350 delegates who forward a youth charter and a Youth Act that we wanted Parliament to pass. There was discussion on it in Parliament, but it never passed.

We were able to bring our interests to the foreground, but the big problem was how to unite young people. All the church groups came in from all the different churches with different views; even the Catholic Youth came in initially. The priests allowed them to come in with reservations, and stayed at our conventions too to see how things were going. At the first things went very well, and we were able to form this unity of young people. After the congress in 1936, we represented 350,000 young people, from almost all youth organizations in Canada. Then in 1937 we had our biggest convention yet with 1,500 delegates in Montreal representing 500,000 young people. The Catholic young people came in too, instructed by their priest to bring in resolutions which they thought would put Communists on the spot, about religion and belief in God. We got around it, because we didn't care about the formalities; we only wanted unity. If they wanted to have somebody who worshiped, we agreed to a formulation which would allow people to worship, and non-worshippers too.

The Young Communists League played a wonderful role. Every time attempts were made to split them, they found a compromise that could unite them. I think that was our biggest contribution to the Canadian Young Congress. Our 3rd congress held in Winnipeg had grown smaller, because the Catholic church pulled all of its people out of it. They were afraid of the direction it was taking, too radical. Also, by 1936, trade unions started coming in. Until then, they hadn't been officially involved, but in 1936, we had 74 union delegates. Later, because of the War, organization just petered out, but while it was there,

it did a lot to raise the consciousness of young people about the problems of the country. A lot of leaders came out of it; for example, Paul Martin's father was there, young Paul Martin he was then, representing the Liberal party. All the political parties were represented. In the House of Commons and at the Congress, we got support from Tommy Douglas and other Liberals who openly supported the Youth Congress and raised the issue in Parliament. In Alberta we had a fine congress that united everybody, and when it came to the question of who would be president, there was almost a unanimous feeling that it should be me. Of course I declined, because it would give our opposition a chance to charge that it was a Communist outfit. However, we achieved such support for our policy of unity and action, that young people were prepared already at that stage to nominate a Communist for head of it. So in Alberta, two of the leaders of the youth section were Harry Yaciuk who came in when I joined, already a leader and a very good one. Then there was Mike Lutzak, also a very good leader. I learned a lot from the young leaders in the Ukrainian organization on how youth organizations should function.

On the campus, the Student Christian Movement was the leading organization, very broad in its membership and following, and in its outlook. They were a unifying force. The leader of the Student Christian Movement was Kenneth Woodsworth, who was a grandson of J.S. Woodsworth. Today his daughter is a member of Vancouver city council for COPE; got elected in the last election. So you can see that over the generations, the name of Woodsworth carries on.

In the years that followed the 1932 school, the Young Communists League worked closely with the junior section of the UFA and the junior section of the Cooperative Commonwealth Youth Movement, called CCYM. We were able to have a joint summer camp of the 3 organizations at Sylvan Lake, which brought them together. As a follow-up to that, in Calgary the Young Communists League merged with the CCYM, the only place in Canada where unity of the socialist movement reached that point, of a merging of social democracy and communism. So we thought we were doing very good united front work in Alberta. The camp was recognized as a gathering place for the progressive movement, and there was a great appreciation to the Finnish organization for always making it available. I remember Sylvan Lake because everybody got the itch. There were also a hell of a lot of mosquitoes, but we survived those as well. We lived in tents, organized in groups of 6 or 8. Then we had the hall for our meetings and studies.

The interesting thing about the youth movement today is that it's coming from the universities. They're appearing as the most radical and best organized section of young people. In addition to those organized in universities taking a progressive stand on world issues, particularly the environment and peace and jobs, we have the student unions taking the lead in movements against globalization. Big congresses were held like in Seattle and Quebec City, and it was the young people from universities who were most militant. They confronted the police and got the benefit of all the teargas. They did the fighting for their rights. We have in Canada today a new element in the fight against globalization, with young people taking the leadership, more young people than elders in

the anti-globalization movement. The union movement is coming into it more and more, but the young people are in the forefront.

