Interview: George Hewison [GH]
Interviewer: Sean Griffin [SG] and Bailey Garden [BG]
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Transcription: Donna Sacuta

SG [00:00:00] All right. Hi, George. So maybe you could just start by giving me your full name and your birthplace.

GH [00:00:08] It is George Elton Hewison. I was born in Mission City, not too far from here in June 13, 1944.

SG [00:00:20] You have siblings as well?

GH [00:00:21] I had five, I've got four surviving and a whole number of nieces, nephews, children, grandchildren, great nieces, great nephews. We've well-populated the province of British Columbia.

SG [00:00:42] So for brothers and sisters, what were they growing up? What was the breakdown?

GH [00:00:46] There was three boys and three girls.

SG [00:00:48] Right. Okay. So I understand your father was it was actually a post sort of World War One settler on Haida Gwaii.

GH [00:00:57] Yes. I guess you'd probably diagnose him as having post-traumatic stress now, four years in the first war, he had patriotic fervor joined the military, he was underage, lied about his age. His mother couldn't get him out of the military four years because he told his mom, we will beat the Huns and we'll back by Christmas. I don't have to tell you the horrors that soldiers went through. I think we heard enough about them. So he couldn't go back to this little village in the north of Scotland. So he came to Canada, worked in the Okanagan, knocked around, joined his cousin on a whaler out of Victoria. Couldn't handle that so he jumped ship in Masset, what was then the Queen Charlotte Islands and applied for a pre-emption. And the government was very obliging to give return soldiers of the British army 160 acres of Haida land to settle. And it was prime land. Come on, come on this island in Masset Inlet.

SG [00:02:09] So I understand he got in trouble with the federal government because he was pro-union.

GH [00:02:14] Well, he spent most of his life trying to figure out, you know, the causes of war. And he ran into my maternal grandfather who was a Eugene Debs socialist and was very good because he had the right personality, calming influence. They worked together when logging this area. And of course, then he met the Wobblies, met a guy by the name of John McCuish who was a communist, and John was part of the Loggers Navy. And one of the things that really attracted was the Little Red Songbook, because my dad was a phenomenal

singer. He played the accordion. He played it all through the war, the more anti-war songs. And this just appealed to him. And he got involved in unions. And because most of the workers there were immigrants, they didn't read or write English, he was made the kind of the Camp secretary, he was kind of a quasi-legal. You'd have to row out in the middle of the night into the inlet to meet John and get literature and take it back and kind of translate it for the other workers. So this was back in 20s, 30s. So yeah. So he became a socialist. And his parents, I'm sure, was very conservative back in New York. He's very privileged came from a privileged family.

Speaker 3 [00:03:42] So politics are probably a frequent discussion around the dinner table or.

GH [00:03:45] Well, it was my parents were founding members of the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation. It's funny because they had this little shack that they had mother trying to raise five kids, this picture of JS Woodsworth on one wall and a picture of Tim Buck on the other, and they really couldn't understand why they were fighting, what the fight was all about.

SG [00:04:07] Well, I mean, one of the things that's always been outstanding with you in the labour movement is your own wonderful singing voice and the fact that you've used it all over the place. Obviously, this was something you kind of came into growing up.

[00:04:19] Oh well our family, we didn't have television, didn't even radio, but it was always there, even way before I came on the scene. Our family, everybody sang and that was my dad would lead the singalong. He'd learnt his harmonies in the church, and it was just natural to pass it on to the kids. And so we kind of got it by osmosis, and we all took turns. We had all favourite songs. So yeah, that was pretty clear. So you use it or lose it? That's right.

SG [00:04:51] And so the Little Red Songbook continued.

GH [00:04:53] To be absolutely. Growing up in Campbell River was phenomenal for music because we knew people that knew Ginger Goodwin in our family, the coal miners, and they would come to the house and all these militant loggers and miners and people from the fishing industry. And the Little Red Songbook was right there, and we knew most of the songs in that songbook.

SG [00:05:15] Hmm. Well, so your family was obviously very much involved in, in the United Fishermen and Allied Workers, once it was founded because it was pretty much a significant resource community in Campbell River at the time.

GH: [00:05:27] Well, and logging and fishing. And there was always this interchange. But, you know, I mean, we were getting all my uncles for, you know, really thankful the IWA was born. I mean, it was I mean, this is the thing that lifts you on these terrible working conditions, same in fishing. I mean, my dad was out fishing in Squaderee off Prince Rupert when I was born in Mission. Conditions were pretty rough, and we had fish barons and we had forest barons, and they run your life and you know, you have to eke out an existence. So, yeah. Unionism and industrial unionism was really, really deep into our, right into our DNA.

SG [00:06:07] So this is very much a kitchen table discussion all the time.

GH [00:06:10] At every strike, every strategy that was in Campbell River.

SG [00:06:15] There wasn't a struggle that went on that wasn't discussed around our table. So my entire family, all my siblings are obviously were pro-union. I grew up with a deep sense of we owe the union a lot.

SG [00:06:30] In one of the really early disruptive events about the UFAWU was the raid that was launched by the Seafarers International Union during the Cold War years in '52. And, you know, obviously you were only, what, eight or nine.

GH [00:06:46] I was nine years old. But I think that was when I started to get really politically conscious. I mean, nothing we weren't none of us kids were excluded from the conversations. But when the Cold War hit, we were basically told what goes on inside the house doesn't go out in the playground. Now that If I sound a little bit conspiratorial at time, it stems from that period. But yeah, the raid hit. I remember it like it was yesterday. My dad had heard this announcement on CHUV radio in Nanaimo that our local had dis-affiliated from UFAWU and was joining Hal Banks' Seafarers International Union. And he just about flipped out because the people who were leading it were two young guys that you kind of cultivated but didn't realize they were SIU agents. And there was a whole series of developments that led up to this that I found out later. They took off with the Union's treasury, they took off the books and they chartered a boat, were going up the coast to get rid of all this communist influence in the industry and the line that you really don't have to struggle against the fish companies. And, you know, we can be more collaborative and, you know, things can come a lot easier. And that was the line that they peddled. In any event, the raid was stopped. Who knows? One of the things that exposed them right away was the fact that three people have run against the top officers of our union, Alex Gordon, Homer Stevens and Reg Payne was that the fish companies had been caught paying the all of publicity for the raiders, the people that tried to take over the union.

SG [00:08:32] So how did they get caught doing that?

[00:08:34] Well, there was a friendly printer in the print shop where they had all their leaflets printed, and it was just by fluke that the guy turned it over to the officers of the union and then became common knowledge through the industry and workers. And it's been a lifetime trying to escape poverty, realized ah hah the pictures end. And so when the election results happened, of course the officers were returned, and they couldn't take over the union from within. So then they decided the tactic of taking it over from without. And that's when they launched the raid. And of course they just successfully raided the Canadian Seamen's Union, just smashed it to a thousand pieces. And because there they wanted to get rid of the merchant navy, which was the third largest in the world. Jim Green wrote an excellent book on that. In our case, I think there was larger forces at work that saw the industry, our industry, as being an impediment to the great industrial development of British Columbia, broader Cold War aims, the, you know, the peace treaty with Japan. There was all kinds of things, the relationship with Canada and the U.S., all of these things. And the industry was an impediment to how the powers that be wanted to develop the industry. And of course, the union stood in the way.

SG [00:09:51] Right. Mm hmm. So when did you start fishing yourself in the industry?

GH [00:09:56] In 1963. And my dad had just retired. And I remember this strange conversation because I had other jobs. I was going to university, and I remember my dad taking my older brother, who was the skipper on a seine boat. And I could just hear the whispering going on. And I knew. And I'm.

SG [00:10:18] Sorry. What was your older brother's name?

GH [00:10:19] John.

SG [00:10:19] John right.

GH [00:10:20] He was. So he comes out later and he said, How would you like to go fishing? And, I said sure. And so he broke in and trained me and net mending and, you know, it was really, really exciting. I think if there was any job that really was kind of fulfilling, that was it because A: you don't really have an employer standing over top of you. Plus it's teamwork. One person that lets the team down, the whole team gets let down. And the problem with it, of course, is the companies and the amount of money you can end up going in the hole. So that very first year, I was expected to make enough money to go back to UBC and complete my degree. And unfortunately, the strike never did settle. After three weeks, which is an eternity for most work, I mean, it would be the equivalent of losing a year. You know, we ended up referring everything to arbitration and I'm still waiting for my settlement for that year, so I didn't have enough money to go back to UBC. So I had to wait, go to work. Basically it was for myself.

SG [00:11:37] What had you been studying at UBC?

GH [00:11:40] I was going to become a school teacher. That was my plan. I wanted a general arts, history and English for my two majors. But instead, life has a way of interfering with your plans. And I never got back. Well, I did go back. That's right. First met Sean Griffin. It was third year, and by that time I had decided that I was also in love, and I wanted to get married, have a family, and I know I can get my teaching degree. But I was still active in the union, I did other things with the union, I was on the Fishery Relations Committee. I was on executive of the local and got elected to the General Executive Board of the Union.

SG [00:12:24] So was the Fisherman's Union your first experience with the trade union?

[00:12:27] No, I was actually I was on the end of a muck stick with the labourers' union, but I'd had all kinds of little jobs. But. I was with the telecommunication workers union digging post holes, a very creative job. Some of them are a little square and some little round. You're putting post holes before it was done automatically. But that was a good job.

SG [00:12:51] So this was the round hole in the square post.

GH [00:12:54] And then you hit hardpan and you hit rock and okay how am I going to dig this a little deeper? We were dropped off and we're putting in new telephone lines. So that was. But it was a good job made good paying and the labourers' union. That was excellent pay.

SG [00:13:11] But these were all in the Campbell River

GH [00:13:14] Yeah, near Campbell River.

SG [00:13:16] And then I understand you got the tap in 1965, to work for the union.

GH [00:13:19] I did. I was just finishing up. I was hopefully going to have third year I was really getting involved in politics and studying Marxism more than I was studying English and history, unfortunately. And I'm glad I did. I got a little bit of grounding. Yeah. But our secretary treasurer at the time guy by the name of Homer Stevens, which is very well known in British Columbia. I've known Homer ever since 1953 and the raid and of course he was like God, he'd come to our house, and, you know, he represented the hope of all of us in the industry. He he was the guy that was incorruptible by the fish companies. He was nobody knew he'd never take a pay off, which some union leaders did. And so when he comes to me and says, we have a problem, Jimmy Pattison poached one of our organizers is supposed to go to Rupert to sell used cars and he won't go. And we have nobody, absolutely nobody. And I said, Homer, I'm 20 years old. I just got married. I in my third-year university, I'm not shaving yet. I don't know how to I don't know how to; I can't even get in the bar. How are you supposed to organize fishermen? He said well, he gave me some names of people that would help me. But you've got to go. There's just simply is no one else. I did. And I said, okay, well, I'll go for a year and then I'll come back, and I'll resume my studies. But again, life as a way of intervening in these things.

SG [00:14:56] So your plan originally was just to go for a year?

GH [00:14:58] Yeah, well, until they could find somebody and.

SG [00:15:01] Right.

GH [00:15:01] But it was really it was quite intriguing. Quite intriguing because I got more education probably in one year doing that than I did in all of my formal training anywhere. It was, you know, meeting. We had to service, I don't know, most of the locals in First Nation, all the different nations and learning about I mean, I knew things about First Nations around Campbell River because my dad fished on a all-native fish boat. But to actually get immersed and get right into that, you know, for eight years to learn about different Tsimshian and Nisga'a you know, the different Haida. I mean, it was it was an eye-opening experience.

SG [00:15:52] Well, can you give us a sense of what it's like to be in Rupert when the salmon season opens, and you've got shore workers coming in from villages all over the community.

GH [00:16:02] I mean, at that time, the technology we had was one there's Port Edward, Inverness, North Pacific, Sunnyside, Cassiar out on the Skeena River were all still open. Then there was Oceanside, the Co-op, you know. So we had the canneries and in Prince Rupert, so all the plants and so the need for labour and what would happen is people would come from the villages all from all over and occupy the hovels overtop the water, particularly the first nations then there'd be the Japanese and Chinese contract labour coming in from Vancouver. And you know.

SG [00:16:48] So there was no contract labour at that point.

GH [00:16:50] And well, there wasn't. There was a union contract. But in order to get the labour, there would be important people would bring their, bring the people up. They had the most influence and the union was often having to struggle with those contract labourers. And, you know, and so there was, you know, unbeknownst to me, I was, you know, I'm still learning about that. Even now I think back on how I might have done things differently, knowing what I know now.

SG [00:17:28] And so at the same time as you've got that happening, the whole fishing fleet kind of coming to Rupert.

