

**Interview: Diane Wood (DW)**

**Interviewer: Patricia Wejr (PW)**

**Date: April 10, 2019**

**Location: BC Labour Heritage Centre**

**Transcription: Patricia Wejr and Donna Sacuta**

**PW [00:00:03]** So it's April 10th today and in the room today, I'm Patricia Wejr. We're going to be interviewing along with Karen Coulter, Diane Wood. Okay. So first of all, just to start off with Diane, could you give me a bit of information about your family background, like where you were born? And basically, if you can think of how that might have influenced your future activism?

**DW [00:00:34]** Well, I'm the eldest of the family, and I have three siblings, two of each, two girls and two boys. And my mother was a very strong woman. So my role model for women was never...I never saw the difference why women couldn't do what men could do. It just wasn't an issue in our family. My father was an activist. He was a school trustee for many years. So I did see someone running for an office and taking a position very often, sometimes not so popular and speaking out. So that too, I think was helpful for me in saying, well, of course you can do this because it was sort of a thing that was regular routine in our family and our kitchen table was always a topic of many discussions and issues of the day. And so that was also good. That helped me in my debating.

**PW [00:01:41]** So moving on to your first, where was your first job?

**DW [00:01:47]** My first job was with school district in Victoria, and as luck would have it, I'm talking a full-time job, right? I had worked many other as a student of course you work. I worked for Eaton's and things like that. But my first full-time job outside of summer jobs when I was going to school was with school district in Victoria and I was very fortunate in that it was a unionized workplace with CUPE BC and so I automatically joined the union and it was...I was young, but it seemed the right thing to do.

**DW [00:02:27]** And when I married and moved to Duncan, the school district I went to was not unionized and so I worked to organize a union there and that was my first strike as well. It was a three-week strike. Thirteen women on strike for three weeks. And we were told when we went to the picket line, you know, you must dress like you're going to work. So we wore our heels and skirts, which at that time were mini-skirts to the picket line. And we picketed 12-hours a day, seven days a week for three weeks. And when it came for us to have some decision-making about a settlement and the secretary treasurer of the school district said, what does it take to get this union strike settled? And I said, "well, we're 13 women, I think it takes 13%".

**PW [00:03:23]** (Laughter)

**DW [00:03:25]** So. And there was...and for me, that strike was very important because I saw the solidarity of women, because we were all women on the picket line and there were very few of us. And so we really had to support each other. But I also saw the solidarity of the other unions that were working at the schools. For example, the IWA members who were looking after the building said, if you have a picket line there, we won't cross it. And without that solidarity and support, we wouldn't have won our strike.

**PW [00:04:02]** And that was at the school board office.

**DW** [00:04:04] It was at the school district. So any, all of us worked you know, we worked in schools, we worked in the libraries in the schools. We worked in the head office of the school district. So it was yeah, it was all of that. That was very...for me that was a very...I always remember it and it sort of was my touchstone, particularly the strength of women. Lots of sacrifices had to be made during that strike.

**PW** [00:04:35] Right. So from there, did you stay on the Island?

**DW** [00:04:42] I did for a little while. And then I moved up north. And when I say north, I mean Mile Zero of the Alaska Highway to Dawson Creek and Pouce Coupe. And I worked there and I also worked with the federal government in Grand Prairie. And then I came to work back to the provincial government after my husband died. I was widowed at 25. So I moved back to be with my parents in Dawson Creek and worked.

**DW** [00:05:10] My job that I got was with the provincial government because I had worked with the Province of BC when I was on the Island in Victoria for a short period of time. And then of course, I had my school district experience and all of this was working as a support staff person at the time. And so I got a job with the provincial government working at the courthouse in Pouce Coupe. And at that time we were not a union, we had an association and we collected our dues for the association and we had no structure for stewards or anything.

**DW** [00:05:50] So if there was an issue, a grievance in the workplace, you just sort of went in and hoped that you could do your best without any official representation. We had a branch structure and I ran for treasurer of the branch for our association. And the story I like to tell people is at that time my father was also working with the provincial government and he was President of the association and I was the Treasurer and there was a BC Federation of Labour convention that was going to be held and they were electing delegates.

