

**Interview: Hans Brown (HB)**

**Interviewer: Johanna den Hertog (JDH) and Ron Johnson (RJ)**

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**Transcription: Brenda Wagg and Ron Johnson**

**JDH** [00:00:00] OK. Hans. We'd like to start with your early years. Can you talk a little bit about when you were born where you were born and your early years.

**HB** [00:00:31] I was born May 15 1944, in Verden, Germany.

**JDH** [00:00:39] And did you stay there for any length of time.

**HB** [00:00:42] No, I left in Germany when I was three. And the family immigrated to England. We lived in Yorkshire for seven years. And then my dad got caught up in the mighty movement of immigrants after the war—Canada, Australia, Argentina—the mighty movement to Canada.

**JDH** [00:01:14] OK. Now you have a very significant political involvement. Did your family have any progressive or union background.

**HB** [00:01:31] No, they really didn't. My dad was a liberal because he immigrated to Canada when the Liberals were in power. And that was a tremendous move in his mind – coming to Canada. And the Liberals deserve some credit for making it possible. So, it's interesting, when he decided to emigrate, because he didn't think that prospects were going to be great in Canada, he went to the Argentine embassy to see what opportunities they offered. He went to the Australia and New Zealand embassies to see what opportunities they had to offer. And he really canvassed the possibilities. And then he did it. He immigrated.

**JDH** [00:02:28] And where did you go in Canada?

**HB** [00:02:31] To Calgary. My dad emigrated. He came ahead of the rest of the family. And he looked for a job, a place to live and when he sorted all that out – it took about a year to do it – then we made the move.

**JDH** [00:02:53] I'm going to stop (due to background noise).

**JDH** [00:02:56] Hans, we were just talking about Calgary and your move to Calgary and that's kind of interesting. Quite a few people come from Calgary.

**HB** [00:03:04] Yes, back in the early 60s the new party movement was gathering speed and coincidentally at the same time model parliaments were the thing to do in the western Canadian universities. And so when you look back you'll see that the in the model parliament held at the University of Alberta, Calgary. Jim Coots won for the Liberals. Joe Clark came second and became leader of the Opposition. Grant Notley who was a key player in the model parliament and, well did they may have they acquired their (skills).

**JDH** [00:04:03] Some of those model parliaments were very important.

**HB** [00:04:07] They were very important.

**JDH** [00:04:11] Did you participate in my model parliament?

**HB** [00:04:14] Yes I did. I was the leader of the University of Alberta, Calgary New Democrats, for three years in a row. And then my friend my best friend at the time Brian Coulter was leader for one year. And in the process, and in hindsight, we obviously were good campaigners because each year we increased our vote. And finally we didn't quite win the model Parliament at the University of Calgary in my last year. But what we did do is we built the University New Democratic club up to the largest club on campus.

**JDH** [00:04:58] Wow, that's great.

**HB** [00:05:02] So instead in the western Canadian universities they didn't have fraternities, they just had model parliaments which we're a great organization to join.

**JDH** [00:05:15] I want to ask you a little bit back from that, when did you first become interested in the NDP? Was there anything about the founding convention that you followed?

**HB** [00:05:34] Well back in those days, just before the founding convention, a couple of years leading up to that the new party movement was really gathering steam. But it's interesting in Calgary the new party was associated very tightly with the Ban The Bomb movement and the civil rights movement in the United States. And so all our New Democrat members of our NDP club they wore the Ban The Bomb button and that identified them to the students on campus as New Democrats.

**HB** [00:06:18] Now, the other big issue was Medicare in Saskatchewan. And the whole thing was over a massive, massive controversy around Medicare. And left wingers and young student activists, they identified themselves as being on the left by their linkage to the new party.

**RJ** [00:06:47] So, was the NDP founded while you were at the University or at the beginning or towards the end of the time that you were at university? Where did that fit in those years that you were at the university?

**HB** [00:07:07] My first year at university I didn't join the university NDP club because I was in the City of Calgary Young New Democrats. And we had a group of student activists who were really great organizers and they had tremendous ideas on how to boost NDP crowds on campus. One of the things that we did to get people out to hear the NDP message was-we got pink panther cartoons and we advertised New Democrats are holding another Pink Panther-rama. And we boosted our crowds immensely. None of the other political parties could compete with us.

**JDH** [00:08:02] Do you remember any particular involvement by the labour movement at that time because the NDP was formed between the Canadian Labour Congress and the CCF. What is your memory of that relationship to labour at that time?

**HB** [00:08:18] I don't have any fixed memory of that because while those are big issues for the Ontario NDP in its relationship to the labour movement Ontario, it wasn't a big issue in Calgary because Calgary doesn't have a labour movement that is significant.

**JDH** [00:08:43] Interesting, very interesting. So then you became president, I think of the new Democratic youth at the university and then have the whole YND in Alberta.

**HB** [00:08:53] Right. I was president for three years and that's how I got to meet Grant Notley. Because Notley was in continuous contact with me and with the other people on the YND executive to run the '61 provincial election campaign.