What's interesting now compared to when I was young, is that we thought mainly in terms of Canada. Of course we also thought in terms of peace and war - but these young people think in terms of the world, the world's environment and peace. So their outlook is bigger, as they're beginning to understand that we can't have a successful movement for social progress in Canada unless we have it in the whole world; it's got to be a world movement. So we are making connections with youth movements in other countries. The Federation of Canadian Students, for example, is in the forefront of the movement for peace, always the first to take a stand on issues like Iraq. In Vancouver, the young people got together in high school and universities, and decided to set up a youth organization. They decided to name it 'Check Your Head', which you'd never expect from respectable staid people like us. At their founding convention at UBC, I was their feature speaker. I saw all these young people with clips in their noses and ears and wondered what I was getting into. So I started talking about my life, how I worked among the Young Communist League and the Canadian Youth Congress movement. I told them how I got arrested in a hunger march, and everybody started clapping. I was one of them if I got arrested. From then on the meeting was easy for me. I could tell them anything and they would give me a standing ovation for making a fighting militant speech.

A little later they had a one month school on one of the islands. I gave a talk there on my experiences and how the youth movement had grown up, and what good work they were doing. It gave them a tremendous inspiration to learn that all these things had been going on in the past, and that there was somebody in the present who understood them fully, congratulated them, and saw them in the new conditions of globalization. So it's a pleasure to work with these young people. Two of their leaders got elected in the last Vancouver civic election, one to the school board and one to the parks board.

When people tell me that things are not going so good among young people, I say, they learned from their own experience. Those who were in Seattle and Quebec City, learned from their experience, what the state is and how it operates, and how it serves the powers that be who are in office, and are opposed democratic and human rights. They are learning quickly, just as we learned on hunger marches and so on. They are learning in the anti-globalization movement, fighting the same enemy, only now it is larger and bigger; it's the world big corporations.

1947 Farmers' Strike

In the 1930s under the leadership of the Communist Party, we helped form all sorts of organizations; the Canadian Labour Defence League, Workers International Relief, the Young Communists League. Another one we helped to organize was the Farmers Unity League in western Canada. It grew quickly in communities that were already quite radical, such as the Finnish and Ukrainian communities, but also to others to become a very strong organization. At Mundare, in the early '30s, there was a farm strike, but the biggest movement of farmers occurred in 1947, two years after the War. It happened,

because after the War, all price controls were removed, and the price of gasoline, electricity, machinery, and all farm supplies went way up while farmers' prices for products remained the same. So, farmers were prepared to join another organization, and we helped form the Alberta Farmers Union. People who had once been in the Farmers Unity League were radically inclined and joined it, so on a local scale, we had the leadership in many areas of this Farmers Union. In 1947 they decided to strike on a peculiar demand "For Parity Prices". By parity prices they meant that the price of what they got for their products should compare to what they paid their production, should be enough to give them a living. It was never defined exactly, but that was the idea.

It was a one month strike. When it started, the Alberta Farmers Union had 10,000 members, but during that strike, it gained 3,000 members, and by the end of the strike it had 20,000 members. There was militancy. They had picket lines all over to stop anybody who wanted to deliver goods; they were on strike and wouldn't allow any stuff to be delivered. The police including the RCMP came out, and fought our picket lines; in one case they came with machine guns and tear gas. The farmers stood firm, but opposed to the farm strike was the Alberta Federation of Agriculture, which represented big rich farmers and the co-ops, which by this time had been taken over by right wing well-to-do farmers. Our main opposition came from them, but we got terrific support from the Canadian Congress of Labour and the Trades and Labour Congress which officially supported the farm strike. A lot of railroad workers refused to transport, and truckers refused to transport any goods to the cities and towns; excellent labour-farmer unity. The government finally agreed to establish a parity price board, but it resulted in talk and finally nothing happened - it just petered out. But still, it was a demonstration of farmers in action. 100,000 was a lot, and of farmer labour-unity.

The situation in the farm movement has changed. In the 1930s and after the war, the majority of farmers were poor, with maybe not even a whole section of land on which they lived. Since the War and in the last period, there's been a growth of big farms, and now there are a lot of farms which have several sections of land, in some cases dozens. They're owned by corporations; we have corporate farming today; e.g., during the present BSE scare big farmers who are protesting, because they have huge herds of cattle.