**DW** [00:06:25] And both my father and I were elected because we were officers for the branch, and one of the fellows came up after the meeting and said to my dad, "Jeez, that's pretty good. You get to spend a week with this blonde in Vancouver." And my father said, "Yes, I always enjoy spending time with my daughter." So that was the time that this sort of gives you a sense that the way things were, you know, and thank God we've come a long way since then, but still have a long way to go.

**PW** [00:06:58] Yes. So that association did it eventually, I don't know exactly when that happened.

**DW** [00:07:07] What happened? Yes. Well, of course. And then at that time, of course, we were there was a provincial election and we had a New Democratic government elected. And Barrett was our new Premier. Pretty exciting time. And one of the amazing things he did and in a prelude to that, in 1969, our association had a convention and we changed our name. And it was a huge debate. We changed our name to the BC Government Employees' Union from an association. Very close vote, many people did not want to change the name to insert "Union", but it passed at the convention. So we were a union. And then there were, of course, many discussions about bringing in legislation to allow provincial government employees to be a member of a union.

**DW** [00:08:01] And so the NDP government did bring in that. And we were given our bargaining rights on March 8th, 1974, and it was at that time that we then had to restructure our union to being a union where we would have representation, grievance procedure, the right to negotiate. All of these things had to be put in place. And I was an activist at the time in our, quote, clerical council of the association, which then became the admin support component of our our union under the new structure. So many of us worked to restructure the union, get a new constitution and all of that, and then prepare for our first round of bargaining.

**DW** [00:08:52] So that's...I was active and involved in that at that time. And by that time I was living, living in a different location and living in Prince George. So I was able to be involved in that and was a steward and then moved through the various elected positions from 1974, to in 1977, when I ran for second Vice President of our union and was elected. Still living in Prince George, not a full-time position, commuting from Prince George to Burnaby to be involved and active in all of the issues around my position. John Shields was first Vice President and Norm Richards was our President and John Fryer was our General Secretary. We still had a General Secretary model, which also was an issue that we were looking at structure and changes. So we didn't have a full-time President and none of the Vice Presidents were full-time. So I did that for ten years as a Vice President. And before I was elected.

**PW** [00:10:07] Were you part of the very first Bargaining Committee?

**DW** [00:10:09] Yes, I was. Yes, I was.

**PW** [00:10:12] So that was with the Barrett government?

**DW** [00:10:14] Actually, no. Because then we and we got a collective agreement. But then, of course, there was a change of government and the NDP lost that election. And so we went into bargaining with the new government. And that was when we ended up taking our first strike vote to have to get a collective agreement. And so that was an experience because we've never done that before. And myself and Ed Bodner, who was the staff rep in Prince George and actually Donna Sacuta, who's with the Labour Heritage Centre now, was working in the office at the time, and we had a station wagon and we had a ballot box and we were told, "okay, you've got the North, go get the vote". And that's what we did.

**DW** [00:11:06] So we were out in the road pulling in the vote. Yes. And there's lots of stories around that, too. But so that for me was an experience because something you've never done before. And we did actually get a collective agreement without a strike. So it worked. Doing what we did, because I don't think the government thought we would be taking or prepared or ready to do any of that kind of action. But it was quite amazing. Then we had all these great slogans and it was a very fun thing to do, but it was challenging because it was our first, so and we learnt from that and it developed great activists coming out of that. So a lot of those folks that were involved in that first strike vote in those early days went on to become leaders within our union and great, great shop stewards and chairpeople and active in so many other things as a result of that. Yeah, they found their legs.

**PW** [00:12:07] So we went from all of the interesting and pro-labour things that were happening under Barrett to the next the next number of years where things were totally reversed. So I know that you under Bill 3 in the next government, you were, you basically were fired...they had the ability to fire without cause.

**DW** [00:12:34] That's right. That's what they were looking to do. So many...26 bills and all of them were just devastating. And of course, again, the first people that they fired on the lines, really the assault, as I called it, was to eliminate many of the activists and leaders within our union. And when we did some analysis, we looked at that. So I was fired. First Vice President of our union was fired, John Shields. And many of the people that were leaders of their occupational groups in the union or were shop stewards. Many of those activists were also fired and supposedly just caught up in the service group that they were looking at eliminating.

