Interview: Colin Gabelmann (CG)
Interviewer: Johanna den Hertog (JDH) and Ron Johnson (RJ)
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Transcription: Jane Player and Ron Johnson

JDH [00:00:00] Just to set the stage, this is an interview that is taking place on March 29, 2018. And we're interviewing Colin Gabelmann, and the interviewers today are Johanna den Hertog and Ron Johnson. So, Colin, it's wonderful to see you. Tell us, first of all, a little bit about your family background, when, where were you born and where were you raised?

CG [00:00:26] I was born in 1944 in London, England during the war. My mother, who was a single mother, and I came to Canada in 1947 when I was three. She came to a small town in the Okanagan called Osoyoos, which is where her father was who had immigrated the year before to get out of England and to live with his sister in Osoyoos. So that's where I grew up, in Osoyoos. My mother married a social democrat activist, a farmer, orchardist and she had five more kids and we had a good life in Osoyoos.

JDH [00:01:10] You've already mentioned that you've got some union or progressive background. So, where did it, did you have any other union or progressive influences in your family in those early years as you were growing up?

CG [00:01:23] Well the most important influence, I think, on me, was in fact from my stepfather. He and a group of 30 young social democrats left Germany in 1925, fearing what was happening during the Weimar Republic and the inflation that was then rampant in Germany, and fearing the potential of a right-wing coup of some kind, which always had happened. They decided to emigrate to the Okanagan to set up a vegetarian communal farm. That was their goal. Trouble is they left Germany in February of '28 and they were going to work their way across the country. Of course, the depression hit in October '29 and the whole dream evaporated. Although many of them ended up, including my stepfather, in the Okanagan where he became very active in the CCF (Co-operative Commonwealth Federation) and very active in the co-op movement, the producers' end of the co-op because the producers' co-op for the tree fruits industry was pretty dominant in those days in the valley. And I spent a childhood listening to debate between my mother who was a more British Tory type in her politics and my stepfather, both respectful of each other's views, but intensely debating issues of the day. This was during the Eisenhower days in the States, of course, and they were both supporters of Adlai Stevenson. My stepfather loved Eleanor Roosevelt so we had all kinds of interesting discussions around international politics and social democracy and although it was never framed in those terms when I was eight or ten or twelve years old. So, but I was quite influenced by my stepfather and all that and so when I was eight in 1952 I was putting up CCF posters with him on the telephone poles and the '52 election, which is the one that Bennett won when we, in CCF, really won the election, but Bennett because of Tom Uphill and other things, they ended up with lieutenant governor of the day who couldn't abide the socialists. We ended up with Bennett as premier in another election in '53 so my telephone pole postering was refined by then. When I was, in '53 I was nine.

JDH [00:03:49] Wow. Wow. OK so you grew up in that kind of environment and you were in Osoyoos and as you were growing up in your high school years or your early years there did you, what did you do summer work and did that have any particular influence on you?

CG [00:04:09] Well, the summer work really started in the orchard. So, by age 6 or 7, I was changing sprinklers every day and I made a dollar a day for that in those days, which was pretty good in early 50s. But when I was 16 I was eligible then, old enough, to work in a packinghouse, which I did. The I guess in Osoyoos the Co-op and it was unionized, of course, the Fruit and Vegetable Workers Union, and a very close friend of mine was a woman named Diane Faulds, who was in the same grade as I was in school. Her mother was active in the union and should have been the president of the union but she was of the wrong gender in the day. So a guy was president but she ran the union. So I spent a lot of time at the Faulds household in Oliver in the 60s early barely 60s, early 1960s and we, with her politics, she was, I think she's one of the first woman ever to be on the BC Fed Executive Council. She was, obviously ran the union and was very active in the CCF, and then in '61 and later the NDP (New Democratic Party), of course. So a lot of my union comprehension of union issues was as a result of Alma Faulds who was a very early influence in my life.

JDH [00:05:38] Wonderful to hear about women at that time. Yeah. And then I understand you worked also in the logging world. How did that come about?

CG [00:05:49] Oh, a friend and I were working in the packinghouse and we were doing a boring job of making cardboard boxes. You'd get the flat box and then fold it up and staple it, whatever, make big boxes. Dusty boring work. His brother came along and said you want to get a real job? And we said where? He says I'm going up to the logging camp tomorrow, you can go with me. You can come up, you can set chokers. So we did and set chokers. That was July of '63. And, beginning, and we spent summers working the logging camp. IWA certification, of course, in those days. And earned, made twice as much money as I did in the packinghouse, made enough money to go to Europe for a year, and learned a little bit about the rougher side of trade unionism because it wasn't the polite kind of work unionism that you saw in the packinghouse where it was mostly women who weren't aggressive and testosterone driven. But you sure got that in the logging camp and whenever there was an issue with the foreman the guys would just say I'm not working today. It was an education for me. At that point I was, I guess I was 18.

JDH [00:07:13] So was that a good experience though?

CG [00:07:16] Oh it was great experience. I was able to read, I was able to talk the language of loggers, which was helpful later in my political life.

JDH [00:07:24] Yeah, I can imagine. So you spoke earlier about, so early helping to put up signs for the CCF. So, how did you come to actually join the CCF so young? So when did that happen? How were you involved? Tell us a little bit about that.

CG [00:07:43] Well in 1958, memory plays tricks on you a little bit. But I do remember it was 1958 I joined the CCYM, the Cooperative Commonwealth Youth Movement. It was, as it was called the youth wing of the CCF in '58. And that was following the Diefenbaker election when he won that overwhelming majority in that federal election. And I was, oh '58, I was still in grade 8 or 9. I can't remember what it was now, but I was pretty young but I somehow, I don't

remember how, somehow I learned that if you're 14 you could join. I was 14 in 1958 so I joined. My stepfather was very active in the CCF at that point. And his friends were all CCFers and the influence was, you know, when they had many parties and get togethers in a small town like that politics was always a discussion and I managed to precociously, I suspect, to hold my own. Yeah it was.

JDH [00:08:51] So how early did you become involved actually in a youth club or a youth organization?

CG [00:08:58] So in 1960 when I was 16 in grade 10, we were then going to school in Oliver because that was the closest high school to Osoyoos organized a NDY club in 1960, CCYM still. And there were only about, if I remember, twelve or fifteen of us. We had to have ten to have a club. I do remember that. And but we got a dozen or 15 of us and, mostly girls, I have to say it was too nerdy for boys. So, anyway, including Diane Faulds, who later became Diane Piket and Bill Piket is well known to many of the people who may be watching this particular interview. In any event, that was the club. Harold Steves came up to it along with another fellow who was an active Trotskyist came up there, I think they saw some fodder. Harold wasn't a Trotskyist. I have to assure everybody, but the other guy was and they came up and talked to us about left wing politics and how the CCF was really not on good course at all. These discussions with the CLC now were good because it should be a labour party, but were bad because it was gonna be more right-wing than even it is now. That kind of I remember that very well. So anyway, it was a great education and so we had a club and that got me involved to a certain extent. And so I met people like Bill Piket, like Lyle Kristiansen, who later moved on to be an MP and died not long ago and many others. And then led to more active involvement at the provincial level of the YND as it became known as result of a convention decision we made early on in my tenure.

JDH [00:11:04] OK. Maybe we should explore that.

RJ [00:11:07] Well I wanted to ask, so you joined the CCYM in 1958. By the time you became involved, sort of actively provincially, had the, in the Young New Democrats had they, had the NDP already been formed in 1961? I had a question about how you perceived that merger of unions and the CCF?

CG [00:11:30] Yeah, I thought you might ask that question because I was very very keen on it. When Stanley Knowles, who was defeated in the '58 election as an MP for Winnipeg North Centre, was made a CLC vice president following that defeat with the idea that he and David Lewis and others would work together to create an alliance between labour and the party, I was actively following that because, of course, it was one of many dinner table conversations. I really wasn't very sure about all this stuff but I was, my stepfather was, and so, watched those from afar, and without any direct involvement even though we were pretty active, didn't really have any connections back between '58 and '61. In '61, I watched the convention on TV. I did the founding convention, I didn't go to but I watched every minute. That was in the middle of peach picking season too and it was tough to be able to watch and you couldn't record things in those days, you had to watch it live, which I did on a black and white TV about this big. I remember being mesmerized by it. So I really believed in the, I remember Walter Pitman getting elected as a new, as a New Party representative before the merger convention, which was I think in August of '61. And Walter was elected earlier in that year, or

the preceding year, I forget which now, as the New Party. And I thought this was good because I thought this was a way we could finally replace those dastardly Liberals.

RJ [00:13:06] My understanding was that there were sizable chunks of the CCF in B.C. that didn't think it was a good idea. So how did that play out? Do you have any recollections of that?

CG [00:13:21] I don't have a lot of direct memories about that. I saw that play out a bit in the mid-60s and there was always a residual animosity toward the formation of the New Party. But it diminished and it diminished quickly, and with Tommy as leader that it made, it healed a lot of the potential dissension that may have occurred as a result of the ending of what people thought was a pure, more pure version of the social democratic party in the CCF. I'm not sure that's true at all but that's...but Tommy's leadership really, I think, was critical to that. If a more labour leaning person like David had, David Lewis, had been leader it may not have gone as smoothly, that's the only thing I can say about that.

RJ [00:14:18] So you went on to, from Oliver, you came down to Vancouver and went to UBC?

CG [00:14:26] Yeah. I took grade 13 in Oliver. I'm still going by 13 miles on the bus every day each way. Like, we kids we walked uphill in the snow both ways to school always. Went to UBC in, and that was the fall, no I went to Europe for the '63, went to UBC in '64. So when I was 22 I came to down to UBC, went into second year because I did the first year in the high school.

RJ [00:14:56] What did you study?

CG [00:15:00] English and history were my two loves. I took some political science because I knew about Walter Young and I wanted to take some courses from Walter, but I found the political science stuff to be not very, it was too, this is going to sound terribly arrogant, but at 22 you can be arrogant I thought it was pretty amateurish, and I was much more interested in history and English at the time.

RJ [00:15:30] Then you became involved in the UBC NDP club? And tell us about that and connections with the labour movement at the time.

CG [00:15:40] The UBC NDP club, yes I was active in it. I was never, I didn't take a leadership role. The guys in third and fourth year did that off the bat and then I looked more into the provincial stuff and left the university stuff to them. There wasn't a lot of labour related activity with the UBC club. The speakers were not, they didn't bring trade unions down to speak to us. We probably should of but I don't recall that as being a pattern. Dave Barrett was one of the early people I remember but it was more academics, left academics who really got to speak to us and then we had a model parliament and that kind of stuff that was always fun.

JDH [00:16:24] I understand you hung around at the NDP office a lot and tell us how, whether that was significant, who you met, and what was what.