**JDH** [00:09:28] So were you managing Grant Notley's campaign '61 or '62?

**HB** [00:09:34] No. Just going back before the founding convention the federal party, the New Party movement knew the election was coming up in Alberta. And so Grant Notley was hired as the provincial secretary/manager/organizer. And in order to manage and organize he put a lot of reliance on the Young New Democrat university club because we just had a lot of people who were keen who had resources, and most important had cars so that we could drive around the cities and then try to drive around the countryside, tracking down candidates and persuade people to run as candidates.

**JDH** [00:10:34] That must be a must have been a very exciting time.

**HB** [00:10:40] It was because there was a tremendous sense of social purpose.

**JDH** [00:10:59] What were the results of that campaign?

**HB** [00:11:03] Well that was a disappointment, but we turned it into a badge of courage that we went into this campaign - the '61 Alberta provincial campaign and we ended up the Social Credit got 2500 votes. The Conservatives got in the mid-teens. And anyway, we got twenty three votes.

**HB** [00:11:43] We got the lowest vote of any party fielding any candidate in that provincial election. So anyway we've been a virtue out of that. Tell you people that vote but we're obviously the party of even joy because we look at the opportunity. You don't have too much competition at all.

**JDH** [00:12:02] What was your role in in that was it to get candidates you say did you have any other role?

**HB** [00:12:10] No I didn't. I didn't have a policy role. The policy role was Grant Notley and the executive team that he worked with.

**RJ** [00:12:26] So you became president of the Alberta Young New Democrats.

**HB** [00:12:30] Right.

**RJ** [00:12:31] And then did you have contact with the national New Democratic youth? Or how did that work at that time?

**HB** [00:12:39] Oh, they were continually in contact with the clubs, the federal Young New Democrats. The earliest federal presence was Bill Piket, who was federal secretary of the Young New Democrats. And then he held the position for a couple of years and then Lyle Kristiansen took over. And then Vera (his wife) wanted Lyle and herself to move back to BC. And so Lyle and Bill Piket started looking for a suitable candidate. And ultimately I was hired as federal secretary but the reason I was hired is that in the middle in the mid '60s I remember getting a letter from the federal Young New Democrats saying that they were in financial distress and that they needed every YND club to raise as much money as possible. And they really put the heat on.

**HB** [00:13:53] So I got my I got my letters from the federal YND and I took it very seriously. I thought that I thought that they were taking it very seriously too. And so I organized the Calgary club. And we formed a five and ten club which boiled down to you contributed five dollars or ten dollars and joined the Five and Ten Club. And in the process you were doing something really positive for the left wing in Alberta. So we raised five million dollars in Calgary. And then we went up to Edmonton and raised five hundred dollars in Edmonton. So we shipped a thousand dollars to the federal office in that early '60s. I mean this was worth a way more than a thousand dollars now.

**HB** [00:14:47] Well, that just blew Bill Piket and Lyle Kristiansen's minds a) that someone took their pitch seriously, and b) that we raised so much money. So that they figured that Hans Brown, with fundraising capacities like that, that he's a person that we should hire and we'll get on a debt.

**HB** [00:15:08] Let him do it.

**RJ** [00:15:11] So, you raised a thousand dollars for the New Democratic Youth.

**HB** [00:15:14] Yes.

**RJ** [00:15:16] That must have been an unparalleled accomplishment at that time.

**HB** [00:15:21] If nobody else ever did it.

**JDH** [00:15:22] So did that when you moved to Ottawa, Hans?

**HB** [00:15:28] Yes.

**JDH** [00:15:29] So, they hired you and what happened? They hired you as federal secretary for the Young New Democrats.

**HB** [00:15:47] Well, a number of things happened. First of all I happened to move to Ottawa just as a whole series of by-elections and general elections were taking place. And so the way that affected me was that because all these by elections I got to know Gordie Brigden, Michael Lewis, and just a whole series of ace Ontario organizers. And they had me because I was full time I was a resource that could be assigned to campaigns. So I was asked to work on a Bud Germa campaign by-election in Sudbury. The John Harney federal campaign

(Sarnia?). The Jack Ottaway campaign (1967), because I was campaign manager there and we'd never won in Scarborough East, but we came within three votes of winning.

**HB** [00:17:04] So, anyway this really impressed people at Ontario provincial office. So I was asked to manage David Lewis' campaigning York South.

**JDH** [00:17:27] I'm interested in the campaign in Sudbury. You mentioned that is a mining town and you said you worked with Gordie Brigden. Can you tell us about the role of labour or unions in that campaign?

**HB** [00:17:44] Well, historically Sudbury had been a mining town that it was partially organized by the Mine-Mill union, and also partially organized by the United Steelworkers Union. And the ideological differences between the two were severe. And Mine-Mill had a significant communist component and the Steelworkers were opposed to that. You had to tie all of that in with the World War. Its influence of union politics still lingered.