**DW** [00:13:23] And so I remember going to those meetings to meet with members and saying to them, you know, if this government can get away with firing the first and second Vice President who are leaders of your union, there is no shop steward that is safe. There is no one in the workplace that's safe to speak out on you without the threat of firing. And people, I think they made a huge mistake by taking on folks like John and I and the other activists, their stewards in their workplace, because people said, well, if they can fire those people, what will happen to us and we'll have no one to speak for us.

**DW** [00:14:04] So it was really strategically a very bad error on their part and it was something that we were able to go and the members resonated with it when we spoke because we were one of them. We had been fired. We weren't speaking as leaders, coming out there where we were safe. We had our jobs. No, we were affected, just like any one of them could be affected or were affected.

**DW** [00:14:27] So the prelude to that was 1982, where they brought in the restraint program. So we knew there was something up and had clearly some activism and work that we did and struggles around that and fights too, because we knew there was something big coming down. So in '83, when the assault came, we had we were shocked, of course, because we never thought it would be as horrific as it was and all encompassing as it was. But we had been working to do preparations and prepare people for what may be coming. And it brought together activism in our union that it would have taken us years to do that. And it came very quickly and very fast. People stepped up.

**DW** [00:15:21] We had, of course, the solidarity of the labour movement and then the issue of working with other partners and allies, which we had not done before in the labour movement. And our first Vice President, John Shields, was set to the task of forming up the coalitions. And John had been a former Roman Catholic priest and had a very good understanding from the work and involvement he had done when he was in the US working on civil rights, as to how the working with other partners and allies and coalitions.

**DW** [00:15:57] So he was the best person to do that work and some would have voted him the least likely to succeed but succeed he did working building those allies and partners in the Solidarity Coalition with the support, of course, of the Federation of Labour and Art Kube, knowing we needed coalition partners, we couldn't do this as labour alone.

**DW** [00:16:19] Incredible movement. So many stories. I say to people, it was the best of times, it was the worst of times. Because what happened with people in their lives and their families, was in effect, of this attack on workers and trying to eliminate the rights of workers was just staggering.

**DW** [00:16:44] But what happened out of that, too, was that across Canada, other unions were watching, other federations of labour were watching. And so what we saw were

people coming to work with us, people from all across the country came. We billeted them out with other people in their homes. They worked all over and volunteering to come because they knew that we were almost like the laboratory. And if they could pull this off in British Columbia, it would move across the country very quickly and we would see a sea of change like we had never seen on the elimination of rights of workers in this country.

**DW** [00:17:20] And so that support came, it came with people volunteering to come and work with us in Solidarity, but it also came with money. I know our whole our national union, NUPGE as it's called, representing public sector workers. They came, all of the leadership and they, we had quite an announcement which was saying we're here to support and financially support and we're here with \$10 million if you need it.

**DW** [00:17:54] So it was like, I think for the government, they weren't prepared for that kind of action either with the coalitions, they weren't prepared to see that kind of solidarity and support across the country. And a lot of this, as you know, the backdrop was Thatcher and doing what Thatcher was doing. And so I think they thought the British model, the Thatcher model, would be one that they could follow and do, but it was a different reaction in British Columbia being British Columbia.

**DW** [00:18:27] Their response was quite amazing. And not just with the labour movement, but with our coalition partners. And the best thing that came out of that too, not the best, but one of the things that's served us well to this day and we'll continue to do so is our coalition partners and working in coalition. Because if we hadn't had that experience, I don't believe that the labour movement in British Columbia would have had the kind of coalition partner building that it has to this day and the strength that we have as a result of that.

**DW** [00:19:01] I think it would have taken many, many years and of course, other people viewed it across the country and those other unions saw how important it was. So it was again, it was a big sea change for the labour movement, not just in BC, but overall and certainly both nationally. And then, of course, that moved to more international understanding of there had been a resistance before, but that resistance was turned into great resistance in working against the government and partnership. Yeah.

**PW** [00:19:35] And I do think that BCGEU did lead the way in term, but in terms of the, I think the community outreach and then I also think the international solidarity work. So I don't know if you wanted to touch on that next because you did a lot of work on international solidarity.