CG [00:16:38] Yeah. So this is, think of the context. This is sort of between '64 and '67 essentially the middle of the 60s. I would go down to 517 East Broadway where these, where

the NDP office was, where the B.C. Federation of Labour were upstairs. The Retail Wholesale were also upstairs. The International Typographical Union was downstairs, a couple of other small building trades related unions were also in the building. And we would always make a point of going down for afternoon tea. They always had a long tea break at three o'clock every afternoon and various of the people who worked in the building went to go down to the boardroom the NDP office had. And we'd sit and talk and Ernie Hall and Clive Lytle and Pat O'Neal and John McNevin and John Squire and others. I think probably Len Guy, but I'm not sure if he was involved in those early days, but certainly later so, and many other names who don't come readily to mind.

RJ [00:17:55] What kind of issues dominated?

CG [00:17:58] Oh, the, this goes back to the CCF-NDP kind of division. The feeling that the CCF, which at the time, the NDP, which at the time was led by Bob Strachan, was not labour oriented enough. And so there was a lot of, and particularly in that room at that time with that cast of characters, there was a feeling that we would do better as a party if we would just be out front about our working-class roots and our working class objectives. And if we would not hide from the labour connection, which they thought Bob Strachan liked, even though Bob Strachan was, I thought an active carpenter in his day in the union and whatever, but there was that old tension, always tension in the party between how close are you gonna be to labour or not. The tension continues to this day although much more muted. In any event that was a lot of the discussion and then much of that discussion and sort of revolved around what would you do with Bob Strachan and, of course, and Tom Berger had been elected as an MP in '62 for only nine months. But because he was defeated in 1963. And then Tom's elected in '66 in Burrard and was a shining star then as he is now. And so, we, talk often turned to how is that all evolve. And then of course, inevitably, April of '67 at the provincial convention in South Burnaby, it evolved with Tom running against Strachan and Strachan won but that was the beginning of the end of his time.

RJ [00:19:43] You became an organizer for the NDP.

CG [00:19:46] Yeah. First of all Clive hired me, and I, to fundraise. So I got it in my stepfather's station wagon and drove through in February through. Imagine the technology in the cars in those days and the condition of the highways in the interior but drove around for every hundred dollars I raised from somebody I got twenty-five, and that had to pay my own expenses. But that didn't matter, I was happy to raise the $75 from each of those people from. So I did that for a week or 10 days, I can't remember which, throughout the Interior. I had a contact list and met a lot of interesting old Frank Snowsell, Len O'Neill and lots of old Doug Fraser lots of active party people in the day they all gave me a hundred dollars for the party and then that worked really well and so after the university term that year Clive decided that he should hire me and Michael Lewis too. And Michael was at that time coming out from Ontario. So the two of us were, because we knew we had to face an election sometime. We weren't sure whether it was early in 1969 or 1970 but it was coming and we had to get ready for it. And so the party was not in good shape in terms of membership and whatever. So our job was to build a membership. To start to there.

RJ [00:21:13] OK you're also a member of Retail Wholesale?

CG [00:21:17] That's a funny story. Yeah. The office staff in the NDP office were organized by the OTEU, the Office and Technical Employees Union 378, Opal Skillings' local.

JDH [00:21:33] Local 15?

CG [00:21:34] Local 15. That's right. Yeah. But Opal Skillings was the business agent but we didn't, we weren't automatically in the bargaining unit. So we were outside the bargaining unit and Michael and I decided that here we were promoting, for wanting a stronger relationship with labour and we weren't even in a certification. So we decided we needed to organize. So upstairs was John Squire, Retail Wholesale, and we talked to him about it and John said OK, well we'll go through the proper process and you can sign cards. We had to have a little conversation, it wasn't card determined. So we had a vote and a big ceremony, ceremonial in a sense, vote in the boardroom of the NDP. Not sure why you would have a certification vote in the employer's office. But nonetheless we did and it was two-nothing. There was some concern that it might be one-one because people weren't so sure about Michael. Michael and I still see lot of each other still and we still joke about that a lot. But it was two-nothing. We certified with Retail Wholesale and the organizers that the party hired in subsequent years all had to belong to Retail Wholesale. We thought it was a major accomplishment.

JDH [00:22:53] I want to backtrack a little bit because I understand you also were sent to Ottawa at some point. And how did that come about?

CG [00:23:03] Back in the 60s, every summer the speaker of the House of Commons in Ottawa would organize a group of men, always, to be tour guides in the House of Commons, in the Parliament, on Parliament Hill but in the Parliament buildings and the house itself. And the way they picked the people from across the country who would be these tour guides was not on any qualifications or academic standing or bilingualism or gender or any of those things. It was simply along who the political representative for the government in each region of the country wanted to have, to give a job to. So at the time Art Laing was the member for Vancouver South and in the Cabinet was the B.C. political minister for Pearson. He was given the task by the speaker, strange way of operating, but anyway to find two people from British Columbia who could join this group of tour guides. And so Art Laing being the kind of guy he was went to the Liberal Party in B.C. and said give me one name. And he went to the Federation of Labour and said give me one name. And Pat O'Neal was the secretary treasurer of the Federation at the time but John McNevin was the assistant secretary. Well, I knew John from coffee time at the party office and whatever else, we worked together in one of the campaigns putting up, organizing Tommy Douglas rallies. So he knew who I was and that kind of stuff, and so John recommended to Art Laing that I join the Liberal appointee, who is a prominent lawyer in Vancouver now, and the two of us took the job. I was selling Fuller Brush at the time making a ton of money selling Fuller Brush door-to-door in South Vancouver. I went to Ottawa and made about 20 percent of what I'd been making, but I had the opportunity to work on the Hill for the whole summer and it didn't matter that I couldn't speak French. Those days the [unclear] weren't considerations and met a bunch of really interesting guys. One who is now a chief justice in a particular part of the country and other prominent people as a result of that. And of course we met most of the MPs and Harold Winch and I were good friends in those days. Don Fisher, and used to hang out with a lot of us, with those guys. And Tony was there and so you know I got to know Tony even better than I had. And this is '65 before, you know, before, I was still at UBC and before I really, before I became party organizer or before I became active in the BC YND.

JDH [00:26:02] So when you look back on that, did that, do you think have some influence also in your interest later in elected life?

CG [00:26:09] Oh no doubt. Most of the interesting that, I still remember this vividly. Everybody who worked in the Hill as a security guard, there were, again all men. But in this case mostly French Canadians who worked the security in the security area. They all said that, they pointed to me, that guy is going to be an MP one day, we're going to see more of him. Of course they never did. But I think it was pretty, I was 21, it was pretty evident to me that life as an elected person would be pretty interesting and pretty fulfilling and I was hooked as it were. If not then, certainly confirmed a tendency, which had been developing for some time.

JDH [00:27:03] Great Colin. We're going to switch now to the time at the B.C. Fed a little bit. So you were hired later actually by the B.C. Federation of Labour. Can you tell us how that came about? What was your role at the Federation? This is the first time that you were hired.

CG [00:27:20] Yes. Michael and I had been working for the party and then, of course, we lost the '69 election and the Party couldn't afford to keep its staff on. So we were both let go and that was late '69. John Squire, and by then Ray Haynes was, had become because Pat O'Neal left in interesting circumstances and Ray became secretary treasurer. And, in those days, unlike now, that was the key leadership job at the Federation. And John was a vice president, John Squire. And so the gang of them decided that John, John Squire in particular, thought that I should come to work for the Federation and Ray who didn't know me as well as John and John McNevin did, or Clive Lytle for that matter, all of whom knew me quite a lot better than Ray Haynes did. But Ray as then, as now, always sought advice and took it when others proffered. Anyway John pushed that I be hired. So I was. I started in the beginning of January in 1970.

JDH [00:28:38] And what was your role? What did you do?

CG [00:28:40] Oh the job was called legislative director. But the job was essentially to try to encourage affiliations to the Party by various locals, some of which were affiliated. Retail Wholesale 580 was affiliated. The IWA 217 in whose office I think we're adjacent to at the moment. And in fact they were affiliated, and others were, but many who should have been, weren't. And so part of my job was to do that. Part of my job was to do labour education. We had the mediation commission in those days and there was no true collective bargaining in the province. And so we tried to go through and meet with trade unionists to talk to them about why they had to change the government in order to change the labour climate. So that was essentially the job.

JDH [00:29:39] What do you remember about the role of the B.C. Federation of Labour in general at this time? What stood out for you as the significance of the Federation within the province or with respect to politics or social issues?

CG [00:29:53] This deserves a book, that question all by itself and I think Rod Mickleburgh has to make that his next book. The Federation was a strong and dynamic and effective voice for the little guy and for the smaller trade unions. The big unions of the day, the IWA in particular and some of the other big ones, didn't need the Federation particularly, and as time

went on that included the GEU and others. It just didn't need a strong Federation, in fact, often felt the strong Federation got in their way. But the small unions needed a strong Federation, in particular, because organizing was tough, strikes were frequent as a result of employer intransigence and [unclear]. So the respect for the picket line had been abused considerably. Somebody had to step up and provide some muscle to get, to sort through some of these key issues on behalf of working people who wanted to belong to a union and wanted a collective agreement as a result of that. And so the Fed was militant as hell in those days in terms of respect for the picket line and support for some of the unions. As I say, a book should be written on this topic because it's a critical time in the labour movement in BC. And admit at times, politically they were pretty unpopular because labour got good coverage in the media in those days. The Vancouver Sun for example had two labour reporters and the Province had one. Unlike now when they have none. And so coverage of labour issues in the news media of the day and, of course, in the print media was the critical media in those days. And so everybody knew that the labour movement was, it was bad for business and bad for the establishment and all that, but it was because of the Fed and particularly because of Ray Haynes that the Fed took that kind of role. So I saw the Fed, I saw it then and I see it now in retrospect, as being the organization that was essential for the survival of the small unions.

JDH [00:32:21] And was it sometimes effective? I mean you say it was

CG [00:32:25] Often effective, often ineffective. Often, you know, there was a lot of disputes and we all remember some of them where workers would sign a card, would join the union, and months and months and months later no first contract. And eventually, even years later, it would fade away. That was true in the health sector. Sandringham is the name of a health care unit I remember. For, one of the car dealers in town, and many many other places where the union failed to secure a first collective agreement as a result of their employer just refusing to bargain. And the government role was to side with the employer. So, did the Fed succeed all the time? No it didn't. But did it develop in the labour movement a respect for the picket line? It did. That was probably, if I think about all of the things that were accomplished in that time, I think the establishment of respect for a picket line was probably the single biggest achievement of the day.

JDH [00:33:35] And was there support by one union to other unions? You say the federation was very significant. How did that actually manifest itself?