**RJ** [00:18:37] So, Steel would have supported Bud Germa.

**HB** [00:18:42] Yes.

**RJ** [00:18:42] What about Mine-Mill? What kind of relationship was there with Mine-Mill? Any?

**HB** [00:18:52] Well I think that I think I was just that I was just a full-time organizer campus organizer. But as a campus organizer I don't recall there being any super ill feelings between the right and the left in the trade union movement in Sudbury.

**JDH** [00:19:19] And what kinds of things did you learn from Gordie Brigden and Michael Lewis?

**HB** [00:19:25] Well they were just tremendous organizers. They were total professionals. And they had. They have been tracking political organizing in the United States, the Democratic Party. And then community organizing flowing from the civil rights movement. So, they acquired skills which they then moved to Canada. And the first impact of the Lewis approach was in Ontario. Stephen (Lewis) got elected in a by-election in Scarborough West.

**RJ** [00:20:34] This this kind of approach to organizing, was this three-canvas model?

**HB** [00:20:41] This was the three-canvas model. And when you could organize three canvases, it really worked. My experience with the three-canvas organization was the Brant by-election, Derek Blackburn (1971). And we actually organized three full canvases of Brant riding.

**RJ** [00:21:18] And he won.

**HB** [00:21:20] Yes he did win. And a point I forgot, I had the good luck to be the co-campaign manager with Michael Lewis in the Brant by-election. And we won it. So, I take some credit although I was still developing my skills in organizing and canvassing.

**HB** [00:21:45] But what was important about my experience in Ontario and all the organizing experience that it all was part of the Stephen Lewis model. Or in BC the Cocke model.

**JDH** [00:22:08] In 1968 you said worked to elect David Lewis in York South.

**HB** [00:22:13] Yes.

**HB** [00:22:14] And what was your role in that campaign?

**HB** [00:22:16] His campaign manager.

**JDH** [00:22:18] Was that the first time you were campaign manager on your own?

**HB** [00:22:24] No I was no campaign manager (before that), but the role was as a whole much less significant because we didn't win some of these ridings.

**HB** [00:22:45] I was campaign manager John Harney in Guelph-Wellington South.

**JDH** [00:22:54] Did David Lewis get elected in '68?

**HB** [00:22:56] Yes.

**JDH** [00:22:57] So that was a success.

**HB** [00:22:59] It was a great success. But there was tremendous downsizing (of the caucus), because Tommy Douglas lost that same night. So, well it was—(you) couldn't retrieve any campaign joy out of that campaign. It was it was Trudeaumania.

**JDH** [00:23:32] It must have been a very hard election campaign.

**HB** [00:23:36] It was. It was brutal, but Trudeau had things going for him and he was skilled enough to really exploit them.

**RJ** [00:23:48] And why would you say David Lewis for example in York South, was able to overcome them? Why was he able to be elected?

**HB** [00:24:00] Well I think he pulled together his campaign strategists – he had a number of strategists who worked for PR firms in the Toronto area. And so he got tremendous advice and he fashioned great leaflets. And also people desperately wanted David Lewis to win. He'd been running since the 40s. And so they desperately wanted him to win. And that the money came. The contributions came. And then the canvassers came and they followed the three-canvas model. And it paid off.

**JDH** [00:25:00] Right. So what happened after that. Did you tell me about how you came to work for Tommy Douglas in 1969? Tommy Douglas had lost in 1968.

**HB** [00:25:18] Right. That's right.

**JDH** [00:25:24] So Tommy was still the leader.

**RJ** [00:25:33] Who lost in Burnaby-Seymour in 1968. Then he ran in Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands. So then he came back to Ottawa in by election.

**HB** [00:25:46] The by election win. That's right. And so then he was looking for staff having to come back into Parliament. Well, what people who should know told me was that Cliff Scotton to discuss it with Tommy that I would be a good principal secretary. And Scotton recommended me. And so, I got it.

**JDH** [00:26:26] Tell us what that was like working as a principal secretary for Tommy Douglas.

**HB** [00:26:36] Well I mean it was mind boggling experience because he—had such a leading moral attitude. And he was tremendously influential. I remember going to a convention at the Royal York Hotel in Toronto.

**HB** [00:27:28] And these are the days of the Waffle. And Jim Laxer was running for federal Council as the Ontario Waffle representative. Anyway, the speeches by candidates for federal council level were given.

**HB** [00:27:59] And then in his speech Tommy – just before the election for Federal Council – Tommy Douglas had given his Federal Leader's speech. And in the speech he made reference a book he had just been given over a week ago—a terrific book 'The Continental Energy Game'—and he said we have to take this very seriously.

**HB** [00:28:40] Well, the continental energy game was written by Jim Laxer. And actually that I had a copy of it in up on the sixth floor in Parliament Hill and Tommy noticed it. And said, 'oh, that's interesting. What is that about?' I told them it's about energy policy. 'Well I should I read that (Tommy said).' So he read it. And then he told them that a convention in Toronto that this was a great book you should read it. So the very next item on the agenda was the election, and Jim Laxer won.

