

BC Labour Heritage Centre Oral History Project

Interview with Ray Haynes

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Interviewers: Ken Bauder, Al Cornes

Videographer: Ruby Best

Running Time: 01:46:37

Key Subjects: Arbitration; Anti-War Movement; B.C. Federation of Labour; B.C. Teacher's Federation [BCTF]; Collective bargaining; International Woodworkers of America [IWA]; Injunctions; Negotiating; New Democratic Party; Retail Wholesale Union;

Ray Haynes was born in Point Gray, Vancouver, B.C. on June 15th, 1928.

00:00 – 05:38

In the first section of the interview, introductions are made, and Ray describes his upbringing in Vancouver. The first address he recalls was on East 44th, and they later moved to White Rock, where he lived until about 1942. His first job was delivering papers; he recalls there were only around 50 to deliver for all of White Rock. His father was a detective with the Vancouver Police Force. His mother was Lebanese – “it gets you great food”. He did not come from a union household and was unfamiliar with labour issues. His dad was in favour of peace and the CCF, but did not discuss politics otherwise. He was not introduced to labour politics until working in a sawmill. In his schooling (during the War), he did not appreciate Cadets, as it interfered with school activities like physical education and library time, which he enjoyed. He left school in Grade 9, and worked as a bellhop. From there, he worked in Insurance for 3 years, then did bookkeeping in a telegraph office. He also worked at Hudson's Bay Wholesale for a time. He then worked in the sawmill, where he “received his labour education” through the IWA [217].

05:39 – 09:06

In this section, Ray discusses working at White Pine Sawmill. He worked the chain with “nice, clean lumber”, and had to work fast to keep up. “It pretty near sucked me into staying in that industry, because the pay was so much higher” – a dollar an hour. It was a “hotbed” of labour education. He worked with Tommy Clarke, John Bushe, Al Bushe, Bill Grey. “I was talking to Bill Grey, the first aid guy, and I'd say ‘He says the Communist Party is a good idea – I don't know much about it. What do you know about that?’... Everybody's politics were strong, and they let each other know how strong they were. So then, telling me the stuff, and disagreeing with each other, I got a crash-course... I really didn't have a political bone in my body until then.” He worked there for around 6 months in 1948.

09:07 – 14:16

In this section, Ray discusses the attempt to form a Canadian union in 1948, and how a majority of the IWA were against it at the time. Ray changed his mind on this issue after learning more about it. He witnessed interference from the International which changed his thoughts. Union dues check-off was present at the time. “I got really initiated then, because of two reasons: One, I was a young guy on afternoon shift... and I wanted my evenings, and I applied for dayshift. I saw guys being hired and going straight on the dayshift, and I realized there was no system, so I started a petition... and I took it to our chief shop steward, and he threw it in the wastepaper basket... another time, we were in a grievance meeting... and finally, Carl agreed to drop the grievance right there in front of us. So I took that to the Local 217.” These incidents fuelled Ray’s passion. They did not introduce a rotating shift structure. Lloyd Wayland was president of that Local.

14:17 – 18:47

After leaving the sawmill, Ray returned to work at the Hudson’s Bay Wholesale, where he earned around \$80-\$100 per month. This is where Ray organized his first union. He picked up the paper one day and saw that Mc & Mac employees had just settled. He called up the Union, at the corner of Cambie and Hastings, and spoke to the President, Jerry Emery. Jerry gave him some sign-up cards, and Ray signed up all but one of the 30 employees at Hudson’s Bay. The employer had no idea a union was coming until the application for certification appeared on his desk, and he was very angry. “You should have come to me”, he said, to which Ray replied, “Yeah, I know if I came to you what would have happened.” Ray organized this union with a man named Percy Stewart, around 1951-1952. When Ray later worked for the Retail Wholesale Union, they never held meetings – they went knocking door-to-door. They organized around 100 Surrey Co-op employees by door-knocking. He was elected to the executive of Retail Wholesale. The Union office was at 49 West Hastings. Jerry never owned a car and organized by streetcar.