CG [00:33:44] Well boycotts is a, one good example. Often a product from a particular establishment, which would be boycotted as a result of the failure to get a first agreement or a difficult strike often on a second contract or third or whatever. Small unions, other unions would support picket lines by participating in them. All kinds of political people would do the same thing. But I think the use of the boycott was probably as effective as any tool that was developed. This is at a time when boycotts were considered for California grapes and for South African wine and whatever. But it became a useful weapon in a lower grade, lower public awareness in particular disputes. And the boycott didn't just become a consumer boycott, it became a suggestion to another employer who might be wanting to do business with the struck plant. You don't want to go down that road do you brother and a lot of employers would then back off of assisting their colleagues because they didn't, they feared [unclear].

JDH [00:35:06] Right. OK that sounds like a very significant time and then I understand as we move on from there that you then became very young an NDP candidate in North Vancouver Seymour. Can you tell us about what drove you to run and how? What role if any did the labour movement of working people play in that?

CG [00:35:27] Well as we talked about it was always in the back of my mind I wanted to run at some point but I had no idea and no thought of running. I was 28 in 1972. I was way too young to run I thought. And the politics at the time were interesting. Dave Barrett was leader of the Party. Tom Berger had resigned after the defeat in '69. Dave won in '70. Dave determined that we would be more likely to be elected if he separated, distanced himself from the labour movement. It created all kinds of tension in the Party. The Party was of a different view in its majority. But Dave was determined that he needed the caucus with them on that they, that caucus, the '69 to '72 caucus. And so there were discussions about who, you know, who was going to run, and who's going to run where, and whatever. And there was a lot of discussion about Ray Haynes becoming a candidate in Vancouver Burrard in that election. And Barrett intervened directly with Ray and said it was over his dead body, in effect, and the pressure was so intense and the consequences for the outcome of the election was so fraught that Ray backed off. And at the time, we all thought Ray, you got to take this guy on. But in retrospect I think Ray probably made the right decision, as he always usually did was to make the right decision. And he backed off and then we had discussions in the office about well we got to have somebody who represents labour's interests who's running. Believe there are others out there and among the candidates who may, but there was nobody who was centre to all of the issues. And, of course, the gleam in my eye became stronger I guess, and I thought, ah hah. And at the same time, a bunch of labour guys who lived in North Vancouver, I won't say the names, of a whole bunch of just small unions, railway unions, CUPE and others just as active members were saying to me you should run, you should run, and whatever. And Clive was supportive, Ray was supportive. Al Staley was president of the Fed at the time he was supportive, although he wasn't an active party guy, he was nonetheless supportive and George Johnson and John Squire, of course everybody was. So I ran for the nomination in Seymour and won that in a four-way race. I got 32 percent of the vote and won by 1,500 votes. If you could imagine a 32 percent. So, it was it was a four-way split.

RJ [00:38:29] Were you running to win or were you running just to hold the flag?

CG [00:38:31] I was running to articulate the cause, the labour cause of the NDP. I had no notion of winning. Clive sat down and spun. Nobody in those days had ever heard of the term spinning the issue. But he spun the Vancouver Province reporter Ashley Ford and, it was, Ashley wrote a column saying Gabelmann's got a chance of winning North Vancouver. He's running against an incumbent Liberal, a leader of the Conservative Party, and a prominent alderman for the Socreds and so Gabelmann's got a chance to win. So this big spread in the Province at Clive's instigation spread, or it ran, and then with the support of a wide variety of people in North Vancouver even against a very progressive Liberal incumbent, we managed to win.

RJ [00:39:30] There was always a worry that the NDP was too dominated by unions and that was bad electorally. That limited the potential for the NDP to win. Takeover Tom was criticized in 1969. Was that a factor in 1972? Not in your election, but in the overall campaign, was the attack on labour or labour's involvement in politics part of that campaign?

CG [00:40:05] No, it was there as an undercurrent, more in the Party than it was in the public, I think it's fair to say. Barrett had created his distance from labour and campaigned consistently with that. Labour, Bennett, WAC Bennett tried to talk about the socialist hordes and the labour goons and all of that kind of stuff. But it didn't wash. But the reason it didn't wash, I think, wasn't so much because Dave had set himself aside, it was because it was time. Twenty years of WAC and the public wanted a change of government and the old adage about governments don't win, governments lose. The Socreds lost the election and we happened to be there. That's what I think happened and I don't think, whether, if Dave Barrett had campaigned as a strong supporter of labour and we got to have more labour MLAs and the labour agenda, I think he still would have won. I didn't have any problem campaigning in North Vancouver you could imagine as a labour candidate. It didn't cost me any votes at all.

JDH [00:41:24] I want to ask you one more question about that election, about the teachers.

CG [00:41:28] I thought that was coming.

JDH [00:41:29] Because the teachers I don't think were members of the trade union movement yet, at that time, and yet, you know how significant was, were those issues for teachers in that election campaign?

CG [00:41:43] They were in, I think generally across the province they were a more significant force than they had ever been before or have been since. I'll say that, there will be a number of teachers who may have to see this who won't agree, but I think that was the highlight campaign for teachers in this province. I had a group of people, teachers, in North Vancouver who formed a committee, Teachers for Gabelmann, I think it was called, and they were disparate. A couple of them were New Democrats. Most of them were not. Most of them didn't have much politics, or Liberals and some were Socreds, but they decided that it was time for change that teachers were not respected. The schools were in trouble with lack of support from the province and that education was needed to be made a priority and they, and that group, I can still see faces around the committee room of those teachers. Many of them didn't stay around after because they weren't social democrats or socialists, they were just concerned about education and they, but they were a powerful group. They took direction from our campaign manager and from our leadership group in the campaign. They took, they did whatever they were asked to do and they did it well and were well organized, and so it was a, they were a powerful influence in my campaign. I don't know what happened in other ridings because I wasn't there I was knocking on doors in North Vancouver but, I think from what I understand, they played a significant role throughout the province. I know that Ken Novakowski in Richmond was, and he and his colleagues in the teaching profession were a big help to Harold Steves winning that seat. I know that was true elsewhere as well.

RJ [00:43:41] You got elected in 1972.

CG [00:43:43] Yeah. Amazing.

RJ [00:43:45] You're in the legislature. How old were you in 1972?

CG [00:43:48] 28.

RJ [00:43:49] How did it feel? And what did you think you wanted to accomplish? What was that experience like?

CG [00:43:59] Well it was, first of all, it was intimidating, I have to tell you this, it was intimidating. We were, all the newcomers were in the backbench. We were all new to the process, as it was. We were green as grass and it was, in a word, intimidating. And, did I have, did I sort of have a set of goals mapped out? No I didn't. I generally thought I wanted to reflect the views of the Party, which happened to coincide with the views of most of the labour movement at the time. And I wanted to keep, I wanted to keep the cabinet, I know this sounds awfully arrogant. I don't mean it that way but my goal was to participate in it, and on behalf of the Party, in trying to make sure the government respected the views of the Party. That was, if I had a goal, I don't think it was even this clearly defined in my mind at that time, as I'm saying it. But it was very much part of what I wanted to do it because I think Caucus, the Cabinet of the day, didn't think they needed to take any direction at all from the Party. And I thought, I was one of those who thought they should.

RJ [00:45:19] So often when people look back from outside at that time looking back on that they will talk about the division between labour and the NDP. So what I'm hearing you say is something a little bit different.

CG [00:45:32] Something very different.

RJ [00:45:33] Just elaborate on that.

CG [00:45:35] No the division was between the Cabinet and the Party. A by-product of that is it created a division between Cabinet and labour. But the real division was between the Party who had a view on a variety of issues, whether it was women's rights or labour rights, or human rights, or a variety of those issues. The division was between the Party and the Cabinet and that really needs to be remembered by everybody I think in shorthand talks about the battle between labour and the NDP, it wasn't so at all. Now, the Cabinet recognizing they had to do something did make some really good progress in human rights because that was an issue that didn't divide anybody and so they were able to do it, but they never did on women's rights. They didn't do it on First Nations rights, they didn't really on the environment, and they didn't, certainly, on labour rights. It was, I say all of that weeks after Dave Barrett's funeral and memorial, which most of us attended and loved and cheered the achievements of the Barrett government, which were monumental and spectacular, and so having said what I've just said for the last few minutes, I don't want it to be seen as if the government was a failure. It wasn't, it was a massive success. It just was very tense culminating in the 1974 convention in Kamloops when the women of the party essentially dominated the convention and tried to get the government to respond to a variety of issues. And the response was to have the Cabinet make sure it organized for the '75 convention with a different result.

RJ [00:47:31] So can you elaborate a little bit about that when you say the '74 convention and the women. What are you talking about? What was the pressure?

CG [00:47:39] Well the women's committee, the women's rights committee, WRC, which was a pretty powerful factor in the party in those days. In many ways, internally in the party, more significant than labour, in many ways, in terms of the intellectual leadership on issues of the day. There was some, a group of women who were really powerful and their leader, their

spiritual leader, and for sure it was Rosemary Brown who was elected. But these other women were tough organizers and leaders and they were formidable.

RJ [00:48:19] And what were they trying to achieve?

CG [00:48:20] They were trying to get the Party to recognize that women had to, and needed to, and must play a significant role in our society and to get that started they need to be able to do so in the Party, which hadn't been allowed very much and there was, except for Rosemary, there was nobody. There's some really fine people including some fine women, but there was nobody apart from Rosemary in the caucus in the day who really comprehended. Nobody else had read Betty Friedan for God's sake, much less some of the other feminist thinkers of the day. Nobody else subscribed to Ms Magazine in its early days. Rosemary did but, so that this group of women as I saw it from the outside because it wasn't my business, but I supported them. They were trying to bring the Party up-to-date with feminism and with the feminist movement and with all the issues that flowed from that, and they did a powerful job. Very good job.

RJ [00:49:33] What role did unions play in that context? You've got, what you're saying is there's a very dominant role by the women's rights committee and Rosemary. And where did labour sit?

CG [00:49:49] Well first of all labour was very supportive. The leadership of the labour movement was very supportive of the Women's Rights Committee and those goals. And George Johnston and Clive Lytle and others were very very active. But in the Party there were, you know, there were a number of times when labour would put a candidate for vice president, it was a traditional spot in the Party for one of the vice presidents being from the labour movement. Well, at times that didn't work because guys like Bob Williams would come on and run against what should have been an acclamation. So there were those huge tensions. Labour began, some leaders, some of the leadership in the labour movement began to move away from being active in the Party, not from supporting it, nor they didn't try and form a new party, or go a different direction, or whatever, but they were just less active, they retreated into their favourite activities. Clive wrote a document called "Toward Democracy", which articulated some of the perspectives that occurred in the day. And so my perspective, sitting in Victoria far away, was that labour had been beaten back and were licking their wounds a bit. And you know we're going to focus on their battles, rather than on our battles, our broader battles. That was my sense of it.