**HB** [00:29:11] And he was the only Waffler that got on the executive – the one that was endorsed by Toby Douglas accidentally.

**JDH** [00:29:25] Do you remember any particular issues about labour or unions or Tommy Douglas and the labour movement that would be interesting to note? Or were there any other issues that Tony Douglas were once more identified with in your mind?

**HB** [00:30:02] Well, the War Measures Act. Within less than a day, Tommy gave his speech on the War Measures Act in the morning and by the end of the day we had ten thousand telegrams. And they were flooding in. And they were ninety nine percent hostile. So there was some controversy as to what position that the party should take. Well, Tommy who came to the meeting late and he had met with Trudeau halfway through the night to find out that the War Measures Act was going to be proclaimed.

[00:31:04] So anyway Tommy, a meeting was called of the caucus to discuss this. And Tommy came to the meeting late. And so David Lewis and Andrew Brewin were discussing this. And they were two rally talkative people.

**HB** [00:31:32] So Tommy, after listening that for four five minutes, said, 'Well I have to go back up to my office to make some notes on the speech I'm going to give. So you keep on talking and I'll leave now. Now I'm not being critical of David and Andrew because they both were solid supporters of our position, but they were the type of people who wanted to make sure that every aspect of the problem was canvassed, so that we're not gonna be taken by surprise by anything.

**JDH** [00:32:21] And what did Tommy do?

**HB** [00:32:21] He gave a speech which were roundly criticized the imposition of the War Measures Act. And ultimately that became the accepted position. The correct position. And everybody agreed with that. But at the time they didn't.

**JDH** [00:32:41] Well, that's very very interesting. What happened after that? Tommy Douglas then I guess resigned at a certain point. And what was the impact for you?

**HB** [00:33:02] Well, I mean its traditional when there's a changeover in the leader's office, that he key staffers that are gone. And a new staff comes in that is more attuned to who suddenly is in the new leader's position.

**JDH** [00:33:22] So you left?

**HB** [00:33:23] Yes, I knew that I wasn't going to stay. And so I handed in my resignation. And Tommy immediately interested to know if I had any prospects and I told him what was happening. Anyway he got in touch with his son-in-law, Dr. Ted Tchorchinski, who had been appointed deputy minister of health in the Manitoba government. And one of their projects that they placed a lot of emphasis upon was organizing community health clinics in Winnipeg. And so Tchorchinski's idea was to have me organize, using the three-member model, and organize areas in Winnipeg for the purposes of setting up community clinics. So I took it, and Melodie and I moved to Winnipeg.

**HB** [00:34:44] But, Hartley Dent came to my rescue. And he was running for Provincial Secretary in B.C., and he was totally unacceptable to a lot of people. So the position was open.

**JDH** [00:35:03] Where was this? The position in British Columbia?

**HB** [00:35:08] Yeah.

**JDH** [00:35:08] The B.C. NDP Provincial Secretary position?

**RJ** [00:35:14] When you became secretary of the BC NDP then did you become campaign manager then at the same time? Was it the same essentially the same position?

**HB** [00:35:27] Yes, it was. Now I don't want I can I don't put much emphasis on that because the fact is that Dave Barrett and Bob Williams and a number of other and MLAs played a key role in developing a successful strategy. Enough is enough. It's time for a change. And it's



time to strengthen the opposition. All of these key messaging lines were developed initially by Dave Barrett. And then they were they were tweaked, and buffed. And they worked.

**RJ** [00:36:21] When you came to B.C., the party was notoriously divided. And there had been battles going back and forth between the Barrett faction and the Berger faction which was supported more by some of the unions. How did you find that? What was your impression when you came to B.C.?

**HB** [00:36:48] Well, I was acceptable to both factions because I got along with them. And I made a point of contacting them and engaging them and asking them to undertake certain campaign projects. And also, part of the division was that the presence of COPE (Committee of Progressive Electors) and the Civic Democrats if you recall. And I made a point of seeking out the Civic Democrats and getting them involved in local Vancouver campaigns which succeeded. So I never I never ran into any sort of negatives about the way I was conducting myself as a Provincial Secretary.

**JDH** [00:37:50] 1972 was the first time the NDP was elected. You were there. Provincial secretary, provincial campaign manager. What were the issues that you can remember were important in that campaign?

**HB** [00:38:07] Well, if you remember the campaign there were sort of hostilities emerging— (point lost)

**JDH** [00:38:31] Were there issues for teachers or workers that were particularly important in that campaign that you recall?

**HB** [00:38:50] I don't recall. It wasn't an issue driven campaign. It was a strategic driven campaign. Enough is enough. Now, that sounds pretty limp but the way Barrett delivered these lines with humour and not with a any sense of nastiness. No hard negative campaign.

**RJ** [00:39:32] I recall an article in I think it was the Vancouver Sun a few days before the election when a memo that you had written became front page news. You remember that? It was the Hans Brown memo, 'we've got the bums on the run'.

**HB** [00:39:51] Well we did, but I made a mistake in pointing that out because Barrett was unhappy, that this was counter strategic in terms of his messaging. He quickly got over it. We were in very good shape.

