

Interview: Bill Zander (BZ)

Interviewer: Sean Griffin (SG), Dan Keeton (DK)

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SG [00:00:04] Maybe we could start, Bill, with by just stating your name, your birthplace, and you're how old, your birth date.

BZ [00:00:10] Yep. Bill Zander. I was born in Mervin, Saskatchewan, which is a northern part of -- north of New Battleford. 1934, November the 22nd. I'm told it was during a snowstorm. 2:00 in the morning.

SG [00:00:29] You were born at home, were you?

BZ [00:00:30] Yes.

SG [00:00:31] Really?

BZ [00:00:32] It was a very big town, Mervin. When everyone was home for Christmas, there were about 218 people.

SG [00:00:40] Oh, yeah. So, this was right in the middle of the course of the Depression. What kind of economic circumstances were there growing up for you?

BZ [00:00:48] Well, I was only a kid, you see. I was about two years old when we came to B.C. and my dad came out in a Model-T Ford, it was a four door, but he had the local mechanic in Mervin cut the back half off of it and he put a platform on it and a tent over that. Being a carpenter, I mean, it wasn't difficult for him to do. So, they came out in 1936 and I've often thought it's interesting because we talk about the Okies coming from Oklahoma. It wasn't much different than the people that were coming from Saskatchewan and Manitoba went out to B.C. during the Depression.

SG [00:01:31] So, they had to abandon Saskatchewan.

BZ [00:01:34] Well, there was no after -- my dad told me that after 1933, there was just absolutely no work whatsoever. So, they just took pot luck and came out here.

SG [00:01:44] Had he been working as a carpenter up to this?

BZ [00:01:45] He was a small contractor. Built hospitals and barns and schools and whatever, such as they were in those days.

SG [00:01:54] But had to bail out because there was no work at that point.

BZ [00:01:58] There was nothing there.

SG [00:01:59] Did you feel that sort of sense of having to move because of poverty and whatnot as a kid?

BZ [00:02:05] No, not really. When we first came out, we lived in a rooming house two doors off of Georgia on Burrard, and I don't remember suffering anything at all, but I do remember -- and I remember I would only be two or three years old -- I do remember my dad selling Christmas trees on the corner. The reason he got the job to sell the trees is because as a carpenter, he made the stands, the wooden stands for them. So, I don't remember any real poverty. I know throughout my early years and my teens that I heard a lot about the construction industry over the dinner table from my dad, about what was going on in that. I always had an understanding, I guess, as a kid, that things weren't just fluid. You know, we weren't rich. We knew that, I knew that. We were -- he worked hard as a carpenter to try to keep a roof over our head.

SG [00:03:07] So he, by this time, he was getting jobs in construction and whatnot. That would have been pretty tough in the thirties in B.C. trying to get into the construction industry I would imagine.

BZ [00:03:17] Well, there's a story that goes, if you're interested in little, short story is that he -- on a rumour -- he heard there was some work in Mission, and he got on his bike. He had a bike at that time, and he rode out to Mission on the bike, stayed overnight in a farmer's field, slept in a haystack or whatever, and got out there and found out that it was just a rumour and had to turn around to come home. I don't think -- I'm not sure -- but I don't think that he was ever on welfare. He scrounged, worked one way or the other through the Depression, and then worked as a contractor for a real estate outfit in West Vancouver in the later years and subsequent to that, got working in the shipyards.

SG [00:04:02] That's when I guess when they opened up during the war.

BZ [00:04:04] Yeah. Yeah.

SG [00:04:05] Right. Yeah.

BZ [00:04:06] First good steady job he'd had.

SG [00:04:09] I think it was for a lot of people around that time.

BZ [00:04:11] Absolutely.

SG [00:04:12] True. What about your own work life? Where did you sort of get into the labour force?

BZ [00:04:17] I started off in the bank, joined the Air Force, spent three years in the Air Force, came out and went to work in a mill on the Fraser River. I worked for Valley Lumber as well. Worked around the forest industry. Worked as a blockman for shingle weavers, where I met Harold Pritchett, who was a shingle weaver.

SG [00:04:46] So, you say you joined the Air Force. When did you join the Air Force?

BZ [00:04:50] 1952.

SG [00:04:52] You would have been 18 at that point.

BZ [00:04:54] Yeah, just a kid.

SG [00:04:55] What was the attraction of the Air Force?

BZ [00:04:58] Oh, you know, we lived out in Delta and it was small farm country, and I guess I just wanted to get away. Had I would have -- my dad was going to talk to an electrical contractor to see that he could get me on as an apprentice, but it didn't pan out, and I think I just thought maybe I'd see some of the world if I just joined the Air Force. I'd be able to travel a bit. At least I'd go to basic training in (unclear) just out of Montreal and St John.

SG [00:05:32] Oh, so you actually shipped out of the province to take training?

BZ [00:05:34] Ended up in Metz, France for a year.

SG [00:05:38] Oh, really? Really. Did you actually get to fly?

BZ [00:05:43] No, I was in aircraft control.

SG [00:05:45] Oh, I see.

BZ [00:05:46] On the ground.

SG [00:05:48] And you decided not to stick with it?

BZ [00:05:52] Oh, no, I wasn't in the Air Force any more than about three months and I knew I wanted to get out. Because, you know what you are in the military, you're a number first, and then your name follows it, but no, I didn't. They had in the Air Force what they call an R2-11, which is your assessment, and my assessment in trades training and all the rest of it was quite good except for one section, and that was my attitude. I had a bad attitude and no, I wanted to get out. I even told them I was going to -- I intended on joining the priesthood, because at that time, if you were going to do something like that, they would let you out. Of course, I'd had a couple of rounds with the C.O. (Commanding Officer) at the time being on charge, and he just -- he was an Englishman, and he said -- I went in to tell him that I wanted to become a priest and I wanted to be released. He just said to me, 'Zander, get out of here.'

SG [00:06:58] So, you actually -- you wanted to get out that badly that you were prepared to go into the priesthood to do it? Was that a serious thing?

BZ [00:07:05] B.S.

SG [00:07:05] Or just a way to get the hell out?

BZ [00:07:10] No, it was just -- I should have known better.

SG [00:07:11] Right. Right, but obviously, this was not the place. What was it about it? Just the command structure that -- so you were already sort of beginning to exercise this, stand up for yourself and not going to accept authority if you don't agree.

BZ [00:07:24] Well, I had earlier on, I had the influence of my older brother and a couple of uncles who were members of the Communist Party.

SG [00:07:35] Oh.

BZ [00:07:35] So, there was that influence too, but my mother and father -- my dad, particularly, a good Dutch immigrant -- you know, he wasn't too much in favour of that, and that was the bad side of the family; but I kind of thought the bad side of the family weren't too far off base when they were talking about looking after one another and sharing and so forth. So, as a kid, I was always, I guess, a little bit on the left. One of the anomalies is that I even joined the Air Force, it made no sense, really.

SG [00:08:10] You said you did it because you wanted to get out.

BZ [00:08:14] Eighteen years old.

SG [00:08:14] See the world. When did you get involved in, what point did you begin working in the carpentry trade?

BZ [00:08:21] Oh, that's -- I was working at Timberland -- not Timberland, but the dry kilns down in the New Westminster for an outfit. I can't even remember their name now, but I ended up as a plant representative for the IWA (International Woodworkers of America) in the mill and I got into it with the superintendent of the mill. I ended -- to make a long story short -- taking the union position on a number of things. I ended up getting fired. So again, I guess attitude was part of it. From there I was basically out of a job, and I wasn't able to get work in the mill again, and I thought I would, you know. So Harry Bird, who was a superintendent for Commonwealth Construction and my brother's father-in-law, said, 'Come on up to Endako and I'll get you on as a labourer because we're short of help up here.' So, I hitchhiked a ride up to Endako, and I got on as a labourer and then from there -- because I'd helped my dad in construction, building the house and other things, I had some idea of a hammer and a saw, and you could get away with it in those days. I ended up joining the Burns Lake Local as a carpenter, so I went quite out of line with what would ever happen today or later on. I went from a labourer to a carpenter on the same job.

SG [00:10:01] So, they basically --

BZ [00:10:02] That's where I started work as a carpenter.

SG [00:10:04] Did you actually get any trades training at that point, or you just learned it all on the job?

BZ [00:10:09] You went out and you hustled, and you always work with a partner. So, I was very fortunate. I had good partners. You know, when that happens, what you end up doing is you end up being the gopher and holding what we call the dumb end of the tape and the other guy leads. As long as you're willing to pack, you know, this is acceptable.

D.K. [00:10:34] So, there's no sort of apprenticeship system, nothing really there.

BZ [00:10:38] Sure, there was apprenticeship at that time, and I probably if I had gone to -- my dad had got me on as a carpenter's apprenticeship with Commonwealth, but there wasn't a lot of work at that time when I got to school, really. The mills were pretty good, but other work, I don't think there was an awful lot around out there. I didn't find it and I didn't like working at the bank. I worked there for a year, found out all my friends that were working in the mill were making twice as much money as me. Somehow it didn't add up.

D.K. [00:11:07] Yeah.

BZ [00:11:08] But you know, you just dig in. We had superintendents who built some of the first high-rises in Vancouver that had a grade four education, never had an apprenticeship. This was before the days when they had apprenticeship.

SG [00:11:23] So, as long as you were able to learn the trade, it was accepted.

BZ [00:11:26] Hustle.

SG [00:11:29] Yeah, and probably the fact that --

BZ [00:11:30] Keep your head down and your ass up.

SG [00:11:31] Right. Probably the fact that it was in Endako and you're out of the immediate sort of trouble.

BZ [00:11:39] There were an awful lot of people -- in the earlier days in construction -- there were an awful lot of people that became carpenters up at Kitimat when they built the mill up there. So, an awful lot of people became carpenters.

SG [00:11:56] Obviously you enjoyed this trade then once you get into it, I think.

BZ [00:12:00] I liked it, and I became a pretty proficient finisher, actually. I considered myself better than my dad in finishing and he could do anything with the square, you know, rafters and all the rest of it. He knew a hundred times more than I'd ever know, but I was probably a better finisher than him.