GH [00:17:32] And you know, because the fishing runs start in the north, they start in the Nass and there's the earliest opening and the Skeena, and then moved down to Rivers Inlet, then moved down into Johnstone Strait and the Fraser River so this caused no end of grief in trying to keep a united organization because when you want to if you want to hit the companies, you want to hit them hard over strike strategy. You got to try and pin when the maximum pressure can be put on because and we've had no end to grief and people in the north would say, well, the southern guys only want to strike when, you know, effect the people up north we lose our season. And this was the kind of arguments. And the shoreworkers want to have only no contract, no work. And so we always have these tensions inside. So you have to try to massage the differences. We have to massage the differences. We have the Native Brotherhood. We never fully completed the unity project that was started in 1945. And so, you know, we have a whole cultural national issue. There's all these dimensions at work. And frankly, I don't think I was equipped personally to handle some of those cultural differences. I think the union as a whole suffered badly from that. I think we could have, who knows? I mean, the companies exploited the differences any way they could. We used to have little pink agreements and little blue agreements between men and women. And it took us a strike in 1975 to get rid of to get equal pay for work of equal value and to get rid of those. So we used to have separate washrooms for First Nations women and other women and <unclear>. We used to have the housing conditions for First Nations were abysmal. The Japanese and Chinese were somewhat better than the whites on top of the hill and the companies. This was this was part of the culture of the industry and trying to, and these were the kind of the quasi economic issues, let alone the cultural issues. I mean, we had, Sean, you know, mind if you go back into the back issues of the Fisherman paper, very progressive on the class question, our papers, but we had the when the war breaks out and the Japanese Canadians, loyal Japanese Canadians are being deported from the coast. There's a big headline in the Fishermen paper said, you know, basically go tell your problems to the Emperor that was the response, and it got a reception in the fleet and in the white fleet and in the First Nations fleet, because each of these groups had been used to scabbing on each other and the company just used these divisions. And there was the ability to understand culturally for each of the sections where I think we, it's amazing that the union was able to overcome this and to, you know, actually hold together. As we often said, it was like the bumblebee aerodynamically. The thing shouldn't fly, but it did fly.

SG [00:20:47] And one of those, as you say, the big issues was the relationship with the Native Brotherhood, which was originally to be a sort of a semi, they were to have a semi-autonomous position within the. Yeah. Within the industry cooperating with the union. Well really bargaining.

GH [00:21:02] I learnt this when I went to the Haida Gwaii the very first time Homer had told me if you get into trouble, just go and see Ethel Jones or Connie Adams these two Haida women and of course matrilineal society, they got a lot of influence and they got a lot of knowledge stored away from years. And they introduced me to Chief Bill Matthews, who was an old man. And he would the first thing you do when you go into a village is you go and talk to the hereditary chiefs, you know, you ask permission to talk to the people because they're from the time they are children are trained they're the guardians of the culture, the guardians of that, that's what they're trained for. And so you go, and he was an amazing man, but he was there, he lived with his uncle. He grew up with his uncle Chief Wiiaa he had actually had altercations with the Hudson's Bay Company captured and held him for I mean, in his when he was a youth, he came out of the longhouse. He came out of a village way beyond Masset. And when the smallpox hit anyway, all of this he was telling me about in the old days before there was unions, how they would get nothing, as soon as there was a big run the price would suddenly drop, but there was no union for them. So that's why the Native Brotherhood was formed. A guy by the name of. Alfred Adams from Masset, he was an amazing guy, an organizer, and they used to go all up and down the coast, in every native village, sometimes pretty brutal the reception he'd get because the companies also had their influence in the villages, and then they'd use the tribal, the differences between the various nations against so. But they finally got it. His son, Ivan Adams, who is the president of our local in Prince Rupert, was also a Native Brotherhood founder. And William Beynon from Port Simpson. Sean, you might remember some of his kids, but William Beynon from Port Simpson was one of the early organizers and they did learn the value of unity and he was Tsimshian. So it pre-dated and it was founded on the idea mainly based on the fishing industry. So it was both an organization that, you know, needed the salmon as part of the culture, that it also needed to get a proper price and a proper return for their labour and the industry. And so when the union came along in 1945 yes, it was agreed that we had to respect that, and we did. We worked very closely, but it started to fray around the issue of boat owners. And it's an old problem that Karl Marx flagged 150 years ago about the contours of working class, there that outer edge where people ceased to be completely working class and they had class interests that were somewhat different from the people who work on boats and the people that had gillnetters and the fish companies were able to use that as well, and they were able to plant leading people and give them perks that they didn't give to everybody else. And that came about, and I heard about this later in 1952 during a strike that actually set the stage for the SIU raid, where they made a brother and actually signed a separate agreement from the union. No, they didn't get away with it because the rank and file of the Native Brotherhood refused to push and to break the UFAWU strike. And in my dad's notes that he took at the time, he mentioned the fact that the people from Cape Mudge and the people from Campbell River the First Nations came to the meeting and they pledged their allegiance to the union and they weren't going to scab.

SG [00:24:52] So what year was this?

GH [00:24:53] 1952, just before the raid and just before all the other stuff happened, with the UFAWU getting suspended from the Congress and all that stuff. But they came in en masse to the union meetings. They were always welcome in Campbell River and Quahtiaski they were always welcome at our meetings. And, you know, there was this close, close bond. Sometimes I don't think the leadership of our union fully understood that what goes on in the grassroots and the way interplay that happens between the rank and file of the Brotherhood

and the <unclear> And I think that we allowed those divisions to creep in, we just didn't understand the cultural aspect.

SG [00:25:34] So how was it for you coming in as a, as you say, a 20 year old greenhorn working with, you know, a lot of seasoned skippers and first nations that are well established in their relationships. How do you fit into this picture?

GH [00:25:48] Well, I knew everything at that time. Okay. Or at least I thought I did that. No, they were very, very kind. They knew the problems. And I had some of the best halibut fishermen actually groom me, train me, teach me. And First Nations people groomed me, trained me, taught me. So they kind of tempered all my own ideas with and very gently and very, you know, they accepted me. I mean, a guy that's not shaving. There's a lobby to Ottawa and I remember one of the members and I'm heading up in one of the sub delegations going to meet various Members of Parliament. Remember somebody telling me months later they thought it was somebody's kid on the delegation, somebody's come up and turned him loose. So yeah, it was it was one of those things you really are thrown in the deep end. But no, the support was, was amazing and it's because of their love of the union and the need for it.

SG [00:27:00] So at this time there was a very sort of big solid base for the union in the community in Prince Rupert.

GH [00:27:06] Absolutely. And yeah, the Co-op was there was a time when the Co-op and the union were very, very prominent. The shore workers were all organized and most of the fishermen there was a little group of craft union halibut fishermen called the Deep-Sea Fishermen's Union. I think they had about maybe 25 or 30 members left. But and we, we had we co-operated with them, we didn't go out of our way to do anything but no, there was a strong. We had problems during strikes of salmon fishermen because the Co-op line was we're always on strike, we're on permanent strike against the companies. We don't see why we shouldn't be able to go out there and fish. And what would happen is they would of course, they could load up because nobody else was on the fishing grounds. And we had no way of knowing about that fish was finding its way back into the into the corporate sector. And so we tried various things to try and deal with that, but we could never win their cooperation. And of course, Co-ops were also the darling at that time of the Trades and Labour Congress. They had joint committees because that was the way to socialism, credit unions and co-ops. And perhaps there's some truth in that. But it was definitely had a more capitalist orientation and it became quite it started moving in the direction of being anti-union and really resisting the idea of having any control whatsoever by unions during strikes.

SG [00:28:43] And so that's sort of the background somewhat to the '67 trawl strike.

GH [00:28:47] That's exactly the background. Yeah, it was those tensions had already started and the majority of the people that fished for the Co-op were members of the union. But it was they also had a deep loyalty to the Co-op. And so this strike tested that loyalty. And I must say, with the exception of perhaps one or two the vast majority, abandoned the union.

SG [00:29:09] Hmm. I'll come back to that in a minute. But one of the things that I want to just look at is that it's always struck me as a really difficult thing in salmon season, particularly to balance the needs of shore workers with the balance of fishermen, because you're having to

sign up all of these guys coming up on the grounds if they haven't already signed up at the union hall. And at the same time, you've got to deal with shoreworkers in the plants, which at that time were spread all over the area.

GH [00:29:35] Yes, that's true. Although and it was somewhat easier because when you go into a plant and there's more commonality, I mean, people tend to be right there and you can get at 'em and whereas fishermen you got to go this camp or that camp, you got to get them at specific times, whether in mending their nets or whatever. They're not all out on the ground scattered.

SG [00:30:03] Well there's what, two of you basically out there.

GH [00:30:06] Yeah, well, we would do most of our organizing on the weekends when the fishing was closed and people would be on the floats. I can recall, you know you go out and that's when you do your chatting. The best way to organize in that situation is to try and get meetings to talk about issues that are burning issues and relate that to what the union's program is. Because we've had the conventions, we've had the discussions and we've laid out a basic framework program and then you, you've got to go and hit people up for their 200 bucks or whatever it is you're trying to get them to sign a voucher and, and actually join the union. And it's a lot easier when it's done collectively if you try to do it one on one. It's a lot of time. I mean, you just you got to go down and have a coffee. You got to sit 2 hours at a time. And it wasn't just full-time organizers, you know, our whole slogan was every member, an organizer. And that always was the slogan. Trying to get volunteers didn't work out as much as you like because one of the things when you became full time, you tend to have more time to think about all these issues. But we did have quite a few volunteer organizers as well. And they would pull people together, they pull they would pull meetings together. So you could address on Canada-U.S. fisheries or bargaining or, you know, salmon enhancement or whatever, whatever the current issues, and try to find the points of unity between everyone.

SG [00:31:38] That was one of the unique things I think about the UFAWU was this campaigning style of organizing. And so that would have been it's essential purpose was to bring people together around issues in order to sign them up in a sense.

GH [00:31:52] Or just the signing up was that was the bottom line. I mean, we have to have a union and, you know, people have to recognize that there's power in the union to do the things you want to do. And but it became increasingly I mean, a fundamental function of the union is still in bargaining the price of your labour and how much you're going to get for your fish. And that was the common thing with the shore workers and the fact that there's a need to support one another. A lot of the times, I mean, I know later, some fishermen thought, well, we should just get the shore workers to do all our fighting for us, just have hot edicts, but it didn't work two ways. In other words, when the shore workers are on strike, the fisherman needs to avoid offloading at the shore plants that are that are having a struggle. So these are the things that, you know, you need to have to forge unity between the various sections. And it was an ongoing struggle. Always. Unity, you should never take it for granted. And I think there's some lessons right now for the for the present and future in terms of how the class is organized, how the working class is organizing different kind of work, but it's same principle.

SG [00:33:09] Yeah, definitely. There's similarities. You had a lot total dissimilarities.

GH [00:33:14] Yeah, that's right.

SG [00:33:15] So coming back to the 1967 strike. This was really one of the most divisive strikes, I think probably in the union's history. Yeah, for sure. Because it was, it was very much, you know, in a single community. Yeah. You can be some of the background to it

GH [00:33:31] Well just, it was first initially a struggle around to get a trawl contract there'd been other attempts to organize trawlers. At first.

SG [00:33:42] These are ground fish trawlers.

GH [00:33:43] Groundfish, going out for groundfish and it was one of the largest unorganized sections still there were still a lot of them are still members of the union, but it hadn't been so it was agreed to like the union had lost a struggle around prices, early back in 1947. Then the next time they waged a battle with the boat owners over the share, whatever the price was, then it was a I think a pretty... and it lasted for a long time maintaining this, you know, a 20% boat share, 80% for the crew, etc., with other things for different, you know, different allocation for expenses and stuff. But what was noticed was that the boat owners were starting to fudge a little bit on some of this, on some of the share stuff, particularly if you get new technology. That's one of the things that they you know; this is a big cost item. And they thought the crew should bear some of the costs. These were the tensions. Eventually, but the basic aim and objective of the union was to eventually get so they could actually negotiate minimum prices for trawl as well. This was the so at meetings was very difficult to organize trawlers because they, they come into port at different times. And so the very thing that the union started was to actually have meetings and they wanted coast-wide meetings of trawlers to actually discuss, you know, the idea of stopping all this stuff with the violations of the share agreements and the idea of setting a deadline for everybody to be in port was the thing that became the pivotal point. And so we had some boat owners, especially in Prince Rupert Co-op, Uh-uh we're not going to live up to that deadline as we know, the rest is history. The fish went bad, injunctions were flying, the union was you know basically in the ultimate final analysis it cost the union the Co-op plant it was strikebreakers were brought in and and basically that threw the picket line by and this group that kind of laying fallow, this other trade union backed by the Canadian Labour Congress, and the strikebreakers went through and disaffiliated from the union.