**RJ** [00:40:17] It certainly captured the mood of the people active in the Party at the time. You know, finally there was a chance to win.

**HB** [00:40:28] Well that's right and people wanted to participate in this, in the process of winning. And they all got on the phone and phoned the Provincial Office, phoned the Provincial Secretary. Get the latest marching orders and will do it.

**RJ** [00:40:48] So that was before faxes and before instant communication that we have. So how did how did you communicate the strategy that Barrett and the others developed? How did that get out to the candidates in the campaign?

[00:41:08] Well that's an interesting question. I mean I remember the shifting to fax machines. I remember scripting to e-mail. I remember all of these communications shifts that. And the 72 election I think what we did was used Gestetner, and we really ground out bulletins. But it was kind of slow and not particularly effective.

**RJ** [00:41:52] Well something was effective because it kind of felt evenly matched in a campaign that we won right. But they must have gone by post. They must have been mailed.

**HB** [00:42:06] Yeah. No you're right. I mean I remember—mailing meetings where you ran off bulletins on the Gestetner, and then you stuffed them into envelopes and then you drove them down to the post office.

**JDH** [00:42:31] So that was an incredible campaign. And what would what do you think are the main reasons it was a winning campaign?

**HB** [00:42:45] Well all the points about the messaging and the messaging strategy which was very successful and really resonated with the electorate. I made the point in the past, and many people don't know it, that this was the first research driven campaign in B.C. politics because at the beginning of the campaign I got a big brown envelope at provincial office and when I opened the envelope – lo and behold – there were polling results for every single riding in B.C. the whole number, whatever the number there were. And the polling was done by a Detroit Republican polling outfit that did polling for the Conservatives in Ontario and did polling for I forget whom the polling was for the Conservatives because they were a factor in splitting the vote.

**JDH** [00:44:04] So you got brown envelope. That must have been something.

**HB** [00:44:09] It was. Don't let me lose this point because it was significant. The Detroit polling firm polled every riding BC and they just opened our eyes to possibilities. And I studied these numbers and realized that we could win significantly in northern B.C. We could win in Prince Rupert, the Cariboo, and Prince George. We could win in the interior. We could win in the valley. We could win in Kamloops. We could win all over the place.

**HB** [00:45:11] And so I realized that our canvassing resources and other resources – advertising resources – were wrongly placed. And if I shifted these resources around so I could solidify our campaign immediately in a way that we hadn't emphasized so far.

**HB** [00:45:41] It's amazing. We won every single riding that the Conservatives had identified as a possible NDP win.

[00:45:57] Well, now, an interesting aspect of this was I realized we had to shift resources to seek the best advantage from them but I couldn't get hold of Barrett. I couldn't get hold of the (Dennis) Cocke. I couldn't get hold of (former provincial secretary) Ernie Hall. I couldn't get hold of anybody. They were all out campaigning. So I thought ah hah, and I walked down the street to Bob Williams' (office) and I went over to my numbers with Bob Williams. I said Bob, we've got to shift our resources. This is inefficient what we're doing. Here's what we should be doing. And Williams, he was very helpful, he said, 'yeah, I agree let's shift resources.'

**HB** [00:46:41] That's always Williams. If he can do something instantly and not have to account for it—. (laughs)

**JDH** [00:46:50] But it sounded like it was a success.

**HB** [00:46:52] It was.

**JDH** [00:46:54] And what was the reaction of Barrett and the others later? Were they fine with that?

**HB** [00:46:59] They were obviously fine with that. And I got credit for it – for not just that but to my general campaign management. David Lewis sent me a letter saying that he had been talking to Dave Barrett, and that he was happy to report that Barrett really felt highly about the work I was doing. And he (Lewis) said, 'I just wanted you to know that Hans'. And so I was mighty impressed.

**JDH** [00:47:42] Very well deserved. One more question and then maybe we'll take a break. Later when the NDP was in government for a period of time there were tensions between the NDP and the B.C. Federation of Labour. Some of that took place around the labour code. Do you want to tell us about that and any of your role in helping to diminish some of those tensions in one instance or another.

**HB** [00:48:13] Well there was a bit of a battle between the B.C. Federation of Labour and the government over, what was it, the right to strike, over our strike policy. And in heat of debate one council meeting—think it might have been Bill King—stood up and just lambasted the labour movement for not having done anything in the election campaign and not made a contribution and undermined the party's leadership of the campaign.

**HB** [00:49:05] It was a scurrilous attack. So I went to the microphone and pointed out and I soon made the point I had to speak on this, and I appreciate that I'm the provincial secretary, and I appreciate that I have to get everyone to get along with each other. But I said I'm speaking because that's precisely what I am trying to do now to get you people to get along with each other. And I can't do that if it's not on the record isn't set straight that the trade union movement made a tremendous contribution to this campaign in terms of recruiting organizers for us, campaign managers for us, in terms of in terms of fundraising. Because there were fundraising connections between the Teamsters and Senator Lawson and they were fed up and they wanted something done about it. The teacher's union, Jim MacFarlane was the head of the teachers' union, and they ultimately gave some money to the party.