SG [00:12:16] Just in terms of the actual manual skill of it all and whatnot, eh?

D.K. [00:12:21] Did you ever get sort of certified? Did they -- they never gave you the big stamp or anything?

BZ [00:12:27] No, later on, Harry Bird brought me up and finally what he said at Endako when I said, 'Harry' -- who was a superintendent, one of the superintendents was I think there were three or four on the job and a bunch of foreman in that -- and I said, 'Harry, I'm going to go and join the Carpenters Union if they'll take me in, I'm going to apply to get in the union.' And he absolutely disagreed with it. He was one of the testers in the apprenticeship program in Vancouver out of 452, and he didn't think much of bringing people off the street in, but he said, 'Well, I don't agree with it, but they're bringing people in here that don't know a 2x4 from a bale of hay and they're letting them work. So, you might as well.'

SG [00:13:16] They let you in.

BZ [00:13:18] They took me in.

SG [00:13:19] Yeah, right. So, was that sort of the beginning of your career in the Carpenters Union?

BZ [00:13:25] That was it. Six months up there. Made good money, sent money home. My wife was happy as a lark. They had the bank come in every couple of weeks and sign your paycheque. Transfer it down to --

SG [00:13:40] Down to the --

BZ [00:13:40] Yeah, it turned out well from being unemployed.

SG [00:13:44] Yeah, right. You said before that you had been fired on the job at IWA mill, in part because your attitude. Were you becoming, at this point, a union advocate as well as a carpenter?

BZ [00:13:58] Yeah, I was involved in the first election of Gerry Stoney to the labour -- to the local. I'm trying to think -- he ran against Joe Madden, I think it was.

D.K. [00:14:10] Gerry Stoney --

BZ [00:14:15] Joe Madden, I think, was out of Catholic action.

SG [00:14:16] You're talking about Gerry Stoney from the IWA.

BZ [00:14:18] Yeah, yeah, yeah. I was one of his teammates to get elected.

SG [00:14:23] Oh, I see.

D.K. [00:14:23] For what? I'm sorry.

SG [00:14:26] When you're in the IWA.

BZ [00:14:27] He became President in the Labour Council subsequently. Yeah.

SG [00:14:31] But at that time he was in the mill working with you, was he?

BZ [00:14:38] He was at Pacific Veneer; I think it was.

SG [00:14:38] Oh I see.

BZ [00:14:40] Mill next door to where I worked.

SG [00:14:44] During this time you got married as well, eh?

BZ [00:14:46] Oh yeah. I had three kids by the time I was about 25.

SG [00:14:50] Oh, really?

BZ [00:14:50] Oh, yeah.

SG [00:14:52] Definitely got on with life, eh?

BZ [00:14:53] We were very busy. Busy.

SG [00:14:57] So, do you recall when you sort of began to sort of get active, and when did you come back down to Vancouver again from working in Endako?

BZ [00:15:07] What year would it be? It would be about late seventies. Seventy -- let me think...

SG [00:15:14] So, you were up there for quite a while.

BZ [00:15:15] I was up only six months, maybe a little more than six months, and it started to wind down. I could have stayed longer, but bunkhouses -- you get tired of being in the bunkhouse after a while.

SG [00:15:27] Yeah.

BZ [00:15:28] It would be in the late fifties when I came back down.

SG [00:15:34] So, when did you begin to get involved in the local here?

BZ [00:15:37] Right away.

SG [00:15:38] Right, and that was 452, eh? Carpenters Local?

BZ [00:15:42] No, I was 1251.

SG [00:15:42] 1251, right.

SG [00:15:43] New Westminster, I was in the Westminster local. Yeah.

SG [00:15:47] So, how did the local work at that time? Was it predominantly big construction or was it more diversified at that time?

BZ [00:15:53] There were an awful lot of smaller contractors that did work around everything from renovations to schools to the hospitals, you name it, whatever. Not into housing, but we also had all the -- pretty much all of the three-story walk-ups and the high-rises were all union. There was nothing that wasn't union. In the high-rise or three-story walk-ups, I think we could say we had 90% of them up until later on when we had our fun with Kerkhoff and people like Gaglardi who built the Sandman Hotel down on Georgia in Vancouver. That was the first high-rise, I think, that went up non-union.

SG [00:16:34] Yeah, I remember that was a huge campaign, but we'll come back to that a bit later. The picture of construction at that time was that there were a lot of smaller contractors. It was a much more diversified industry with a lot more work involved than it is now, for example.

BZ [00:16:51] School additions, and you know, all that was going on. It wasn't just today where we had a population increase. I wasn't the only one with three kids, there were more kids coming. There were more schools needed, and hospital admissions and everything else.

SG [00:17:06] Yeah. There was a lot of building going on at that time, too. That's true. So, what's your sort of beginnings of leadership and direction in Local 1251.

BZ [00:17:15] Well, it was 1251 and of course, I was always mouthy, and my mouth always got me into trouble, but I was interested in what was going on in the union and ended up as a job steward on a number of jobs. I was part of, actually, a committee. We

had some people that were in the leadership of the local at that time who could best probably be described -- they were decent enough people -- but they were probably centre elements -- not very far to the left, to be blunt about it, for me and a number of other people. They didn't look after grievances as much as we thought they should, and they didn't come out on the job as often as they should, and they didn't look after the jurisdiction of the Carpenters as much as they should. So, there was opposition to them, and then I was asked to run for Business Agent. To be honest about it, I didn't want to. I said, 'I've only been in the union for six years or whatever it is, and why can't I run as a sergeant-at-arms or something.'

SG [00:18:26] Right.

BZ [00:18:27] They said, 'No, why don't you run for Business Agent?' So anyway, moral of the story is I did, and I got elected in spite of the red-baiting. I got elected in and from there, it's Bob's your uncle.

SG [00:18:40] So, there was red baiting already at this point. Were you a member of -- had you joined the Communist Party yourself at that point?

BZ [00:18:47] Oh, yeah, sure.

SG [00:18:48] So, you basically followed in the footsteps of your older brother in doing that.

BZ [00:18:55] I don't think I followed in his footsteps, but I became a member of the party. I sold Tribunes out in front of the liquor store in Whalley for a year or two.

SG [00:19:05] No, I'm just curious as to how coming from, as you say, your father was an old Dutch immigrant and didn't do things too much.

BZ [00:19:13] My dad turned my brother in. This is a little family secret, but it's of no importance now. My dad turned my brother in to the RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police).

SG [00:19:26] Told them that he was a communist and they should watch him?

BZ [00:19:31] Told them that he'd become a commie. He disagreed with it. My older brother got into a fight with him over it, and of course, I was the youngest in the family and people were trying to protect the kid.

SG [00:19:43] But in fact, the influence obviously stuck.

BZ [00:19:47] It didn't work.

SG [00:19:48] So, I'm just trying to get what were the influences that went into your joining the Communist Party?

D.K. [00:19:55] Any defining moment that you (unclear)?

BZ [00:19:59] Well, I'll tell you one thing. It didn't -- it wasn't a reason for joining. The one thing I found out when I was in the Air Force, they had a buffer zone between East and West Germany. It was about a 20- or 30-mile buffer zone, which the Russians effectively --

East Germans -- agreed that they wouldn't fly into that zone and NATO forces wouldn't fly in. They stayed, and I can recall one night on radar, we had the Americans flying over the buffer zone into East Germany. When the station phoned -- our radar station phoned and say, 'What and who the hell is it? What are they doing in there anyway? They're violating a national -- an international treaty.' Basically, we were told by the Americans, they gave us a one-fingered salute and said, 'None of your business.' That kind of bothered me. I thought, 'the other side is playing by the rules, but we're not.' So, that was just one little instance where I saw that effectively during that period of the Cold War, that some people were abiding by the agreements and other people were basically doing what they felt like doing.

SG [00:21:08] Right.

BZ [00:21:08] Yeah, but that wasn't the reason for joining the party. I just say that as a bit of a byline. I joined up partly because of my brother and other people talked to me and said, 'You know, it's the right thing to do, and socialism's the answer.' and so on.

SG [00:21:26] So, there was a lot of that in the labour movement at that time, people sort of talking about socialism, talking about the Communist Party and urging in joining and so on. Who are some of the other people besides you? I presume you're talking about your brother Phil Zander, eh?

BZ [00:21:38] Yeah.

SG [00:21:39] Right.

BZ [00:21:41] Well, and then, of course, I met all kinds of people. Harvey Murphy. Homer Stephens was a friend of mine, so to speak, in Delta. A whole lot of people. Harold Pritchett, I worked with, as I said, in the shingle mill.

SG [00:21:58] Mm hmm. So, you had come across all of these people and admired the work they did?

BZ [00:22:02] I liked them. Yeah. They were good people. I mean, that was as easy as that. They were good people. There was no reason not to like them.

SG [00:22:09] Right. Okay, so back to the local. So, you get elected business agent.

BZ [00:22:13] Yeah.

SG [00:22:14] And there's a red-baiting campaign that takes place.

BZ [00:22:16] Well, there was from the day I was elected until the day I quit. I mean, when I retired. Every campaign there was a --

SG [00:22:23] Who was leading this?

BZ [00:22:23] It was always people on the right that didn't --

SG [00:22:27] Didn't want you elected and want any --

BZ [00:22:29] Well, you're a Communist. What business have you got being (unclear), being a leader or a business agent?

SG [00:22:37] But obviously, your advocacy on the part of workers was what kept getting you elected.

BZ [00:22:43] That's right. We look after the jobs; we looked after the jurisdiction and all the other problems that people had. I'm not going to say we were perfect, that we did everything right. We did obviously a credible job, because you don't get re-elected year after year without.

SG [00:22:59] Were you always fairly handedly re-elected or was it --?