19:48 – 24:19

Ray attended nearly all the International conventions. He remembers when the Vietnam War was on, and the Union International was in support of the war. George Barlow, head of the union, was unhappy when Ray went to the microphone to disagree with the President of the International. “In fact, Tommy Douglas thinks it’s terrible”, Ray had said in reference to the Vietnam War. Ray also discusses the influence of McCarthy-ism in the labour movement. He states that even he was “oversensitive” to start. Ray says he only ever disagreed with the BC Fed on social/international issues.

24:20 – 24:55

Ray speaks more about working at the BC Fed. He loved the job and couldn’t wait to get to work each day.

24:56 – 28:35

In this section, Ray talks about the use of “ex parte” injunctions. Jon Squire, of Retail Wholesale, was a big part of the fight against them. Pat O’Neil picked up this fight for the BC Fed. He famously plastered the walls of his office with injunctions. Pat was a “media darling” and did well with the press. Ray was proud of the fact he got Pat on board with uniting during times of strikes to avoid breaking picket lines. This is now written into many collective agreements. Ray laments the loss of dedicated labour reporters in the media.

28:36 – 36:20

Ray was not involved with the Lenkirk strike, as he was organizing his own for the car salesmen at Dominion Motors. He discusses injunctions he experienced while organizing, including one on a plumber’s strike which prevented 100% of picketing. Ex parte injunctions were extremely common and limiting – “you couldn’t sneeze or blow your nose at a picket line”, Ray jokes. He discusses how unions would organize together to go around injunctions. He talks about one incident where items were declared “hot”.

36:21 – 39:37

In this section, Ray discusses organizing tactics at the time. One strike was organized out of a boxcar. Products were declared “hot”, which was “nearly as good as having a picket line”. He talks about grapes being declared “hot” and refusing to work with them.

39:38 – 43:04

In this section, Ray talks more about Jerry Emery. He was the one who asked Ray to join the BC Federation of Labour. He moved up to 4th Vice-President, before replacing Pat O-Neil as Secretary-Treasurer. He mentions Bob Smeal and George Johnson as Presidents, and Len Guy as a vice-president – all former leaders of small unions.

43:05 – 45:15

Ray pushed for the BCNU and BCTF to join the BC Fed, but they both joined after he left. One big fight that the BC Fed had was against the Bennett government in favour of the building trades. He dealt with both WAC Bennett and Bill Bennett during his time.

45:16 – 48:00

In this section, Ray talks about the changes that came with the Barrett government. Ray had supported Berger quite early on. Barrett wanted to “contrive” a fight between labour and the NDP. Barrett didn’t want to be associated with the labour movement. “We didn’t want to call it the Labour Party, but we didn’t expect to be embarrassed”. This was also the same time that Ray left the Fed.

48:01 – 49:33

In this section, Ray talks more about international issues such as apartheid and the Vietnam War. He recalls a province-wide shutdown in response to the War. The Fed was invited to a rally in San Francisco as a result.

49:34 – 51:25

Ray left the Fed to own a resort at Quadra Island. He was “dead tired” and needed a break from Labour. He got a call from Berger, and was asked to join as a labour consultant for the Mackenzie-Valley Pipeline Inquiry.

51:26 – 53:17

In this section, Ray talks about the BC Fed’s involvement in Peace Rallies and Marches. Ray credits the people around him who influenced him on these issues. He mentions Debbie Cameron, Deborah Brewster, Colin Gabelmann, Clive Lytle, John McNevin, George Johnston as people who influenced him.

53:18 – 57:15

In this section, Ray talks about working with the BCNU. He continued consulting after working with Berger, and Norah Payton, head of the Nurses Union, offered to hire him. Long-term care workers were unorganized at the time, and this was the job he was hired to do. They also hired two nurses to work with him – Debbie and Deborah. They organized 1000 nurses in the time he was there, private and public, all over the province. They were paid terrible wages in comparison to nurses, and demanded equal wage, as well as benefits the nurses didn’t have. Norah is the one who pushed for long-term care organization. The employers formed an organization of their own and bargained as a group.