RJ [00:51:30] Should we move on to the Labour Code? You were an MLA.

BG [00:51:35] I wonder if I could jump in with a question that kinda leads into that a little bit.

RJ [00:51:38] Absolutely.

BG [00:51:39] Something that Ray Haynes talked about in his interview with us as a big issue during his time at the Fed that might have been even when you were at the Fed and into when you were in a MLA position. He was talking about the fight against injunctions, as a tactic. Do you recall that at all being an issue?

CG [00:51:56] Oh yeah, no, it was a major issue. Ex parte injunctions in the beginning, whether, you know, an injunction being granted to an employer without anybody else being present in the court room. But even when they weren't ex parte, the injunctions were it was routine in those days for the courts to side with employers. It was routine and so with the odd labour lawyer around, there weren't very many in those days. But John Laxton and Tom Berger and Alex MacDonald when he wasn't practicing politics and very few other labour lawyers were enlisted to try to help the labour movement fight against this court system, which was essentially an ally of the boss, of the employer. And so that was a pretty significant campaign. Some of it fought publicly but most of it fought behind the scenes to the point where I think now the judiciary wouldn't even begin to think about issuing an ex parte injunction in a labour dispute. So, we won that battle but over the years, it took a long time.

RJ [00:53:16] What did the injunctions do for anyone [unclear]?

CG [00:53:19] Well it prevented boycotts, prevented picket lines, it, in a variety of ways tried to aid the employer in their fight. So, the physical, stopping trucks from coming across into a struck property was a big tactic in a lot of disputes. The injunction would be issued against the, anybody who was preventing access, and then of course the consequences were higher as a result of breaking a court order as opposed to just some kind of civil disobedience. And then so the consequences were jail often and a number of labour leaders ended up spending time in jail. But it was because they would break "violate" the injunction. No one in the labour movement in those days thought the injunction had any moral validity because they didn't. As I say they were often ex parte and when they weren't ex parte it was simply the judge just deciding completely with the lawyer presenting the employer's position.

RJ [00:54:35] So the NDP got elected in 1972 then to, and one of the things was to deal with this problem.

CG [00:54:41] Nice segue Ron.

RJ [00:54:44] And we had a labour code introduced. You were there. What would you tell us about that topic.

CG [00:54:51] That was a great labour code. I know the mythology that's been developed on how the three of us stood up and opposed it. We didn't. I went back over the, in preparation for today, the Hansard debate to remind myself of things that get lost in the mists of time. And there were only six sections of the bill that we had any difficulty with and they were, I'll get to them in a minute. But the Bill was good. Bill King did a masterful job in bringing in Paul Weiler as an academic to help frame the code. It was, for the most part, a very very fair balanced document, which, if it had been intact for a longer than the three or four years it would have settled labour relations down in this province a lot quicker than they actually were settled down. We would have avoided a lot of the battles of the late 70s and 80s that had occurred if the code hadn't been changed by, first of all, Bennett and then later by Vander Zalm.

CG [00:56:09] So it was a good code. There were some sections that some of us didn't agree with. Sections that today people would say what, you're out of your mind, these are good things. And particular on that is the imposition of the first agreement, first collective agreement. Because when we talked earlier about the battle of getting a first collective agreement, so Bill King and Paul Weiler's approach to that was to, was section 70 of the

labour code, which was the Labour Relations Board would have the power to impose a first collective agreement. The labour movement was totally against it because, at the time, everything was so labour, so employer dominated that all, everybody thought all we'll get from that is an employer-based contract. So we're not going to support the imposition of first agreement because that will be worse than not having an agreement. That was the view of the day and that was a position I took in the House on the day and when I re-read the Hansard on that particular issue in particular in the day I thought you know I was right then. But if it were today, I'd be wrong because its context. Today a first, an imposed first collective agreement would probably be much closer to being fair than ever had a chance of being in 1970, early seventies. So there were and there were others were more technical issues around organizing and whatever but they were small potatoes compared to the, all the mass of good that was in the code.

RJ [00:57:43] One of the issues that I think was the Federation position and probably your position, correct me if I'm wrong, was that the imposition of a first agreement was kind of an alternative to giving the labour movement unfettered right to picketing or unfettered right to collective bargaining and that there was some, that it was a power debate as well. Is that correct, or how do you remember?

CG [00:58:10] I don't remember it in that context. I suspect there were people who, I can visualize some elements of the labour movement taking that view and some elements of the Cabinet taking that view. I didn't see it as connected at all. I think it was, in retrospect and in fairness, I think it was an honest attempt by Bill King to enable those workers who, in good faith, had joined a union and tried to negotiate a collective agreement and failed to get the employer to the table and the strike continued. It was an effort, in good faith, to enable them to get a collective agreement. And the labour movement didn't buy it. But I think I think it was simply good faith on Bill's part and the timing was wrong. It was a simple as that.

JDH [00:59:16] How, just on the labour code, how significant was this new labour code, not only for B.C., but for the country? I mean was it--were we catching up with the rest of the country? Or, you know, do you have any perspective now looking back on that first labour code for British Columbia? How significant was that?

CG [00:59:35] I think it was hugely significant. We went from having the worst labour structure, labour relations structure, in the country. The mediation commission and the imposition of agreements in favour of the employer, and every decision, everything was always in favour of the employer. We went from that, and the rest of country wasn't that bad, but it was not very good. There were some elements or some legislation in 1948 in Ontario, which was a good step forward, but there were, for the most part, the B.C. Labour Code in '73 was a significant advance on any labour legislation anywhere in the country. And Paul Weiler I think is an historical figure as a result of that. And Jim Matkin, who at the time was the deputy minister, was supportive and Bill who understood the issues really well and could debate them pretty effectively. I think the three of them were the--and with Paul as the intellectual leader of it all--had developed what has been a model piece of legislation for the country, and in fact for the world really in many ways in terms of its principles.

JDH [01:00:57] As an MLA in that time did you stay connected to the B.C. Federation of Labour?

CG [01:01:03] Of course. Clive was my very good friend, Clive Lytle, and I would see a lot of them socially. I had a house in Deep Cove, which was the location of many a party to which many labour leaders were present. So we had lots of social time. I used to, I didn't make any bones about it, I used to find out what the Fed perspective was on particular issues and then make a decision as to whether or not I would articulate that or not. Sometimes I chose not to. Sometimes John Squire became mad as hell at me because I was being co-opted, he thought, by the government. I had other views, but there was a lot of back and forth. Clive helped with a number of speeches. I remember another ex-Fed staffer was in the House and part way through the term became a cabinet member, Phyllis Young. She was a former CALFA business agent, flight attendants, who worked at the Fed between '70-'72 as well, and she got elected in '72 but she went her own way and didn't have any continuing relationship with the... Is it fair to say it this way--I don't think she had very much, at least connection with the labour movement, certainly not with the Fed anyway. But so, there was that kind of tension between her and I in the caucus. It became awkward at times. You know, Fed colleagues not agreeing with each other in caucus. Yes, it gets tense sometimes but it goes to your question.

RJ [01:03:03] I was going to say we could talk all afternoon about all the many things that that government did that made a difference in people's lives. And there have been books written about that actually.

CG [01:03:16] Yes, a very good one, a very good one recently too.

RJ [01:03:19] I wonder was there anything in particular that stood out for you that you were really proud to be part of our government accomplishing?

CG [01:03:29] Oh, I think the farmland issue. I grew up in an orchard in the Okanagan and I understood the pressures on farmland. And, for me, even though that wasn't a labour issue per se, indirectly perhaps but not directly, for me that was the single biggest achievement of the government of the day. And still, I mean it's been eroded and lost a lot of ground literally, but it's still the single big, for me, the single biggest achievement of that government.

RJ [01:04:06] OK. Three years and three months into the term, there were a number of labour disputes happening.

CG [01:04:16] Bill 146.

RJ [01:04:17] And Bill146 was introduced by the government. Tell us about that.

CG [01:04:23] That was the worst mistake the government ever made in my view. They thought it would be a key to winning re-election. And I didn't think so. But more importantly it was a mistake because it was wrong. Rod Mickleburgh and I have this debate every time we see each other because he thinks it was the right and I think it was wrong. There were a number of disputes around the province. There were pulp disputes, there were food industry disputes, there were health care industry disputes. There was a little dispute in Nanaimo, which led to the Teamsters who weren't in the Fed at the time or the Congress, preventing heat from being supplied to a nursing home. That was the only one of those disputes that you could arguably say deserved government intervention. It was against the Teamsters. Ed Lawson was the head of the Teamsters and he and Barrett, Barrett phoned and said I'm going

to legislate you back to work. And Ed gave him a wink and nod and that could have helped him out with his members. But then they, the devil got hold of them, Barrett and the Cabinet and they suddenly said wait a minute why are we just legislating the Teamsters back to work in Nanaimo. We could get the pulp workers back, the food industry workers back, and there's other health care. And there were a whole variety of disputes, it was a big time of tension and industrial relations in the province. So they wrapped everybody into this piece of legislation that sent everybody back to work. And it was, there were a couple of disputes that were within hours of being settled, particularly on the pulp side. And I talked to a lot of the leadership of the various unions involved at the time before deciding what I would do in the house. It was, I am absolutely convinced, it was wrong in principle, was wrong morally, it was wrong practically, and it was wrong politically. And I haven't on that view, unlike others, I haven't changed my mind one iota since then. It was a bad decision and it cost us. It cost us, it didn't cost us the election, other, the election probably would have been lost anyway. But it just, it meant a lot of labour stayed home and made a lot of campaigns were weakened as a result of the tension and the lack of commitment on the part of trade unionists to work the '75 campaign. And that hurt, a (unclear) but I was, if there is one thing I have thought a lot about over the intervening years, and it's thirty-six years ago or whatever now, I can't do the quick arithmetic. It is, that my view of the day was right and I still believe it intensely today. I just think that was a terrible decision.

JDH [01:07:35] So you were opposed at the time?

CG [01:07:37] Yeah.

JDH [01:07:38] So how did that play out actually within the party and within the caucus? I mean was there any, you know, how did it play out?

CG [01:07:47] Well first of all I wasn't alone in the caucus on this issue. Harold Steves and Rosemary Brown supported me. Nobody else came close to support for that position. So the position which I had articulated at the caucus, they supported that. I don't mean to take leadership on it but in effect Rosemary took leadership on women's issues, Harold took leadership on farming and land use issues, and I took it on labour issues and the three of us worked well together. So they bought in and the three of us did our thing. The party was supportive nonetheless of the three of us by and large, always there, my government right or wrong. There's always that element in the party and there's too much of it sometimes. But the party and the labour movement certainly were very clear that this was wrong. It wasn't dissenting, it wasn't the use of the government force to send workers back to work. I voted the year before to send firefighters back to work in Richmond and I would have voted to send to the Teamsters in Nanaimo back to work, but as I said, not the whole shot. What it did to the party was in many ways to was to demoralize it going into a campaign, you know weeks later.