BZ [00:23:04] Usually with no opposition, but there was opposition and the RCMP were involved in it. You know, CSIS (Canadian Security Intelligence Service) got involved at one point, that was going on. They would deny it, but they're a bunch of liars. I mean, even when I was in the mill, one of the reasons I got the boot in the mill wasn't just because I was the sassy young guy and the job steward or plant chairman, such as it was. The young kid that was blockman on the forklift -- driving a forklift at the time and a carrier -- but the blockman, during the summer, one of the manager of the mill's son was riding as a blockman with me and he said, 'You know what? Dad was saying --' and he said, 'This is between you and I --' but he said, 'Dad was telling the story at supper last night. The RCMP came in the office just to talk about you. That you're a communist.'

D.K. [00:23:59] Wow.

BZ [00:24:01] I said, 'Oh, that's interesting.' And it wasn't too much long after that that I got the boot.

D.K. [00:24:07] Just -- if you don't mind, Bill -- What was the time frame for that again? Like fifties?

BZ [00:24:12] Yeah, it would be.

D.K. [00:24:13] Kind of later.

BZ [00:24:16] '58, '59.

D.K. [00:24:18] So, McCarthyism is still pretty strong and all that.

BZ [00:24:19] Yeah, '60, '61. Maybe early sixties, yeah.

SG [00:24:25] Right, so what's the situation like in building and construction at that time? Were there organizing drives going on? Were you actively organizing all the time or was it kind of static?

BZ [00:24:37] Always. The biggest thing was organizing. The biggest thing was getting developers. After the War, the development of housing, even single-family residence, was built by union companies. Then the developers came in. When the developers came in, things were all subcontracted. People got a piece of this and a piece of that, and you didn't have like Commonwealth or Dominion Construction taking the job from the top, everything would be the union. When the developer came, you were dealing with a new breed of cat,

and they were building high-rises and low-rises and frame construction and whatever else, mainly in the residential area. Everything had to be organized, you had to go sign the developer up. Bosa Construction. I mean, there's a whole pile of them, they all had to be signed up.

SG [00:25:29] So, you had to sign not only the main contractor, but all the trades going all the way down too.

BZ [00:25:34] They would subcontract whatever they could subcontract as far as the carpenter work was concerned.

SG [00:25:42] Hmm.

BZ [00:25:43] Some of them did their own. Bosas had their own crew, and then they became a developer.

SG [00:25:49] So, what was involved --

BZ [00:25:50] They were a framing contractor, the Bosa brothers.

SG [00:25:52] What was involved in doing this organizing? Wonder if you actually had to go to each one of these jobs, sign guys up?

BZ [00:25:58] That's right.

SG [00:25:59] Yeah, so --

BZ [00:25:59] Usually when they were digging the hole, you got involved.

SG [00:26:04] So it likely would have been, first of all, pretty labour intensive to do this work. How was the pickup from the membership? Were you able to get members or was it always a struggle?

BZ [00:26:18] Oh yeah, our membership grew. We had up to 17,000 in the Carpenters Union in the province up until about -- I don't know, I'm just guessing now -- 1984 or so. '86. That included a couple of school boards, but they weren't huge. No, we had -- the union grew.

SG [00:26:41] It grew basically through organizing.

BZ [00:26:43] Yeah, that's right, and then of course, what took place across the border with the right-to-work and that influenced up here. They started trying to move in up here. We had it with Kerkhoff. We had it Kerkhoff, Gaglardi was another example, but he built a hotel and then I don't know what he did after that. Kerkhoff was a big one. He was used by the Social Credit government to basically break the Building Trades. That's what his job was.

SG [00:27:07] Well, when I first started covering the labour movement as a reporter, that was the first sort of struggle that I remember being part of, was the campaign to battle the de-unionization that was taking place under Gaglardi. There were rallies down at the Sandman worksite down on Georgia Street there for a long time, but it seemed like it was a losing battle at that point. Was it? In the -- we're talking early seventies now.

BZ [00:27:34] Well, one of the weaknesses of the construction industry -- the unions -- the building trade unions, was that you had 15 unions that were involved in construction. Carpenters, plumbers, labourers, and painters and you know, on and on. To get everyone to work together collectively -- and what happened with Gaglardi, Gaglardi could have never put up that building if every one of them had hung tight. I mean, he wouldn't have got elevators in there and it would have taken a hell of a long time to get them in if you had everyone standing solid, but what happened is they would piece off a bit and gradually weaken it because you had 15 different trades you were dealing with. Some would hang tight, and some wouldn't.

SG [00:28:24] So, a lot of the problems from that emerged from the trades themselves not being prepared to stand up as one.

BZ [00:28:31] Yeah, I think it's safe to say that when industrial unionism came in the thirties, that the construction unions, building trade unions were a thing of the past, because what you're talking about is not organizing an industry. The construction industry should have been an industry and it should have had the trades -- and even to this day, as far as I'm concerned -- all of the trade should be in one union with sub-locals or whatever you want to call them. The separations from with their own things. With a good education, central education system, a pension plan and all those sort of things. That never happened because the international unions across the border couldn't get along. You know, who's going to sacrifice being the president of this union to be part of something bigger? They stayed apart.

SG [00:29:19] Right.

BZ [00:29:19] That was that division that's been a real nightmare for the construction industry.

SG [00:29:25] So, was Gaglardi successful finally in building the Sandman?

BZ [00:29:29] Sure, he put it up, yeah.

SG [00:29:30] Yeah. So that was, I guess, kind of one of the first breaches in the wall, eh?

BZ [00:29:35] Yeah, there were whole -- there were trade union trades that went in and helped build up building. Yeah.

SG [00:29:40] Mm hmm, but eventually that sort of set the pattern for a lot of other building at that time as well.

BZ [00:29:47] Well, Pennyfarthing with Kerkhoff was the other big one that really created a problem. We couldn't -- we should have hung tough on that, but that's a long story. Kerkhoff was used by, in my opinion, was used by the Social Credit government to break the back of the Building Trades.

SG [00:30:11] Mm hmm. Well, one of the things that I think the labour movement had been -- was successful in winning was the whole battle around injunctions.

D.K. [00:30:23] Around the what?

SG [00:30:23] Around the battle against injunctions in labour disputes. I mean, looking back to beginning with the Northland Navigation strike and a whole bunch of strikes in that ten-year period after that. I know the Carpenters were very much involved in that battle, as were many others. What are some of your own recollections of that?

BZ [00:30:45] Oh, there was a kerfuffle with the So. Cred. (Social Credit party), at a meeting of the So. Creds in the hotel in New Westminster in about 1973 when the NDP (New Democratic Party) came in. This was before they came in. Maybe it was '71. We had a general strike. You know, the Building Trades were on strike, and we were ordered back to work. Government order. Back to work order, and we did not. We just said we're not going back.

SG [00:31:24] Right.

BZ [00:31:27] If you'll remember, at that time, the Attorney General came down pretty hard on what they were going to do, and they raided our offices. There were ten of the Carpenters locals around the province that were raided by the police -- I guess RCMP -- and looking at all of our books and whatever, getting information for the for the big trial, which there would have been a huge lawsuit and cost. That had started in the Royal Towers in New Westminster, was a big demonstration against the Cabinet that were meeting in the Royal Towers, and it became a huge issue. Well, what happened out of that? A few months later, the NDP got elected and the new Attorney General just turfed the application for the injunction and the charges and everything against the unions out. The NDP did that. I'm trying to think of the NDP minister that was responsible.

SG [00:32:30] I don't know, the Labour Minister that time was Bill King.

BZ [00:32:34] No, it wasn't him.

SG [00:32:35] He wasn't the attorney general. Not sure who was the attorney general, but clearly if the labour movement -- particularly the carpenters -- hadn't taken this stand, that would not have been the issues that it was in that election.

BZ [00:32:47] Well it was all of the trades at that time. You may not remember, but we started off with all of the trades pretty solid at that time. We were ordered back to work, then it broke down. What we ended up with was a six-pack, what we called the six-pack. The others had fallen by the wayside, were ready to cave in, and it came down to a six-pack with -- a few of the industries I can think of. There was a -- well, carpenters -- not the operation engineers -- the carpenters, the electricians, plumbers and a couple of the other unions stood solid at that time; but there was a lot of fear and there was fear in the Carpenters Union. The Carpenters Union just wasn't ready to take it on by themselves, and there was a lot of discussion amongst our own executive too, 'We're going to have to go back to work because it's we're looking -- I think, put in Harry Rankin's words -- you'll end up with your hat floatin' and it'll be \$50,000 today and it'll be \$100,000 the day after and on and on and on.' But you're facing huge, huge fines that could bankrupt the unions, and it was a real fear. Into that step, the number of a us on the executive to go and meet with Arnold Smith in the office. Arnold was the President of the Carpenters Union at that time.

BZ [00:34:17] I can remember old Arnold, who was a pure gold in my opinion. There was no trade unionist that I've ever admired in my entire life as much as Arnold. He was as solid as a rock, and I can remember him sitting there saying when we went and a number

of us -- Lorne Robson was amongst them, John Takich, Colin Snell and others went in to say to Arnold, 'Look, Arnold, we got to rethink this because trades have started to fall off the wagon and we had a six pack. The now, we don't know, maybe it's only a two or three of us that are into it. We're going to have to re-evaluate what the hell we're up to.' And I can remember Arnold just sitting there, sitting at the table and his desk, and he said, 'Well, I'll tell you what, if you guys want to hand the keys to this office over to the government, then you can go ahead and do it, but I am not part of it. I am not part of it, and I don't agree with it.' Basically, the four or five of us that were there to convince him to do something else, turned around and he had us absolutely solid the other way.

SG [00:35:25] So, he basically said, 'We're doing this.'

BZ [00:35:28] That's right. 'I'm not going with you. I'm the president.' We considered ourselves some of the militants, but the real militant was Arnold. Yeah.

SG [00:35:42] You say that your legal advice that you were getting was, 'Don't do this because you could bankrupt the union.'

BZ [00:35:48] Well, think about it.

SG [00:35:49] Or about what the consequences are.