SG [00:36:24] So just let me. So we're clear in this. When this deadline was set, the idea was the shore workers were going to cease to handle it beyond a certain point.

GH [00:36:33] Yeah, well, that's what happens if you if you violate a deadline. The whole idea was to try and get a deadline where people could talk about violation, but also to strengthen the share agreement so that we can move forward. So, yeah, what you'd end up with, any time any of the union's deadlines were violated you'd get a hot edict slapped on it. And the fish wouldn't be handled, everybody knew that.

SG [00:37:01] So was the Co-op plant organized into the UFAWU?

GH [00:37:05] Absolutely it was the strongest plant in Prince Rupert. I mean we had people like Ray Gardiner who was the northern representative twice, people of long-standing seniority, Florence Greenwood, who was an organizer for the union in the north, came out of

that plant. I mean, it was it was a powerful, it was a large chunk of our membership and the most seasoned elements of our...

SG [00:37:29] Just running through the stage of events here. You set a deadline for them to deliver their fish beyond which it wouldn't be processed and at that point as you say shoreworkers wouldn't handle, the fish went bad. So then boats were being picketed. At this point not to be able to sail again.

GH [00:37:48] That's it exactly. And while they couldn't even get the fisher unloaded, unless they agreed to put this put the fish in escrow. Put the proceeds into escrow. And you know, and they just simply refused, it's our fish and the union is going to pay for anything that goes bad there would be damages.

SG [00:38:07] And so this injunction is issued.

GH [00:38:08] Injunction is the beginning of a lawsuit as you know.

SG [00:38:11] Exactly. The injunction is issued that leads to eventually civil cases against the union.

GH [00:38:18] Yeah, there were seven.

SG [00:38:19] And what were the circumstances of the the jailing of UFAWU leaders?

GH [00:38:24] Well, I think what flowed from all of that was eight of us were arrested. I can't even remember the date we had to make several trips back to court. But eventually we had a trial, eventually it was Homer. Jack was arrested twice.

SG [00:38:46] You were actually arrested in jail.

GH [00:38:48] We were all. Yeah, there was eight[1], it was really strange because the people who were arrested were those that didn't have much connection, a very tenuous connection to Prince Rupert. Like there was obviously the three officers and Steve Stavenes wasn't even hardly involved because he was a rank-and-file element for sure and he was out on the fishing grounds. But because he was President, he had to be named. Joe Verde, [00:39:14] Don Dumas, Jose Garde, myself. One more. And of course, Jack and Homer and we all put a night in, you know the hoosegow.

SG [00:39:33] In Prince Rupert.

GH [00:39:34] In Prince Rupert underneath the police station. I believe it was a Sunday night so there was no money to get our bail, they had to toss the hat around. I think our bail was set at $10,000 or something. But anyway, the bail was raised. It was amazing. When we came out, there was a huge crowd and Prince Rupert came to greet us. But the town was

[1] The number of people arrested in June 1967 was five: Union secretary-treasurer Homer Stevens, business Agent Jack Nichol, northern representative George Hewison and trawl committee member Jose (Joe) Verde were arrested June 7. Another trawl committee member Art Murdoch, was arrested June 8. - SG

absolutely split right down the middle. You know, husband and wife, brother and sister. It was centered on Prince Rupert Co-op.

SG [00:40:12] So there were other companies involved. But the Prince Rupert Co-op ends up being sort of the focus of it.

GH [00:40:17] Yes, and because the union was so strong, the Royal Fisheries was also another one but again, it wasn't over near... Those two vessel owners that fished there they also were involved in the lawsuit. But it was, we had the loss of the Prince Rupert Fisherman's Co-op. There was a vote taken. And not only did they not handle the fish, but eventually there was it was close to the time that I was actually arrested. There was I mean; emotions were running really high and the workers just didn't want to put up with any more garbage the harassment they were getting from their managers. So they decided they were just going to go on strike. And they did. They pulled the plug. Against the advice of some of the leaders of the union.

SG [00:41:19] There was just one there from the shore workers simply was part of the bargaining process at that point.

GH [00:41:26] There was bargaining going on. But it was also part of this bigger, you know, epic struggle had been going on now for several months. And so it wasn't part of the like filing for conciliation. And they just didn't want to put up with any more harassment and the things they were doing to the workers to basically humiliate them.

SG [00:41:53] What kind of things?

GH [00:41:55] They had Pete Parfeniuk and Ray Gardiner 21 years seniority each doing the lowest seniority jobs they were cleaning out the fish offal from underneath the reduction plant, of stinkiest job in the plant, you know, just to make a point that these are strong union people, and we can do it. For the first time, Union representatives were barred from the plant, we couldn't even go in to monitor the conditions, that had never happened before. So we couldn't, we had a collective agreement with the Co-op. So you have a whole number of things happening. That strike was if I hadn't lived through it, I wouldn't have believed it. The Prince Rupert Daily News brought in a ringer reporter on side, and every story had to be cleared. The CHTK radio, they brought in a guy and every I had a friend who was a disc jockey there from the station. I used to do music with him and he told me, he said "there's really something strange going on, George". He said every story has to be cleared. Anything to do with the fishing industry or, you know, the union has to be cleared with this guy. It has to be basically censored. So the entire town had been organized. It was just almost as if they were anticipating our struggle. The Ministerial Association the guy that got the Freemen in the city from the United Church organized all the churches except one, to do things to bless the fleet, bless the scabs. The mayor, who'd been elected on a Labour ticket many years before, had organized going to the homes of shore workers, particularly immigrant shore workers, and saying if they didn't cross their own picket line, they would be deported back to their home country. I mean, you are making people were getting physically ill, immigrants wondering what futures is. It was like it was a state of siege and a struggle. As I say, we had mass meetings. The other side had mass meetings. Two ideological things contributed. One was the north versus the south, there was always a sense if you're not with Prince Rupert those guys in Vancouver they always had the advantage because they know if Charlie Hays

hadn't died on the Titanic, you know, Prince Rupert would have been would have been a prime port on the West Coast. And but in everything since then, it was and because of the fish runs, there's this sense that the North always get screwed. And that was one thing. The second thing was it was the dying embers of McCarthyism. And so the only organization was get rid of the reds in Prince Rupert. There's one really important sign that still burns in my memory, basically get rid of communists. It was.

SG [00:45:15] So. Yeah. I remember that picture of that woman.

GH [00:45:17] Yeah. And her father and her husband was a vessel owner and but the Marching Mothers were developed, the idea of with the Canadian flag wrapping themselves in the Canadian flag, this was the and it still had some residual effect. And of course, it certainly had a residual effect for the Canadian Labour Congress that had resurrected this organization they'd set up. They sent their organizer into Prince Rupert to advise them as to how to handle the union and how to make sure they could organize this new union and breathe some life into it and this cadaver turned into an anti-union instrument. So all the while we're still trying to get membership in the Canadian Labour Congress, our membership were saying are you guys nuts?

SG [00:46:06] So how was it that the UFAWU certification at the Co-op became Prince Rupert Shore Workers and Clerks?

GH [00:46:14] It was after when we finally settled, we realized the strike was lost and we had to retreat or we're going to lose much more than just we'd already lost. So we had to enter into negotiations with the Co-op and we finally did get the strikers, the Prince Rupert Co-op members, our member shareholders back. But they had to go at the bottom of the seniority list below the strikebreakers. And you can imagine the grief that that caused.

[00:46:46] So they actually re-jigged the seniority list?

GH [00:46:50] Yeah so the UFAWU strikers ended up at the bottom. People like Ray Gardiner and Pete Parfeniuk and Bob Jones and others who are our chief stewards of all our stewards, Manuel told me some of them never went back. They just that's it. But the rest of them did. But they ended up at the bottom of the seniority list. And so when the decertification vote happened, union got decertified.

SG [00:47:14] When was that?

GH [00:47:15] Right after.

SG [00:47:16] So right after in '68?

GH [00:47:19] Yeah. And they became a directly chartered affiliate of the Canadian Labour Congress. And of course, it's all academic now because the Co-op's gone. Yeah, and so is the union. But it was what it really was, in my opinion it sanctified the idea that strikes by fishermen were illegal. And every time we went on strike from then on, we had to make sure we could win it.

SG [00:47:49] You know, that seems to be essentially what was at stake here was the fundamental right of fishermen to enforce a picket line...

GH [00:47:58] Exactly. That's whatever a union does. But we had two things going against us all the way through this whole epic period from 1945 to 1967. And that is that they kept telling us the fishermen were co-adventurers and two, they couldn't agree who if they weren't co-adventurers and were somehow either dependent contractors or workers, whether they were under federal jurisdiction or provincial jurisdiction. So we had lobbies to both Victoria and Ottawa, and it took years of struggle to get to that point. And we're fighting to get into the Rand Formula and, you know, covered so that if we had some modicum of security and some framework in which we could bargain legally, and Jack Nicol always made the point that we were bargaining legally because we were voluntarily recognized. But voluntarily recognition is only as good as you can enforce it.

SG [00:48:59] So you were arrested at this point, along with several others. No charges resulted in your case.

GH [00:49:04] Oh, no, we were charged. But what we ended up with is a stay of proceedings. And so they were. As Harry Rankin, our lawyer at the time, said it's never been a case in the British Commonwealth where a stay of proceedings is ever resurrected to involve, you know, convictions. So I think I'm pretty safe now.

SG [00:49:25] Well surely there's a statute of limitations.

GH [00:49:27] You think so?

SG [00:49:28] But so what was the stay introduced for? Just simply because they wanted to focus on?

GH [00:49:32] Well, they were big.

SG [00:49:33] Contempt order?

GH [00:49:34] It was also the dying days of the ex parte injunction because all these were granted ex parte and then they had to go to trial. And but they wanted to make an example. And I would argue they wanted to make an example of a particular kind of union. And during the ex parte, they were they had arrested quite a few people in jail, quite a few people. When the Second Narrows Bridge collapsed in 1959, George North wrote an editorial saying injunctions won't build bridges or catch fish. He did six months in the slammer for that. Paddy Neale, a secretary of the Labour Council, did some time in a big strike here, waterfront strikes, all ex parte injunctions in all over Canada, these things, this was one of the last examples of an ex parte injunction, actually. And what they do is they trying to set an example and I think they realized that those things don't work anymore, what you do is you create martyrs in the labour movement. What's better to do is to cripple unions financially. And they did that too. So it wasn't so much the jail sentence that hurt the union was the fact they took our treasury and we ended up with no money.

SG [00:50:55] There was a civil lawsuit for 108,000 or something. Yeah, it was levied against the UFAWU, and it went all the way to the Supreme Court I understand.

GH [00:51:03] I'm not sure whether it went all that way, but it certainly our treasury, they seized our treasury. And I know Buck Suzuki had to go up to Rivers Inlet and go and appeal to people, put their twenties and fifties, you know, into a hat and they came back with enough money to keep the union going when the officers were in jail. And people that remember the union and understood what was an issue and the ability to appeal directly to rank and file members, I think really, really helped. But it was a, it was a very difficult period.

SG [00:51:39] So with the jailing of the Steve Stavenes and Homer Stevens, did that create any sense of sympathy in Prince Rupert in the wake of the strike, or did it just perpetuate the division?

GH [00:51:50] Well, I think no, I think the I think the division was there. I think there was certain bars that members of our union and our supporters wouldn't go into and vice versa. It was just, as I see it, a lot of healing. I don't know healed yet, it's 50 years, but I'm sure people die and the memories fade. But certainly it was it was one of those classic labour battles and as I say, I kind of swore I didn't ever want to be another one of those again.

SG [00:52:23] It's interesting. And yet you shortly after that came down to Vancouver to take up a position with the union.

GH [00:52:32] No, well, before that happened, I ended up exactly back in that position, but it was in Canso Strait. And I went to strike of fishermen, exactly the same thing. It was another kind of civil war kind of situation with everything but the kitchen sink thrown against us and people going to jail and anti-communism and CLC organizing on the part of the unions to try and undermine the union's organizing efforts, etc. So it was like really the tail end of the Cold War, but it was.

SG [00:53:06] What prompted the union to take on organizing in Nova Scotia.

GH [00:53:11] Well, it's a good question, but the appeal went out from the East Coast. Since their union had been smashed in 1946, they were treated like serfs and there were small unions in the plants, but the fishermen were treated the lowest rung of the social scale. And they, the companies just run roughshod over weights or prices over virtually every aspect of the fishermen's lives. And so somebody puts out the call, nobody's responding. We weren't in the Canadian Labour Congress. We tried to get other people. Nobody was interested until we went in. And the first time we went in was in Lunenburg and did get organization promptly. Then Canadian Brotherhood of Railway Transport Workers, suddenly got interested and they went in and organized and this one in Canso Strait still couldn't get any interest until we had this several months of struggle.

SG [00:54:13] And these are trawlers mainly were there.

