Interview: Carolyn Askew [CA]
Interviewer: Bailey Garden [BG]
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Transcription: Donna Sacuta

BG [00:00:01] All right. So to start off I'd just like to introduce the interview. So we're interviewing Carolyn Askew. Today is August. 23rd. 2017 and the interviewer is today Bailey Garden and Neil Vokey on behalf of the BC Labour Heritage Centre. So thank you so much for coming in Carolyn. We're really excited to add your story to our collection. Just to start off can you tell us your full name as well as a little bit about when and where you were born and raised.

CA [00:00:31] My name's Carolyn Judith Askew. I grew up in southwestern Ontario and I transferred out to second year law school in 1967 I'm going to say. Yeah.

BG [00:00:50] And so you came out to BC.

CA [00:00:51] I came to BC, yeah. And obviously never went back.

BG [00:00:57] So growing up were your parents involved in Labour issues or politics at all? Was that ever a discussion in your family?

CA [00:01:05] Politics was a daily discussion at the dinner table. My parents were very strong CCF as it was in those days so social and political issues of the day were what was discussed at dinner. And my grandfather Askew, though he left England as a young man was a very strong British Labour Party supporter.

BG [00:01:36] So you always had that growing up. Did that influence your choice to go to law school?

CA [00:01:45] No I can't remember why I went to law school. I know that I thought it was actually social work. It wasn't until I was in there for a while that I realized it was all about business.

BG [00:02:00] But were you drawn to kind of the more social issues side of it?

CA [00:02:05] Yeah. Oh yeah.

[00:02:08] So what was your first experience with work or labour prior to law school? Can you tell us a little bit about that.

CA [00:02:16] Gee, well we all worked in the summer during university years I worked at I don't know who owns it now but it was Northern Electric then and they made telephones for Bell so I worked a couple of summers actually on the Northern Electric production line. It was non-union. And before that I worked in a dry-cleaning factory. Putting the bags on clothes, clean clothes which of course was also non-union.

BG [00:02:51] Must have been some hard labour though.

CA [00:02:52] Well it was scary actually as an old plant and there was lots to get injured on. Northern Electric probably for its day was probably a good plant in terms of worker safety. It was a big plant.

BG [00:03:13] So before we go into your background as a lawyer can you just tell us a little bit about your family, your children or what they're doing as well.

CA [00:03:25] I had two husbands both of whom are dead, but I was married to John Squire who as the head of Retail Wholesale Union for a long time. And he and Ray Haynes were contemporaries. And John was a table officer at the Labour Federation when I worked there and when Clive worked there. Clive Lytle. I have one son. And he's in Nanaimo.

BG [00:03:57] So you had a very long career as a lawyer. And a lot of that work was in regards to labour, for the Labour Relations Board, tribunals, things like that. So was the labour movement part of your awareness when you were becoming a lawyer? of what was happening you were introduced you through work.

CA [00:04:19] It certainly wasn't anything I was introduced to for work.

CA [00:04:25] I had difficulty getting articles because I was female. There were very few women graduates and most firms were not interested at all. Later on got to laugh over their explanations for why they couldn't hire me. But at that time of course I needed articles. But I did get articles at a business firm. And so that's kind of where I was going. But it I didn't like it and I became involved I don't remember how it was prior to the election of the Barrett government in 1972. But Norm Levi was a social worker and he and that group of others including Clive Lytle decided what we need to do is take over the Children's Aid Society which we did, we rank, we stacked the annual meeting and got all the spots. And promptly began to change the Children's Aid Society approach to child apprehensions and other things that they were doing. I don't think they exist in British Columbia anymore, but they do in other provinces. I'm not sure about that. But anyways I met Clive there. And as it happened you know time passed, August 1972 the Barrett government was elected and Colin Gabelmann who also worked at the Federation was elected an MLA from North Vancouver. And Clive just happened to mention there was an opening Legislative Director opening at the Federation. So I applied and got the job. Ray Haynes was the secretary treasurer.

BG [00:06:21] So that was right after the election of the Barrett government.

CA [00:06:24] Yes. Yeah. Yeah.

BG [00:06:26] So that came with a lot of changes to labour laws a lot of excitement of course. In the labour community. Can you talk a little bit about that election?