**DW** [00:19:54] Well, my experience as a young woman, I never would have thought, that wasn't something I thought about or, you know, international work. I was at one point in my life going to be going to Africa as a missionary. Not very many people know this, but as a young woman, that was something that I was going to be doing. That was my goal. And that changed because I fell in love and met this marvelous man. And we ended up doing something different with our lives. But for me it was always there because I had learned a lot of it because of my working as a young person with my church. It was always something we supported and talked about, but it wasn't something in the way I ended up doing it that I thought I would end up doing.

**DW** [00:20:49] So in 19...I think it was 1977, our union put together our some of our officers and we went to study with a study visit in Sweden. And I remember reading a book and it said...to try and get a little sense before I went with our union to do this study visit

with the...it's a very long name the Union. Statstjantemannaforbundet to say it is like, we just just called it ST because it was easier. That was a union that we met with in Sweden. But I thought I'll do a little bit of reading about Sweden just to understand. And the book I read was "Sweden: A Guided Democracy", and I'll never forget it, because it really helped me understand a lot about being there and how they worked and achieved what they achieved.

**DW [00:21:44]** We spent three weeks studying with this union and it for me, I came back to our union with a very a much broader vision and understanding that I could never have developed over...it would have taken many years. And but it was the catalyst for me. But at the same time, it was sad because at that time it wasn't really accepted to be talking about your international work in your union. You had to kind of keep that a little quiet because you might have the members thinking, "what's the union doing, spending this money going off to these places and sending these people to these different countries? You know, they need to be here working for us, doing things that improve our life." And it what it said to me when we had that discussion and that reaction was, well, we have to change this attitude. We have to work to change this because this is important work and we need to do more.

**DW [00:22:48]** So that was sort of the beginning of the discussion for, I think, a very effective change to see that internationalism and the work that we needed to be involved in. And we couldn't operate in isolation because what was going on in the world at the time all came as a result of actions in these different countries and what these unions were doing to respond and change. And so it was a good time for us to look at that and model the work that we needed to do in working with those other unions.

**DW [00:23:20]** And of course for public sector unions there is an organization called Public Services International, which our national union was also changing at the time and evolving. And we then were became involved with the Public Services International and I was by that time quite involved in this work and they elected me to be Canada's, our national union's representative at the Public Services International on the Women's Committee. And from there, I was elected to serve as a representative on our Inter-Americas Committee and the Executive and Executive Council at the Public Services International.

**DW [00:24:06]** And we did some very good work, and particularly on the issue of women, things like pay equity, where a lot of the unions were struggling. How do we get to this point of equal pay for equal work or whatever the term was, eventually pay equity? But those were one of the things. And then there was affirmative action, which is an old term now, but at that time getting more women involved overall in the movement, the union movement. So that was that was exciting work.

**DW [00:24:36]** My last work was at the Congress in Vienna, and by that time we had so many women involved and speaking out both at their regional in the world, regional councils and the activism of the Women's Committee and the changes that happened there, and also for our own union at the national level and also BCGEU now the international solidarity work is just part of the work of the union. There is no hush-hush or can't talk about that. We speak very loudly about our international solidarity, formed an International Solidarity Committee. And I'm pleased to say even though I'm retired and have been for a while from my union, that that work continues and just gets stronger and more dedicated.

**PW** [00:25:28] It's such an honour for you to have the fund actually named after you. The Diane L Wood International Solidarity and Humanity Fund.

**DW** [00:25:37] It was a great honour my union gave to me at the convention where I retired to have my name attached to that fund. Yeah, very special.

**PW** [00:25:52] It is special. There's a fund and there's also a building in, a union building in Prince George named after you.

**DW** [00:25:57] Oh yes, it's another honour they bestowed on me. And actually I was there to put the shovel in the ground for the building. And I'm going to be in Prince George in a little, about a week or so where I'm actually going to go in and see my building because I haven't had the chance to do that yet. So it's a great honour. One of the things I love is that the picture that was taken during Operation Solidarity, where we led the huge march through Prince George, that that is one of the pictures that's in the reception area of the building, I'm told. So I'm very proud of that that that's there.