BZ [00:35:51] The solidarity was starting to collapse. It's like in '83 with Solidarity. They end up going to the Kelowna Accord and things start to fall apart. They do it bit by bit. It's not all at once, but no one was kidding Arnold. He wasn't handing the keys over the office, and that was it.

SG [00:36:09] So, was there a sense then, in the union and in the Building Trades when the NDP was elected in they turfed this case out that you'd won something, then this labour action had really resulted in it for you. Yeah.

BZ [00:36:23] Yeah. After having our offices raided and stuff, files taken out. Yeah, it was a huge victory, right?

SG [00:36:32] Yeah. So, were the Carpenters then a much more respected group within the trades for having led that charge?

BZ [00:36:41] I think all the trades were, because no one was pointing fingers at people that were actually fallen off the wagon, that were throwing the towel in. You didn't talk about those that didn't stand solid. You kept your mouth shut. We didn't need that. That wasn't important. The fact is the outcome was good and there was that solidarity back together again, and that meant a lot.

SG [00:37:03] So, what was the involvement of the labour movement in general in many of these struggles? I mean, now often when there's a struggle, there'll be piecemeal sort of support from various locals and so on. My sense of things at that time was that there was a lot more support in general from the labour movement. If you went out to take action, the labour movement was there to support it.

BZ [00:37:26] I think there was, yeah, yeah, I agree, yeah. There were a lot more disputes. The seventies were when were -- we had in '72 we had a 12- or 13-weeks strike, (phone ringing) in '74 we had another 12- or 13-weeks strike. We were on strike for a long period

during the early seventies. There was some real head-on collision with the Building Trades and, and collectively with the labour legislation that came in under Bill King and the New Labour Board, under Paul Wilder. There was a different attitude. Things had moved a little bit further to the left and a little bit better for the trade unions. It was easier to organize, and at that time, we're taking the position flat out. Barrett, and later on others, that if there was going to be government money put into construction, it was going to be union.

SG [00:38:23] All right. All right.

BZ [00:38:27] Surely, a big breather. It made it much easier to negotiate. We had good agreements, but there was still that the fight was coming on from the other side through the influence, I think across the border with the right-to-work and the right-to-work coming up here, which is Kerkhoff and company. The So. Creds, when they came back in office again, things started to turn back the other way.

SG [00:38:50] Do you think Kerkhoff was actively involved in the right-to-work movement?

BZ [00:38:55] I don't think -- I think he was used. I don't think he --

SG [00:38:59] But it certainly had the impact. The result of becoming almost a right-to-work movement within construction is under great pressure. How did that battle get started? Was it because it was before even the Pennyfarthing construction site?

BZ [00:39:15] We were concerned about it before, and we knew that and I know the contractor clearly, CLRA of course, was Construction Labour Relations Association. They pulled together to so, they were all operating like individual contractors. We were able to -- in the late sixties, around late the settlement half hour day, for example. That was done because there was a lot of high-rise construction developer construction around. The developers wanted to put out the building. They weren't interested in a 3-to-4-month strike or whatever, they wanted to get the building up, get their money out or whatever. So we used those independents, which they were called the union, the organized section to deliver it. We had that leverage then because there was a lot of work that wasn't under CLRA so to speak, under the organized section of the construction industry.

SG [00:40:14] They were setting the rates in many cases.

BZ [00:40:18] They got the seven-hour day that came in '69 but yeah.

BZ [00:40:23] So, I guess that's where the sort of leverage came was that they started to de-unionize some of these smaller contractors, or they replaced them I would guess.

BZ [00:40:32] Yeah. Yeah. but Pennyfarthing was probably the turning point. The building trades, we agreed again, to quote Harry: 'Your hat will be floating if you don't get off that picket line, because there's an injunction against you and you're going to end up. ' He's just telling it the way it is, 'I'm telling you what's going to happen to you, you make the political decision. If you want to pay the fines, run the risk. That's your business, not mine.'

SG [00:41:11] So, you were told again the risk here is great.

BZ [00:41:14] We would have faced a huge fine. What should have happened is because there was a lot of people. There were people from other trades. There was schoolteachers, there were fishermen. There were people from all over that were coming

down manning that picket line. You had the support of the public, which is something we didn't have a handle on, and we should have. We should have known where the public were on this, but the public were on it. We found out afterwards the public were on our side. We could have -- we should have ended up with a citizen's picket line. The Building Trades had to get off, but these other people aren't building trades and they can do whatever they like. So Willy Gauthier, who was the President of the Building Trades came and had a big meeting, said, 'It's over with, the lines coming off.' That was him defending the unions and their finances that might have been involved in the court case. We got off, but that didn't mean the people had to get off that weren't building trades.

SG [00:42:09] But that was never offered as an option, really. Was it at the time?

BZ [00:42:13] Yeah, it could have been.

SG [00:42:16] Of course, it could've but didn't.

BZ [00:42:17] It didn't happen. It should have been done through the Labour Council and I'm not blaming the Labour Council, but people like Homer Stevens and others didn't recognize what it was, and I suggested that to the Building Trades. We're going to have to get off, but other people will stay on and we need to be talking to them.

SG [00:42:37] So, you got this sort of relentless pressure beginning with the Gaglardi de-unionizing campaign and Kerkhoff off and now becoming more and more concentrated. I guess that takes you to where the trades are today in a sense, where it's very difficult to organize now on the job, because you're here today, gone tomorrow.

BZ [00:42:55] Yeah, it is a lot harder -- and again, the fracturing of the trades, having 15 trades, or 13 or whatever it is now on a construction site. Not being part of one organization makes it so much difficult. We would have never lost the construction industry as it is now under CLAC (Christian Labour Association of Canada) and non-union, which is a big part of it. If we had been under one roof. You know. We would have been able to hold it together. We had the strength to hold it together. I think that's my opinion.

SG [00:43:31] So, just going back to your own position in the union, so at what point did you become -- you were a business agent for 1251.

BZ [00:43:39] For six years.

SG [00:43:40] For six years, and then did you jump from there to provincial council president or...?

BZ [00:43:44] I ended up being elected President of the Provincial Council and the Canadian Council of Carpenters. That's a federal thing.

SG [00:43:54] So was there, in a sense, a campaign strategy that you had to become president where it was a part of a group? Were there others on a slate or was it just a personal decision you made?

BZ [00:44:06] Well, Arnold was gonna retire, and Arnold wanted me to run for president.

SG [00:44:09] Oh, I see.

BZ [00:44:10] He had a lot of influence. He wasn't a party member, and we were, I guess, quite a few other people that were party members that that I should become the president. Again, that was a kind of -- I don't know -- I'd been a business agent for six years, but...

SG [00:44:32] There were no other obvious candidates at the time?

BZ [00:44:35] I'm trying to remember, actually, I think there probably were. I don't remember anyone ran against me or not. I can't even remember. I'm not sure.

SG [00:44:44] But certainly you had -- obviously -- had support. For how long were you the President of the Council? 18 years. From what, '73 was it or '75?

BZ [00:44:56] '75... no, no.

SG [00:44:57] You retired in 1991?

BZ [00:45:01] '75 on.

SG [00:45:02] You retired in 1991, as I recall. Right. So, that takes you back to '73, thereabouts?

BZ [00:45:08] Yeah. I was President of the Canada Council of Carpenters for 14 years.

SG [00:45:14] What did that entail?

BZ [00:45:16] It gave the carpenters across the country, rather than have -- it was our national organization. It had no teeth. It was controlled by the international, basically. They had the Constitution and that, but it had delegates and so forth from across the country. We met periodically once a year and discussed things, but pretty much it was a - what would you call it -- a child of the international, so to speak.

SG [00:45:51] Hmm. So, it was their attempt at Canadian autonomy?

BZ [00:45:55] Oh yeah. From there, we took it. I was part of that Canadian autonomy, went to international conventions and spoke out on Canadian autonomy, handed out leaflets to CLC (Canadian Labour Congress). The international pulled us out of the CLC. I can't remember what year it was, but it was typical of them. If they got their nose out of joint over something, they would pull out. 'We're pulling out and that's it, we've got 50,000 customers across the province and you're not going to get any dues out of them. We're pulling out.' Right. Well, they did that for a couple of years, and I said, 'You know, we've had enough of that.' And other people -- not just me -- said, 'We're going back in the CLC.' Well, the international won't allow you to go back because they're paying. Well, we're going back in the CLC, and we'll pay ourselves.

SG [00:46:37] That was --

BZ [00:46:38] We told the international we're going back in the CLC. They said, 'You can't do that.' We said, 'We can't, but we're going. We're doing it.'

SG [00:46:45] So, that's when McDermott had you come back with just a straight Canadian affiliation?

BZ [00:46:49] Well, I had a meeting with McDermott and Campbell, who was the president of the CLC. We had the two of them at the Canada Conference around the table and had a good discussion over who was on first and who was on second.

SG [00:47:02] Right. So, what happened then? So they -- I know that the international pulled out the Building Trades locals because of what had happened in Quebec and so on, but at what point did McDermott and the CLC get involved in this?

BZ [00:47:21] I think it started through the Federation (BC Federation of Labour) here, actually. We joined. We were going to be part of the Federation and through that we said we're going to join the CLC, and I don't think that -- we just said we were joining and they accepted us. They were happy for us.

SG [00:47:37] Oh, so you joined the BC Fed first then, eh?

BZ [00:47:38] I believe so. I think that the Labour Councils, of course, followed from it. We got to be members of that. We weren't going to be cut out of everything and we -- and it just happened. I mean, it was a game where you just defy someone and they realize they're a loser, that they can't do anything about it. You know, like being a bad kid.

SG [00:48:00] So, how did that process play out then, because there were a whole lot of things that happened as well in the wake of that, were there not?

BZ [00:48:09] Not too much. We went back in, and then slowly the building trades reunited and got back. Once the Carpenters went, it kind of broke the mold and then others started talking to their international. You know, if the carpenters can do it, why can't we? Why can't we be in the house of labour in Canada? Why should someone in Washington D.C. tell us we can't be part of the trade union movement in our own country? It didn't go down too good with the membership in the other unions, and then the pressure was built up from down below to get back into that.