**RJ** [00:50:24] So your intervention at that provincial council.

[00:50:27] Just cooled it all off because they could be there's no way that the cabinet ministers could criticize what I said. But the next day back in Victoria there was a two-hour cabinet meeting that was devoted to Hans Brown and what should he have said when he said. And I was told that the Bill King wanted me fired. And Jim Lorimer. There was a whole raft of them but Barrett was opposed to that and didn't want me fired at all. And Dennis Cocks, and Ernie Hall, Dave Stupich—(were on my side). .

**JDH** [00:51:12] So that made actually a major contribution. Did that calm things down?

**HB** [00:51:18] Yes it did. Barrett was smart. I mean, this was a real side show.

**JDH** [00:51:35] Great. I think we should cut it here—(break)

**JDH** [00:51:39] So Hans we are now moving on to about 1974 where I understand you had a new job. You went to work for the Hospital Employees Union. Tell us how that came to be and what your role was there.

**HB** [00:52:05] Well, I became a provincial secretary in 1972 and two years later I was just absolutely burnt out. And I realized that my health would get adversely affected if I didn't get a different type of job. And so I told (Dave) Stupich that I was leaving, and I told Barrett that I was leaving. And so the word went out. And HEU, Ray McCready, the business manager, got me on the phone and asked me if I would like to work for a trade union, because he had a job for me if I wanted it.

**HB** [00:52:50] So, I said well, I really would want it, and so it was as simple as that. I got the job.

**JDH** [00:52:58] And what did they hire you at first to do? What were you busy with?

**HB** [00:53:02] I was first hired as a union representative servicing various hospitals in the Lower Mainland. And I was also involved in organizing because the HEU was in a growth mode at that point. They only had about 7000 members when I joined the staff and ultimately became one of the biggest unions in the province.

**JDH** [00:53:37] So what locals for example were you servicing?

**HB** [00:53:41] There's only one HEU local. That's the whole provincial membership. It's all part of what one local.

**JDH** [00:53:49] I understand you were one of the things you were involved with was going to the Surrey Memorial union group or unit. And what was your role there?

**HB** [00:54:02] I was their business rep.

**JDH** [00:54:09] And what were some of the issues that were tough that you helped solve?

**HB** [00:54:16] Well we built up some support for equal pay for work of equal value. That was an important policy issue that HEU really endorsed because it really affected them. Most of HEU – 90 percent of HEU members – are women and but they don't get the same remunerative consideration.

**JDH** [00:55:00] Right. And how did you address that issue? What was an example of the problem with pay equity?

**HB** [00:55:09] With the pay of licensed practical nurses and orderlies both LPNs and the ORNs did exactly the same work but (the HEU members) there were 37-50 percent behind the ball.

**JDH** [00:55:27] So what did you do to change that? And what happened to change that?

**HB** [00:55:31] Well, ultimately we—the union—went on strike and. And I went and held strike meetings and garnered strike votes at Surrey Memorial, Lion's Gate Hospital, Royal Columbian Hospital, Holy Family hospital. And then they set me up north. And I did Terrace and Smithers, and Prince Rupert, talking to people about why we should go on strike. And you've got tremendous motive. It's interesting that people will strike if the issue is a real issue. And I went into Kitimat to conduct a strike vote. And as soon as I arrived many of our members came to talk to me about the strike vote because they didn't think it could win because the big resource union – I forget which union it was – but they just decided to go on strike too. And so there was a feeling that if the women went on strike the men wouldn't support them. So I gave my rousing speech and had the vote, and we won by (inaudible) percent of the vote. Something like that. Great.

**JDH** [00:56:57] So the HEU got a strong straight mandate over the province did it?

**HB** [00:57:01] Yes.

**JDH** [00:57:03] And what happened? Did it succeed?

**HB** [00:57:07] Yes it did. We took our hospitals. Lions Gate, Surrey, Royal Columbian— that list of hospital. we took them out on strike one by one. And so the pressure just built up and the bigger hospitals started coming in. And it worked great. It worked out well.

**RJ** [00:57:35] It was the bargaining province-wide bargaining?

**HB** [00:57:39] Yes.

**RJ** [00:57:39] So there was one contract for all the HEU members in all hospitals.

**HB** [00:57:45] Right. It's a master agreement.

**RJ** [00:57:47] And the \$37.50 you referred to, can you just elaborate a bit on that. That is \$37.50 was the difference per week or what? What was that? What did that represent?

**HB** [00:58:01] \$37.50 per a month.

**RJ** [00:58:04] The difference between what orderlies got paid and what LPN's got?

**HB** [00:58:08] Right.

**JDH** [00:58:13] Who came up with that slogan?

**HB** [00:58:22] Well I think it would be Ray McCready. He was you know, he was a terrific 'union boss' quote-unquote.

**JDH** [00:58:36] Did you enjoy working for the HEU? This was very new for you.

**HB** [00:58:42] Well I mean I had been a member of CUPE in Calgary, working for the Calgary parks department. So I knew something about unions and the formal structures.