CA [00:06:39] The election itself or the after the aftermath? Well of course every all the leadership in the labour movement had worked a very very long time to get the NDP elected, and they'd been close and not close and most of the labour movement back Tom Berger in the leadership contest and he was not successful. Labour was not very keen on Barrett, and he not very keen on labour. So it became a real challenge to moderate the hopes of the labour movement and try to elevate the interest of the government. They knew they had to do something because labour was so integral all around the province in getting them elected. But it was by no means a pro-labour government.

[00:07:41] So Clive Lytle mentioned in our interview with him that you might have been involved with the BC Fed's Women's Committee. Were you? Can you tell us a little bit about that.

CA [00:07:52] Well they didn't have one. And so I think a group of us and. Actually, there was another woman that worked at the labour federation when I did it. Her name was Gail Borst, now Meredith. Anyway she was from the United States, and she was an organizer for the farm workers. And we had the grape boycott going on in British Columbia. So I think Gail and I had the idea that there should be a women's committee on the Fed. So we were able to put that forward to the table officers probably and a Women's Committee was established. They met for quite a while.

BG [00:08:48] Was it well received at the Fed?

CA [00:08:49] No. I mean there were women in leadership positions in some unions but not very many. Few and far between. Yeah. Yeah.

BG [00:09:06] So you also chaired the first Community Legal Assistance Office in BC. Can you tell us about that and why is legal assistance important in the lives of working people.

CA [00:09:19] We started that when I was actually in third year law school. So that would been 1967-68 probably think I graduated in '68 and Mike Harcourt was a classmate. And there was some federal money around, It was a Company of Young Canadians or youth funds for youth, or it was the time of the riots on Kits Beach and so the federal government decided to throw some money at young people. And so I think we got a small amount of money to start a Community Legal Assistance Society. So there was Mike and I and Ian Waddell were always the first staff person and then able to hire a second staff person. But legal aid like the provincial legal aid system either had not yet been set up or was just being set up.

CA [00:10:29] Their original mandate was only for criminal cases, serious criminal cases. There was no civil law component. There still is my understanding the Federal Government's still only funds the criminal legal aid and it's up to the provinces to fund or not all the civil stuff which was all family and children and poverty and housing and tenants. So there was really there was nowhere to go for that. So that was our target group from Community Legal Assistance.

BG [00:11:05] Can you remember what some of the big issues were that you fought for?

CA [00:11:11] No.

BG: No worries.

BG [00:11:16] So over the years appearing before provincial and federal labour or labour employment boards. Do you remember any specific cases that were memorable? Either big wins or maybe big losses.

CA [00:11:30] Every time I had a big win it would always be appealed. Oh gee that's a big question. I have been giving it some thought. The wins were mostly certification drives because they were so difficult, and people would get fired. But I can't... And of course in those days some unions had, and the labour federation had the hot goods policy. So that

was always very strongly challenged. To hang on to a hot goods declaration was a big win. Yeah.

BG [00:12:16] That was a common tactic used.

CA [00:12:19] It sure was yeah.

[00:12:22] This may have been slightly prior to your time but during the 60s there is the fight against injunctions and that kind of carried into the 70s. Somewhat. Particularly ex parte injunctions. Yeah. Did that come up in there?

CA [00:12:36] Oh yes. Yeah. Yeah. I can remember very clearly, I don't know of a case but going into it there was a time when we did get notice you would get two maybe three hours' notice of an application. You'd get it late morning and have to be down there for two o'clock. Just absolutely astonished at the nonsense that came out of the Employer Council's mouth. Because the court was not sympathetic and of course the law was not in our favour at all on the injunctions were usually granted. We used to joke about the Federation was at 517 East Broadway upstairs. And you've met Ray. He's a big man. He was always a big man. We used to joke about having an injunction, except for Ray somehow if we could just get him to hang outside the window while the process server came. Yeah yeah.

BG [00:13:41] Yeah. He told us quite a few stories of his ex parte injunctions and the fight against them.

BG [00:13:46] Yeah. Do you remember any other tactics that were used by employers' councils or the like against unions?

