

BC Labour Heritage Centre Oral History Project

Secondary Interview with Ray Haynes

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Location: BCLHC

Interviewers: Ken Bauder, Bailey Garden

Videographer: Bailey Garden

Running Time: 01:26:27

Key Subjects: Bargaining; BC Federation of Labour; BC Nurses Union (BCNU); BC Federation of Retired Union Members (FORUM); Compulsory arbitration; Hot edicts; Injunctions; International Woodworkers of America (IWA); New Democratic Party (NDP); Organizing; Strikes; Retail Wholesale Union; Union solidarity; Women's issues; Women in labour;

This is a secondary, follow-up interview with Ray Haynes. Ray provided the BCLHC with a number of materials (photos, newspaper articles, etc.) to digitize and archive, which much of this interview is based from.

00:00 – 12:04

In the first section, Ray starts by reflecting on some individuals he worked with at the BC Federation of Labour. George Johnston was “terrific”. Although Ray came from the CIO side of the labour movement, and George came from the more conservative AFL, they were able to work together well. George was from the Meatcutters Union. Jon Squire was Ray’s “buddy” – Ray hired him with Retail Wholesale, and when Ray left that union, Jon was his replacement. Carolyn Askew was a lawyer in the labour movement, and married Jon. Jon was not on the Executive of the Fed, but he played a big role. The Typographical Union (led by Len Guy) and the Retail Wholesale Union (Jon Squire) were in the offices below the BC Fed, and so they often collaborated. Al Staley was another AFL background, and a representative for the Carpenter’s Union. Many of these folks volunteered a lot of time to the Fed, as their main job was with their union. Jack MacKenzie was from the IWA, and was a preferred Federation officer, over a man named Jack Moore, who “didn’t work out”. Don Dunphy was from the Steelworkers, and did a good job. Len Guy was a trade unionist “100%”, but needed some convincing on social issues – though he later played a big role, and was the choice replacement for Ray after he left. Don Crabbe was a quiet, well-dressed man. Ron Johnson was a “top-notch” staff person. Ray attributes his success at both the Retail Wholesale Union and the BC Fed to having quality staff members supporting him. They had no problem with making Ray rethink or reconsider certain choices and issues. “If you haven’t got all the skills, you better have good people around you, and you better be ready to listen”.

09:57 – 12:04

Ray discusses working with Clive Lytle. They would often play pool at lunch and discuss the issues. Ray admits while there was a council of 16, with 6 officers, it was not uncommon for a resolution to be passed with 5 of 6 officers and some council present. It was understood that if the majority of officers supported a resolution, you had to abide by it. Paddy Neale (IWA) was one officer who rarely agreed with the majority.

12:05 – 15:55

In this section, Ray describes when 4 locals of the IWA were removed from the BC Fed. The IWA had been going to the press, and the Fed had made multiple requests for internal issues to stay out of the media. They passed a resolution regarding this, and in those days, “when we made policy, people had to live by it”. Finally, they were removed from the body. Paddy Neale stepped down from his position at the Labour Council, as he did not want their membership to be at risk as well. The Canadian Labour Congress became involved, and the locals eventually returned to the Fed. The Labour Council and the Fed had many clashes over the years. Paddy had been arrested during the Lenkirk Electric strike, which he saw as a badge of honour. Paddy then ran against Ray for leadership at the BC Fed.

15:56 – 21:57

Ray discusses the issue of injunctions in this section. When he worked with Retail Wholesale, strike after strike were ruined by injunctions. One interesting strike was with Grinnell Sprinkler Systems, which got an injunction preventing picketing of any sort. They were unable to get it removed, which busted the strike. As 4th Vice-President of the BC Fed, Ray’s main driving force was against injunctions. Pat O’Neil was the Secretary-Treasurer at that time, and was great with the press. He famously plastered the walls of his office with all the injunctions active in the process, which made the front page of all the newspapers. Ultimately, they won this campaign against injunctions, in that there were less “ex parte” injunctions issued. He recalls a time when the Fed declared California grapes as “hot”, and they protested a store which continued to sell them. The injunction on that location was renewed yearly for almost 5 years. “They were a mockery of the courts, really”. Northland Navigation was one of the largest examples.

21:58 – 22:51

In this section, Ray describes “hot edicts” – the practice of declaring items “hot” and refusing to handle them as protest, such as what happened with Imperial Oil. The oil workers were striking, and so Imperial Oil was declared “hot” – that meant all oil, because the industry is so interwoven. It ultimately resulted in a settlement for the workers.

22:52 – 26:24

Ray doesn’t see injunctions as of much of an issue today. They are no longer handled through the court system, and instead go through the Labour Relations Board. He goes

on to talk about Bill 33, which brought in compulsory arbitration. It was “the big fight”, and the Fed decided they would boycott the mediation commission. There were a few unions that were timid to defy it, but they held strong. The Teamsters (not part of BC Fed at that time) decided to go through with the arbitration process and “got royally screwed”, and then spoke out against the mediation commission themselves. The way in which the Teamsters were treated, and their consequent protests, were the final blow to the process.

26:25 – 27:54

Ray talks more about working at the BC Federation of Labour. His main goal was get trade unions to work together. Ray had seen a lack of solidarity during strikes in those days, and so he emphasized the Fed play a role in this. As far as he knows, the policy created still stands to this day, which states that delegate unions must meet with the Federation before organizing a strike, in order to coordinate solidarity actions.