58:30 – 01:01:25

Ray believed in organizing through door-knocking, and many times, people would check down the street before inviting him in. At that time, you didn’t have to vote to certify a union. He recalls organizing his first union at Hudson’s Bay Wholesale, where he worked as a tea-blender.

01:01:26 – 01:02:57

In this section, Ray talks about working for the BCTF for a time. The teachers gained the right to strike. He worked alongside Sharon Yandle, which was a “great experience”.

01:02:58 – 01:06:57

In this section, Ray discusses leaving the BCNU to begin working for VMRU. Glenn replaced Norah at the BCNU. Roy Richmond, a BCNU employee, kept Glenn “sane”. Roy

passed away, and Glenn fired many people. Ray decided he didn't want to work there anymore, and accepted a job at VMRU from Bob Donnelly. He was interviewed by the whole executive. He met Joey Hartman and Steve Baker while working there. The major employer they dealt with was the City of Vancouver – Art Gallery workers, Parks & Rec, City Police office staff, etc.

01:06:58 – 01:08:25

In this section, Ray gives his advice for the younger generation. He says to avoid surrounding yourself with “yes-men”, and quotes an old friend: “you have to have it in your gut”.

01:08:26 – 01:14:08

In this section, Ray talks about his current political involvement: being the Sunshine Coast representative for FORUM, and being arrested while blocking a coal train. Cliff Stainsby was an organizer who Ray had met through the People's Commission. He encouraged Ray to become involved with the picket. Ray says they all agreed they made a mistake by paying the fines after being arrested, and the issue died off as a result. He recalls an individual from his BC Fed days who talked about environmental issues all the time; “drove us nuts – we weren't talking about environment in those days!” He was “ahead of his time”. They finally set up an environmental committee, and made this individual the chair.

01:14:09 – 01:18:30

In this section, Ray discusses what he feels are the biggest issues facing workers today. He says we don't learn enough from history or the events in other parts of the world. He acknowledges that it is “different times”, and the conflict between environmental issues and jobs, but “without unions, what the hell – we're hopeless”.

01:18:31 – 01:20:50

In this portion of the interview, Ray describes his proudest moments. He says the policy of unions working together during strikes is extremely important to him. He thinks of a specific strike at Simmons Mattress, where he says “women saved the strike”. He remembers the UFAW bringing salmon down to the strikers on the picket line. This solidarity is what he is so proud of.

01:20:51 – 01:24:30

In this section, Ray goes back to his interest in the BC Fed. During his time at Retail Wholesale, 9/10 strikes he was involved with were “recognition strikes”, or first contract. He felt very unhappy that they couldn't get support from other unions.

01:24:31 – 01:28:15

Ray acknowledges that although he worked quite hard for NDP affiliation, having a certain party elected is not as essential for the Labour Movement as was once thought. He learned this when the NDP was elected, as they were hesitant to enact a lot of the policy they were thought to support. Ray provided a collection of scrapbooks for the BCLHC to digitize.

01:28:16 – 01:37:15

Ray shares a story of organizing a particular picket, which the Machinists and Teamsters kept crossing. As a response, they started picketing Teamsters. John Squire always wore a light coloured raincoat. Around the second day of picketing, a man came out of the Teamsters office and attacked a random picketer in a raincoat (mistaken for Jon Squire), knocking him to the ground and fleeing. Ray chased after him and got the licence plate from the car – it was a Teamsters rep from the Okanogan. They discovered that this rep had hired a “goon” from Seattle. He recalls several other notable pickets.

01:37:16 – 01:38:45

In this section, Ray recalls the various lawyers that were employed by the labour movement. He convinced the BCNU to hire a new firm to represent them. He says a mistake of many unions is that the lawyer ends up running them.

01:38:46 – 01:46:37

In this section, Ray talks more about his time as a consultant. He also mentions Paddy Neale. The interview is wrapped up.