Alberta was unique in another way. Not only did we have a lot of progressive immigrants; we also had people who in the winter would work in industry to keep their farms going, in the coal mines, packing houses and places like that. It was interesting that the first union they formed was called the Farmers Union of Alberta; the idea of union didn't scare them at all. They figured they're a union just like workers are in unions and organized on that model. And of course there were small farms. Several times during my career, I did an analysis of the farmers. BC was different; their small farmers were people who lived on farms, had a few acres, and worked in industry; just an additional way of making money. That was the case all through the Fraser Valley. The Peace River country was different. In the Okanagan it was also different, as there were fruit farmers. But you have to analyze it each time on the basis of the size of the farm, its wealth; then you can get a better understanding of what their political outlook will be too.

We gave the strike our full support. In the case of the packing house in Edmonton, there were so many, including Nick Alexievich, who were leaders among the workers. In fact, probably the majority of the packing house workers in Edmonton were of immigrant extraction, and very radical. It wasn't easy, but they were people who were prepared to put up a fight to establish a union.

I think the Labour Progressive Party made a real contribution to the farmers movement and the trade union movement. Socialists know what they're fighting for, and can give the type of leadership, whether in a union, whether of farmers or workers, that has the broad outlook or understanding of all society. They don't just react to immediate issues, as an ordinarymost might when they're losing their job or not getting enough money from the farm to live on. They played a very progressive role in developing the farm movement and the labour movement; even though their numbers were relatively small, they were decisive in a lot of the struggles that took place; e.g., the strike in the Crows Nest Pass, strikes in Drumheller Valley, the Alberta Hunger March, organization of relief camp workers union, organization of the young people. Communists played a leading role in these, and were able to shape the history of Alberta at a certain time. This changed for two reasons; first came the War, then came oil, which changed the whole outlook. People thought that times were good, and struggles not as necessary as they were before.

Social Credit, the CCF and Party Politics

How Social Credit came onto the scene is another interesting question. A lot of the farmers who came to southern Alberta came from the US. In the US, the move from the gold standard to the silver standard, was very popular as a means of solving their economic problems, and that feeling was strong among a lot of farmers in the south. Not so among the Ukrainian farmers in the north; their feet were too solidly on the ground based on their own experience. The UFA government, which was radical in its early years after it was elected in 1921, went further and further to the right and also succumbed to this idea of monetary reform. They sent a delegation to London to see Social Credit people there, and invited them to Alberta to speak to the Legislature.

Aberhart was already on the scene, and this played right into his hands, to have monetary reform put forward as the answer. \$25 a month seemed to capture the imagination of people as an easy way out; you don't have to strike or to have struggles. All you need is for the state issue \$25 a month, backed by the resources of the province - not the wealth there is, but the potential wealth of the province. It did fool a lot of people, and in the 1935 election, not one UFA member was elected as Social Credit swept the whole thing. They got all except 8 members in the Legislature, and the Communist vote was relatively small. I was the campaign manager for the Communist candidate in Drumheller, was a Communist and union stronghold. Murdock Clark, our candidate, got 371 votes compared to thousands for Social Credit. It was a a sweep of an idea of an easy way out.

The Labour Progressive party played a role in those communities and sections of the population that were radical. In the Ukrainian areas, Vegreville, Mundare and Innisfree, our people w ran in provincial or federal elections and came pretty close to being elected.

That was never the case in the cities or in the mining camps. But in those areas where we had progressive populations, they came very close. Bill Halina came very close. In BC, he was Mayor of Kelowna, and he ran in the Vegreville constituency which was the centre of the nationalist movement and the centre of the Communist movement.

I ran in the Crowsnest Pass both in the federal constituency of McLeod, which included the Crowsnest Pass. In the provincial elections, I got a pretty high vote but nothing like the vote secured before by Enoch Williams who was mayor of Blairmore, a left wing labour leader very close to the Communist Party, but with wide connections in the community. I came in as one from the outside, a Communist which was a wrong tactic to put me into that community. While I may have been a nice guy and it wasn't enough to be elected. It should be a local person if possible, who grows up in the community and has won the respect of the people over the years.