**PW** [00:26:43] Now, I just want to back up a little bit. In terms of you mentioned about how the structure had changed, but what are your thoughts? Because you were the the second person who was full in a full-time position, you and John Shields. So what changes did you see as a result of the move and the eventually having many more full-time elected people as opposed to staff?

**DW** [00:27:13] Well the change happens with a lot of people thinking about it and looking at it. And it really goes back to the model we had as a General Secretary with John Fryer. And he had some good visions about what we needed to do to adapt to the changes that would be necessary. John went on to become the President of our national union, but at the same time, we did a task force that went around to talk about the structure of the BCGEU and what we needed to do. And the provincial executive at the time went and spoke with our membership and we had to do this constitutionally, of course. So in 1985 we were to elect our first full-time President of our union.

**DW** [00:28:11] And at that time I had been working very much with the Women's Committee and saying, you know, in speaking with them and saying, we need more women involved and doing all of this, doing the training and all the stuff we needed to do to ensure we had representation at all levels of women, whether they were, you know, in occ health and safety, whether they were a shop steward, we needed women in leadership roles and active.

**DW** [00:28:38] And so I thought people approached me and said, "well, Di, you need to run for President". And I said, well, I was the, you know, I was a second Vice President at the time. The first Vice President was John Shields. And I thought about that and I thought, "what am I doing?" I'm saying to all these other women, you know, we need to step up, we need to do these things. And yet I'm hesitant. And so I stepped up and I ran. I wasn't elected. And I'm pleased to say John Shields was elected because he was a great leader. And we discovered as we were on the road, travelling together, speaking at all of these campaign things and election things that we really had so much in common and we became great working partners.

**DW** [00:29:25] So John became the first full-time President, and I was first vice President at the time and at the next convention because that was 1985. And then in 1987, there was a resolution that went forward to create a second full-time officer position, which was

the Treasurer of our union, and I was elected to that position. So we then had John being a man as President, me being a woman as Treasurer, which was, I think, good visual messaging and good leadership showing that, you know, women and men in leadership and roles working together.

**DW** [00:30:14] And I think we did some really great things together with our working with our provincial executive, where we had other great leaders there, many of them women as well. And we had some really, really good men as well. One of the fellows that comes to mind is Brother Tom Kozar, because quite frankly, for me, when the discussion came about having a full-time Treasurer and Tom Kozar was the Treasurer at the time, he goes, "well, if we're going to have a second full-time position in this union, it has to be a woman". And he did not run. He freed up space for me to run. So this was a man who didn't just talk the talk. He walked the talk. Very special man. So I was there, really, I have to say, because Tom stepped aside so I could move forward. That, again, was very good messaging for many of the other, particularly men, to see that this is sometimes you have to create space.

**PW** [00:31:19] And that was quite a long space because 18 years, you were the Secretary Treasurer...

**DW** [00:31:25] I never imagined it to be that long. But it was. And I have to say, as we all know, it goes in a blink of an eye. And before I knew it, I made a decision that it was time for me. I had been active in many things because at the same time I had been on the Executive Council of the Canadian Labour Congress, I was on the Executive of our national union, and I was doing PSI work and I was full-time with our union and of course Federation of Labour. All those things, right? It's like this spider's web. And sometimes it can be rather fragile. And it was really important to try and bring other, particularly other women in to mentor..."femtor"...them, so that they were able to move into these positions. Because, you know, it also means you serve on other boards and stuff. So how do you prepare people to come in? So there had to be some transition planning for the departure.

**DW** [00:32:23] When someone's been in a position that long and held those, you know, you have to really think about that. And so I had given fair warning that I was looking at leaving and unfortunately, events occurred that I wasn't able to retire when I thought I would, because my dad always used to say, you have to go while people want you to stay, you know? And I've always I always remembered that. And so I stayed a little longer. I served one more term than I had planned. And I was happy to do it because folks asked me to do it. We needed a little more time to prepare, that we weren't quite where we needed to be for my departure.

**DW** [00:33:10] And so then I did retire in 2005 and continued to do work at Public Services International. I served in that volunteer position and served on a few other boards to bring people along, so they were able new leadership was able to move into those positions when I left. So in 2009 and 2010, I kind of was finished with all of that. And then someone said, "oh, could you, would you think about coming to the BC Federation of Retired Union Members and being on our board? So it began again in retirement. You don't you don't ever retire. I mean, just really don't if you're an activist, you're an activist for life.