GH [00:54:14] No, they're inshore fishermen, both trawlers and inshore fishermen. And that's the first time. It was amazing because it was the first time in Canso Strait, we had a local over in Petit de Grat, which was all French speaking and in Mulgrave and Canso was all English speaking, and looked across the channel at each other for probably 200 years and had never, never the twain shall meet. And the first time they met was, was through the union coming to joint meetings and in agreeing that we're going to do something about the condition and the

union advice, then the union leadership advised them, this is really a bad, and this is our information is this is not the optimum time to strike if you're going to. But they just fed up. They were. And so Homer went down and helped, and they just got into it. And once you're into it, you can't get out of it ...

SG [00:55:12] So did you yourself go down?

GH [00:55:12] I did. Homer had called, it's really interesting because of all the people they could have sent down, I probably wouldn't have been. I was still in the Communist Party at the time. Homer had quit. And so we're still sorting out our relationship over the politics. But Homer would be I mean, he was one incredible organizer and he'd already, things were well organized. But I watched, my job was basically to raise money because there was no strike, people had nothing, done fishing, let alone going on strike. So we had to have strike relief and we were getting plenty of support from like Cape Breton, Halifax and District Labour Council. J L Bell, who was Secretary of the Federation of Labour. We also had this other residual part within the Congress that didn't want to do anything that was going to help establish the UFAWU, particularly on the East Coast.

SG [00:56:17] Right.

GH [00:56:19] But so we had to raise money. There was no strike funds. UFAWU never had a strike fund to speak of in fish sales. And we had different things we did. And our strikes, of course, were much shorter because of the seasons a one-week strike is catastrophic, two weeks and so on. But there these are more year-round. So they had to when the thing got started getting into weeks and months, it was necessary to go around and raise money. We had good support for some of the churches, but some of the churches, people got various people were sympathetic priests and whatnot, were sympathetic to us, got pulled out and sent to Ottawa, got reassigned and other people that weren't sympathetic were put in their place. So we had a lot of work to do to build a sympathy and succeeded. It was the middle of a provincial election. And that became, I would think, the number one issue. What about bargaining rights for fishermen, and what about those fishermen down the Canso? So when the fishermen there were sentenced to jail, there was almost a spontaneous uprising in Nova Scotia. That was the heavy water plant went out on strike, the building trades went out on strike, the Sydney steel plant were going out on strike, the railway. So it was building.

SG [00:57:35] What year were we?

GH [00:57:38] 1970. So there's this crescendo of and so finally the government, the Smith government decided they'd better do something. I guess they got the call. This thing was getting way out of hand and a guy by the name of Green was appointed to kind of investigate this thing. In the meantime, right alongside of this there's a provincial election and I think there was only two NDP members in the legislature. But the Liberal leader, the opposition leader Gerald Regan at the time had promised that if he was elected, they were going to bargain rates for fishermen became an issue. And of course at that point so the conservatives under Smith were wiped out, were defeated and Regan got elected and things begin to change. But so we finally ended up getting negotiations. I was involved in a negotiation down in Antigonish, but they wouldn't allow, the companies wouldn't allow us to have the officers of the union, myself or Homer or anybody else from the union, keep those West Coast guys out of here they're just troublemakers. And we don't want any outside influence in our

negotiations. But they did agree to recognize the United Fishermen's Negotiating Committee, which was the rank and file, a fellow by the name of Ron Parsons, who was an Anglican priest, a good friend of ours was on that. He was the spiritual adviser to the negotiating team. So they negotiated a settlement and got the very first settlement ever or since 1946, at least, and everybody was set to go back to work. In the meantime, the fish companies went behind their back and went down to Chicago and Booth Fisheries and negotiated with what was then the, what became the United Food and Commercial Workers, then Meatcutters and got them to come in and sign a back door with the company and under it all the crews that were part of the Fishermen and Allied Workers Union either signed cards with this new union or they couldn't ship. So then it was a question whether these guys were going to go back on another strike, this is 18 months later. Whether or not they're going to go back out on strike. They have no money, and it just made their literally. So many of them signed cards. And the bulk of the leadership of we had to bring them to the West Coast to ship out of Vancouver. But so we won the strike, lost the war.

SG [01:00:22] Interesting.

GH [01:00:23] And that's why they've a deep feeling of hostility that existed there within the, that existed towards particularly me. So right at the same time, we're being negotiating, trying to get back into the Congress. And we're told that we have to merge with an existing affiliate. So we have a choice. We can go with the CBRT that basically raided us in Lunenburg or the Meatcutters who just raided us in Canso Strait. But coming in as an independent union was not an option. So we had meetings with CBRT and some of us thought well a Canadian union. No way we're going into a... But we said, well, we're going to hang tough, and we're going to try and come in as an independent union. And in fact, the campaign in British Columbia was overwhelming. I mean, even people who didn't agree with our politics, supported us. I mean, it was amazing. The support of the Labour Council, support of the BC Federation, they would get up in conventions of the Congress and demand the fishermen be brought back in because it was not a strike fought by anybody in this province that we didn't support. So we were eventually brought in in 1973. So I think that just closed the chapter on the cold war in the labour movement. But it wasn't without, you know, big chunks coming out of the union in the process.

SG [01:01:50] So this was the time basically that after that you came down to Vancouver from Prince Rupert.

GH [01:01:55] Yeah, I came down in 1971. And there's a picture, I think, in A Ripple a Wave, the history [book], we're all being sworn in to the Vancouver and District Labour Council. So it wasn't a whole bunch of us. It was a big, big day for in the union that 20 years later, we'd been we were suspended three weeks before the SIU launched a raid, a coincidence of timing. But so 20 years later, we're back in and playing, trying to play a role within, but really, the damage had been done.

SG [01:02:28] So just to be clear, you say '71, but you're talking about the Labour Council in '73.

GH [01:02:33] That was at 73.

SG [01:02:34] But you came down and '71.

GH [01:02:36] I came down in 1971.

SG [01:02:37] Okay. And so what were the circumstances of your coming to Vancouver?

GH [01:02:43] I ended up in the West Coast Club. It's a bar not too far from the Fishermen's Union. And I'm coming down for a convention. And the acting business agent guy by the name of Glenn McEachern who was a highline gillnet fisherman, said I wanna take you over for a drink. And I said, okay, I want to catch up on all the news that's going on because we're kind of isolated up in Rupert. And he said Thursday, the elections are on and I'm not running. And you are, it was just that simple. And he said, not you, who?

SG [01:03:21] And so. I've always been one of these people for every job I've ever had in the labour movement, it's been a draft. It's felt like it's a draft. It's not something I've ever sought. Or in any event, I took it on. It's the Organizational Director post in the union at that point.

SG [01:03:43] Organizational Director?

GH [01:03:44] That's what the business agent is. That was defined in the Constitution as the Organizational. Director. We have a, one of the things about the union and most unions have the three, usually three officers so that no one person got too big a head go too grandiose. And so you had some collectivity in the leadership and so each shared the duties equally and they each had shared the policy, you know, beginning to frame policy and things like that, got to lead the discussion along with the general executive board. So that was my first experience as a top officer of the union, so I lasted there until it was in '77, I guess it was. So that was from '72 to '77. My first year, I shouldn't say what caused me to come to Rupert. I was going back to school. And so I'm getting all these things. I said I have to get back into the mainstream. I mean, I've served my one year, it's eight years later, and so they needed somebody to be a big boat organizer on the Vancouver waterfront. So I did that, enjoyed that immensely, it was a different experience dealing with a huge Yugoslav community, dealing with some amazing people that built the union from in the hell of a section and just understood unionism and major, I wouldn't have had that experience had they not. You know, I can think of ten names that are gone now, but were rank and file builders in the union, understood how difficult during the Depression it was to keep unionism and a guy by the name of Harry Corlett, president of our Gibson local telling me, you know, you gave the John F Kennedy speech to me about ask not what your union can do for you, but what you can do for your union. He said it's always paid dividends to me, so I never gone hungry. The unions always had my back. So that was kind of that was in the back of just about every one of those early old timers that had built.

SG [01:06:00] That sense of. I mean, there is I remember that at well an intense sense of loyalty. You got it from a lot of those old-time organizers, especially in the Yugoslav, Croatian....

GH [01:06:09] Oh, yeah.

SG [01:06:11] Where do you think that came from?

GH [01:06:12] It just came from hardship and learning the hard way about collectivity that you have to have your brother or sister's back. If you don't have that, you've got nothing. You're facing that corporation, you're facing that whole, and now you're facing that whole capitalist superstructure all by your little lonesome. And so you appreciate that, and so that came through a lot of hard knocks and so that ideologically, I think that's what they've tried to do to the working class, they Uber-ized so that, it's that each of you, you're your own means of production by getting ahead, you know, playing the cards right. You, too, can get ahead. But it means shafting everybody else around you, basically. And as opposed to, you know, building class solidarity across lines and yeah, so guys like Walter Ironside who is also, he would never take on a union job. Harry Allison, we used to call him Harry Halibut, but just an intense, intense loyalty to the union.

SG [01:07:21] Some people would have been in the in the same sector of the fishing industry, or at least in the unionized part of it at that point.

GH [01:07:29] In the fishing section are the same because you see that all changes.

SG [01:07:34] In the same sector.

GH [01:07:34] Because well it changed radically after the Davis Plan, as you know, because the seine boats exploded, because my brother, for instance, bought his boat for $13,000, sold it for 52, the next year, somebody sold it for 252, and then last time they made a great big seine boat, a million something the same because the license is on the boat and there's not enough fish in the Pacific Ocean to pay for this capital indebtedness. But what happened is people they allowed combining licenses of small boats, trawlers and little gillnetters and to make one single license. And so the other thing exploded from 150 seine boats to 450. When I started fishing, we were a seven person crew. And then we had the power blocks, we could do it with six. Then you get up to the table seining and we could do it with five and sometime four. And Gordy Maddox actually did it with three.

SG [01:08:32] Drum seiner you mean.

GH [01:08:32] Drum seiner. One day they got the drum, so the technology was, so the big thing for the union was now we got all this technology. Two things happened. Employers wanted to get a bigger share for themselves for all this technology. And the crews, of course, wanted to, because they're doing more work with fewer of them, but they're producing the same amount of fish. We can make 20 sets a day drum seining, as opposed to 3 sets a day pulling it all by hand so these are the issues that we wrestled with. It was always that constant conflict. But how many? So if you have 150 seine boats times six, excluding the vessel owner, as opposed to 450 times five, that will give you some idea of the size of our fleet.

SG [01:09:28] And so once the seine fleet had exploded, but the number of crew members that you had to organize that was actually declining.

GH [01:09:38] Yeah. And we you see one of the things when the SIU raided, they took all our files in Campbell River in 1953 just for an example. But one of the things that faced the union, we had a clearance program, and this was the way to guarantee that everybody was in the union.

SG [01:09:56] You know, you just take a minute and explain the clearance, okay?

GH [01:09:59] Well, okay, the clearance program, it's every vessel that sailed under our contracts, they had to have an all-union crew and it was enforced by the crew themselves, by the union. So our house in Campbell River was the headquarters for the clearance program. Crews would all come trooping up to the house and my dad was away fishing. My mum would take on the job of clearing the boats for him and everybody had to agree to sign a voucher that BC Packers will donate X amount of dollars, $48 or whatever to the union for dues. And so everybody except the boat owner had to be a member of the crew. There's a delegate elected who represents the crew with dealing either with the boat owner or with the company and those boat delegates. And so it was a very strong thing that emerged out of the building of the union, like this conference this last weekend, we talked about Scotty Neish being one of the heroes of the union, well he led the seiners into Vancouver in flotilla form when companies tried to cut the price on chum salmon. And he led them up to 1938 and why he as a young skipper, they had to almost do it in military fashion to beat the companies and make sure there were no strikers or people violating the solidarity of the union and the solidarity of the strike. Same thing. That's what the clearance program developed, everybody, and there was a consciousness in the rank and file that everybody had to be in the union and there will always be people that don't agree. But you're still going to be bound by brother. And if you don't, eventually the whole thing will fall apart. And so that's what the clearance program was about. And so when the SIU took all the forms and I know my dad, Homer sent a letter, the office people in Vancouver sent a letter saying, Can you make sure you get this clearance program, we don't know who's in, who's out. People are complaining they paid their dues, but there's no records. So they had to do a major re-jigging around who was who. And so that was the first thing that started to go down and of course, what happens when you get lower technology or higher technology, for instance in our local, the first thing that happens is my brother, who is no longer just a skipper, no longer just a company skipper, where he's still a member of the union. But I have to issue him his withdrawal card because he's now become a boat owner and he's hiring more than three people. But he still hires me, but I don't really want to get into a fight with my skipper, and particularly since he's my brother, and then suddenly he hires his uncle and his cousin and then when you get down to four people, the unions suddenly find themselves in a minority. So how do you deal with this? And that's one of the big debates that the union had. John Radosevic and I have had many discussions about is there different ways? That's what happened to the Native Brotherhood. The Native Brotherhood basically started to become controlled by the boat owners to the detriment of the crew. So it became one of the points of tension with the union.