SG [00:48:45] So eventually, all of the trades came back into the Congress, but for a while they had their own independent federation, the Canadian Federation of Labour (unclear) for a few years. Right? Yeah, but finally they abandoned that.

BZ [00:48:58] Well, no, they always had the Building Trades Conference, they always had that, but it was a game. It didn't amount to much. It was controlled completely by the international unions and international representatives. They had control.

SG [00:49:17] But the building trades formed a parallel national organization called the Canadian Federation of Labour which existed for a few years.

BZ [00:49:26] Yeah, we got into that, but it never -- there was never the break away from it, but we came close. We had a conference in Winnipeg where the building trades in Canada were coming together and were going to separate from what was the building trades department at that time in Canada.

SG [00:49:43] Yeah, right.

BZ [00:49:45] But it never, ever happened. The building trades, there was discussions and there was a peace -- smoked a peace pipe, and there were a few changes, and we stayed in the --

D.K. [00:49:57] There wasn't one conference of the CFL, was there? Assuming that there was, I don't know, one. That it had one conference.

BZ [00:50:04] Yeah, I was the one in Winnipeg. We had one in Winnipeg where there was a decision made and there were some of the trades that were off and not 100% behind that either at the time, but to make a long story short, there was a coalescing or whatever, a coming together between the two and agreeing that, 'Okay, well, we'll clean up our act.' And never did separate.

D.K. [00:50:30] Oh, okay.

SG [00:50:31] But did the Carpenters during the time you were the president actually achieve Canadian autonomy?

BZ [00:50:38] No, we didn't, but we had -- they came up on several occasions to tell us what to do, and what happened is -- without getting into details of it -- we sent them back across the border. Basically, ended up in disagreements, and we hired -- we had Laughton as our lawyer. We had meetings with the international down in one of the hotels in Richmond, and basically told them that the law in this country said certain things and that they were asking us to violate the law, they were violating the law and that we weren't going along with the trusteeship or whatever it was. I think it was a trusteeship at the time. What we basically did is send them back across the border. I just said, 'Get out of here. We're not putting up with this. It's not going to happen. Forget it.'

SG [00:51:29] So, you actually sit down at the table with these guys and tell them to take a hike.

BZ [00:51:32] Yeah, we had a meeting and invited the members. We had demonstrations at the hotel. The District Council got together and the one guy was listening to the international rep for the 10th District, which was from Winnipeg this way, from Manitoba this way. The 10th District international rep at that time was heard on the phone telling me International, if they want to fight it, they better send up money and they better send it up in a box or something, and lots of it because they had a fight on their hands. It happened on other occasions where they came in and tried to put a local under trusteeship, and we just went after them. They -- one, they couldn't bully you -- and instead of them reading the riot act to you, we read the riot act to them. These are the laws this country has. We've got laws and labour laws in this country that give us certain rights and you're not going to break that. So, we sent them back across the border.

SG [00:52:41] So, in effect, you had de facto Canadian autonomy. Even if it wasn't actually in the Constitution.

BZ [00:52:47] They're still paying the dues and we still didn't have paid representatives nationally and so forth. There were still the international reps that were sent in to run the 10th District and the 9th District and other reps underneath them. So, the international still had a handle on it. We didn't have autonomy, and again, you're paying dues to the international, which was a consideration.

SG [00:53:13] So, what was your own role in this? I mean, you must have been having to meet constantly with other members of the executive and the district leadership or the local leadership and whatnot to kind of keep them on side, eh? Is that --

BZ [00:53:28] Yeah, we did, and we had a committee of our executive go down to San Jose and have a talk with the international executive at that time and told them the way it was in B.C. and what we represented and how we were operating and how we were continuing to operate. The provincial council was -- we had the 27 locals, and they were going to remain that way. Unless it was elections by the membership that wanted to change things, they weren't going to change. They were going to stay as they are and so forth. So, I think we had the respect of the international.

SG [00:54:03] Hmm, and did you have pretty much unity here amongst the membership?

BZ [00:54:08] Oh yeah, and when they came up, they sent the second vice-president up to go around the province, and he got an earful.

SG [00:54:14] Is that right, eh?

BZ [00:54:14] It wasn't a very friendly trip for him. He told me when he came back, he said, 'I know we've got a problem, but we better have a meeting and try to get around this and settle it.' What happened was they gradually backed off, but this was B.C. You know, there's another nine provinces and territories that don't have that. Didn't have a provincial council that took them on.

SG [00:54:40] So, you were largely alone in Canada, here in B.C., in waging that campaign.

BZ [00:54:46] Yeah, the international had much more influence in Ontario and other places than here.

SG [00:54:51] Oh, I see.

BZ [00:54:52] Yeah.

SG [00:54:54] So that -- some of the subsequent events which we won't go into here were partly to do with that, I presume.

BZ [00:55:01] Sure.

SG [00:55:01] Yeah.

BZ [00:55:02] The last kerfuffle was again initiated by the international, with the president coming up here and telling them what we're going to do. They're going to cut back on the number of locals and so forth. They're going to amalgamate this, that, and the other thing and of course, I'm out of here by then. I'm retired, but he came up acting like a bully. You know, 'We're going to tell you what to do.' They got the membership here wired, and the membership in B.C. through 20 years that I was around, we were talking about Canadian autonomy, and handing out leaflets and laying out a position. So, the membership were fully behind Canadian autonomy. There was no argument about whether the international had the upper hand or not. We thought we had the upper hand to the extent that we wanted autonomy and it was going to come sooner or later. Well, what they finally agreed to is turning the Canada Conference into the Council of Canadians, a Canadian council which has -- and in fact, I wrote the -- what do you call it?

SG [00:56:04] The Constitution.

BZ [00:56:06] Constitution for them. They asked me if I'd write it and I did. I wrote the Constitution, and its things that had to be negotiated but as far as I know, it's still there. That was the movement at that time; but again, subsequent to that, a new president comes in and he's going to tell people what to do and that created the backlash in B.C. Now we've got -- we've got two locals in B.C.; we've got the International -- two unions. the international. We've got -- I forget what the hell the name of it is now, but anyway, the Canadian union, the breakaway section of it.

SG [00:56:40] That's now part of Unifor, eh?

BZ [00:56:42] Part of Uni -- yeah.

D.K. [00:56:44] Well, it isn't part of Unifor now.

BZ [00:56:48] Well, it was part of CEP (Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union), but that --

D.K. [00:56:51] Yeah, and they subsequently left. I mean, it's kind of funny because there's divisions. The old 1928 local, right, are Unifor members.

BZ [00:57:00] Yeah.

D.K. [00:57:02] But the Council itself -- I'm trying to remember its name.

BZ [00:57:05] It's all over the place. There's some locals are in and some locals are out of the independent union with CEP. Some of them came in, some of them didn't. There's a question of dues structure. That was a real problem too, that. Yeah. It's -- to be blunt about it, it's a hell of a mess because for a carpenter now, like one carpenter I talked to up north said, 'I've got to belong to three unions. I've to belong to --'

SG [00:57:31] In order to work anywhere.

BZ [00:57:33] Yeah, because one union will have one job and they're all job -- it's just -- As I told them when the breakaway, we'd kick the international back across the border like we did before. You don't have to put up with that, but breakaway, where are you going to go? You're fighting non-union. You're fighting CLAC. You know, you're fighting amongst yourselves, and that huge non-union element out there that needs to be worked on. How many people can you fight at once?

SG [00:58:05] So, that unity of the trades has always been the key issue, right?

BZ [00:58:09] The building trades themselves. Now, I forget how many locals are in or out, but it reaches a stage where it's every man for himself.

D.K. [00:58:20] Excuse me a second, I just have to go to the bathroom, and I wanted to reload on coffee. Is it possible we could pause it for a sec, or do you want to keep pouring over miles and miles? Yeah.

BZ [00:58:32] Yeah.

SG [00:58:33] Okay. Bill, I just want to go back to one of the things we were talking about before, and that is your membership in the Communist Party and your activism there in it. I mean, for example, there was a club of carpenters, as I understand it, the Peter Maguire Club. Named after their longtime U.S. president. Were they sort of active in sort of being a caucus in within the Building Trades or within the Carpenters in terms of --

BZ [00:59:01] We were, but we didn't operate as a party caucus. We had a lot of what you want to call them, fellow travelers, or a lot of people that were close to the party. A lot of people that we developed friendships with around the province, with all kinds of people. I mean, you went to Castlegar, or you went to Nelson or wherever else, or up to Prince George. You met people, so you developed relationships, and we used to meet with them. It was a broad caucus; it wasn't just party people. There would be maybe three or four party people, or five, and 25 other people that were -- so it was prior to conventions and that we would meet, but it would be a broad caucus.

SG [00:59:51] The idea was that you sort of had some consistency in policy and is not.

BZ [00:59:56] Sure, which direction are we going to go. What's the big issue for them? You know, there wasn't a time that we didn't have an issue that we dealt with. We always had some issues that we were taking on, whether it was to improve the shacks on construction or safety or other things that came out of the Bentall Tower thing. There was always something that we zeroed in on that we gave special attention. It's kind of like a program, and education was a big part of it. We used to get Ben Swankey to teach the trade union economics around the province. A lot of people got educated.

SG [01:00:35] So, it was kind of a respected and useful function that it played in it within the union, but probably led to a lot of the red-baiting from the other side of the political spectrum.

BZ [01:00:48] They were, but they didn't have anything to -- you know what they had to go after us on, and I mean, I'm not -- you know, there was stuff that we could have done, but it would have been high-handed if we weren't careful. You had to be careful, and among some party people there was some high-handedness in certain issues. Trying to overrule the top, and it was wrong, in my opinion.

SG [01:01:11] Can you give me an example of one like that?

BZ [01:01:13] Well, having -- for argument's sake, having Jack Phillips at the convention, you know, kind of drifting traffic from the back, from the party point of view I thought was wrong.

SG [01:01:25] Hmm.