About the relationship of the Communist Party with the CCF, I think the situation in Alberta was unique because a lot of the active people in the CCF and later the NDP were people that we had worked with over the years in struggles. Alberta had that reputation of working together. We had a situation where the leaders of the CCF and the leaders of the party would get together to issue jointly leaflets in the name of another organization we called Unity, to develop unity between the Communist Party and the CCF. That was also unique, that we could get enough support to do a thing like that. So that went very well. But the downfall of the CCF was not its own fault entirely. First of all, in the hunger march a labour city council in Edmonton, who were CCF when it was being formed, and the UFA government, which was affiliated with the CCF, they played such a bad role in the hunger march.

The 1932 Hunger March left its imprint on the whole province. The CCF never got off the ground in Alberta, where they should have because it's a radical province. That's one of the sad things where people took a side pass. When we organized the 1947 September farm strike, Coldwell, the leader of the CCF at that time in the House of Commons, said it was foolish for the farmers to go on strike. They weren't going to get anywhere. They should confine themselves to voting for the CCF if they wanted to change. After the strike started though, they changed their tune and came in and supported the farm strike, because that's where their people went.

His View of the Future

I'll tell you what I say at most meetings I go to, because people always ask me what I think of the future? Have I got any hope?

I tell them that it's absolutely inevitable that we're going to win, here and on a world scale, because the 400 monopolies that have control of the world today have only one aim, and that is to make more and more money. They have no morals, they have no ethics. They'll do anything they can, legal or illegal. In the course of their gaining more and more power, they're going to attack every section of the population except themselves. Every section of the population is going to be hurt. This creates the

possibilities for a wide united front against them, and that's what's developing. Also involved in this is the question of world peace, which people want. No working person wants war. The environment, which young people today realize even more than adults, that we may lose the planet unless something is done to save it. That these movements are growing on a world scale. While the corporations are united now because they've got the economic power at the top, at the bottom there's a growing unity of the people of Europe, Latin America, Asia, North America.

There's a growing movement, and I have no doubt that as the attack grows, this movement will grow. It's inevitable that the people will win this struggle in the long run because if you bring it down to the bare essentials, it's a struggle for survival. To survive is the basic object of all living matter, of all nature. It's a struggle to survive. The struggle to survive will change peoples' attitudes and understanding. Those who today may not want to help the people who are on victory square, because they think we don't have to identify with them, there will come a time soon when they will identify with them. Because they'll find their sons and daughters also have no future. So I'm very confident that this movement will grow in Canada, that the young people will play a leading part. That women today are playing a more important part than they ever did before in the struggle. The trade union movement will become more and more involved in this. And we will have a movement that can lead us to victory. I'm absolutely confident of that.

In 1989 the Postal Workers were in negotiation for a new contract, just like they are now. The head of the Postal Workers Union nationally invited me to come to Ottawa and give some talks to the delegates of their unions who were gathered together. They'd heard that I'd written a book on the Fraser Institute, and they wanted to hear more about that. So I went there and gave a talk to them and met their leadership from all over the province. Here I was in front of the York Hotel on a picket line.

The key words are : “Depression,” “hunger,” “RCMP,” “Communists,” and “unemployed. The materials in yellow are recommended for inclusion on the audio-clip. The materials in red provide context.

Here's the one-paragraph opener:

HUNGER MARCH

On December 20, 1932, about 12,000 Albertans gathered in Market Square in Edmonton to hear speakers at a protest rally against government inaction to aid unemployed workers and destitute farmers. The rally was organized by 14 organizations, mostly with links to the Communist Party and the speakers focused on the need for the provincial government to create as many jobs at union wages as possible, and to provide generous unemployment insurance for those who could not find work via taxes on the wealthy. The organizers' plan was to follow the rally with a march to the provincial legislature to present the protesters' demands. But the civic authorities, under pressure from the provincial and federal governments, refused to allow a march. They brought in a large

contingent of well-armed RCMP officers to aid the local police to suppress violently all efforts of the protesters to march from Market Square to the legislature. Hundreds of peaceful protesters were injured and required hospitalization. Next day, about 40 alleged organizers of the Hunger March were arrested on charges of organizing an illegal assembly. Only six of them were eventually found guilty but these six each served six months in jail. The legacy of the suppression of the March was disillusionment with the three governments that had conspired to prevent workers and farmers from speaking their minds.