**PW** [00:34:01] Okay. So with your so-called retirement and BC FORUM work, it's broader than that because you're also on a national organization.



**DW** [00:34:11] There's some very good work being done and important work...the lobbying. I mean, retired union members are a force to be reckoned with and seniors are a force to be reckoned with. I mean, there's so many amazing people volunteering their services as seniors and working and they're working full time, even though it's without pay. But they are committed. They're passionate. You know, they get up, they get dressed and they get out. That's what they do and they get active. So for the BC Federation Retired Union Members, we're part what's called a Federation of the Congress of Union Retirees of Canada. BC FORUM was formed up by the BC Federation of Labour and Ken Georgetti, who was the president at the time, part of a group which is the Working Enterprises. Where they said we need to do some things here dedicated to union members and whether it was setting up benefits, setting up a travel agency, setting up an insurance group, setting up Columbia Institute. They did all of these things with the vision. It was an amazing vision and we were part of that. And so we actually, the Canadian Labour Congress decided they would do something similar, but we had already done it in British Columbia and had this model. So they were, I think, really modelling after us. So we now have a national organization for affiliated unions of the Canadian Labour Congress and they can join and they do certainly do in British Columbia are to BC FORUM. But out of that work as well, I come back to the coalition work because in BC, BC FORUM and myself as president of BC FORUM, we're active in the Council of Senior Citizens organizations of British Columbia, which is a huge group of seniors' organizations working together to lobby for change, whether in British Columbia, but then through their arm, the National Pensioners Federation, which we're also affiliated and work with. So there's this national work, there's this provincial work across the country, all being done by seniors and retired union members. And when it comes to issues like national Pharmacare Program, we were there in Regina in September, National Pensioners Federation at the legislature demonstrating for Pharmacare. So, you know, town hall meetings held in BC we're there lobbying for universal Pharmacare. So this is the action that can take place. And of course, now we're lobbying for a universal dental plan. So we're very active and for BC FORUM, I find myself now as president sitting back on the Federation of Labour Executive Council. And so we have a voice and a vote at the Federation of Labour for BC Federation of Retired Union Members, which is great, it's just great. And now we're working very hard because we're looking at legislative change, Labour Code, Employment Standards and BC FORUM is working with our members to do the lobbying to effect the change that's needed for workers of this province. So it goes on and on.

**PW** [00:37:40] Yes, it does go on and on. But I was particularly interested in the Protein for People initiative.

**DW** [00:37:46] Oh, yes. The Protein Project is one that we support. In fact, John Radosevic is a member of our BC FORUM Board, and I'm also on their Executive Council for Protein Project. They changed their name now, so I still lapse back into the old language too because I'm adjusting to the new name. So at BC FORUM, wherever we go with displays at conventions and conferences, we always, always bring the information and the display for the Protein Project, such an important project that has been actioned in British Columbia, but now it's going to be reaching out to other provinces across the country following the model that happened in BC and to John's credit, and the team of people working with him, all volunteers taking it out to provide protein to folks through these food banks where they just don't see enough protein in their diet. Great work.

**PW** [00:38:55] So I'm just interested in generally what do you say to young people today about the importance of unions?

**DW** [00:39:06] That's a very timely question because our own union, the BCGEU is going to be celebrating 100 years in 2020, and they're calling, it's their Centennial Project. And they phoned, well, they asked me if I would come and sit on the Centennial Committee. And at my first meeting of that committee, I found myself sitting with a group of leaders in the union, but at an age group that they came pretty much after a lot of the change and the implementation of labour laws in contract language, the structure of our union that had been done before they came. So their leaders, so they know this just didn't happen without the union but they also don't know how did it happen.

**DW** [00:40:06] So yes, we've got two labour books and some people do read books, but not everybody reads books. They'll look through them for the pictures and they enjoy it. But the telling the stories, you know, the First Nations folks are great at the storytelling and they do that from the time they're little people and they bring them through. So they grow up with knowing and understanding the history. But we don't in the union movement, it's a struggle. And that's why it's so great what, you know, Labour Heritage is doing because they're recording it. They're telling the stories that the most the most recent book is great, but all of the other things they're doing.