BZ [01:01:26] I said that to some of the people, 'If Dave Barrett sat over there on the bleachers and NDP-ers kept running back and forth to him over resolutions, we would be the first ones up in arms over and saying, what the hell's going on here?' You know, the trade union thing, not that there wasn't always influence in the background. Of course, they were. No one's naive enough to think that there wasn't, but I think the breakaway of the IWA is a good example of where mistakes were made by the party. You know, people will disagree with that, but --

SG [01:02:04] Well, I don't think there's a lot of disagreement over that. I think there's a recognition by that within the Communist Party circles at the time that --

BZ [01:02:11] It was tragic.

SG [01:02:12] That it was a decision that was made.

BZ [01:02:14] To lose someone like Harold Pritchett, worked with him in the mill, and he was a sawyer, and I was a blockman, he couldn't be a member of the union. He had to get his paycheque every other week, or whatever it was, cash. I forget what the circumstances were, but that was -- he couldn't play a part in it. A guy like that, and he was basically ostracized. He just wasn't allowed to take part. I felt real bad about that.

SG [01:02:43] But otherwise, this was something that was useful to you as a trade union leader in the party.

BZ [01:02:52] The party gave me a compass.

SG [01:02:54] Hmm.

BZ [01:02:56] I was never, ever any kind of a theorist. You know, it was pretty simple. Our family motto is To share is fair, and that's just about where my ideology begins and ends. It's part of it, the socialist aspect of it, I'm not a theoretician. I love reading and all that, but no.

SG [01:03:25] So, was that generally shared by a lot of people in the carpenter's union? That sort of philosophy, to share is fair?

BZ [01:03:34] Yeah, you know, I'll give you an example. I go to a convention and this woman comes up to me who I don't know from two bases, and one of the members' wives is a delegate at the convention, and she said words to the effect: 'What the hell did you teach Peter at that educational last month?' I thought, I said, 'I don't know. What do you mean?' And she said, 'Well, he came home and he gave me a slap on the rear end and he said, Mary, I'm not such a bad guy after all. He'd taken some trade union education that said that Labour is the creator of all wealth, and he had a different evaluation of his own. I'm not such a bad guy after all.'

D.K. [01:04:28] Says a lot.

SG [01:04:30] Do you think that's something that's being lost, is that trade unionists don't have a sense of themselves that they used to?

BZ [01:04:38] Someone needs to go and lecture at a BC Fed convention, in my opinion, and say, 'You know what? If it wasn't for labour, there wouldn't be a floor to put the table on. There wouldn't be a table to put on the floor. There wouldn't be a book for you to put on the table, or a pen to write with, or a loudspeaker to talk into. There wouldn't be a car on the street, or a road to drive on or ride your bike, or a sidewalk to walk on if it wasn't for labour. You know, the millionaires and billionaires in this country, literally -- the Jimmy Pattisons -- wouldn't have a pot to piss in or a window to throw it out of if it wasn't for labour,' and I think we've lost that and it's so basic. It's like we were the burden, and they keep telling us what a burden we are, and the people that are the one percenters have got us convinced that we're the problem.

SG [01:05:39] And they're the ones that are creating all the opportunity.

BZ [01:05:41] That's right.

SG [01:05:42] No, it's true. It's happening more and more. So, one of the things that obviously must have happened to you in the -- well, I know that it happened to you and to others -- that of course, you became targeted by the RCMP and other agencies in terms of trying to root out the communist influence in the labour movement in B.C.. What kind of experiences have you had with that?

BZ [01:06:08] Well, there was once where I told you about, when I worked in the mill. I think there were members of our union -- in fact, I'm positive there were members of our union -- that were agents of the RCMP. I'm not going to name names, but we know some of them because one of them who died here just a couple of years ago, they had the RCMP insignia and the Mason insignia on his obituary. So, we know that he was a -- you know, he was a... and there were others, there were others were involved. In fact, at one point we had an election, I think it was about 1985 in 452, a very protracted election campaign and fairly bitter. There were people that came in that hadn't been involved in the local that long, but they were heading up an opposition slate, and we became suspicious of some of them. Anyway, to make a long story short, it ended up being told to me by one of the people that was in a meeting with this group, that there was a guy there and we thought it was -- he said he was from CSIS.

SG [01:07:28] He said he was from CSIS.

BZ [01:07:30] He was in on this meeting of this one group at this guy's house. I talked to Svend Robinson about that and I said, 'We thought it was RCMP E Squad or whatever that were keeping an eye on this.' But Sven said he talked to -- and I think it was Perrin Beatty at the time who was the Minister of Justice or whatever, and Perrin Beatty had said, 'No, it wasn't the RCMP.' And then Sven said -- I met him at a social occasion later and I said, 'Oh yeah, apparently it wasn't the RCMP, it was CSIS.' And Perrin said, 'Yeah, it was CSIS.' So, CSIS was -- and I got a call from the Canadian Civil Liberties Association some time later, maybe in a month or two, want to know if we could take that and make an issue of it and take it? I said 'Absolutely. We're prepared to go. Go ahead.' But I never heard any more about it. So, they squashed it.

SG [01:08:36] I see. So, this was a CSIS agent that was actually working.

BZ [01:08:39] Was at this meeting in a guy's house with this caucus.

SG [01:08:42] Involved in the opposition.

BZ [01:08:44] For the election of the people to the 452 local.

SG [01:08:49] What was the results of the election? Were they successful?

BZ [01:08:51] No, they lost out there. No, no. They had no support, or very little support. There was a CSIS, two CSIS agents that met with the Rep up in -- with our Representative in Castlegar. Subsequent to that, a few years later, I wanted to go public with it, but the Rep didn't want to go public.

D.K. [01:09:14] Was that Len Embree?

BZ [01:09:15] Yeah. He had taken a trip to Bulgaria, I think it was Bulgaria. We had an invitation to send a trade unionist to Bulgaria to some conference or whatever there, and so Len Embree was going to go, and Len went. He told me some time later, he came back and these two guys met him at the door, and they were concerned about where he had been and what he was doing or words to that effect. I said, 'Well, Len, let's take it on and let's go public'. Well, of course, you can't expose anyone's name because if you do it, you're in violation of Secret Act or whatever the hell they use to cover up.

SG [01:09:54] Right. So you had to basically drop it.

BZ [01:09:58] He didn't want to go along with it, and I --

SG [01:10:03] Right. Did this really have any impact? I mean, obviously, all of this sort of stirring around inside the local didn't really have any impact on the direction of the local or locals.

BZ [01:10:13] No, it was it it was a concern, though. Yeah, it was a concern, but it didn't change anything. I mean, we regained good unity, I think, amongst -- and had good support in the membership.

SG [01:10:27] Did people get scared off by it at all?

BZ [01:10:31] Well, there's a limit to how public we could go with it, too. It's this he said, I said, he said sort of stuff doesn't hold up too good in court. So, I mean, you're not gonna -- but I wrote, I think if we got copies of The Level, I wrote articles in The Level regarding B.C. and the RCMP.

SG [01:10:51] Right.

BZ [01:10:52] We basically told the membership, 'If the RCMP ever bother you? Let us know, because we'll take it right to the limit. We'll fight back on it. We're not going to put up with intimidation by RCMP agents or anyone else.'

SG [01:11:08] No, so that set the tone for, I guess, the leadership and all the way down the line that they weren't going to be intimidated.

BZ [01:11:15] Yep. Members thought that they were part of a big family.

SG [01:11:17] Right.

BZ [01:11:17] Yeah.

SG [01:11:18] Well, interesting. I mean, one of the big issues for the labour movement, particularly since the defeat of the Barrett government in 1975, has been how the labour movement gets involved in sort of political action. How it does it step out and speak in its own name, or does it try and do it through the NDP or whatever? That sort of change took place during your tenure.

BZ [01:11:42] Yeah. I think when you mentioned it earlier, Johnson and Len Guy, when they wanted the trade union movement to take an independent position.

SG [01:11:51] Mm hmm.

BZ [01:11:52] I talked to other people that were leaders in the trade union movement at the time, being part of the NDP, that it's been a mistake. They feel that way. That it's a mistake. I won't mention names again, because those are things that are said to me and I don't know whether they want to retain confidences or not, but I've had discussions with people who were there at that time and they feel that that was a mistake because the trade union movement lost its -- But who represents who? I mean, what went on for many, many Fed conventions that used to blow my mind completely was don't worry about it, just elect us. Get us elected and everything will be okay. Well, we did elect them. Things did improve on that, but not everything became okay. We ended up with So. Cred. subsequently and we ended up with anti-labour legislation and stuff like that. Bill -- you know, the 19 bills in 1983, or 21 bills or whatever they were, created a real problem. The trade union movement rallied around that, but I think we've lost a direction about who you're taking your -- well, regardless of political party, whether it was the Communist Party or the NDP or Liberal or whoever else. We had Catholic action in the IWA years ago. Catholic Church interfering in the trade union movement. I don't -- you know, that was wrong. That finally died out. I think the trade union movement represents working people under specific conditions and they have to speak out for those people. I think that's a democratic process that has to be enunciated more and more. That you can side with whichever political party you want. You know, we were open. When we put The Level out, we never took political sides, in the broad sense of the word, to tell people who to vote.

SG [01:13:55] You're talking about the Carpenters paper, On the Level.

BZ [01:13:57] On the Level.

SG [01:13:58] Right.

BZ [01:13:59] What we did was, we said, 'This is what is being done. This is the labour legislation, this is what this party represents and this is what that party represents, and you make your choice.' If people know what the circumstances are, if they have knowledge to what the truth is, a reason, they'll come up with the right answer. You don't worry about it. You don't have to tell people. I always had full confidence that the membership would make the right decision, whatever it was they had to do. If you had a chance to discuss the issues, people come down on the right side of the issues. I've never seen it fail.

SG [01:14:35] Right. So, in effect, the Carpenters took the position that the labour movement should be taking independent political action all the time.

BZ [01:14:40] Absolutely.