CA [00:13:53] In particular. No. No. I mean their biggest goal was to stop the organizing. Stop the certification. So typically once the certification was obtained you could look forward to a successful negotiations but not always. Sometimes it just there would never be a contract and support for the Union would fall away after a couple of years and the whole thing would die.

BG [00:14:33] Kind of drawing out the process.

CA [00:14:34] Yeah. Exactly. Well people join a union with a number of goals. And if they don't see them realized people lose heart. Understandably.

[00:14:48] So you also taught at the People's Law School in the early 1970s. Can you tell us about what made that institution unique?

CA [00:14:58] The fact that we were offering a wide variety of courses and speaking plain English. It cost nothing.

BG [00:15:13] It was completely free?

CA [00:15:14] Completely free. I don't remember if you got materials probably given that we were lawyers we probably gave you materials as well and it might have been a notional nominal cost for print materials but the courses themselves were free. We taught weeknights. Sometimes we'd blow our brains out and do a weekend or something. Yeah. I

taught family, I taught estates, I taught real estate, and of course I taught employment standards.

BG [00:15:55] So did people receive a certificate or a diploma?

CA [00:15:58] Oh yes I did. Oh you bet. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Diana Davidson was the brains behind that idea, a lawyer. There were a lot of us that taught.

BG [00:16:12] It's definitely a unique institution.

CA [00:16:15] Yeah. We taught in church basements, I think. Or community centres.

[00:16:21] Do you remember how long that was around?

CA [00:16:23] I think it's still, I think it is still in existence. But I don't know what their offerings are or what the program, they eventually got funding from the Law Foundation. So that made a huge difference because before that it was all grant stuff.

BG [00:16:45] So during the 1972 election there was an introduction of the labour code. Did this impact your work at the BC Fed? Do you remember any parts of it that were big changes.

CA [00:17:05] Well labour was bitterly disappointed and disappointed by the Labour Code and thought it was a betrayal. It was based on Ontario legislation which was relatively new at the time and thought by Ontario standards to be progressive. But it was not what the British Columbia labour movement wanted. The fundamental framework of the legislation was to equate the rights of labour with the rights of capital. That was a non-starter. Obviously. What the people in British Columbia wanted was something that was more on the Saskatchewan Trade Union Act as it was then which really was labour rights. And there were a lot of important what the heck did we call it. There were a number of severe restrictions on picketing and because the picket line was so strong in British Columbia, it was really why disputes were successful because we would picket the employer wherever they were. And then in 1973 kind of '74 labour code began to restrict that and ultimately now you can only picket where you actually work. So if you work across the street, I mean oh big deal you have a picket line. Nobody comes down here. Nobody is going to see you. You're not going to get any public pressure. The employer can operate out there somewhere else, and you can't go there. That sort of stuff.

BG [00:19:05] And we've seen that transition now from a lot of picket lines to a lot of these battles are being fought primarily in court. It's kind of the only form of recourse.

CA [00:19:16] Yeah. Yeah.

BG [00:19:19] So, there was a lot of rollbacks to the provincial labour code as we move forward into the 70s and 80s. Of course we have the Social Credit government re-elected. Can you talk about those rollbacks a little bit.

CA [00:19:34] Well they all restricted and in some cases prohibited the use of the primary weapons that labour had in the dispute. They was something in there about the hot goods. There was something of course further picketing restrictions, for a while there or they made it more difficult to obtain a certification. They played around with the threshold for a vote. And what had started to develop under Paul Weiler as the first chair of the new

Labour Relations Board and then continued was unhelpful definitions of the bargaining unit. So big was in, which of course is harder to organize once you get going. If you're trying to organize 400 people, it's really hard. And if you're trying to organize 400r people who work shift work it's even harder. So as the push was under the labour code for bargaining units labour had more and more difficulty obtaining certifications.

BG [00:21:10] How long were you at the BC Federation of Labour?

CA [00:21:18] Five years maybe six.

[00:21:21] So going into 80s.

CA [00:21:23] Yeah.

BG [00:21:24] Were you then at a private firm?

CA [00:21:26] Yes. Yeah. I practiced on my own for a while and I practiced with other firms. I didn't practice for a couple of years around my son was little somewhere in there we moved to Vancouver Island. And then moved back.