27:55 – 30:26

Ray talks about the lack of women at the BC Federation of Labour at that time. There were 16 staff members when he started, all of which were male. Two notable women he interacted with were labour lawyers: Carolyn Askew, Marguerite Jackson, and Catherine Wedge (the latter two of Victory Square Law Office). Opal Skilling, of the Officeworkers Union, was a powerful woman at the time. Josephine Hallock was in charge of Union Label, along with her husband Earl.

30:27 – 36:53

Ray talks more about tactics used by the BC Fed, such as declaring items “hot”. He tells a story of the OTU (Office and Technical Workers Union) certifying a factory which the Steelworkers had been unable to secure. This meant when the office workers (organized by Steelworkers) went on strike, they could not get the OTU to support. The Fed declared all products from the factory hot, which was controversial, as it was technically union-operated – but “a picket is a picket”, and the policy was respected. This tactic is still used today. He goes on to note that communication was another tactic – he laments the loss of dedicated labour reporters today. He gives examples of recent strikes he was unaware of due to lack of media coverage (IKEA, BCAA). Ray has noted a lot more lockouts by employers in recent years.

36:54 – 37:40

Ray now sits on the BC Federation of Retired Union Members (FORUM). This has given him insight into the various campaigns that the BC Fed is now undertaking, such as the “Fight for \$15”.

37:41 – 39:55

The new labour code (introduced by the NDP Government in 1973) came after Ray had left the Federation. Ray knew Dave Barrett from his previous associations with the party. Barrett was not a fan of the party's associations with the labour movement. Ray tells a story (he notes Dave has denied) of Barrett urging Tom Berger to start a fight with labour, in order to remove any association.

39:56 – 45:18

Ray elaborates on the issue of party association within the labour movement. Ray signed up many affiliations to the BC Fed, and he worked hard for them. His reservation, if any, is not with party affiliation, but rather that some people see that as the only way to solve problems. "The labour movement can't win all its battles by electing a government"; it still has to be a militant movement. He points to the upcoming provincial election as an example of this issue re-emerging. He also says the New Democratic Party itself has changed – "it's not the Tommy Douglas party I remember". He talks about the founding convention of what was then called the "New Party" (an image of which he provided to the Centre).

45:19 – 53:30

Ray reflects on his time working with the BC Nurses Union (BCNU) in the 1980's. He had opened his own labour consulting firm, West Coast Labour Bureau, and the BCNU was one case he handled. He was then offered a position organizing long-term care workers. Deborah Brewster was a co-worker (now works for the Newspapers Guild in Victoria), and Debbie Cameron was another. Ray describes the work they did as "unbelievable". The workers themselves were primarily women, and often new immigrants, and "they had guts" when it came to organizing. There were a large number of Filipino nurses. They had great faith in the union. BCNU had help organizing from the HEU (Hospital Employees Union), and Ray often worked alongside Sharon Yandle. A lot of organizing was done by "door-knocking".

53:31 – 55:48

Ray learned these direct tactics of organizing (as opposed to holding meetings) from his first time organizing, back at Hudson's Bay Wholesale. They were secretive and deliberate in their contacts, to guarantee the union could be certified.

55:49 – 58:21

Ray discusses the Trade Union Research Bureau. He did some work for the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers during his freelancing days. He tells a story of RCMP surveillance from around that time.

58:22 – 1:00:45

Ray has become involved with FORUM as the Sunshine Coast representative over the past year. He keeps himself active within the labour movement.

1:00:46 – 1:01:50

Ray brings up Bob Smeal who was the President of the Federation prior to Al Staley. He was also the BC Rep on the Canadian Labour Congress. He unfortunately passed away at a convention. He was the one who pushed Ray to join the Fed.

1:01:51 – 1:11:15

In this section, Ray returns to the topic of Pat O’Neil’s bugging scandal and subsequent inquiry. Ray and others refused to support him after this incident – “people had a right to be unhappy”. Canadian autonomy was also an issue at the time, and there were many raids going on between Canadian and International unions. Canadian autonomy was an old issue, and has been around since Ray first found himself introduced to a union workplace in 1948. The labour movement was “slow” in taking up the idea. Returning to Pat O’Neil, those at the Fed were shocked when he decided to return to the Pulp & Sulphite Workers Union, which left Ray as his replacement for Secretary-Treasurer. Surprisingly, Pat got a great recommendation from the judge during his inquiry – “the judge fell in love with him; he was that kind of guy, he had pizzazz.”

1:11:16 – 1:14:00

Ray talks about his motivations for staying in the labour movement over the years. It started with “dollars and cents”, and has evolved to include social ideologies. He mentions Tom Clarke, the head steward in the IWA when Ray worked at the mill. Tommy Douglas also had a big influence over his political ideologies.

1:14:01 – 01:19:59

Ray says he tries not to be negative about the state of society today and going forward. He recalls the Simmons dispute, and says “the women won that strike”. Ray always insisted on the union shop being included in a contract. He found in his experience, workers waived when the issues went beyond wages – they would strike for higher pay, but weren’t sure if they would strike for a pension plan or union shop dues. Ray also describes a bargaining tactic he learned from Len Guy – leaving the monetary value blank on a contract until it was agreed to. He tells a story in which representatives from the City of Vancouver asked, “Well, how will we know when we’ve reached a number?” and Ray replied, “I’ll yell BINGO!” Most employers got used to this way of bargaining.

1:20:00 – 01:26:27

In the final part of the interview, Ray describes a strike that operated out of a boxcar, and mentions some further names – John McNevin, who was Ray’s assistant at the Fed prior to Clive Lytle. Roy Gauthier and Tim Buck are other names. He tells one last story, of the BC Fed condemning a Communist action that had occurred in Europe. The interview is wrapped up.