JDH [01:09:21] You said a few minutes ago that we might have lost anyway, or the NDP may have lost the government anyway. Do you want to expand on that?

CG [01:09:30] Well if it was determined to call the election after three years and three months, we would have lost anyway because we hadn't done very much to develop support for what we were doing. And I think if we'd been given another year and a bit, gone say four and a half years, there might have been a much better chance, if in fact there had been a deliberate decision in government to present the what we had done and to package it and to sell it, but

to their credit in one way and to their discredit in another, cabinet was only intent on governing. They weren't much intent on persuading the public to come with them and that was, that goes back to that famous line in the first opening cabinet or caucus meeting I can't remember what it was, but that famous line are we here for a good time or are we here for a long time? And (unclear) were here for a good time.

JDH [01:10:30] Which meant?

CG [01:10:32] It meant you govern but you don't bring the public with you and you get one term. And I was always on the other term. I was always, one of the other things that was said frequently in those days, was that Barrett will get us elected but Berger will keep us elected. You know back in the old Berger-Barrett days. So it was that dichotomy, and people will argue and you can make an argument, people argue that, because they did that they did some pretty amazing things. Some very amazing things and Ron alluded to some of them earlier in terms of the massive accomplishments of the government. And that was because they were focused on doing and not bringing the public with them. I think they could have won the election if they found a way of bringing the public along. But they needed more time. Three years wasn't enough.

JDH [01:11:26] So if someone's watching this last question maybe on this section, what lessons would you say that future people should learn looking back?

CG [01:11:38] Keep the party with you. If you need to do things that the party doesn't like, make sure you take them through it step by step. And even at the end of the day they can't go with you, they'll respect you for it. So that's number one. Keep the party with you. Govern judiciously. Don't be afraid of being radical, but be judicious. Just be careful. Don't, you know, take an extra month or two if you need rather than being precipitous. And, most importantly don't leave the public behind. Keep the public with you. Off the top of my head, those are lessons I would draw.

JDH [01:12:22] That's great. I'm wondering if we should take a break right now Colin. That sounds like a really good place to have a little coffee. OK. Colin unfortunately the government was defeated in 1975 but I understand you went back to the B.C. Federation of Labour. What was your role at this time? And can you tell us about your work at the Fed at this time? I think you were political action or education director.

CG [01:12:47] That's right. Yes. It was more direct political because I think Len Guy was secretary-treasurer at the time. He recognized that we needed to do a lot of political education. I think he saw it as educating the party about labour. But I saw it as finding, you know, finding your way back into government so enlisting the labour movement. So, I did a lot of, continued on the affiliation issue, a lot of labour education. And I did a lot of representing the labour movement in the party councils both federally and provincially. It was, but it became stressful. A bit of Gomperism began to develop in the Fed. And it was, I found it increasingly uncomfortable and finally after a couple of years, just over two years, I decided it was time to go look to do something else.

JDH [01:13:56] Before we leave the Federation, you said you were doing political education, political action, for people who aren't familiar with what that would have meant, what does that actually mean at that time within a union in terms of political education?

CG [01:14:11] Well it was trying to defend labour, trying to persuade working people who've got so much to do with their family and their work and they don't have time to think about labour issues, to get them to think about their roles and responsibilities as an organized worker in respect of people who aren't organized, people who maybe are organized but are in weak situations and not getting the kind of recompense they should, or the job protection they should or the safety conditions that they deserve, to get them to understand that the resolution of those issues was in government not in the labour hall. You could do a lot of stuff in the labour hall, but in the final analysis it can all be undone by government and you have to understand that you've got to have government on your side on these kinds of issues because its the legislation and the administration of the government that matters in the end. And so we tried to convey that argument in local union hall after local union hall for quite a while.

JDH [01:15:22] Were there things like schools or was that a mechanism?

CG [01:15:28] Yeah, of course, the CLC did the Winter School, which we were always part of. I didn't play a particularly major role in that. That was a Congress thing and I wasn't very good at that kind of formal thing anyway. I'd much prefer the getting into a room with a bunch of guys who were on a local executive and just shooting the breeze really and talking, trying to give them an argument that they could use effectively with their--because I wasn't going to be to meet all of their members, but they could. And so what they needed to do is to have the argument. They often understood, didn't have to persuade them of the principle, but they had to give them the tools to help them sell the notion that government was critical.

RJ [01:16:19] I remember one conference I think you quoted on in Parksville where Mike Liebowitz came to talk about Marxism and there were people talking about liberal democracy and social democracy and trying to get a bit more of an understanding from politics. Was that part of it as well, or was that a minor.

CG [01:16:43] I don't remember that as a central, I mean I think that was sort of the fun side of what we were doing. You had to cater is the wrong word because it doesn't leave the right impression, but you had to respond to those people who wanted a deeper analysis and wanted a deeper philosophical attachment to politics. So you had to think about the historical stuff whether there was Marxism or whether it was the various philosophers or whatever. I was not very good at that because I wasn't academically inclined. But you had to respond to it. And so we would put those kind of events, conferences on occasionally. And I must say I don't have a clear recollection of that weekend.

JDH [01:17:33] After a while you sought the nomination again for the NDP and I understand that was federal?

CG [01:17:39] Yes. North Vancouver-Burnaby.

JDH [01:17:43] How did that come about?

CG [01:17:46] I'd left the Fed. Robin Sears hired me to work for the federal party in advance of the '88--I'll get my dates right here--the '78, there were two federal elections, '78, '79. The '78 federal election and then I ran Mercia Stickney's campaign in Richmond and in the...I'm

trying to remember... I've lost the sequence here. In any event, it was at the same time there was a nomination to be held in North Vancouver-Burnaby. They were contiguous events, I think, with the federal party. Anyway, and a number of people there said, I was still living in Deep Cove, living in the riding. A number of people said you should run. And of course I thought back to my days in Parliament Hill, I thought, well, this really is what I should do. And so I, Dale Babish who became Dale Clark, was one of my key workers and we organized and a lot of other people, especially the old Seymour crowd, we organized a campaign and we held an event to raise--I'll come back to that in a minute.

CG [01:19:16] During the course of this, we had the nomination convention. Grant Notley spoke and a young 13-year-old named Rachel Notley came along and was at the nomination meeting. And it was fine and we continued to campaign, got the first leaflet out, and whatever. And then there was a redistribution of provincial seats, at the same time. And, where it had been two NDP seats in Northern Vancouver Island it became three. And the mayor of Campbell River who was in the third seat was Tom Barnett a former MP, NDP MP, and he and a number of people--and this goes back to Bill 146. A lot of people from the pulp unions came to see me to say you should run up here. So, a whole bunch people, young activists, the mayor, the pulp unions, Art Gruntman, and the PPWC guys too, were all saying you should run, so I did. Gave up the nomination in Burnaby, North Van-Burnaby. We had, I wanted to tell this story. It's not much to do with labour but it's historical and interesting given that we had a $10,000 debt, had to raise some money to pay the debt. So, I went to two people to get them to help us do a fundraiser. One was David Suzuki, who I knew fairly well at the time, and the other was Susan Jacks, the singer, Susan Pesklevits, whose mother was very active in New Westminster and whose brother was a good friend mine, Rick Pesklevits a good friend of mine. So anyway, Susan and Seasons in the Sun, had been a big hit. Anyway, Susan and Suzuki came and headlined the evening. We raised $10,000 to pay off the debt, which enabled me to feel free about leaving the federal nomination and going off to run in North Island. There was a lot of cynicism around that in terms of people's attitude toward me and I must say I felt pretty torn and you know what kind of opportunistic person am I? And it was, it was pure opportunism and I, today, don't regret a moment of it, but the labour movement here again played a significant role because the position I had taken on Bill 146 resonated with the labour movement. North Island was a labour riding if ever there was one. There were three pulp and paper mills. There were more than 10,000 IWA members in the riding, in and around the riding alone, and the Fishermens' Union and a couple of mining unions and they were all really quite supportive. So it became a natural and it worked out very well. So that's a bit of a digression. But there is a labour connection I tell you because they were the key people in my campaign.

JDH [01:22:24] And you stayed there for years.

CG [01:22:26] Still there.

JDH [01:22:27] Yeah that's right. You're still there. But you were elected for such a long time.

CG [01:22:31] 17 years up there.

JDH [01:22:33] 17 years in North Island.

CG [01:22:34] Plus the three years in North Vancouver.

JDH [01:22:38] Right, right.

JDH [01:22:38] OK. So then that was 1979 you were elected, right, in 1979? But then we were still in opposition for many years.

CG [01:22:50] We almost won that election. You know we came within three or four thousand targeted votes of winning the election. We lost by five seats, 31-26 in terms of seats. There was only about four or five thousand, somewhere in that number, if the votes had switched in the right ridings we would have won the election with Barrett in '79, it was a very close election.

RJ [01:23:16] What kind of issues, public issues or issues that related to working people, would you say were at play there that would bring the NDP back that fast?'

CG [01:23:28] Oh I think four years of Bill Bennett, very right-wing. It wasn't as bad as it got the next term. But it was it was scary and people could, I think, people could see that these guys re-elected would be bad news, the Bill Bennett government. And again, it was, governments are thrown out, not elected. That's a recurring theme I think in politics. And there were, there was a number of people who were prepared to let bygones be bygones in terms of the internal stuff in the party and the labour movement in order to get make sure that Bill Bennett was defeated and they all came very close to doing that.

JDH [01:24:14] So you were then under Barrett and then there was Bob Skelly as well. But throughout this whole period it was in opposition. I think you were Labour critic for some of these years.

CG [01:24:24] Most of the years between '79 and '91. I would say probably of those twelve years I was probably labour critic for ten, nine or ten.

JDH [01:24:39] So how was that and what were the particular bills or debates or fights that you recall during this time?