BG [00:21:46] So with that then you may or may not be able to speak to this but in the 80s there was a few big protests regarding labour. First one being the 1983 Solidarity movement. Which was a response to kind of sweeping legislation put in by the provincial government. Do you recall that?

CA [00:22:07] Oh yeah, very much so.

BG [00:22:10] Did you work on any cases related to it?

CA [00:22:12] I did. I don't remember which ones I remember going to a lot of demonstrations. I remember watching from the sidelines.

BG [00:22:28] Do you remember what the overall feeling was like at those rallies?

CA [00:22:32] Oh people were furious, absolutely furious. You just could hardly believe the things that were happening were happening. It was worse than know wage and price controls in the late 70s. This total rejection of. Stymie everything that the labour movement stood for, all the social justice stuff, all the equity stuff. All the poverty reduction stuff, the Human Rights just was out the door.

BG [00:23:10] So you mentioned actually the wage and price controls in the late 70s, that was introduced by the federal government. We should go back to that. Can you tell us a little bit about how that was affecting labour?

CA [00:23:25] Well of course there were no price controls none of us ever thought there would be. But the federal government set it up that way. But there were certainly wage controls. People's wages were frozen, basically for a number of years. .

BG [00:23:44] Was that challenge legal do you know?

CA [00:23:49] I recall it might have been in other parts of the country, but I don't recall. And I'm not saying not but I don't recall. Yeah.

BG [00:23:59] So going back to the 80s Solidarity. So the end result of that was the Kelowna Accord which was beneficial to labour but not as well received by some of the social justice movements. Can you recall that. And what were your kind of thoughts in terms of the legality of it whether it was positive or negative.

CA [00:24:37] I didn't think it was any great gain. In the labour movement was already challenged on its actions on social justice. They couldn't really decide whether they were as tight with their social justice organizations as I think they are now. Because the answer was always, join a union. You don't want low wages joining a union and that wasn't always possible. And not every union was organizing even then. So I don't think it was any great victory.

BG [00:25:26] So In 1987 only a few years later there was kind of a one-day general strike. A Day of Protest.

BG [00:25:34] Can you recall that?

CA [00:25:35] I do. Yeah, we had a lot of fun that day.

BG [00:25:40] So did you go on strike?

CA [00:25:40] Oh sure yeah. Oh yeah. Yeah.

BG [00:25:44] Were you representing any cases around that time?

CA [00:25:47] I don't recall. Yeah. Yeah.

BG [00:25:51] So during the 80s there was also some federal legislation introduced that might have come up. There was for example 1982 we had a Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Or 1988 the federal Pay Equity Act came into play. So did that legislation. Come into play in your proceedings.

CA [00:26:12] No actually I did not act for very many federal certified unions. I acted for the airlines and airline unions for a while but that was later on. Certainly we started making charter arguments. Not very successfully but we did start to try to use the charter and the pay equity was really aspirational. Other provinces had pay equity legislation. We didn't. The labour movement decided I think wisely that we didn't want pay equity legislation that we were better to force it at the bargaining table. Then what we were hearing out of Ontario was that there was so much time spent on job evaluation. As part of any pay equity stuff. And it just took forever to get any kind of wages. And of course we learned the hard way that let's say in health care well there's no point in doing a job evaluation and weighting the jobs because they're all done by women and they're all low paying what you needed to do is evaluate the jobs as against the electricians or the elevator mechanics. So it was a real struggle and none of the in the early days none of the pay equity legislation did that. It wasn't going to get us anywhere but of course we didn't know that then.

BG [00:28:00] How has that changed over the years. Is there now more room to do a cross industry comparison?

CA [00:28:07] I don't know. You know the after lawyering for more than 40 years and working on social and economic justice issues the pay gap between men and women has

gone from like women making 64 cents on the dollar to making 73 cents on the dollar. So I would say it's a dismal failure.

BG [00:28:34] A hard fought battle. So in recent years you've taught law, chaired the B.C. police commission and also served on councils and things like that. So as you look back as you said it's you know it's been a long career for you as a lawyer and not many things have changed but some things there has been victories. Can you talk a little bit about you know what's changed the most and maybe what hasn't changed as much as you wish it would.