SG [01:13:18] So what was the situation when you took over that responsibility.

GH [01:13:21] Of?

SG [01:13:24] Of Organizational Director in the seine fleet? It's your clearance pretty well.

GH [01:13:28] The template had been laid for me many, many years before me, so my job was just to go out, we had we had a...

SG [01:13:35] But was it, was it beginning to decline at that point?

GH [01:13:39] For sure. For sure. And it was partly because the Rand Formula works like a damn in terms of union security, getting money, but it's no good for maintaining the consciousness of the rank and file about, you know, the whole idea is "I pay my dues to this union. What services am I getting now?" and, you know, it's in other words, the union is George Hewison. The union is Jack Nichol, The union is Buzz Hargrove. The union is this person, it's not me. So I no longer, and it almost becomes, you know, and I'm like contracting out my unionism by paying $240 a year to somebody. And in my opinion, that was almost a poison pill with capital put back in our ranks back in 1946 at the port strike. Where there was a good side to it that we did get some union security and we got some resources. But we also began to make we became administrators of the membership, and we also bear all the responsibilities if workers suddenly decide we want a general strike and they're going to come and take our treasury and they're going to come and take our union halls. And so we were in that we're in the cusp of that problem back from almost from the beginning, in my opinion. So, so ironically, we were fighting to become part of the ranks, knowing full well that it was. But our theory was, well, if we can release these 16 organizers that we have, our full-time staff, they'll be able to go out and organize all these other wonderful things like, you know, for the environment and first nations and social justice and, you know, getting a better deal and not just a theory.

SG [01:15:32] So was this the time, in that early seventies where because the fisheries were expanding, I mean, for example, there's the whole advent of the roe herring fishery and.

GH [01:15:41] Yeah, well, yes and no. I mean, yeah, I mean and before that, you remember the herring fishery was wiped out on this coast too. And so this was just the beginning of the comeback. And of course, then the explosion in Japan and prices. But also because the companies wouldn't give us much more than $110 a ton for roe herring. But they were paying the fishermen 1100 dollars a ton because it was all going under the table. And we had some people saying, why the hell do we need a union? We pay only bonuses. And this was another thing.

SG [01:16:14] That's what I was going to ask you, is that the fisheries were expanding, but the direction they were taking was not one that would encourage union growth. Is that a fair statement to make?

GH [01:16:24] Oh for sure. For sure. There were two things I think, that undermined the union most effectively. One was the licensing schemes that was designed to put the emphasis on capital and not on labour. And it created a lot of illusions among boat owners that up to then had been very loyal union people. Then you get into area licensing and then try to organize where you're stuck to where you can fish, and where you can't fish. And if the runs are up there and they're on strike, people down here, there's all these things. And of course, guess who wins? Jimmy Patterson at the final nod. So that was huge. And the state played a major role in that, in undermining unionism in the fishing industry, in my opinion. The second is exactly what you just described. I mean, there's splits and divisions. I mean the idea of, you know, having people make the main enemy in this industry the First Nations, because they want to assert their historic right to fish rather than try to find ways to accommodate. I think all of these things contribute and the powers that be, they always had the tools. And we were always working with limited tools.

SG [01:17:48] So how did you find it, though, personally, when you were on the grounds here in terms of organizing, was it getting more difficult to do, organize fishermen? Was it getting...?

GH [01:17:58] I didn't notice it. Maybe it's like a frog in the boiling pot of boiling water. I mean, I, I thoroughly enjoyed it. Because I enjoyed interfacing with the members. But what was happening is that we had all these young folks coming behind me that were full of ideas. And, you know, that's there's a law of growth of leadership that you have to step back and let other people take on the responsibilities. And it wasn't really till I left I begin to see that there's a much bigger something bigger at play, because you're right, when you're focused on the struggle, you're developing tactics. What you're not doing is developing strategy. And that's the problem, in my opinion, with the whole labour movement. We've got damn good tactics, but our whole strategic plan, right from the Winnipeg General Strike right back to now, and that's why this conference this weekend was so great. We have lost a strategic battle on both from those that wanted a revolution to those that wanted to just simply reform the system. Both have failed to cope with capital strategy and 1400 transnational corporations as a living proof of our failure.

SG [01:19:12] Well, it's interesting because you mentioned before that you were a member of the Communist Party. In fact, UFAWU is kind of renowned as being one of the communist-led unions that outlasted the cold war, so the speak. So did you find being a member of the Communist Party useful to you in terms of giving you direction?

GH [01:19:29] Yes.

SG [01:19:30] Strategy or whatever?

[01:19:31] Absolutely. Yes. It was a compass. It was also a liability. Let me put it this way. I've had to really do a lot of reprocessing of everything because I think tactically the Communist Party understood what they were up against, they understood the class nature of society, and that without that I think it's impossible to be a labour leader in today's world. You have to...and it also had a vision of something different than just simply the next contract or the next election. You have to have a broader and I think to a certain extent the Communist Party gave that. Where it failed, in my opinion is it didn't have the strategic vision. It had two parents. One parent was the Winnipeg General Strike and the stuff that Ben Issit talked about where we could fill four theatres in Vancouver with thousands of workers that parent, socialists and people that were...and the Russian Revolution. And we were inspired by that, and we thought we want to have some of that formula here and we want to get in on the ground floor and we're prepared to pay whatever price it is for admission. And I think we did that and did some rather heroic work, and particularly during the Depression, when it looked like capitalism was on the ropes again and looked like five-year plans in the Soviet Union were going to work out pretty good and they were advancing. So those all those things happened. So I don't think I ever bragged about or bullshitted about my, I don't think I ever mentioned my communist. Everybody else did. I mean, I was that little commie shit the history department people used to refer to me, but I recall in the Cold War where, "are you now or have you ever been?" And if you answered yes, you were blacklisted and you lost your union membership and you for sure couldn't hold office anywhere. And if you answered no, you were lying. You're being duplicitous. So you just don't engage in that. I remember my dad writing in his diary about he went to a church meeting. A church meeting was Communist Party.

SG [01:22:03] And in the seventies there were a whole number of younger people that re-entered or who were in the Communist Party and in the union.

GH [01:22:16] Well, yeah. Well I mean we started to, we were crawling, but it was growing on the basis I mean, I remember some of them saying, I'd joined the Communist Party but I sure don't like your attitude towards the Soviet Union and you know, I've got a real problem with that. We said well, join anyway, you know. But you know, we don't really worry too much about what goes on over there. And, you know, our job is to take on BC Packers and the corporations here. That's our goal and take on the Socreds and anybody else that gets in our way. And so it's an appealing thing. I think where we kind of messed up, I messed up, I don't think we concentrate enough on long term strategy, and I don't think we questioned enough. I don't think we did enough analysis of really what we were up against in terms of the Canadian phenomenon and in terms of capital, long term political economy of capitalism and how it reflected. We'd done excellent work in 1947 around the Abbott Plan, around the integration of Canada with the US. And that stood us in pretty good stead in terms of fighting it for, for instance, me fighting in the Canada-U.S. fishery talks. But I got fired off that delegation probably for because they were selling us out. I understood why they couldn't agree with me. I understand the government position, but so that was really useful stuff. But I don't think we kept it really current and as the party shrank, didn't have the resources to do much except borrow from fraternal sources elsewhere in political economy. And I'm sorry but I listen to one of the representatives of the Communist Party this last weekend saying that the answer is we got to get out of NAFTA, you know, I think anybody that knows about capitalist globalization, I mean that right at this point as a demand would lead us, we'd be probably somewhere close to North Korea or Albania in terms of our economics that we try to sell that to the Canadian working class. And I think we need to have much more...

SG [01:24:30] Not to mention that we would be lining up behind Trump. That's a small problem.

GH [01:24:35] But we need to have I think we need to have our best brains start looking at these and we have we have considerable resources, but we haven't done it. We haven't created the instruments yet. We've got excellent research facilities, the Centre for Policy Alternatives. We've got the Broadbent Institute, but what we don't have is another institute where we can gather people, where we begin to look strategically at where we're going and in particular, you see, Marxism was kind of relegated during the Cold War to the campuses and to the universities. And they were kind of they were up in the hill. The labour movement was here down here amongst the great unwashed and never the twain shall meet. And so you can't have that. You got to have the interface. So when the Leap Manifesto happened, I was pretty excited by that because for the first time somebody saying the problem is the system. And but then you end up with the backlash. And the corporate world has really just jumped all over them but including a lot of people in the labour movement, even in the NDP. You know, it was horrifying. But I think the question of deepening that analysis and particularly making that the property and making that debate down within the, first of all, the trade union movement, but even amongst the precarious workers who are all fighting this fight, I mean, this thing in Ontario, for example, great news. It was a great victory for precarious workers backed by the labour movement, backed by progressive society, to amend the Labour Code to amend the employment standards. But I'm thinking to myself, it's strange that this is only going to go into effect after the government's re-elected, the Liberal Government is re-elected. Have they

suddenly been on the road to Damascus with Paul and suddenly seen the light of what neoliberalism and uber-ization, or are they actually is there something new? And it seems to me we've got to be careful because a lot of my friends in Ontario that are involved in this campaign are saying we've won. And it's like the Rand Formula. It's only a temporary stepping stone. So it's the same it's the same question we were always in with a union. What was our end goal? Our end goal was to organize. Our end goal was to get good contracts. But that wasn't the end goal for the communists in the fishing industry. Our end goal was we wanted to organize workers in order to build a new kind of society that's going to be, we want to organize all workers everywhere in order to have a different kind of system that's not based on profit. And that goal, in my opinion, remains exactly the same as when George Miller first set out to organize up at [01:27:28] the central cost.

SG [01:27:30] One of the new things that's come into it. It began to come in in the seventies, I think, was the idea that this was a common property resource and something that needed to be preserved for Canadians' use.

GH [01:27:41] That was always our strategy. That was always our strategy. And we always developed our policy based on what's in the best interests of the Canadian people, whether it's herring ...Link that too because you took on a whole number of sort of international files, at that time and was that common property resource part of the strategy in your own ...

GH [01:28:00] Absolutely. And they wanted to, we knew we had a problem, we couldn't just let everybody and anybody into the industry. The thing that was obviously way too many boats starting to happen, way too much fish or too many boats and too many people catching too few fish so nobody could make a living. But the answer by capital was, we're going to make it. We're going to take it from a common property resource and turn it into a commodity. And you can flip it, you can buy and sell them real estate. Our position was you could come in a certain...you had to make the bulk of your living from this you had to make a commitment to the industry, which had always been the case. I mean, you know, people in fishing industry, first nations, whoever don't believe in fishing the last fish out of the ocean in order to make in order to pay a mortgage or to pay... There's no such thing as, a creek robber was the worst thing you could call a fisherman and the worst <indistinct> to going in and robbing the next generation of fish because that was what was going to come back and be there forever. Our members told Dr. Needler that if you left the quotas on herring, you're going to wipe the herring out, because of our technology. He didn't listen, he said no, no there's an abundance of herring. Well, we wiped the herring out within three years. Then they sent the fleet around the East Coast and wiped them out there. That's so we didn't have any fishery for a number of years until the roe fishery came up. So no, a common property resource it is. And it should be just like air, land and water. It belongs to the people. It doesn't belong even to the people. We use it to make a living, just like people make a living building houses or whatever. But, you know, it should be, it is a common property and that was pretty central. So everything we did was to protect the workers, their lives, their quality of life. But it also was to advance a program that was in the best interest of Canadians. When I went and spoke across the country, it was on the basis that this fish that the Americans now want half of on the Fraser River or...

SG [01:30:21] This is during the Pacific Salmon Treaty dispute?

GH [01:30:22] All of the disputes that we had for a pittance. They want to take half the salmon that are produced in British Columbia and give it away. Our government is prepared to surrender because of a slide that happened in Hell's Gate in 1913. I mean, the same thing with putting oil tankers on the West Coast. We fought to get an inquiry into and we ended up getting Dr. Thompson to finally conclude that there should be no tankers. But what was it based on? The salmon belongs to everybody. They had a hard sell in Ontario when I went down and spoke at meetings, rallies and in Ontario they said, well, it may be a common property resource, but we can't afford it. We can't afford your salmon. So this was so you know, you have to take that on board as well. And how do you how do you factor that into your strategies.

SG [01:31:18] Haven't you?