**JDH** [00:59:06] I understand the union had to deal with new issues like sexual harassment within the union. Were you involved in anything that helped solve some of these issues?

**HB** [00:59:21] No. Although I was involved in one sexual harassment campaign. This involved two employees both of whom accused the other one of sexual harassment. So the question arose as to how do we process this? How do we handle this? What do we do? So I participated in those discussions and ultimately we came up with an approach that both people accusing the other of sexual abuse, they would have their own business reps and the union would represent all the people involved and see if we could work out an agreement. And ultimately we did, because it became a question of a monetary settlement.

**JDH** [01:00:38] It was another good success.

**HB** [01:00:41] Yes.

**RJ** [01:00:42] Would you say at the time that these were groundbreaking issues like pay equity and sexual harassment? Seems to me this must've been some of the first times that a major union would be taking these kind of issues on. Was that the sense that at the HEU? Were these new issues that they were breaking ground on or had they been fighting these for a long time? What do you think?

**HB** [01:01:08] Well I mean they weren't constant problems. They came up mostly out of out of the blue. You didn't expect them. Suddenly and they're on your desk. So to the extent that they didn't get out of hand and under control it was a success.

**JDH** [01:01:32] HEU also represented or represents people in nursing homes workers in nursing homes and care facilities. Did you work as a business agent for any of those members?

**HB** [01:01:47] No I didn't. Sharon Yandle was the director looking after that component of union activity.

**JDH** [01:01:55] So you were more responsible for the hospital employees.

[01:01:58] For hospitals and then I subsequently shifted to classification. I was director of classification.

**JDH** [01:02:03] OK. Tell us about that. Why was that important for the HEU and what did you do?

**HB** [01:02:11] Well, what we did is we developed a new classification system for clerical and non-clerical workers for all HEU and all people working at HEU facilities except nurses. And we were quite we were quite successful as far as it went. Ultimately the government shut the exercise down and so not everyone got equal pay for work of equal value.

**JDH** [01:03:01] Was the classification initiative very much tied to pay equity? What was the purpose of the classification process? What were you trying to achieve?

**HB** [01:03:20] We were trying to achieve equity. There was an argument when a new job was posted, a Clerk 6 job, and the hospital argues that this is really a Clerk 3 job and the unions argue no, no. This is a Clerk 6 job. Now how do you resolve that?

**HB** [01:03:46] Well we did two things. One is we put these issues, as many issues to arbitration as we could, and—

**RJ** [01:04:17] So in solving the classification issues – you're giving an example of a Clerk 3 and a Clerk 6 – what was the union trying to achieve? Were you trying to reduce the number of classifications, or what was the objective?

**HB** [01:04:39] The objective was to have standard criteria at each grade level so that everyone would be slotted into standard criteria at each level of classification.

**RJ** [01:04:58] And when you said that the government at a certain point – I guess that's past the employer – they just stopped negotiating on it? Is that what happened? So then the effort that the HEU was making stopped at some point?

**HB** [01:05:17] Well, What happened was we were arbitrating these classification issues, and an arbitration board was set up to do that work. And I was appointed the union representative on the arbitration board. Now, I guess I took a slightly different approach to classification adjustments than the employer did. And finally the employer got fed up with the approach I was taking. And ultimately in that discussion that led to—what was my point?

**RJ** [01:06:37] So you were on the arbitration board and you were taking a position on classifications that was different from what the employer wanted. So what happened in that process then? Did you to the arbitration finish and you were successful, or how did that end?.

**HB** [01:06:58] The arbitration was shut down and it never reopened. And the classification issues that were resolved, they weren't undone. He just floated out—

**RJ** [01:07:30] Right, so it was a project that ultimately got a certain distance but didn't go as far as the union wanted.

**HB** [01:07:38] No, because ultimately so much time was wasted that they'd gotten shoved into collective bargaining. The next master agreement. Well, once your resources are shoved in with the Master Agreement in arbitration a pretty thin resource.

**JDH** [01:07:58] When you first started with being director of the classification unit or leading the classification unit, was that the result of the previous strike? That the union achieved something in that strike? How did it come to be that they were able to move on classifications. Was that a result of the strike previously?

**HB** [01:08:25] No, the strike was in the 70s.

**JDH** [01:08:36] And it was about pay equity.

**HB** [01:08:39] That was one of the big issues.

**BG** [01:08:45] So did you move into classification in the 80s? Just to jump in because as you said that was the 70s. Was this towards the end of the 70s when you took on a classification?

**HB** [01:08:57] I took on classification in the early '80s.

**JDH** [01:09:06] What other memories do you have? Or any other memories that you have of the HEU that stand out as interesting or significant?,

**HB** [01:09:25] No I worked for HEU for 13 years and I say that the first 10 years were a pleasure to work at HEU. The staff were great, hardworking, motivated. Now, in the last three years certain issues became controversial among the staff and so people started to leave. I left. Jean Greatbatch left. Carol Cameron left. Steve Koerner left. A number of people left.