[CA 00:29:25] Well the wage gap. The wage gap between men and women is just flat out disgraceful. You know it's all occupations. Including lawyers. Including physicians. The practice of lives changed in that there are a lot of women in law school and practicing law. I think it's still the case that most women have to form their own firms. They still are widely embraced by the mainstream firms. But again there are a lot of women practicing and that can only be a good thing. I think there's also a number of young lawyers who are active in social justice. It is the folks that work for a Pivot and it's the folks that work for the B.C. Civil Liberties and other you know street level social justice organizations. So that is growing and that is really good. Practice of law is becoming in general less and less desirable in its traditional form. So I like that I'd like to see more street stuff. Yeah. Yeah. Because it's a great skill set.

BG [00:30:51] When you were a proponent of it early on.

CA [00:30:53] Yeah. Yeah. .

BG [00:30:56] So I want to go back a little bit to you mentioning how you were married to John Squire, and he worked for Retail Wholesale Union. Could you tell us a little bit about his work in the labour movement and maybe how it impacted you as a lawyer if it did.

CA [00:31:17] Well. John Squire was a brilliant negotiator, and it was Retail Wholesale, I'm sure Ray told you, that had the hot goods provisions and between the Federation and the picketing, the strength on the picket line and the hot goods I think the Retail Wholesale members had a contract like nobody else. And they were able the food industry employers formed a Council, and the food unions formed another council and through John Squires' leadership a lot of the food unions like the bakers and the meat cutters, none of which exist anymore, it's almost the candlestick makers back in those days but you know they made some huge gains. And their members were pretty darn happy. John Squires was also a brilliant I don't know what the right word is. He used to really make me mad. I'd be talking about somebody another lawyer. Maybe an employer and he would say something like I know that guy's a three-dollar bill. And I'd say no he's not you know he says he's this, he's that, he says you know six weeks later, Yeah, the guy is a three dollar bill. I'm going ahead. And that's the way I learned it. I used to wake him up in the middle of the night with my cases. What do I do now? You know he would always figure something out. Oh. Yeah, very good problem solver and he could see a long way away which was really what his success was. He could and I think probably he taught me that if A then B. And Ray Haynes too I mean we spent a lot of time. It was easy to get us into trouble. It wasn't that easy to get out lots of time. So I got to if A then B, if B and C and we used to laugh at how far down the line we would have to go before we would see an exit to the chaos that we or somebody else had created. Yeah, we were ready and having the long view. Learning down the long view. I found it a great advantage both at work and in life.

BG [00:34:18] So can you just tell us what were some of the unions you represented over the years?

CA [00:34:26] Acted for the telephone workers. Actually John Squire and I once did an organizing drive for supervisors in the telephone workers. I acted for the Bakers. I acted a little bit for the IWA. I acted for a very long time for the newspaper unions. Pre them being forced into one union. So there were the typographers and the lithographers and the pressmen and actual printers and all those folks, so I acted for them. I acted for most of the college faculty unions. I acted for the nurses sometimes I worked at the Health Sciences Association for a while as in-house counsel acted for them, I acted for HEU. Yeah. The construction unions. I think they do now. I think I know she does Sandra Bannister acts for some of the construction unions and has done for a long time, but they were not the least bit interested in having a woman act for them. Not at all, thank you very much. I was the first lawyer ever hired in the labour movement in British Columbia because you know the historical dislike between labour and lawyers. In fact I remember some of the Federation table officers being pretty unhappy that a lawyer had been hired.

BG [00:36:21] Did they come to see the value of it?

CA [00:36:26] Yeah they did and some of them were sad when I left.

BG [00:36:29] Do you recall the names of any other lawyers that were working in the labour movement over the years?

CA [00:36:41] In-house. There were always lawyers at BCGEU. And not lawyers, there were people who were skilled advocates at the teachers Union, and I think that's about it.

BG [00:37:19] So still today not very many unions have a lawyer in-house. Do you think that's something that you would benefit from? Or do you think that's just a matter of choice?

CA [00:37:34] Well we always debated that. I think there's probably 25 or 30 lawyers in the lower mainland here working for trade unions. We always debated whether it was better to have in-house because they would you know get to know all the players and get to know the industry really well or whether it was better to hire people from private practice because they had to learn you know the industry and they would see new things. The risk of being in-house and using in-house is everybody's drinking their own bath water after a while. It's unavoidable really. That's just what happens.