GH [01:31:19] Well, we've said yeah, and that's the problem with corporate control of the industry. You know, we get along and I said, I got 11 cents a pound for pink salmon one year. And the next year the company cuts the price to 7 cents. How much do you pay for pink salmon in a can now? That's the problem. So when we had fish sales during our strikes to raise money for our strike fund, people would line up for blocks to buy salmon from the strikers because for the first time, they could actually afford to buy salmon. So that's another... That's part of their discourse that companies didn't like it very much. And that's when the Combines Branch started moving in on us and trying to really put the boots to us.

SG [01:32:01] Maybe we could just touch on that. Because I mean, one of the issues that's always been there for the UFAWU is the whole issue of bargaining rights for fishermen because they've never been recognized as workers. So you were there for that second combines investigation. Can you just give us some insight into that? That must have been quite an event.

GH [01:32:23] Well, I you know, I'd been on a delegation from our union to Murmansk meeting our Soviet counterpart, and I get off the plane and the first thing I'm told I arrive was since the Combines Investigation Branch is scooping up papers in my office, I was just about ready to get back on the plane and ask for political asylum. But no, they were in there. They seized all our documents, seized boxes and boxes of stuff. And so this is the second time this happened.

SG [01:32:53] This was in 1976?

GH [01:32:55] Yeah, so we're saying, what is the motive? Why would they do this once again?

GH [01:33:03] We had the one the previous one in the fifties when Jimmy Sinclair was our counterpart across the bargaining table, they were trying to use this as an excuse not to bargain with us. And we couldn't. And then they just really got tough. They were saying that we were all, I was summonsed, other people were summonsed, and it was all confidential. We had to keep it confidential that we were being summonsed to MacMillan Bloedel Building down on Georgia Street, on the 10th floor to give evidence, star chamber and bring certain documents with us. And Jack and Homer, but Homer had already left by then. But Jack and myself and the other officers and Homer had been summonsed but we just said, No, we're not, we're not going to do it. I'm not going to do it. If they're going to have, you know, to start

investigating us, we want to have it in open court and we want to have it more publicly, you know, if they're going to hang us, they're going to do it public, because this is really an attack on the union. And the guy that was heading this thing, Simon Wapniarski, who was just really aggressive in terms of his demands. And of course, they had pretty sweeping powers. If they wanted to use it against the corporations, they could certainly use it. But they were choosing to use in this case against a union. So we get there. But before we did, we put out the call to one to every local in the union to at least send one representative to sit and observe these proceedings, even though they weren't invited. And so either we all go in there or none of us go in there. And so that's the way it ended. And they had the security guards to keep us out. And so the thing got shanghaied and we were being threatened with court action and all kinds of dire consequences. And while we're there, we're also going before the Labour Relations Board to deal with these hot edicts from the strike in 1975. And so we're about to give evidence on that to defend ourselves, then who sits in the back of the room, but Simon Wapniarski. He's taking notes on what we say. So it's kind of like a double jeopardy. I just said I'm not talking, I told Ian Donald who was our lawyer at the time, I said Ian, I'm not testifying here. And Ian was quite embarrassed because he's a judge now and he's quite everything's by the book. And I'm totally. "You're embarrassing me, George." I said, "I'm sorry, but I'm not doing this." So he quit.

SG [01:35:54] Well you also walked out of those hearings I understand too.

GH [01:35:57] We walked out. That's why, that was the point. We walked out; we're not staying. We're not going to be tried here with that idiot. So anybody Ian did explained, or Harry came in, Harry Rankin, I think, had to pinch hit on the thing. And he came in and explained it this time so the chair of the Labour Relations Board just dressed Wapniarski down. First of all, you don't come into this hearing without identifying yourself and frankly, so the whole thing just blew up right at that point. Anyway, the whole thing is, as you know, all kind of collapsed at that point, but we're doing it publicly. It's all over the news, all over the Sun and Province, Global.

SG [01:36:41] We were one of the seven charged with impeding a hearing.

GH [01:36:43] Yeah. Yeah.

SG [01:36:46] What was that like being, you know, before the court, essentially facing not only your own future...

GH [01:36:51] Well, contempt of court. Yeah, well. That's what you do when you take the oath of office. I mean, you're sworn to uphold the union. And you can't do that if your union is being smashed. So. So, yeah, you got to.

SG [01:37:09] You still must harbour some...

GH [01:37:12] I think my wife at the time did my kids probably remember, you know, and wondering, well, how much do we own here, we have a house that can be, you know, things like that you can worry about when it comes to that.

SG [01:37:25] Well, given what had happened in Rupert in 1967.

GH [01:37:29] It could have been, could have been more serious.

SG [01:37:31] Was there feeling that this was also going to be a serious threat to the union's future and to your own, for that matter.

GH [01:37:37] The personal stuff didn't worry me, too... I was stunned. I didn't believe I had ever lived through anything like that. If it hadn't happened to me, I wouldn't have believed it. All the stuff, the way it was just it was like a conspiracy, it's like a novel, how they organized this. And I'd love to talk to some of these guys that organized it just to see now that it's kind of history just how they did it. I mean, it was amazing, the amazing job I had my personal RCMP corporal follow me around and he was waiting outside the door. And it wasn't for me because I he wasn't intimidating me. He certainly was intimidating my wife who wasn't political. And, you know, you come home, and your house is rifled, we send people...

SG [01:38:26] They actually invaded your house to check documents as well?

GH [01:38:29] Oh yeah. And so you... Yeah, I mean, it's intimidating. You know, that was the function, I'm sure, too. You know, they find out where the cracks are. But also, we sent workers up to...fishermen up to Alaska. And to this day, don't know how they found out that our people were went up there because we didn't do it over the phone. We didn't do it in public meetings. But as soon as they got off the boat in Ketchikan to alert the people that there might be some hot fish coming, they were nabbed, escorted by the police right back down to Prince Rupert. They knew were coming. It was unbelievable I think was really, really well organized from the Daily News censoring our stuff. CFTK the radio station censoring our stuff. Ministerial Association, the mayor, council threatening all the immigrant labour. It was the orchestration, I mean it was like they saw us coming and the whole thing, they saw the strike happening.

SG [01:39:36] As you know.

GH [01:39:37] I've seen a lot of strikes. I had never seen a strike like that before.

SG [01:39:41] But as you know, this is a very similar situation took place in the United States, where they used the anti-trust legislation essentially to break up the International Fishermen and Allied Workers of America. And what was interesting that they targeted that ability of the fishermen to put a hot edict on fish.

GH [01:39:57] Yeah.

SG [01:39:58] To prevent it being delivered so they could actually enforce a strike. And that seemed to be what they wanted to sweep out.

GH [01:40:04] Absolutely.

SG [01:40:06] Is that the case here?

GH [01:40:06] Absolutely. Absolutely. And well, the thing is about the Rand Formula, it's really interesting because originally it was a compromise with Ford <unclear>, and that was a template for all labour relations. But the two things they wanted to get rid of the militant past.

And you know, so this compromise between capital and labour and most I think militants saw it as just a temporary truce. I think most corporations in the corporate world saw it as a temporary truce. The rest I think, saw it as something rather stable. You know, it was going to be the ongoing template for all time. But the hot edict was part of it. And like the BC Fed had a hot edict for years and years, maybe they still do. I don't know. I don't.

SG [01:40:53] Much prescribed.

GH [01:40:54] But what they do in that sort of thing is they've shrunk down. What you can do, you can't have secondary picketing anymore. You can't have sympathy strikes anymore like that. Those things that Ben Issit was talking about when Winnipeg happened, there were sympathy strikes all over the country, but that was gone. Sympathy strikes had huge penalties and prescription for that wildcat strikes. No more wildcat strikes. And so workers get grievance. So, yeah, they've got us in a kind of in a chokehold and things we can do. And we still have to provide all the services. We have to. I mean, you have precedent now in Labour Relations Board. Precedents in all these specialized labour courts, specialized training and an average worker has to be part lawyer, part accountant, part shop steward and even the most brilliant labour leader today has to... can't possibly keep current on all this stuff. So we have some unions that arbitrate every dispute now and a few others used to arbitrate every grievance and <unclear> she'd be clogged up pretty quick.

SG [01:42:10] So what was the sense in the leadership at this time when you're facing not only the Labour Relations Board over the hot edict but also the combines? I mean, it must have been a sense you were under siege almost within the leadership.

GH [01:42:25] I can't recall feeling that way. I recall anger that, you know, the injustice of it all. But I think also no, I think we just we're looking at, okay, how do you how do we fight back? That was most of our energy, I think, was, you know, rallying the labour movement in BC, rallying our membership, rallying the community, going as far afield as we had to do to get the job done. And backing them off. On every campaign we ever whether it was building a dam on the Fraser or West Coast oil ports or any of these things. I don't think we you know, the Davis Plan, the Canada-U.S. fishery talks, I think in every case was what do we do to stop this? And of course, that's where the lack of strategic planning happened. I mean, it obviously was part of a broader sweep, I don't know if there's some little guy somewhere sitting in Ottawa thinking, okay, how are we going to screw the fishermen during the day? And I don't think that happened, but I think there was a there's a diabolical hatred for everything we stood for. And I think it started probably with BC Packers or Jim Pattison or somebody, but it also had the capitalist state. I think people in there thought we got to get these guys they're, you know? So I think there was an element of that and opportunities present themselves. And suddenly things got to where I think the RCMP is a big factor. The fact that, yeah, we had they knew what we were doing almost as quickly as we did.

SG [01:44:05] But it was significant that the Combines legislation was never used significantly, at least against any other union.

GH [01:44:13] Exactly right. And we were vulnerable because we had co-adventurers and because we had no legal protection provincially or federally.

SG [01:44:24] Right. So one of the things you also did when you when you came down here was you took a leadership role in the Vancouver and District Labour Council and Jack Nichol was an executive officer of BC Fed. And you were...

GH [01:44:36] Yeah, we had a division of labour among the officers and initially Homer was on the executive when we first got readmitted to the Congress, but he stepped aside. He had a lot of other things to do. But we figured out and we considered the Labour Council was, you know, very, very important and so was the Fed. So yeah, so we worked, we worked the division of labour out. And I became at one point first vice president responsible for Unemployed Committee of the Labour Council, particularly during the big recession in the eighties.

SG [01:45:14] So that's where the beginnings were for the fightback against the 26 bills.

GH [01:45:20] Exactly.

SG [01:45:22] Can you relate some of the events that led to the formation of the budget coalition.

GH [01:45:29] Yeah, well we had an Unemployed Committee, we set up Unemployed Action Centres, that was our theme. And a matter of fact I brought out to BC, I was going to show somebody, we wrote briefs to city council, briefs to the province on, you know, scandalous welfare rates. And when we had these Unemployed Action Centres we had one philosophy, the Congress had another. Theirs was simply self-help rather than mobilize and use... The independent unions had another thing. They just wanted to have political bodies. We wanted to have a combination of helping people but also having them help themselves and organize. So it was we weren't just helping people get through this rough patch but then explain and do something about the rough patch. So, so we set up in the Fisherman's Hall we set up the Unemployed Action Centre to first of all explain to workers that had just suddenly had the bottom drop out from under them and feeling that it was all their fault. First of all, the problem isn't your fault. You're part of a cyclical crisis that happens every ten years or so. Where people lose it, lots of people lose their jobs and it's no fault of yours, and it's not a failure on their part. And, you know, if you have to get through this whole trauma and secondly, then the system get retraining or doing things, how to do a résumé, dealing with some bureaucrat somewhere trying to deny them or a bank that's trying to foreclose on their home or whatever, all these kinds of things. And plus, we built up a political movement that would, if need be gone, picket a bank or picket or, you know, some area. So that was the and we had an excellent crew there, volunteers and one I think we hired one Kim Zander actually was the main person that was hired at that time. So this is all going well until the election. And we had a different estimation than some of our friends in the labour movement. And the NDP got seriously defeated. Everybody thought they were going to win, but it ended up being it was the Socreds got re-elected. And unbeknownst to all of us, a group that we had dubbed absolutely nut bars in the political economy field, the Fraser Institute. They were so far out; they simply won that election. And they met with, unbeknown to us, met with Premier Bennett and his Cabinet right after the election and laid out this formula for the landing of neoliberalism in British Columbia. Up to then, the Social Credit had been a different animal. And being on a Keynesian yes, we're going to screw the workers. We're going to use it to, you know, to basically pillage the economy. But it wasn't based on taking back all the gains of four decades of struggle. And so suddenly the Fraser Institute has emerged in the face of a new

Social Credit. And unfortunately, the NDP was basically flattened as an opposition, because they as many of us expected they were going to actually form the government. And so the day after the election or after they dropped these bills right after the election, and in face of a lot of demoralization on the part of the left, it was amazing that the Unemployed Committee, which normally had about 12 people come to our meetings. Suddenly there's a Fishermen's Union boardroom close to 100 people or 70 or 80 and people I'd never seen before. I mean everybody wondering what we're going to do about this crisis and demanding the labour movement has to do something. And so I'm interested in forming the Lower Mainland led coalition. Nominated and elected me as the spokesperson for it and chair. And I've got Father Roberts I had never worked with before. The last time I had anything to do with the church, I got stabbed in the back up in Rupert. So I'm really, who are all these women against the budget? I got to admit, I've never met any these people. The tenants' groups, the labour movement and the social justice movement in British Columbia up to that point had been two solitudes. so we called a meeting for the next day, or the next couple of days in the auditorium in the Fisherman's Hall. And we ended up with I think, over 400 registered in the auditorium. It was amazing. And so I'm in the chair and I don't know, we didn't yet have a co-chair. We should have. But it was part of our education as a labour movement, and the sensitivities towards the community. So we had to have a gender balance and I was getting attacked, not for being a communist, I'm being attacked for being big labour. And that was the main charge. But the labour bosses are running the show. And how do we you know; how do we show respect? So we did and we so formed, and the committee had made the decision earlier to have a demonstration to allow people to vent and put the word out. And we're meeting almost daily. And I suddenly got a call from a guy that I hadn't seen for a year or so. He'd come and solicited our support to run for secretary of the Canadian Labour Congress and we'd turned him down. Anyway but he's now, because Jim Kinnaird had died in office the head of the Federation, he's now the acting head of the Fed, Art Kube. He said "George, call them off!" Just an abrupt that stern accent? And I said, "Art, whoa, whoa, whoa, what". He says, "you've got to call it off it's going to be a failure". I said, "Art, it's too late, the die's cast. But I'll tell you what, you come down". I got this call, I'm in my office and I had to go back into the boardroom. So I went back into the boardroom and told them that Art's coming down. He's going to try and explain what's happening here. That's where that story came about, the 20,000 leaflets.