CG [01:24:47] Well, the first big public issue was the Solidarity campaign when we had that legislated assault on not just workers' rights, but the human rights, and every, all kinds of ... The right of the contract to be honoured. So that was the big issue in '83, the Solidarity campaign against a terribly, terribly right-wing assault by Bennett, which ended in an unceremonious compromise. People had been criticized for buckling. And there's been criticism of Jack Munro for that and I don't share that because I think that he was in a unique position to be able to put an end to what was going to be a losing battle on the trade union movement. And, you know, so I think that it had a sour effect on a lot of people and people became cynical of politics and cynical about labour leaders as a result of that whole process. But I didn't. I thought that the resolution was...something had to happen and it was inevitable. And Jack played the role, he became the scapegoat. I never felt good about that because I think he took an unfair beating. So then I guess the next, lots and lots of things happened in those, in the '80s, but Bill Vander Zalm's election in '86 and introduction of Bill 19 the labour code, which was written by some of the most right-wing lawyers in Vancouver, Don Jordan and others. I've talked, I mean I can say his name because I had this discussion personally with him and some of his colleagues. And so the labour legislation was worse than the old

mediation commission of the '60s. And so we had a fabulous debate in the house and in that debate, and again, labour was really good. The CCU, the Canadian Council of Unions, are obviously not any part of the Fed and the Operating Engineers leant their lawyers to come to Victoria and help me with the day-to-day committee stage debate, which Stan Lanyon and, oh God, getting old is a real problem because sometimes you forget names, I've just forgotten.

JDH [01:27:35] Greg Mullaly?

CG [01:27:36] Greg Mullaly. Yes. Thank you, Johanna. Greg, please forgive me. They came and did a fabulous job in terms of helping me just deal with the clause-by-clause of that. We had a six-week debate, which Vaughan Palmer said about, that it's the only debate he's ever heard in the house that constantly changed his opinion on that issue. So, that was a watershed.

JDH [01:28:04] That must have been an exhausting process.

CG [01:28:07] It was. At the end of the day at the Fed convention that fall they made me an honorary member of the Executive Council for life. So, I'm still on the Executive Council of the Fed, honorary position. Haven't needed to lead, but I don't think anybody at the Fed Council today knows this.

RJ [01:28:24] You can send them a letter saying I'm coming to your next...

RJ [01:28:28] I wanted to ask you just your perspective on Operation Solidarity, not the way it comes back to the [unclear]. You know I heard that.

CG [01:28:37] Debate

RJ [01:28:39] Debate and how that issue played out. But it was a big change for the labour movement to suddenly take something on like that and really reach out and organize with various different community groups, activist groups. What's your perspective on that? Was it a good idea? Was it a success? Or, in fact was it kind of doomed to failure from the start because it really wasn't using the power of unions to push union issues?

CG [01:29:10] I think those kinds of pushbacks in our society are almost always doomed for failure at one level in the sense that you don't accomplish all your goals in the short term. You do it in the long term. I think they did in the long term, but in the short term, it's quote "a failure". But what, the single best thing for me was the coalition building between labour and social community groups. I mean there you had Art Kube and David Vickers on the platform at Empire Stadium together. David in a sense representing the disabled community and Art the labour movement and others, of course, but that was for me the symbolic demonstration of that coalition building. That, I think, has been a good thing. There's less of it going on now, but it I think could be more easily rebuilt if it needed to, to fight any particular issue in the current climate. So, I don't know if that answers it, but it was a good thing and in the long term the battle has been won.

JDH [01:30:30] Can you also expand, you were in the house in this whole period of the Solidarity process. How was that, how did it feel being from the caucus, or what was the

impact of Solidarity as a member of caucus? I mean how did it affect things in the house? Did it affect the caucus?

CG [01:30:49] Well, it gave us an opportunity to have a bigger head of steam on the debate over the bills. We remember too what happens is you're really isolated when you're in Victoria. Nobody knows you're there and you don't know what's going on elsewhere. I mean it's a funny kind of isolation that you get into. So, in a sense the storm was happening around us, but we were in the eye of that storm in many ways. But it gave us strength. It gave us courage to debate the bills. We would have anyway, but I think it just was more backbone as a result of the community that we knew we had the community with us on the issue, on the issues, there were many.

BG [01:31:41] Were you in legislature the night that Barrett was forcibly ejected?

CG [01:31:44] Yes, I was. And, in fact, we were, we had to rotate, the house was sitting 24-hours a day so we had a rotation system. We had three, we divided the caucus into three groups and I was in the same group as Dave. We were doing the night shift that night and he turned to me at one point I'm sitting beside him. He turned to me and he said I think the next step is they are going throw me out. What should I do? What do you want to do? He said, well I can't stand this, I've got to do something. I said well then just follow your heart. And minutes later they pulled him out, literally dragged him, you know, while these poor sergeant-at-arms had to do it. But he didn't resist much. He just sort of let himself be dragged out of the house. It was a, I get chills now when I think about it because it was a pretty significant moment in the history of that legislature. The car dealer who was in the chair of the house that night was just terrible and anyway. They should, the government was stupid to let it happen because it did seem a little bit like Barrett in the 69-72 parliament when he stood up in favour of that woman in Penticton who had been badly treated by her car insurance company, I think it was and he asked the same question 77 times or something, I forget. There are moments when you can make an impact that will last forever and being dragged out, that night was one of those moments. I still get chills when I think about it.

JDH [01:33:35] OK we're going to whizz ahead now and (unclear) when the NDP was working hard again to get elected and this time to get elected under, with Mike Harcourt as leader. You were also elected. Tell us about this election, reflections you have on why the NDP was successful this time around.

CG [01:34:03] Again, governments are not elected, they're thrown out. And the Socreds were thrown out. They made, you think Donald Trump is bad? That government was similar in many ways to what we're seeing in the States today. It's, and Mike was not threatening. Mike was calm and people were comfortable with him so they had no problem voting for the NDP in that campaign. Plus we had a split, which we always seem to need when we get elected. We had a split between several parties against us. And we had a good campaign for the most part, a good platform. We had a series of regional platforms that were, the Vancouver Island one worked beautifully. And we just [unclear]. Mike ran a good campaign. Nothing particularly went wrong. We had an opposition in disarray. Their only moment of glory was when Gordon Wilson scored a point in a debate but it was a theatrical debate and not a solid political one, the victory. So, all in all, it was a good campaign and it wasn't--it had a sense of inevitability about it. Most of us who were candidates could tell ourselves that we were going to win this campaign.

RJ [01:35:33] From your riding in North Island, tell me about that campaign and the previous ones leading up to it. Was labour particularly involved? What role did the trade union movement play?

CG [01:35:47] I'm glad you asked, you added in that question and previous ones because I wanna go back to '86. '86 was when Vander Zalm was first running. He was charismatic and he was winning over a lot of workers. The only time I ran in North Island where we were afraid we might not win was in '86. Jack Munro who was leader of the IWA at the time made a speech in New Westminster three weeks into that four-week campaign and we were, Robin and I, my wife and I were in Port Alice knocking on doors and it was mostly, we were in the IWA camp. There's a camp there and the pulp mill there and people were listening to the radio reports of Jack Munro's speech. And we were in the IWA mess in the place where the guys ate dinner. And he turned them all around. We couldn't turn them around. They thought Vander Zalm was wonderful. Jack turned them around. And from that night on in the remaining week or 10 days and I forgot exactly what it was, all of our encounters with IWA members were positive as a result of Jack Munro. So we won that riding in '86 because of Jack Munro. And that's one of my most vivid memories. Jack and I always had a very interesting relationship and it started back in Nelson when he was in the local up there and I was an organizer. That's another story. Anyway, so that was a really important element. '91 less so. '91, the labour movement was on board. We had to, you know, we had to mobilize and motivate them. But there was no difficulty with getting labour support in the '91 campaign as I recall in North Island.

JDH [01:37:48] OK, so now we were government and I think things are different for you. You were included in the cabinet. You were asked by Mike Harcourt to be attorney-general is that right? And this was your first opportunity to be a member of Cabinet. You're not a lawyer by training. What insight can you give on why Mike Harcourt asked you to take on this role?

CG [01:38:15] He asked me in the summer--he didn't ask me he told me--in the summer before we were in Kimberley at that caucus thing. So the election was in the fall. We were up there. It was in July. And he said to me, he was standing on the balcony at the golf course that we were having a social event, and he said, I want you to keep it yourself but I want you to be attorney-general. And will we win. And I don't know how many other people he went to ahead of time. I've always wondered about why he did that. I take it back to the labour bill to the Bill 19 debate. I think he liked the way I handled that debate fight. That's my sense. I never talked to Mike about why he did it. He also, I think because he was a lawyer, he recognized that it might be good if the Ministry, the attorney-general's ministry, had a bit of a shake-up in terms of not just having some insider who's just going to be part of the old boys' network and that I would bring a freshness to it. The legal community was split right down the middle. Half of them thought it was great and half of them thought it was the stupidest idea on the face of the earth. But I survived for four years or so and it was the best, my best four years in politics and in my political or in my work-related life was the [unclear] four years as AG.

JDH [01:39:52] And what in your background in the labour movement do you think helped you in taking on that role?

CG [01:39:59] I spent a lot of time analyzing and dissecting and talking about legislation. So I think I understood how legislation, how it was, technically how it worked and how the whole system worked and that goes back right to 1970 when I first started at the Fed. So I think that was, helped me have a head start and then the years in the House of course you are always debating bills. And I think that I was head of the legislation committee for the Cabinet so I had to deal with every bill that any minister brought. And, so it was, I think that experience was pretty crucial.

RJ [01:40:46] What would you say were the things that you enjoyed most or that stand out for you as the accomplishments in your time as attorney-general?

CG [01:40:55] Well there were many. I think, and many of my colleagues will scream at this, but I think freedom of information, protection of privacy was for me the single biggest achievement. It was not popular and I'm not telling any secrets out of Cabinet when I say this. It was not a popular thing to do but fortunately everybody was so busy with their own ministries that they didn't have time to take me on that one even though they would have liked to scuttle that particular initiative. But with help from Barry Jones, MLA for Burnaby North, David Schreck who was in Lonsdale and others, but those two in particular, we managed to have good caucus support for doing it. And I think, in the history of the province, that is one of the more significant [unclear]. Incidentally on that, it's interesting to note that my executive assistant, my administrative assistant at the time was Michael McEvoy. He was a Vancouver lawyer and came over to Victoria to work for me and was quite closely involved in development of the freedom of information and protection of privacy. A couple of weeks ago, he was appointed the new commissioner for the Privacy Commissioner in B.C. and has been for the last six months dealing with the Facebook and related issues in the UK working with Elizabeth Denham. So that's not a part of labour history either but it's all a piece, and it's all interesting because the whole question of privacy is a massive public policy issue facing us now and most people don't get it.

JDH [01:42:46] And what was it at that time Colin that made you so aware--if I can put it that way--of how important privacy and freedom of information was, what generated that awareness or interest?