BG [00:38:22] So looking back on your career do you have any cases or accomplishments that you're particularly proud of?

CA [00:38:47] I can't think of any particular cases. I would if I saw some materials or went through some files. I mean everything was so hard fought, the law was always against us. The only time we won is if the employer messed up big time. I used to describe my job as a pick and shovel work, we get behind the employer and start digging a hole and hoped down we could push them into it. But it wasn't. It wasn't going to be any. I'll put it this way. I always worked the facts because the facts were all nearly always good for us because there had been an injustice. Or some bad behaviour and so a fight. Pounded the facts and I could try to work that law into it. But. You know we never won on the law. We always won on the facts. I think what's changed is that and then I feel happy to have contributed to it

there's a lot more women who are active and strong and in leadership roles in labour and other community justice organizations. There's been a huge upwelling.

BG [00:40:25] It's good to see.

CA [00:40:25] It is it is.

BG [00:40:27] So we have the first female President of the BC Federation of Labour that's something that's changed from your days of setting up the Women's Committee.

CA [00:40:35] Yeah and there's some strong women from time to time in the Teamsters and the building trades you know remain over here, but even then, there's women in those trades and some of them are in leadership positions. The whole of the news, well the newspaper industry is under terrible attack. But there you know Jan O'Brien came out of the newspaper. She came out in the old Guild. She was first president in a big Local 2000. There's been great leadership in the nurses' union even though they've messed up recently. So I understand. I should be able to think of some cases. I don't know why I don't. You know I counted a great deal on having a good memory. I could remember what the witness said or didn't say six or eight months ago when the case was over. It was gone. Just gone. And the next case was in there.

BG [00:41:46] Once you dedicate yourself to the case. Yeah. Yeah. So we always like to ask people towards the end of our interviews, and we are going through nearing the end. Why do you think it's important for young workers today to understand this history of the labour movement in B.C. and Canada in general?

CA [00:42:15] Well we wouldn't have any of the even modest employment standards, protections or we wouldn't have WorkSafe. We wouldn't have any of that if it hadn't been for the labour movement. And as it's under attack or you know staying still it won't survive unless there's an active labour movement because nobody else cares. And it's all stuff. All requirements and rules that impact on profit and even in the public sector for some reason where profit is not a requirement and public sector employers don't act in my experience any different than private sector employers. In fact and I was happy that I had a large private sector client and that I had a lot of unions that were in the private sector, and I was always happy because it would make me so angry. And I do believe that popular saying you know if we don't remember how we got here we're going to have to do it again and again and again. It's not because employers are good people that we have eight-hour day or overtime. Or any of that. It's not that they're bad people it's just it's not their goal and objective. It's not their concern. So it's important for young people to understand how social change is achieved. Certainly you know I learned in the labour movement in working with a wide variety of unions that it's a small number of people that can actually make something happen. So we were never deterred the unions I acted for. Were never deterred by the fact that maybe only 20 percent or 15 percent of the members thought this was a great idea. If it was progressive and a positive idea that would benefit the membership you could make it happen. And so for young people to see and have a sense that you know we can actually change this we can make this happen and we don't have to wait till a majority feel this way we can do it now. That's. That's why I think people need to know their history.

BG [00:45:06] So. Looking forward. What do you think are some of the big challenges that the labour movement is going to have to fight there and maybe even labour lawyers?

CA [00:45:20] Well you know the percentage of the workforce that's unionized is a huge concern. And as technology continues apace the nature of work is changing a great deal. And the idea that everybody's a contractor nobody actually has a job. People don't know what an FTE is very worrisome to me because what's anybody thinking is going to be happening when I'm 55 and I don't have a pension because I was always an independent contractor and I just never had enough money to build my own pension. I think it's a very challenging and for many people hostile work environment is hostile. Aren't valued in lots of sectors. You know it's like I can't, I would not want to be graduating from law school right now. I wouldn't want to be graduating from a lot of things right now because workplace has changed and not going to find opportunities in the same way. And I don't know whether people are being equipped. Probably not to be as adaptable as you need to be. I mean my son who's 36 or something maybe 37. You know he talks a lot about being in the right demographic. And he is in the right demographic, but the youth unemployment rate is still way too high. And that's the thing I worry about more than anything else is the youth unemployment rate.