**RJ** [01:10:13] Was there a change of leadership or management at the HEU that obviously didn't sit well with some of the folks? Is that right?

**HB** [01:10:25] Right.

**RJ** [01:10:28] How would you characterize the change, if you want to discuss this? I don't know if you want to discuss, this but what would you say was the difference? What made the change?

**HB** [01:10:45] Well I don't think I want to get into it.

**JDH** [01:10:47] That's fine. I want to ask you one more thing about that time. There was a big event in 1983 – Operation Solidarity. What do you remember of that? You must have been at the HEU I think at that time. What do you remember if Operation Solidarity? Were you involved at all? Was the union involved?

**HB** [01:11:18] Well, we weren't as heavily involved as the IWA and the resource unions. Or the teachers. The teachers had big issues. I remember going to the rallies. I remember going to the marches. I remember the first day of the strike. The teachers couldn't close down the schools because they didn't have enough people out on strike. So the next day well the activist phone line started buzzing away and to get people out to support the strike. And shut down schools. And we did that. I remember doing that too.

**RJ** [01:12:15] Did you go out and picket a school?

**HB** [01:12:15] Yeah.

**RJ** [01:12:19] What was the atmosphere at the time?

**HB** [01:12:24] The teachers showed up and when they saw that their school was on strike then they said that that's terrific. We're leaving now. Bye-bye. We're going on strike.



**RJ** [01:12:43] So it was a help to the teachers' union to have activists from other unions at their schools.

**HB** [01:12:50] It was. The attitude was, how come there's a strike on, and you're not striking? But now they could say look at those picket signs. They're telling us not to cross the picket line. So we're not gonna cross the picket line.

**JDH** [01:13:09] So this sort of political picket lines and secondary picket lines were important.

**HB** [01:13:14] Yes.

**JDH** [01:13:18] Anything else about the solidarity process that you remember or have reflections on?

**HB** [01:13:29] No. Because I didn't play a central role in that I just joined the crowd.

**JDH** [01:13:38] And it was a low point for the NDP as well. It came right after the loss of a provincial election in '83.

**RJ** [01:13:50] Correct. That's when Dave Barrett ultimately left.

**JDH** [01:13:58] Okay, Hans so somehow in the 80s you came back to work for the NDP as provincial secretary. I think there was a change of leadership and I'm not sure when you came back. Was it 1986 or '87?

**HB** [01:14:24] 1986 I think it was.

**JDH** [01:14:27] There was a provincial election in 1986. Bob Skelly was leader and then after that 1987 Mike Harcourt was elected leader. So in that process, did you come back for that campaign? In the world.

[01:14:43] Yes I did. Well, what happened was that Mike Harcourt became leader of the party and he recommended that Ron Wickstrom be hired as provincial secretary. But a majority of the provincial executive wouldn't buy that. And so Mike Harcourt said well if you don't like Ron Wickstrom, if you don't like my candidate, well, where's your candidate? You've got to come up with an alternative that's acceptable to me. So they said they said fine, we'll take that on. So I ended up the next few days nothing but phone calls from Joy Langan and Elaine Bernard. There is just a whole raft of them. Sharon Yandle, So I thought about it Melodie wasn't that keen. But, I thought about it and I said, well, I'll put in an application. So, I put an application. And Mike Harcourt wasn't opposed to me at all. He just liked Ron Wickstrom, he knew Ron Wickstrom. But anyway I was interviewed, and wondered what impressed Mike about my resumé was that it contained some fundraising components to it. And it became apparent to Mike that I knew something about fundraising and the party was so badly in debt that Mike optimistically thought that hiring me would deal with that problem. And in hindsight it did. I raised that ferocious amount of money.

**JDH** [01:16:56] How did you do that?

**HB** [01:16:57] Well, mostly by direct mail. Now I have to give Gerry Scott some credit for that because he knew everything about direct mail and he studied in the United States. And he gave me his views on it and so I thought that sounds sensible, I'll try that. And my trying it involved really pushing it. And I got provincial council and provincial executive up in arms about my fundraising approach and all this these letters and direct mail pitches, but there's nothing the council ultimately could do about it because the money was coming in and the donations were increasing by leaps and bounds. And I'd always point that out, you know, you're right about too many letters. Maybe that does cheese some people off. But there's enough that aren't cheesed off, that will contribute if we can continue on with this approach.

**HB** [01:18:14] And another aspect to the fundraising was that the federal party was even in the worst financial shape than the B.C. party was. And we agreed to take on some of the federal debt. And just assume it and develop a strategy to pay it off which we did.

**RJ** [01:18:39] If my memory is correct. I think you hired Bill Tieleman, and maybe Gerry Scott was part of that same firm, that actually worked with you to do a lot of that fundraising. So that was probably the first time that the party had actually hired outside resources to really bring the fundraising into direct mail up to a really intense level.

**HB** [01:19:12] I like that intense level. It certainly was intense.