SG [01:52:10] Oh, I see.

GH [01:52:11] I guess it did partly originate with me, but I think it mainly originated in Jef Keithley's mind.

SG [01:52:16] Maybe he could relate that.

GH [01:52:18] Anyway, yeah. So I guess he comes down and he gets an earful from everybody in the assembled delegates and representatives of each organization in the boardroom about the Fed sitting on it's ass and doing nothing about this. And you know, we're going to at least try and do something. And so finally Art got the message and he said, "Yeah, okay, we'll support you." And so we ended up with 35,000 people at that first rally and the thing just took off.

SG [01:52:50] It was must have been pretty staggering. I mean, I remember being astounded.

GH [01:52:54] Well, I was astounded, I can tell you, for was astounded too, but I was more astounded by a hundred people showing up at an Unemployed Action Committee and then filling the auditorium with organizations that I'd never seen before. And I remember coming down, Frank Kennedy, the President of the Council coming down, and I've got literally arrows and darts sticking out of every part of me from being big labour. He's shaking his head you masochist you. But, it was an experiment. I mean, it was, it was a wonderful, wonderful growing experience for me, for the labour movement, I think, to finally start working with some of these and of course the unfortunate way it ended it just it set it back. But you know, but what's really important, I think for Operation Solidarity and the Solidarity Coalition is coalition building with labour has never looked back. It's been used again and again and again and quite successfully. And I think it's important so we not lose sight of that and we lose sight of the way we kind of dropped the ball at the end.

Speaker 3 [01:54:07] Do you recall any of the names of the organizations that you were introduced to? Because we know, we know there was tons of these.

GH [01:54:13] Well it was, there was cultural workers against the budget, women against the budget. They had a tea party at Grace McCarthy's place to highlight the plight of women and single women. But there's all these cultural groups, there was at least 100 cultural groups trying to coalesce the coalition, cultural workers and did amazingly creative things. And but the tenants' rights movements, all the tenants groups, I mean, I don't know, it ...was. The churches, we'd never worked with the churches before. I mean, as Father Roberts was incredible. I mean, he had one great story he told. He's in the chair and I'm sitting on one side of him, and Lorne Robson was on the other from the Carpenters. He said, I wonder when the last time somebody had a fisherman and a carpenter on either side of him. [laughter] This Jesuit priest, you know, very, very powerful spiritual guy that was, you know, motivated and he was directly designated by the bishop to be part of this.

SG [01:55:20] So that was what's even more stunning, he had been defrocked as a priest because of his advocacy of social justice issues. So for him to be designated by the bishop was really quite a...

GH [01:55:35] He was, I mean, so I take it all back, all those nasty things I said about the church in Rupert.

SG [01:55:43] Maybe you could just relate the story about the leaflets, as they appeared it was kind of interesting.

GH [01:55:46] Well, yeah. You know, my memory I mean, this is going back quite a bit of time. And Jeff related the other night, and I don't know how he related it there, but he said he told Art, or somebody told Art that 20,000 leaflets were already printed, the posters I know, posters were all ready and they were already up and it was too late to call it off. But I don't know anything more than what was related by Jeff the other night. But anyway, the thing went ahead, and I guess the 20,000 leaflets did go out subsequently, and this was part of the... See here's part of the problem between you see Jeff represented the Canadian unions who had no love for the Congress and for the Fed or for the labour movement, the Confederation of Canadian Unions at that time. And there was a level of distrust between him and I, because we wanted to be in the Congress, we thought strategically or tactically, I guess that's where all workers should, even though we have differences of opinion that the leadership level we

should be part of it. And then there was this deep distrust between the Federation officers and us that goes back to the Cold War, that goes back to the Russian Revolution. And we'd spent 50 years just throwing rocks at each other for so long. And so they had an agenda. I mean, nobody going to convince me that they didn't sit there and say, we're not going to let these guys get to march on, you know, be part of this thing. We better do something and that's when Operation... And the fact that they named it Operation Solidarity after Solidarnosc and the same stylistic that there wasn't an element of that, and it was just an attempt to just kind of put a dig into the communists. But on the other hand, it was an amazing, it was an amazing process. And they got a lot of unions involved. And but there's also, you know, all kinds of questions. And the cynics in the labour movement would say that they, it was designed it was programmed to fail. And I'm not sure that's correct. I'm not sure that even the Communist Party wasn't bitten a little bit by cynicism in this point that we thought we can take it another step further. We can take it another step further, but maybe we could have got them to back down. Maybe we could have got a few more things. But I think we were up against the Fraser Institute. We're up against big capital in this country and I'm not sure where it could have ended. It could very well have ended in a complete shemozzle from the trade union movement. I don't know. I mean, it goes to the question of assessing the balance of forces. And I know since that time I watch from afar my friend Jim Sinclair, as he's had to take two of these things on and just get lambasted from every corner as a leader of the Fed because he refuses to engage in general strike. And it raises a huge problem as I see for labour. And that is we haven't done the same job that obviously people did back in 1919 to get eight thousands of workers out, haven't done any consciousness building so that it isn't just a matter of walking off the job. It's a matter of okay, what does this mean in the grand words and can lead us Where is it going to take us? So I'm getting far afield I know from what you want to talk about, but for me this is really has always been uppermost in my mind and when I talk to Art Kube now, I think reading it I've been asked why don't we write a rebuttal to Brian Palmer's book who thought the revolution was on the agenda in '83? Because I don't have all of the facts, I don't have all the names and I don't have all of it. I mean, we were just thrust into this and knowing what I know now, I might have handled it differently I don't know. Maybe not. But I know it was so easy to throw the word sell-out around after the thing ended. And that's a loaded word. And I know when Jack Munro, and I hadn't talked to Jack before he died.

SG [02:00:05] Probably not since he died. <laughter>

GH [02:00:07] But I know he's talked to other friends of mine that were in the IWA, and he claims that he was the only guy safe enough basically, in the labour movement, that could actually call them off without. It was done brutally, and it was done terribly in terms of the allies, but I'm really not sure, I think it might be a bit unfair to cast him in the role of a sell-out just because he did that. Yes, the leaders of the White Bloc in the IWA way back in the forties were pretty scandalous in the way they did things and Munro was kind of a different generation. I know when we got into trouble, he was always there on the picket line. So it was, but he was a trade unionist always. But when you get into the big politics of general strikes and which is the next step to a revolution, I'm not sure you can. It was a tricky situation.

SG [02:01:05] Well, were you there at the meeting that was held just before they sent dispatched him off? That was a huge meeting of the Federation officers.

GH [02:01:13] No, I was there the day he came back and reported.

SG [02:01:17] Because Bill Clark had raised the question, where do we take it from here? What happens if there is a general strike? Are we going to be calling for the government to step down? And there was silence in the room.

GH [02:01:28] Well, that was the problem, you see. I mean, yeah, we could bring down the government, but we didn't have a government waiting. Dave Barrett when we went to Victoria told us, come back in four years and I think, oh my God, he's not ready to accept power on the basis of even though the majority of British Columbians are supporting him. That was a serious problem. And so, yeah, so what are we? So our next effort is our demand to bring down a government like in Brazil or right now in <unclear>. So these are things that we hadn't had time to ferret out, and I know when I came to the meeting where we were discussing the settlement, seventeen, I knew there had been a meeting where I wasn't present, where the decision had already been made, call it off. So, you know, it was really dicey, too, because these were a lot of people like Bill Clark where we worked very closely with Bill. Worked very close with Art Gruntman. We worked very closely with Leif Hanson from the UFCW and just simply labelling them as sell-outs is not, I don't think it was very useful. And I remember a party meeting where I was ordered to characterize it like that publicly. I kind of hedged on discipline because I think it was, would have been just not true.

SG [02:02:57] So you'd had a sense that this wasn't a sell-out so much as that they weren't ready to go any further and they had to call it off.

GH [02:03:04] I think it was fear. I think there was a lot of fear. I mean, the membership wasn't like a lot of us have taken votes, just like we taken our strike votes. Everybody had taken votes except the IWA had taken votes, I think like the BCGEU was already on the lines. So they knew what the issues were. But also, what's the next step?

SG [02:03:25] So had the fishermen taken a strike vote that would have allowed them to participate?

GH [02:03:28] Yes. Yes.

SG [02:03:29] We would probably have been one of the only private sector unions.

[02:03:32] Oh, no, no, no, no. The ferry workers were going to be the next ones, they had taken a vote, CUPE had taken a vote. I was at meetings...

SG [02:03:39] What I'm saying they were the only private sector union. I don't think any of the other private sector unions had taken...

GH [02:03:43] So you may be right. You may be right. I'm not sure about the pulp workers, Gruntman's group, but I know this, that he didn't mind attacking Jack Munro over anything.

SG [02:03:55] No, but I think that was part of the discussion.

GH [02:03:58] I think you're right. But you may be right. Yeah, you could very well be right. All I know is that there was a meeting that I wasn't invited to where the decision was made.

Speaker 3 [02:04:07] And so obviously when the Kelowna Accord was signed, not everyone was happy with the result and with having your membership on board for what was potentially going to be a strike. How was the rank and file feeling about that?

GH [02:04:21] Well, that's the problem. It was an escalating strike. And this is where you start getting the thing that maybe the fix was in early because the first group they put out on strike were the teachers who had never been on strike, had no history of striking, had no sense of what an injunction would mean, going to jail would mean, public sector workers or private sector workers had lots of experience in that, and even some of the public sector workers had had some experience. So the morning of that the teachers were injuncted off the line there was a phone tree went to work here in Vancouver and just within a couple of hours they had every picket line jammed with experienced people and the teachers held. And that was when that happened, then it was a question of ferry workers in others were supposed to go and there was an escalating pattern and as it went. But at what point? At what point does somebody blink? And at what point... So if you read the only written record of this right now, it's by Brian who basically says that it was, you know, Trotsky was right, and these guys were just selling out and it wasn't a very... I don't think capitalism was completely on the rocks here. I don't think the British Columbia labour movement was about to overthrow capitalism. And that wasn't the issue. The only question remains, is there something in between that could have happened? And what we didn't weren't completely aware of is the role of big capital, and particularly the Fraser Institute. And could we have peeled away some of the support by more action, peeled it away from the Fraser Institute and neoliberalism, which was after all, in British Columbia it was our first experience and I think, you know, we didn't know, we didn't have the answer to that. So a guy like Bill Clark asking that question is no longer a question. He didn't ask it of me though, and I probably would have told him "let's go!"

Speaker 3 [02:06:27] So what about the relationship? Because I know that a lot of like the community groups or social justice groups that were involved were some of the ones that were upset with the end result.