**DW** [00:40:50] So I say to the young people, lest we forget, and I can't answer your question or comment on that unless I go back a bit, because I have to tell you, how did we get there before we can really think about and decide where we need to be going? Because it's too easy to just sort of go, Oh, we don't need to worry about that anymore. You know, we've got that now. And I say to them, you have to be forever vigilant because it can be taken away with a stroke of a pen.

**DW** [00:41:29] A government that decides one day we're taking this away and they have the power to do it because they have the numbers. So without you being forever vigilant, these things can be lost. So that's the important message, I think. When... at my first labour winter school, Canadian Labour Congress Winter School I went to, they showed a film for every session that went to labour school. It was called I think, The Inheritance, and it talked about the history in the movement and what we had achieved, the changes that had happened. And it closed with a song and the song said in every generation has to do it all again. And that is the truth, because we may have thought we fought it. We won. We got it. It just simply isn't so. It can be eroded slowly. And then before you know it, it's gone because you didn't know how important it was to keep it in the foundation that it provided for all the other things that come from it.

**PW** [00:42:42] And I think looking at the labour movement in general, it is it's interesting now that public sector unions, of course, really have so much more strength in it. And that was so different. I'm sure when you first started at GEU, you it was it really was like the IWAs and the trades. So yeah, I don't know if you if you want to comment on that.

**DW** [00:43:10] Well, I think it's a tragedy what's happened in the labour movement overall. I mean, we've watched and observed, you know, what we saw in the US and the loss of organized workers and the challenge they were having and the fights they were having. And yes, the public sector unions, we have this, we are the largest. We have the numbers in the labour movement, we certainly have the largest representation. But again, that could have been very different had we not had the fight and the struggle that we did. It's very difficult for some of these unions with, you know, when the three-legged stool privatization, the free trade and deregulation was brought in and Mulroney was pushing that and it came coming of course, from Thatcher in the UK. This is what drove the reduction in the elimination in the strength of many of the unions and the elimination of their members and

therefore the union membership numbers. So that, those three things are the drivers that can change the union movement in this country and they have and in other countries.

**DW** [00:44:22] And so, again, forever vigilant on all of those issues and these free trade agreements that come up. Some people say, oh, it's so complicated. I don't get it. But I would have you know, whether it's the comprehensive economic trade agreement, whatever name they want to give to it. All of these things are a loss of industry, work and jobs for people and changing the jobs. And so and how it's regulated, which affects everyone in their communities and their families when it comes to deregulation, the safety of people.

**DW** [00:45:02] So I just I feel so sad that what's happened to some of our union sisters and brothers and their union, and now they're fighting back. And we're seeing now the talk that's happening about thank God for our new government about what's happened to the forest industry in this province and what we need to be doing. I mean, exporting raw logs and then, you know, buying these logs back like this is what 16 years of this other government in this province has done to us.

**DW** [00:45:40] So and now seeing the rise of women in trades and the push for trades. I sat on a national training board before the Mulroney government and we made all these recommendations about what we needed to be doing and preparing for trades folks in this country for what was coming. Had they followed those recommendations, we would be prepared now for what's happened and where we need these tradespeople. But they didn't. So now we're in catch up. But now we've got the Women in Trades Centre, we've got the trades really organizing and working on this and we're seeing that change happening. But it's very difficult after 16 years of erosion and elimination. They have a lot. They have a lot to be. Well, they have a lot to be accounted for.

**PW** [00:46:38] So I think we're getting close to the end. I don't know if there's anything that we haven't touched on or whether or not you want to just tell me about, like of your very broad experience with the international work, with the union and with your own union. Is there one thing that you would like to say that we haven't talked about?

**DW** [00:47:04] I think the one thing I have to say that all of these things that I've been able to engage in and work with and I think have some effect on change came because of my union. It's the union movement that has made so much possible for this young person who could never have imagined that she would be involved in these things and be able to make a difference. And so I think for all of us that are involved in our unions, we know we make a difference because we can work with the labour movement to make it happen and with our coalition partners. Because of that relationship we share, it's very strong. We fight with two arms, not just one anymore. And they're very strong arms.