CG [01:43:01] I think it is right from childhood. I always believed that, and I think this comes from, a little bit from my stepfather and his view of what happened in Germany in the '20s and then the '30s. That governments, as important as they are, do not own the information that they have. They are custodians of public information and if they are only the custodians and not the owners they can't decide to keep it to themselves. And I believe that from the beginning of my memory and it carried through until, fortunately, I had an opportunity to put that into play with the freedom of information side of it. The privacy side was never as big, it wasn't as big in those days. It has since become probably as big or bigger in many ways. But in those days it was the freedom of information. I honestly did believe and still believe that the, there were times when government has to keep something to itself for a period of time. And I accept that and the legislation reflects that. But for the most part the government, you shouldn't have freedom of information request to get information from the government. The government should put it out them into the public to begin with. And I can never win that argument. But we managed to get most of it into the legislation and I'm forever grateful for people like Barry Jones and David Schreck for helping me do that.

JDH [01:44:35] Recently I read that British Columbia I think may be one of the only jurisdictions which has applied its freedom of information and privacy legislation also to political parties. Was that already in that time?

CG [01:44:49] No it wasn't. There were a lot of exceptions and exemptions and too many in my view. But we had to, you know, the art of the compromise. You have to go with some things and not with others. They should be. Political parties are public institutions. They are part of the democratic process. They are part of the governing process, very much, and they should be subject to appropriate provisions with respect to those private. And privacy is a new big issue for political parties. So what Michael McEvoy has been working on England before this whole thing with Facebook blew up, the whole issue of how much information do parties have about individuals and I know how, that the extent of the information is absolutely wrong and inappropriate and needs to be curtailed. But the public is too often not caring about their own privacy. They don't seem to think it's important but they should all go back and read 1984 again and a little bit of George Orwell will do us all good right now.

RJ [01:45:59] A couple of issues to talk about from that Harcourt government when you were the AG. A big one was labour and environmental movement clashing over Clayoquot Sound on these issues at the time. Now you're sort of the labour, I don't know if there were other real labour people in caucus or government at the time. You certainly have that background. How did you see that unfolding, the conflict or the push between jobs versus the environment in the Harcourt government?

CG [01:46:35] That was, in many ways the whole debate over Clayoquot Sound was the most difficult issue that we faced. A lot of us, it wasn't just the ones who were had a bit of a labour background. But a lot of the caucus members were really uncomfortable about the environmental position at the time because they saw it as job destroying, community destroying, and saw it almost as an insidious foreign--I don't mean foreign in terms of nationality--but an invasion of the normalcy of community where people get up and go to work every day and many of them in the forest industry and all that was going to come to an end and then [unclear]. My own view was as a cabinet member was curtailed by the fact I was AG and there was inevitably going to be court injunctions and there was going to be, if there were going to be issues where I had to be more neutral. So I stayed out of the debate particularly. My sentiments were that there had to be compromise, that there had to be some give and take on both sides, and, as it turned out there was and we got a relatively good outcome. And I think in that particular debate the Forest Practices Code was a good example of the kind of good that came in protection of much of Clayoquot Sound, not all. And then the developing of that time, of our relationship with First Nations, which was a big part of what happened there. And then the realization on the part of some of the environmental community that First Nations weren't going to be on their side all the time. And that, so there are a lot of things going around. But that was a tough one. And we are, the mantra of the party is jobs and environment shouldn't be opposed to each other. But inevitably there is going to be some tension between the two. The advocates for both sides--trade unions who represent workers in industrial fields are always going to be protective of their members and they have a responsibility and an obligation to be protective of their members. And the environmental community is going to be, you know, black and white about a lot of these things. But, by way of bringing together, the role of government is to help bring those things together.

RJ [01:49:06] Some people might say that the ending of the war in the woods, if we can say that it's ended, what was really one of the biggest accomplishments of the Harcourt government, yet it didn't seem to get a lot of pull politically from that. It seems like neither side was one hundred, was really totally happy. So what's your comment on that?

CG [01:49:29] Neither side was happy. The IWA at the time was pissed off because they were losing jobs, good jobs, good paying jobs in the communities in which they worked and lived and sent their kids to school felt the same way. The environmentalists thought that the loggers got too much. And so everybody was against what we did. And the community out there who weren't particularly involved in it were sort of dazed by this conflict going on around them and just kept quiet. And we suffered all the political negatives as a government from that. Managed I think over time to get through it and there was enough time before the next election and then, of course, whether Mike could have survived it if he'd been leading us in the '96 campaign, I don't know. But I think he could have. That's we'll never know.

JDH [01:50:28] I want to ask a little bit about Aboriginal issues, which did become more and more a focus of the Harcourt government, the NDP government, and you in Cabinet as well. What actions in terms of Aboriginal issues to you were important at that time and did you have any particular role?

CG [01:50:52] Well [unclear]. I mean, the B.C. Treaty Commission had been established by Jack Weisgerber in the last days of the Rita Johnston government. So, we inherited that. We beefed it up, we strengthened it. I was a player in that because I was on the cabinet committee, the Aboriginal Affairs cabinet committee, together with four or five others. And so we played a fairly significant role in trying to provide the support network for a process that would lead to resolution of the so-called land claims debate, the treaty making. At the same time on another table, once the Nisga'a, because they were part of that process and those negotiations, so I was again on the cabinet committee that gave the mandate almost, not daily but certainly weekly basis to our negotiators and varied the mandate when that was necessary as a result of things that happened at the negotiating table and that continued right through the entire time I was AG and so that was pretty significant. But the most important thing, another all important, but for me personally the most important thing was the Delgamuukw case and I want to take a minute on this because I think it's the most, one of the most significant things that happened during my time as AG. We inherited a government defending in the appeal court a decision by Allan McEachern in the Trial Division, the Trial Court, on the Delgamuukw decision and where he talked about Indians as being savages and that oral history is not real history and on and on and on and denied essentially any rights that the Gitxsan Wet'suwet'en people had to their territory. So when I was faced with being the person who was in charge of the government position on the appeal and the position was to defend everything McEachern said and the advice from my deputy and the advice from virtually everybody in the legal services part of the ministry was to defend. You've got an obligation to defend the court and I said I can't. I don't think, I just can't do it. And then finally I said to the assistant deputy in charge of legal services, I want you to bring the two people who are your best people to argue either side of that argument and come in and I want to listen to the debate. So two people, one who is a provincial court judge today so I won't name her but the other was Joe Arvay was a pretty well-known lawyer in this country. They were both working for me at the time. They came in and they had a debate in front of us. It's the only way I could see through and, at the end of it, Joe Arvay won the debate hands down and on top of that he was supporting exactly the position I wanted to take. And so, I said fine, OK.

Good. I'm going to go away I'm going to think about it. And a few mornings later Robin and I were playing golf in the little golf course behind us and on the eighth hole I said to Robin I'm going with Arvay and we're gonna change our position. And we did. And I went over to phone Brian Williams who was a, we needed, I needed somebody who had some credibility in the broader legal community and Brian Williams was a prominent capital L liberal lawyer and good on Aboriginal issues. I phoned Brian and said will you handle this for us and he said I'm going off for a month sailing trip in the Caribbean so I don't think I can. I said I'm coming over tomorrow morning to see you and I want to talk to you about it and I'm gonna bring my deputy. My deputy missed the plane if you can believe it. And so Michael McEvoy and I went over. We talked to Brian and a few hours later Brian agreed to take the case and then Joe Arvay and Andrew Petter played a big role and a number of other lawyers in the ministry and private practice played a good role and we fashioned a new position that led to, finally to the Supreme Court of Canada in Delgamuukw establishing rights for First Nations, which in terms of their territories and much more, which had led to the successive decisions that have been all to the benefit of Canada, not just the First Nations but benefit Canadians. That was pretty significant.

JDH [01:55:59] It's a courageous and very significant

CG [01:56:03] Joe Arvay to this day talks about how that was the most courageous thing he's ever seen a politician do so.

JDH [01:56:10] And you clearly also had the cabinet behind you.

CG [01:56:15] I had Mike behind me on this issue. Mike Harcourt was super on the issue and if anybody wanted to take a different position they didn't dare. We had the cabinet. We had, I mean the McEachern decision was just an appalling bit of work and so in that sense and how we solved the problem of the AG has to support the court is we appointed an amicus curiae to, a friend of the court, a legal firm to defend the decision. We paid for it, but we didn't direct it. They could do whatever they wanted and the appeal court [unclear] with us and I've said this before a camera.

JDH [01:57:01] Right.

CG [01:57:03] Sorry to take—

JDH [01:57:05] No no no, this is significant.

CG [01:57:06] I think its the most significant thing I've ever done in politics. I said earlier about the freedom of information that was a legislative initiative. This was a risk. This was playing defense and that was playing offence.

JDH [01:57:23] Are there any other reflections, Colin, over that time whether it's from working people or others from that time, that period of time in government that we haven't touched on that you wanted to mention.

CG [01:57:34] Oh gosh yes. It, one of the, I can't talk about cabinet and caucus secrets. But there was a very, very interesting process that developed in terms of the labour code changes in the like that Moe Sihota was in charge when he was Minister of Labour in the Harcourt

government. And we had to do without Moe because Moe was off the Constitution talks in Ottawa during a lot of this time. So, I was the one who was expected to understand the nuances of the labour issues. So we ended up with four issues that were divisive and we had to... So we finally agreed in this process of trying to sort out how we were going to frame the legislation. We finally agreed that we would adopt two of them and we would reject two. That was the kind of thing. So, I'll never ever forget the caucus discussion. Moe was in Ottawa. And the caucus discussed which of the two were the most important and which of the two were important but could be discarded. I'm not going to talk about the particular issues and what they were because that's not appropriate, but it was, that was a fun, fun debate because it was, it engaged the full caucus on the intent, on the intensity on significant labour, the four most significant issues facing the decision makers on the framing of the code. So, that was a lot of fun. There were so, that was a good government. I don't know whether the public understands the only time we've had a government as good as the one we've got right now. Horgan is doing a major massively good job as Premier and I think Mike did as well. And he had, he had a number of albatrosses to carry, unfortunately, that couldn't survive but it's a real shame to have him retire as early as he did. He was a good guy and good premier. He gave those of us who he trusted he gave us our heads. And it was a wonderful opportunity.

RJ [02:00:15] Looking from where you sit right now, what do you think are the challenges for the union movement going forward? We've got a government, we've got issues. How do you see it?.

CG [02:00:29] Well, the eight-hour day as it rears its ugly head. Well, I mean that symbolizes for me the real challenge we have with this new economy that's developing where people thinking working 24 hours in a row behind a monitor is a good thing. And I don't know how we get labour standards back on track. I don't know how we get an understanding that families and community are more important than jobs. Jobs are central to supporting those families. But you've got too many people in the labour economy now who are so focused on their jobs that they're excluding everything else so that from a worker's point of view we are heading down a terrible road. Unionization is down and getting lower. And I see we're into this so-called post-industrial economy. You know the public sector unions become the dominant ones and there's no problem with that but it means that the people who are working in the private sector, especially in the tech sector, are being manipulated and are not being provided with, except at the top end, are not being provided with the kind of income that helps support families and helps support communities. And I don't see the problem being even addressed. It's a huge one. I have to say it may be a little less labour but in the final analysis it is a labour privacy issue. That's for me, for me those are two of the many big problems that the world is facing, Donald Trump being another.