GH [02:06:37] I think they're all upset and rightfully. Yeah, I'm so were a lot of rank and file union members had staked everything on this and because they weren't just union people. They also worked in a community. And so their credibility is on the line. And the line has always been those big labour bosses, don't trust them. They're going to sell you out. And this was just proof positive that that's exactly what happened. And so. Yeah. And we'll never trust them again. So makes the work really, really difficult. That's why I say the work really needed to be done in both within the Rand Formula people and particularly the private sector, as Sean points out, but not just them in all sections of labour and with our allies to explain, because I think a lot of the people in a community have always and they still do, in my opinion, I don't think they understand how the mechanics of the labour movement, they understand it's they either worship it or hate it and they think that labour is all-powerful and can do whatever, and they don't factor in the other side. And I think there's a big job to be done in building when you're building alliances. Yes, labour's got a lot of resources. Yes, labour have some strength. In Ontario we used to be able to shut down, we had the days of action against Harris and hundreds of thousands of workers and it's feels really good when workers feel liberated and the community feels liberated, but it's risky. You can't just do that all the time on every issue, and you have to account to your members. You have to account. And there's politics within the labour movement. In that struggle we had a lot of unions didn't

support the days of action, and they were throwing sand in the gears. So there's all kinds of wheels. And in this particular case, in my opinion, the overriding consideration where I want to devote some time and thought and hopefully other people will, is that the struggle between the left and the right in the labour movement in British Columbia that always seems to surface whenever there's a crisis. And how what are the roots of that? That's why I was so excited by this conference on the weekend, and it actually opened up something that's been kind of swept under the rug for so long. And I know as a communist, we couldn't examine it because it would create an existential crisis for the Communist Party, much less the consequences beyond. But I think it's a necessary discussion. I think the NDP needs to have a serious discussion about its role it played in the Cold War, because they were basically joined at the hip at one point, and they just went off and they became more bitter enemies. And that played a role in terms of the distrust so that we couldn't actually have the discussion that was needed as to where do we go from here and how would we lead the struggle. I think everybody hated the Socreds. We also had to decide, well, okay, Dave Barrett isn't going to lead us. Then who will and how do we? We're not syndicalists. We do believe in political action. We do believe in politics. So these things we couldn't discuss.

SG [02:09:51] We should just for the historical record, we should probably note you're talking about the Pacific Northwest Labour History Conference.

GH [02:09:57] Yes, that's the Pacific Northwest...

SG [02:10:00] You know, 20 years from now, when someone is listening.

GH [02:10:03] Frankly, I think I have not seen a conference like this with this subject matter. It's a first.

BG [02:10:10] Yet. The theme was 100 years since the 1917 Russian Revolution. Just again, for the record,

GH [02:10:15] Yes. And that was I think it's an important because it's. Yeah. So yeah anyway.

BG [02:10:21] It's true it all ties back in. These issues and it carries forward.

SG [02:10:26] So just as we start to kind of come to a close here it's at this point, I presume a lot of these thoughts and discussions you're having with yourself and with the others leads you to to take on a position as the Communist Party's Labour Secretary shortly after these events.

GH [02:10:40] Yeah, I think it was partly when the union was a pretty healthy in terms of lots of young folks coming around that are already steel themselves in leadership. And you know what happens is that you can't lead unless you have the opportunity to lead, and you can't learn leadership. And so we have some really first-class people emerging and a collective. So yeah, and besides I that's all I ever wanted to be was a communist. I mean, it's I would have been happy to organize in the Northwest Territories. That was my goal from the time I'm nine years old. I mean, I wanted to be a teacher. I thought that's a good place to kind of situate myself, but I would have been a communist teacher and then, I became like I happened to mention on the way to a central committee meeting to our leader in BC here, some point I want to be considered by Maurice Rush. I'd like to be considered to go to work some

assignment somewhere else. It's got all this. It's, you know, I've been debating 50 machinations versus 70 machinations for so long and I've just about exhausted my potential on that. So the next thing I know, I get the call and I'm being asked to go east. And so I did.

SG [02:12:09] Again a drafting.

GH [02:12:09] It was a draft, yeah. Yeah, but no, I I wanted to do that, but I was asked that seemed cool at the time and I wasn't up to the task I didn't think because I thought there was way more to it. So anyway, I had to take more training but within about three years the former leader I don't know whether he was pushed or shoved, but something happened. He was stepping down and my name came up to be the next leader. I ended up being the unanimous choice of the executive at that time, even though because I could pretty well get along with all the factions inside the Communist Party, there was quite a few and it was probably important that a guy by the name of Gorbachev was the leader of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union at the time. And he made it possible to open up a debate and have a discussion about things that nobody wanted to talk about. And so when I ended up leader, he was still there not knowing that he was going to they were going to collapse within a year. So that was an interesting period of my life.

SG [02:13:32] But I'm going to leave that particular part of the leadership to another interview, because largely it takes place inside British Columbia. But one of the things I want to come back to is that, you know, is your music. Because, you know, I remember you're telling me that you one of the first things you did when you went fishing was to you and your brother were sitting on the dock in Namu.

GH [02:13:52] Yeah.

SG [02:13:53] And I also recall that at the time you went to take the position in Prince Rupert, you had a possibility of a contract with CBC on the table. At that point, which would have led you into perhaps a different musical career.

GH [02:14:07] Well, I've got I have to thank Harry Corlett for it. Yes, I could have. I had a number of offers. But I remember Harry Corlett telling the the guy, one of the agents that came to see me. We were in Ottawa, we were singing in a nightclub. But I we rigged it because I had a whole delegation of fishermen in the nightclub, and they were screaming and hollering for more from me. So I think it sounded better than it did with this. So anyway, I had two or three agents from television stations and whatnot after me and Harry Corlett interviewed the same guy "ask not what your union could do for you", but he said, "No, he's ours. You talk to us." And it's true. I dabbled at it because I wanted to finish my university and I made enough money singing and playing to actually help pay the bills in my second year and to get by playing at a place called The Bunkhouse and remember it, Sean? Les Stork. [0.1s] And so I get pretty big money for those days, depending on how big the crowd was.

SG [02:15:23] Well, this was the beginning of the folk days.

GH [02:15:24] Absolutely the beginning of the folk. And I was right on the cusp. And so you get gigs on the Tommy Hunter Show, or I got pulled off the Bud Spencer Singalong Jubilee because I hadn't joined the Musicians Union yet. So, but Harry Corlett kind of summed up my feelings. I owed my union, my loyalty.

SG [02:15:51] What did your wife think of that at the time?

GH [02:15:53] Yeah, I'm not sure, she probably would have preferred I went into music, but you never know. She didn't want to move to Prince Rupert, that's for sure.

SG [02:16:01] I was going to say that.

GH [02:16:04] And her parents were multi-rich capitalists. So it was a struggle. But no, the music was a big part of the decision. But I always saw music as, some of you may have met my friend Wanda. I'd been singing with her since she was 14 or 18 with the whole family from Campbell River. Great musicians plays in...

SG [02:16:36] And what's her name? Wanda...

GH [02:16:37] Mundy. The whole Mundy family but she played with the great troubadour here, has the choir, Earle Peach. Yeah. So she did bass with him and with Illiteratty they call themselves.

SG [02:16:55] Liberati.

GH [02:16:56] Whatever they are.

SG [02:16:57] Illiteratty.

GH [02:16:59] Anyway. So yeah, known her for over 50 years, I guess. Great musician, great singer. But she sees music as primary. The other stuff is secondary, and I see my politics is primary and the music is secondary. They're all folded in and you can't separate them. But I found it to be the most useful tool. You mentioned Namu. I mean, I really realized this 17 with my brother. He played guitar, I played 5-string banjo at the time, and you're stuck halfway up the coast with no television, no radio reception. There's nothing except you sit and drink and you do your picket duty, and it can get pretty rugged if you don't have other things to engage people. So we did music, and we had the floats around our boat. We're literally almost sinking from, you know, I got a thousand fishermen in Namu before they're given permits to go home. And yeah, so it got so bad at one point that the manager of the cannery invited me up to his house for dinner and so I had to get permission from the strike committee, because they had this really hot looking daughter that I was really interested in at the time. But anyway, nothing came of that, and I went for dinner and I didn't get involved. But anyway, I had to come back and give a report to the strike committee about my <unclear> But music was really important and I, reading all the union songs I learnt, came back, you know, and I realized the real power of music and you win people through their logic. But I think you learn; you win a lot more people through their heart. And music is an appeal to emotion. And I'm going to a place that was pretty hostile sometimes to the union. And if you can play a guitar and you open up and have a song, suddenly you're their new best friend. And it opens a channel of dialogue so that the next time you have a discussion, you're first of all, you're a friend, you're not there trying to sell Amway or something. And it's possible to have a dialogue about unionism, about fishing, about organizing, about why. And you can do it softly. So music is a very powerful tool. And so when he stepped away after the party imploded around me, I went to the CAW, and I talked to Peter Kennedy and Bob White about a labour music program because and how

important it was in your ears. And I managed to get an arts culture grant because I've done a bit of recording and so I said, how about we put on a labour music course reviewing labour history? And Peter thought, this is great, we'll do it. And I got a grant and put up ads to all of Canada. We only had 25 spots. We ended up with over 200 applications from coast to coast of musicians that are lurking in the rank and file somewhere, just languishing away with their musical skills. So then my job is to make myself really popular, who I can accept. So you have to exclude some people. So we have to have the right balance of gender, geography, all this kind of stuff. But that's where the Rank and File Band was born. It was all rank and file musicians from one end of the coast and some incredible guys that had played in Nashville and Howie, and people here on this coast and from every part of Canada there was talent. But I remember that first couple of days I had two guys standing at the back, both named Mark, and they're both pacing up. And I thought I've really, really offended them somehow. And so I finally just said, okay, what's up and what's going on here? Because they were kind of being disruptive, they were just "We're just really pissed off. We're pissed off because we've been in this union movement for 15 years and this is the first time we've learnt about Solidarity Forever, what it really means." And they're angry because their history is being denied them. And what the story of labour, the untold story of labour is told in our songs. And so they're hearing this and they're getting a sense and they want more, and they want more. Global TV sent a guy out to film this whole thing and they can see just see the light bulbs going on, light bulbs that would not go on in a union meeting. They wouldn't even bother, most of them wouldn't even bother. I'm happy to say most of the students there took it seriously. One of the guys in our Rank and File Band became recording secretary of his local, he was on the bargaining committee. Another pupil, one of the guys took up the Environment Committee down in Windsor. And so on, many of them lost their jobs in the reshuffling of the manufacturing sector, and women that were founding the gay caucus inside the union but having to struggle through all of these issues. So it was a powerful, but it was a different experience. And to learn a different history than they've been used to hearing. So music has amazing... And of course, we all know this. So anybody that's been around the labour movement knows about the Wobblies. They know about Joe Hill, and they know Ginger Goodwin. So it's nothing new. But the template was there but it had been ignored. And lay fallow for all those years. And it was largely because of the Cold War. The Little Red Songbook was replaced by the Little Blue Songbook of the AFL-CIO. Put on your old Bluebonnet or Daisy, Daisy and all of these other songs. So music is a powerful tool.

SG [02:23:15] So is it possible, do you think, to keep that traditional labour music alive because it seems to be fading with this generation?

GH [02:23:22] Mm hmm. It my needs to morph. I mean, I had a lot of young people have gone through this course. I did it about five or six times. And every group of youth, they start by the premise that Solidarity Forever is passé. It's old we've got to jazz it up, we got to do something to it. But when they hear the history and they hear what it really stood for, nobody wants it jazzed up. They want to, they want the real thing because it's part of their DNA. And but that doesn't mean we can't take what a new generation is kind of using in folk music. I mean, there was times when I was with Joan Baez when she gave Bob Dylan shit for going electric. But just using new instruments doesn't change this, the essential funkiness of labour music is a branch of folk music. It's the music of struggle. Folk music just deals with all the lives of ordinary folk. But labour music is the essence of struggle by working people down to the ages. And that's there's...And you can inject that with different... The one thing I have against some kinds of music when it kills the lyrics, when you can't hear the essence of what's

being sung about. And it's really important, which I'm finding young people, once I know the millennials, the twenties and, you know, mid early to mid-twenties is a real acoustic music. It's actually making a comeback. And the writing.

SG [02:25:07] And harmony.

GH [02:25:08] And harmony, it's all so it's all there because I think they sense the need to make change and using music. But it's the appeal here and that's really important.

BG [02:25:17] Do you have a particular favourite labour song that you like to perform?

GH [02:25:22] I like them all. I've had to change my opinion on some of them. Used to be my favourite was Joe Wallace, “O Lovely Land”. But now that we're celebrating the 150th anniversary of Canada, I really have a hard time. I always have to preface it by singing a song about a First Nations person. I'm going to have to sing songs about women about we've still got a glass ceiling. We've got so many issues, and this is part of my growth as a person. To sense that we still got a lot of hills to climb, and the songs have to reflect that mountain we still have to climb together. And I haven't written a song in five years. Genocide was my last song and I really need to get with the program.

SG [02:26:15] I think that's a great place to end this interview. It's a good note to wrap it up on.