SG [01:14:41] Right, but one of the things that did change again was when Operation Solidarity was founded in 1983. From what my understanding of it is that the beginnings actually came with the Vancouver District Labour Council, which formed the Lower Mainland Budget Coalition following the announcement of the 26 bills. What's your recollection of that, because you would have been involved in in the council at that time, eh?

BZ [01:15:14] I think my daughter was more involved than I was at that time.

SG [01:15:17] That's true.

BZ [01:15:17] But yeah, they had six or eight thousand people down at the main street at that big rally that took place to start with. Kicked it off.

SG [01:15:31] How was your sense of that, when that movement sort of just erupted?

BZ [01:15:35] I think everyone was euphoric. We're going to fight.

SG [01:15:40] Right.

BZ [01:15:42] You know, the 26 bills were unjust and we're going to fight it, and I felt good about it. Our people, I think, felt good about it in general. We rallied around the flag. We had great meetings around the province. I attended a few of them and spoke with Father Roberts, for example, who was an absolute wonderful man.

SG [01:16:04] Mm hmm.

BZ [01:16:05] Jim Roberts. It's just a shame that they had the Kelowna Accord, because I think, again, it was like Pennyfarthing with us where we folded our tent. We should have found a way to carry on and take, you know, if it meant jail terms or whatever. We should have stood up to that, and with Solidarity it was the same thing. It was a shame that the rug was pulled out from underneath it. There were, at Pennyfarthing, carpenters who were crying when we told them they had to come off. That actually cried. They were upset, and the same thing with Solidarity.

SG [01:16:42] Yeah.

BZ [01:16:43] When we pulled out, there were people that were just so upset, they couldn't believe it. You know, I was at the meeting when Art Kube cracked up in New Westminster at the old Army and Navy on Columbia Street. They had a meeting there. Jim Robert spoke and he spoke on --

SG [01:17:04] What meeting was this?

BZ [01:17:07] Regarding Solidarity.

SG [01:17:09] An Operation Solidarity meeting?

BZ [01:17:10] Yeah, I mean, he cracked up. He broke out in tears and whatever. I remember him asking me, he said, 'Well, how do you think it's going?' I said, 'It's great.' I thought was just wonderful. Meetings all over and record turnout and membership and everyone's united on this. We're going to fight this.

SG [01:17:29] This is when the escalating strikes were beginning.

BZ [01:17:33] Yeah, but then he cracked up.

SG [01:17:37] What do you mean, he cracked up?

D.K. [01:17:38] Well, he had a nervous breakdown.

BZ [01:17:40] Sort of a nervous breakdown or whatever.

SG [01:17:42] At this meeting.

BZ [01:17:44] Yeah, he started crying, and then it was a day or two later he was off. He was no longer in the office. He was at home under doctor's care or whatever it was at the time.

D.K. [01:17:53] Was this public, Bill? Because I think I remember actually reading about this in the Vancouver Sun or something that Kube was kind of crying and saying, 'How could we deal with this kind of government?' Or something like that.

BZ [01:18:06] Yeah, he said words to the effect that 'If the Premier had any decency,' or whatever, 'he would resolve these things.' Then he burst out into tears. Words to that effect, I remember. Similar to what you -- so that took place there. I was really surprised. I was taken back when he -- because I thought everything was just going great. You know, there was great unity and everything. Then there was a meeting of the executive on the problems and the question of Jack Munro and Scott going to Kelowna to agree to the Kelowna Accord, which basically settled some of the BCGEU issues and pulled the rug out from underneath a number of other people.

SG [01:18:49] Well, yeah. I mean, I think a lot of -- I mean, all of us felt this enormous sense of betrayal when the Kelowna Accord was signed, and of course, all of that was focused on Jack Munro because he was the messenger. I think most of us realize that that was a decision that wasn't made by Jack Munro. It was a decision that was made by a lot of other people. So, were you at that --because you were a member of the BC Fed executive.

BZ [01:19:12] I was a member of the Executive Council, not the executive, and I wasn't at that meeting.

SG [01:19:16] The Executive Council didn't take part in this meeting.

BZ [01:19:18] No.

SG [01:19:19] Just the executive, right. Just the officers, in effect.

BZ [01:19:22] Oh, Jack Munro quoted me in the book, and there's words to the effect that 'even Zander agreed to it.' Well, Zander wasn't at any meeting, and I took it up with him, in fact. Asked for a retraction, and he said, 'What are you talking about?' And I said, 'Page 11,' whatever it was. Okay.

D.K. [01:19:38] Of the Union Jack book, right?

BZ [01:19:41] Yeah, but yeah, you're absolutely right. In my opinion, Jack Munro was the goat. I mean, it's unforgivable, but he said that Bennett pissed backwards on some of the commitments he made. But, you know, why wasn't it written down and signed? I said later, I said, 'Even one of our job stewards would know better than that. That if you' get an agreement with the company, you'd write it down.

D.K. [01:20:07] You'd sign off on it.

BZ [01:20:08] Write down this, that and the other thing. You get signatures and the date.

SG [01:20:10] Exactly.

BZ [01:20:10] Why would a guy like Jack Munro and Scott go walk out of there with some verbal commitment, especially from a rat like Bennett? You know, why would -- but anyway, he wore it. It was the decision of the executive. It wasn't Jack Munro's decision. It was a decision, a collective decision, and he wore it.

SG [01:20:29] Well, I would presume that they got Jack to do it because he was the one who was less likely to be affected by his own membership.

BZ [01:20:35] Well, he was a willing goat.

SG [01:20:37] Yeah.

BZ [01:20:37] Yeah, yeah, yeah.

D.K. [01:20:39] Well, in fact, I guess the big thing about Solidarity too is we didn't have a lot of private sector involvement as these things escalated, right. It was mostly public.

BZ [01:20:52] Well, there were a lot of people in the Coalition that had the rug pulled out from underneath them, and it was a bloody shame. It should have never happened. It should have never happened. First of all, whether if there was an agreement to back off, it shouldn't have happened without the participation of all the Coalition partners and all of the Executive Council and all the unions. There should have been a huge meeting to discuss it.

SG [01:21:18] So is it your recollection the Executive Council ever had any discussion about the role of how much involvement there was by the private sector, what their feelings were about it?

BZ [01:21:28] Not that I'm aware of.

SG [01:21:30] So no, no such discussions.

BZ [01:21:32] No, he went to Kelowna to settle it, and he came back with an agreement and it was game over, right? After all this build-up?

SG [01:21:40] Well, there had been the big meeting -- conference of unions that took place following the big Solidarity meeting. They actually -- I remember Bill Clark getting up at that meeting and saying, 'Do you realize where we're going with this? This is going to result, if it continues, in our bringing the government down. Are we ready for this? I mean, he was asking it ingenuously, I think, but a lot of people probably thought, 'Oh, my God, where are we going with this?' Not that (unclear)

BZ [01:22:13] Well, I heard that even Bennett was talking -- considering that the government might have to resign, you know, might have to bring it to an election. I was also told by someone that should have been in the know anyway that the NDP did not want the government brought down.

D.K. [01:22:32] Yeah.

BZ [01:22:32] There were members of the NDP that were putting pressure on people in the Executive Council of the executive, I should say, to settle this thing that they didn't want the government to come down. So the NDP were involved as well if this is true, and I think it is.

SG [01:22:50] Oh, it's very likely they would not have wanted to be -- to have the government brought down, and then there would have been a demand there in the movement for all of these things to change that they would've been in no condition to do.

BZ [01:23:01] Get rid of those 26 bills and let's start with some other stuff that could benefit the people instead of the corporation.

SG [01:23:08] So, what was the feeling amongst the Building Trades workers about the Kelowna Accord? Much the same?

BZ [01:23:15] Oh yeah, people were really upset. I think the average working guy -- working person, I should say -- probably were more upset than people like me. I was upset, but because of the political machinations and that, you're inclined to be able to roll with the blows a little bit better than someone that takes it and thinks he's got it, people are there and then they pulled the rug out from underneath them without the discussion or whatever. I think it bothered the average worker who more than what did the people in the trade union movement, for example.

SG [01:23:53] Oh, that's interesting. They would have felt not only a betrayal that their movement being lost, but a betrayal by those who did it, in a sense. Yeah, I mean, I certainly know there was a lot of a dark feeling towards Jack Munro that went on for some time after that because of his role in that.

BZ [01:24:12] You can't lead people down the garden path, so to speak, and then pull the rug out from underneath them and expect that they're not going to be. I mean, I can remember that when we had the hassle over in Port Alberni with the pulp mill, we ended up with a bunch of people charged and sent to jail and I was one of the ones that got charged subsequent to it. When we had the big meeting in the tent over that right-to-work outfit moving in and taking the Building Trades work. We had a meeting in the tent and a representative from the Building Trades came and said, 'We've got to pull off, because the fines and etc. etc. MacBlo (MacMillan Bloedel) and the companies were -- it's going to cost our treasuries. We're going to get cleaned out,' so the executive met again and made a decision to pull out. Telling the exact truth, but there were people in it that were so upset, and the meeting would have turned, I think possibly, into a bit of a donnybrook, to say the least. I could see it was heading in that direction. I just said to whatever his name is, Philip or whatever, he's told us what in fact has to be done. Otherwise, you ought to turn your treasuries over, it's going to be a huge fine and same old story. You know, your hat's going to be floating in the water. I said, 'Any people that really feel strongly enough about it. Individually, they have to tell us to get out, but individually, I'm going out the line tomorrow morning and I don't care if I go to jail because I feel that way about it.' But I said, 'People should feel comfortable about what they do, and if you if you feel strong enough about it, let them haul us off in the paddy wagon.' But, we're being told to pull off the line, and that's what did happen.

SG [01:26:11] But you went out as an individual. What -- just to go back, What was this particular?

BZ [01:26:16] I'm trying to think of the name of the outfit that we were fighting. They were an outfit from back east. Anyway...

SG [01:26:24] This was a mill that you had struck? Over work that was being done.

BZ [01:26:31] Yeah, pulp mill.

D.K. [01:26:31] Was this in the early '90s?