BG [00:47:33] We are reaching the end.

CA [00:47:35] Okay, good. I'm a fast talker.

BG [00:47:38] Is there anything else though from your time in the labour movement that you'd like to share/ Maybe that we didn't talk about.

CA [00:47:48] I'll tell you when I first went to work in the labour federation, I had never been in the room you know what board boardrooms are like. There was board room down at 517 on East Broadway there and they're all big men mostly big men. Not, some were heavy but they were they were big men, and they didn't swear in those days. I swore a little bit for a lawyer, and they did not swear at all. Least not in meetings but the voices would be raised, and the table would be pounded, and I was terrified. Just terrified. Nobody acted like that at law school. Nobody had that in articles and certainly I did not come from a demonstrative or excitable family. And I several times wanted to get under the table. OK somebody is going to die here and make sure it's not me. I'm young. Once in a while when those officers would go across the table. Fortunately board tables are wide, so it was more for show with them for actual. But in those days when that meeting was over, they walked out of that room it was rock solid. They never discussed what was said. They never said oh so-and-so didn't vote for this. He thinks it's stupid. They never said any of that ever. It was rock solid. That was the decision that was a decision. And it was a huge strength, and you know obviously every organization that can operate that way is stronger for it. It's kind of like a street level Cabinet solidarity thing but where you don't have it makes being in a leadership position really difficult and makes it hard for the organization to move forward. Because ultimately decisions have to be made. And actions have to follow to implement the decisions and where you have that yip-yip back chatter it doesn't happen. Doesn't happen.

BG [00:50:15] Ray described it being a really collegial atmosphere during his time at the Fed. Did you find it was that? Or were you kind of on the outskirts?

CA [00:50:23] No no. It was absolutely they liked each other. You know I worked with some incredibly smart people, incredibly smart people. And you know in those days 40 percent of them maybe didn't finish high school. Some of them didn't finish elementary school so it had nothing to do with formal learning. And they had a lot of fun. I mean. You know yes, we got tired walking around marching around the downtown financial district

protesting wage and price controls but we were still having fun. We're always having fun and people really liked each other. We had nicknames for everybody. And the building trades were in the federation in those days. And they're always funny and they're doing crazy stuff all the time. Just the nature of the trade and being a trade allows you some leeway that you don't have if you're working in the kitchen. Well in those days you actually worked for the hospital instead of some kind of Aramac or some kind of a company but yeah. They Had fun. And I remember going over to Victoria with the Federation officers my first ride on a float plane to lobby. We went over several times during the Barrett government to lobby and that was always fun. They would make up stories or nicknames for the various cabinet ministers and then the trick was to not blurt it out during the lobbying session. You know we tried hard to get affirmative action. We tried hard to get better human rights legislation; more resources devoted to human rights. We lobbied hard against the labour code as it became more and more restrictive and more and more of a barrier to organizing.

BG [00:52:43] So the Fed was invested in human rights.

CA [00:52:48] Yeah. Yeah, we sure were. Yeah. You know the topics for discussion on the convention floor changed a lot over the years and there was more and more social justice, more international solidarity issues. In my first Federation convention you could still smoke.

BG [00:53:15] On the convention floor.

CA [00:53:16] On the convention floor. It was absolutely brutal. They lasted a week. And the officers played poker every night. All night. George Johnson from the meat cutters was the President, I'm sure Ray Haynes talked about with George. George would put his last hand down about let's say the conventions started at 9:00 let's say. So he put his last hand down about twenty to nine, he'd go to his room, have a shower, put a clean shirt and he'd bang that gavel at 9 o'clock without fail, without fail. Now they did not drink. It was not a drinking game. It was cards, purely poker.

BG [00:54:16] They actually still have those poker games.

CA [00:54:20] Do they? Yeah, yeah it was a big deal. If you weren't an officer, it was a big deal to get invited to that poker game. Yeah yeah.

BG [00:54:31] All right. Well I think we're going to wrap up the interview That's all my questions. I want to see you again. You're welcome. It's a great addition.