BZ [01:26:31] Yeah. No, no. It was in the eighties. No, wait a minute, pardon me. You're right. It was in the nineties.

D.K. [01:26:36] Yeah, cause it was --

BZ [01:26:38] It was after I retired. I mean, I was retired at the time.

D.K. [01:26:41] I almost had work actually, with Greenpeace doing photography for that. Then it fell through, because, I guess, because they (unclear) action or something.

BZ [01:26:50] But there was betrayal there. People felt betrayed there, too. So, I guess the moral of the story is when you embark upon things, you have to think like in a game of chess, you have to think ahead a few moves about what you're going to do before you know.

SG [01:27:07] Well, I think there was a -- because the Pennyfarthing incidence down in False Creek came not long after Solidarity, and I think a lot of people there felt the same way. That this was -- we've got to hold the line here over trades work, or we will be betrayed once again. And was there that feeling amongst your membership there as well that they had to do that? They'd lost a lot.

BZ [01:27:32] Every squabble you get into, whether it's a strike or whatever, if you don't come up with some benefits out of it, you know, people are disappointed. They're let down. If you emphasize certain things are going to happen.

SG [01:27:45] How much of a role do you think at the time that these particular losses had in terms of the decline of union membership within the building trades and other unions, for that matter, as well?

BZ [01:28:00] Well, you know.

SG [01:28:01] Was that part of it, do you think?

BZ [01:28:02] Yeah, it's a slippery slope, and once you lose one and you lose another and another and another, you become acclimatized to losing. The other side starts to win and they consider you're obsolete and they have ways of dealing with it. I mean, the corporations in this country, they didn't just get off the boat last week. They know what they're doing and they've got control of the press. Look at today. You can have an international convention in this town of a trade union movement representing millions of workers around the world, and it's not even hardly reported in the Vancouver Sun. Maybe a couple of little words in the Vancouver Sun and nothing on the TV or the radio, not a word. BC Fed convention, we used to have a labour reporter for the Sun and The Province

and they were well known reporters. They were very important journalistic positions. How many are there today? There's no labour reporter today. You can have a convention today and there's hardly anything said about it in the paper. People don't know what's going on. They just blanked it out. You don't know when, you know, what? 'What Fed convention were you talking about? There wasn't a Fed convention, was there?' 'Yeah, there was one yesterday.' Well, how come no one knows about it? We had a meeting. We had a meeting, a conference sponsored by the seniors organization with 400 people in it. International people coming over, reporting on health and seniors and all the rest that deals with it. Not one word in the paper, not one word on TV, not a reporter came there, not a TV camera, not anything. We had well-known report people from around the world that came to that meeting and spoke to it, including government people were there.

SG [01:30:08] Well, that's one of the things that the Carpenters was a particular example of, was because you folks had a newspaper, which was even by that time, a relative rarity. From what I understand, On the Level was deliberately maintained because you felt it was a means of communicating with the membership.

BZ [01:30:30] It was our educational. We had everything on apprenticeship there, what went on in the apprenticeship program and you know, all those things. The other thing, there's a report on our health and welfare and pension plan. That's in the Level. As often as not, the wives of the members knew more about what was going on in the health and welfare, pension, dental and things like that. They read that and knew more about it than our members did. It was important to them too. So, it wasn't just a paper for the member of the union. The family, I mean, their wives took an interest in it, too, but it was an educator. It was mainly an educator. Membership knew what the hell was going on and if there were problems.

SG [01:31:16] So, I would presume that the leadership of the Carpenters actively knew they wanted this and put the money in it to do it.

BZ [01:31:23] Oh, yeah.

SG [01:31:24] Because a lot of them -- I mean, let's face it, journals like that expensive.

BZ [01:31:28] Yeah, it was a collective decision.

SG [01:31:29] That was the purpose, to make sure there was this education of the membership.

BZ [01:31:34] Sure, and that should happen today. You know, I remember raising that at the BC Fed, I guess it was the last one I was at before I retired. I raised the question of the unions getting together collectively, all of them, and putting out a paper, even if it only comes out two or three times a year. Put out a paper on the major issues that are that the working class in this country are facing. What are the main issues? What do we need to do? What's our position on the armaments industry? What's the position on the 1%? What's the position on, for example, today they got 800,000 people in this province living in poverty and 170,000 are children. You know, what's our position on those things? None of that stuff is discussed and it should be. The answer I got from the podium was, it's on the internet; but you see, I can take a piece of paper and hand it to my neighbour, or I can use it as a reference in a conference or a convention or a council meeting in the town I live in, but I can't take my bloody computer there.

SG [01:32:35] Well, even if you did, you'd be sending them 10,000 different sites with 10,000 different ideas, that's part of the problem.

D.K. [01:32:42] Well, they do the one thing like Unifor does, The Uniform, right? Which is emailed to you. So, it's kind of like -- it's a little bit in your face, right.

BZ [01:32:51] But there's a lot of older people like me that are computer illiterate. You know, I rely on the written word and I get it off the computer for one simple reason. My wife gets it off for me. She does the secretarial work, so to speak, but not everyone has that.

SG [01:33:09] One of the things that struck me always about sort of left leaning unions -- because I was a member of the United Fishermen, Allied Workers for a long time, a member of the Marine workers -- and we would often have various labour educationals, and you go to a meeting before the union meeting and there'd be a lecturer comrade there'd be a film or something like that. The Carpenters did a lot of that too, where you'd have education in the paper and educational speakers come and so on. I was really surprised when I joined the Newspaper Guild, there was none of that, absolutely no education whatsoever. So, was this kind of a left culture, do you think, in the labour movement to have that style of work?

BZ [01:33:53] I think it was just simply that if the unions are going to represent working people, they should have an informed working people. They should inform those people that they pretend to represent or purport to represent. They should be part of the Democratic decision and that, and they can't be unless they're informed. So, you have to have education. You have to tell people what's going on in the industry. They don't all know, people don't learn by osmosis. You know, you have to -- there has to be an effort to do it. At our convention, we had all kinds of people from the Indian movement across the border came up. A guy by the name of Truscott who got into it with the FBI and that, we had them. We had Native Indian chiefs come and speak at our conference. We had Robert Sass, who was at the time Minister of Health or whatever in the Saskatchewan government came out and spoke to us. We had Jim Roberts spoke several times, Catholic priest. We invited all kinds of people to our convention. We had a convention every year, and a lot of unions don't have a convention every year. I don't know if they ever have a convention. Some of them never have a convention. So how do you educate, how do you educate people? How, more so, how do you represent people if you don't discuss with them, or have dialogue or whatever, what you're doing so that they're part of the decision making and informed.

SG [01:35:26] That's another thing, too, is the whole issue of participation in union meetings, union conventions. Was there a lot of pick up by the membership of conventions and local union meeting turnout and so on?

BZ [01:35:38] I think so, yeah. I think so. Our union meetings were relatively active. I mean in 1251, as I recall, there was fairly good interest in the union and people did come out.

SG [01:35:56] That local does not exist anymore, does it?

BZ [01:35:58] No.

SG [01:35:58] No. So, it was merged into...

BZ [01:36:01] 452, and I think the new name and the new number is 1995, because the merger took place in 1995.

SG [01:36:07] Oh, I see.

BZ [01:36:09] Mhmm, yeah.

SG [01:36:10] That's largely, I guess, because of the decline in membership and representation.

BZ [01:36:14] I understand it's way down, but I don't keep well informed.

SG [01:36:20] Maybe you don't want to be informed about that. That must be hard to look back. Just, you know, to kind of wind up here, to look back and and see the union that you were part of that was very much active and engaged and moving now becoming much more difficult to move forward.

BZ [01:36:39] Someone offered me a copy of the agreement a while back and I didn't want it. I don't want to read it.

SG [01:36:44] Is it so much worse, is it? In what way?

BZ [01:36:48] Union hiring and things like that. Travel time and other things I've been told about just through the grapevine that they've lost, and now their project agreements. We had an agreement that covered the whole province. No matter whether you're working in Pouce Coupe or whether you were in Castlegar or wherever, the wages were the same across the board. We de-sexed it in the sense years ago with our -- we came to represent quite a few women. Women in Trades, we pushed that to start. We were the union that lead that.

SG [01:37:29] Was that right? Tell me about that. How did that come about?

BZ [01:37:34] Well, we had several women that got involved in some of the outlying locals. I could think of Kate Braid for one, who's a great poet and writer and whatnot, and another woman by the name of Marcia Braundy, who was out of Castlegar. They came and they became involved in the union. Joined and, you know, you can't just -- this business of not having women. They were allowed in the union too.

SG [01:38:00] Right. Was there opposition to it from male members at the time?

BZ [01:38:03] Pardon?

SG [01:38:03] Was there opposition to it from male holders at the time?

BZ [01:38:06] Oh, of course there's some. Not many, but there were some chauvinists, of course, male chauvinists. We promoted it, we encouraged it and they became delegates to convention or whatnot, but we had to de-sex the agreement. I'm not going to comment on what some of the employer's reaction to it was. It was very nice, let me put it that way, but they went along with it because it was the thing to do. It would be embarrassing not to try and help that along and to try and help people that worked on construction sites where women did to be decent about it, to provide the same dignity they should to everyone. We

were behind it all the way. The federal government got involved. Braundy and them wrote some stuff up and travelled across the country with it, they had videos and... Yeah.

SG [01:39:01] Were there a lot of union women that came to be part of this?

BZ [01:39:05] I don't think there's an awful lot, but I really can't say, but there are more than there were then.

SG [01:39:12] It's certainly a better situation as a result of that work, I'm presuming.

BZ [01:39:16] Sure, yeah.

SG [01:39:18] Okay. I think that's all I have. Do you have any questions, Dan?

D.K. [01:39:24] We could follow almost anything Bill said and follow the pathways down that one for a while, but that would take us into the middle of next month, I think.

BZ [01:39:35] My memory's not that good either.

SG [01:39:38] Oh, it's pretty good Bill. I wouldn't worry about that.

BZ [01:39:40] Comes with age.

SG [01:39:44] Okay.