JDH [02:02:17] That leads into what would your advice be to union activists these days with regard to political education or political action?

CG [02:02:28] I think the labour movement has done a pretty good job of this but I think they need to step up getting their members to recognize the essential role of government in their lives. That not only their protections, their health and safety, their wages, their job security, all depend on unions number one, but depend on government legislation number two, and they go hand-in-hand. And I think unions have to get a bigger and better--I'm not criticizing when I say this. We can always do a better job. I think a better job needs to be done on that front.

JDH [02:03:08] So is there anything else you'd like to say about your experience in the labour movement and NDP in politics?

CG [02:03:13] Oh it's been a wonderful, wonderful time. I don't intend to bow out of life yet but if I had to I'd say it's been a fabulous life because I've worked with some incredibly, incredibly good people and met and made friends with many of them including (unclear) I have to say but Ray Haynes, if I had gone through life not knowing Ray Haynes I think my life would have been much much poorer. He's one of the most fascinating and under-estimated people that this province was ever produced. And I got to know him well because of the labour movement.

JDH [02:03:57] Right, right right. Well Colin, I want to say thank you very much for your interview. It's been covered a lot of ground and we could add many more hours and we might in the future. Thank you very much.

CG [02:04:09] Lots of stuff we skipped over and some we missed altogether.

JDH [02:04:15] Correct. Tell us about that time when you were an organizer for the NDP and what that meant in terms of who you got to meet and what you did?

CG [02:04:23] Yeah well I had the fortune of being able to travel all over the province and meet some very interesting people. I got to know Jack Munro in Nelson when he was head of the local 405 of the IWA. And in those days you got to know people in the beer parlour and I was there doing organizing for the party and he had run for us. And I needed to get his help in building the party in Nelson-Creston and did that. Went into Rossland-Trail where it was a disaster area for the NDP. Trail, that riding should have been an NDP riding from day one. It was dominated by the people who worked at the smelter, at Cominco. The union was Mine Mill and Smelter Workers Union, which had a fairly left-wing tradition. So, when I remember my first trip into Trail I think I went to get the membership list and three members. You know, how are we gonna build an organization. So I thought well the first thing I need to do is go meet with the union executive at Mine Mill, the local authority. I think it was. And so they agreed to meet with me. It turned out the president of the union a guy named Bob Taylor who was a conservative, a capital C conservative, and I understand that the other 15 members were all either members of or supporters of the CP, which was a dominant union in the Communist Party, and dominant union in the Mine Mill across the country in their various certifications. And so they gave me polite hearing and I think there were a lot of smirks, and a lot of rolling of eyes. I was maybe twenty-three years old and these guys were seasoned to work in mine work, smelter workers and anyway, got nowhere, obviously got nowhere with them whatsoever. I thought how am I going to break into, to get some labour support in this labour town, especially from the mine workers [unclear]. So I looked at the membership list again and there was a guy who lived in Rossland who was, who was the custodian in one of the schools, a member of CUPE. So I went and knocked on his door and said I need some help, I need some advice. How can we do this? He said, well, he says lots of, there's lots of public sector workers who support the NDP. Why don't we knock on doors. So for the next three or four days we did nothing but knock on doors. We signed up, and I don't remember exactly, it was over 100 members. And so we finally built the beginning of an organization and then another ex, in this case ex-CPer, who was an old IWA guy named Tom MacKenzie, but he had renounced the CP and he'd come over to the NDP. He lived in Janelle, which is between Castlegar and Trail. And he and his wife Jean they housed me and we began to find

other workers, other people, and other sympathetic academics. Gradually built up a membership and through doing that we found people who were, actually worked in the smelter because they were friends of friends and whatever. And so they finally built an organization, which led us in '72 to winning the seat and we held it, except for the 2001 election, we've held it ever since. It was, but that was an interesting time, particularly going into a union executive that didn't have a single New Democrat sympathizer in the entire executive council, executive committee. So there are lots of interesting stories. I went and drove up one, Ran Harding, Randolph Harding was the MLA for Kaslo-Slocan, which was a riding that was re-distributed, became Revelstoke, Revelstoke-Slocan I think in the 60s and then he decided to run federally in the '68 federal election and so quit, resigned his seat. He too was having problems with the leadership of the party at the time and was a very strong Berger supporter. But anyway he decided to get out and he ran federally and we had a by-election coming up in Revelstoke-Slocan and there was a train engineer in Revelstoke named Bill King who people had encountered over the years and thought might be a good candidate. So I was dispatched. Clive was still secretary at the time. Maybe Wally Ross, but I think it was Clive, Clive Lytle. Dispatched me and drove up to Revelstoke and Bill and I sat in the beer parlour and I said you've got to run, you've got to run, you gotta run, and he said you don't know how much fun driving train is, he said. I don't need all that politics shit and so anyway we talked and talked and talked and drank beer and whatever and finally he said, I've had enough beer, why don't you come over for breakfast in the morning and Audrey and you and I can talk about it some more. I saw that as a hopeful sign. And the next morning we talked about it and a few hours later he agreed to run. So that was just the kind of work as an organizer, most of the work as an organizer is slogging, just door knocking and door knocking, but sometimes the door knocking in Nelson-Trail is really significant because you could start at the grassroots in building an organization. Then the other times when you're talking to people like Jack Munro in Nelson or Bill King in Revelstoke you're talking about pretty powerful people and you know you're 23 years old and you're in this company and it was where a lot of those kinds of stories. I think this is probably enough for now, but a lot of those kind of stories in the organizing days and getting to know Michael Lewis really well and of course the whole of his family as a result of that. And I was on the federal executive, Federal Council of the party at times. I got to know his dad and his brother and then I managed his brother's campaign so in Ontario in '73. So those kind of connections and, you know, it's just pretty, not bad for a kid in his 20s, you know.

JDH [02:10:52] You must have learned, you must have seen a lot of B.C. in this process.

CG [02:10:57] Oh, I got to know the province really well. Like door by door. You know I've knocked on doors in just about every town in this province at some point. In some ridings more than others. You know we were trying to build an organization in ridings that should have been supportive for us. Like in the Kootenay East, in Rossland-Trail and Nelson obviously, and Revelstoke and Prince George and Kamloops. Signed up a lot of people in this party many of whom go on to glory and many of whom were quite prominent in the labour movement as well as in the party and some of those people...

JDH [02:11:33] And this was the time before internet and cell phones and let's say in Rossland-Trail when you only have three members and you said you went to seek out other public sector workers like physically. How did you do that? Did you.

CG [02:11:49] Well they got they.

JDH [02:11:50] How did you find them?

CG [02:11:51] Well the trick was one of the three was a public sector, was a member of the executive of the CUPE local because he worked at the school board and so he said let's go and start. I don't remember the precise details but we first of all gone to his executive members and most of them would have been, I think we got most of them signed up. And then we were able to, there was a couple of CUPE locals, because it wasn't just school boards there were other community whatever. And then the mayor of Trail at the time had, another ex-CPer, but he had left the CP and his name just slips my mind right now. But, a real character. The world was full of characters in those days. Anyway, he agreed to sign as well and that added some impetus to our ability to build an organization. So by the time I left going into Rossland-Trail we probably had two or three hundred members in the riding and that's sufficient to build an organization that has carried it through till this day, and we still represent it.

JDH [02:12:54] Right, right.

CG [02:12:56] So there are countless other stories. There were six of us during Wally, Wally Ross became provincial secretary in the lead up to the '69 provincial election.

RJ [02:13:09] Wally Ross from the Steelworkers?

CG [02:13:09] Wally Ross from the Steelworkers. Wally Ross who lost an eye in the fight in Kitimat as a result of an organizing, as a result of a raid by the Steelworkers on a non-unaffiliated union. So it was a legitimate raid because they weren't members of the Congress. And that was a bitter, they lost, Steel lost that at that particular debate but Wally in one of his brawls had a knife put through his eye and he had a glass eye for the rest of his life. Anyway, he was made provincial secretary. He's the one incidentally who brought the party into the modern times by bringing in a computer system. We used card files for the membership and prior to that and he computerized it. So, but anyway, he, there were six of us. We divided up the province into six and I'd done my dint in the boonies so Michael and I did the Lower Mainland and the other four organizers were given the rest of the province. Geoff Holter went off and did the Kootenays and he carried on with that Kootenay work. So this, you don't see that kind of organizing anymore. Everybody organizes now by sitting behind their computer in an office in Vancouver and it just drives me crazy. I long for the days of the organizers who would go out and knock on doors and enlist people. But now all we want to do is a list of email addresses and send them more dunning letters.

JDH [02:14:41] And what do you think the impact was? I mean, it may be obvious, but what is the impact then of meeting people compared to now? I mean you signed them up, OK. Was there a larger impact than that?

CG [02:14:57] Well yeah. We won a government. Was there a larger impact? What it did was to invigorate the party I think prior to a bigger membership base. The party was led by a small group of full-time political people and academics. You know I think of for example the '66 election campaign, which was designed by academics and didn't work and Bob Strachan was supposed to carry out this image that just didn't work. But once we got more active people involved in particular trade union members around the province it made the party stronger, it

made it more...we got a better range of candidates, stronger candidates I think and we got stronger campaigns. And I think the fact that even though we'd virtually got wiped out in 2001 and there were a lot of commentators who said well that's the end of the NDP in B.C. Those of us who understood the grassroots knew that it was not the NDP because we had built, we have built, lots and lots of people over the years, have built an organization that is composed of a wide variety of political perspectives and community strengths and we're an institution in this province and we never will never go away. We're the only political party that doesn't fade from view.

BG [02:16:24] I wonder if you could talk about if you noticed any sort of major differences between organizing in rural areas that might have had a kinda heavy resource focused industry versus organizing in the lower mainland.

CG [02:16:37] The huge difference you can identify. I mean knocking on doors in Rossland versus knocking on doors in Richmond both of which I've done a lot of over the years. It is so anonymous and people are so I don't think they're vacant but they give you a vacant response in the city as compared to the response you get in the country other than the rural areas. I'm talking now, you know I'm talking about between the sixties and seventies, a long time ago and the differences I suspect are even more intense these days than then. But then they were different, it was so different. You can, you could communicate with people. People would, in the interior, people in the communities they would invite you in, always invite you in whether they were going to join or not. They were, it was sort of the old mentality where everybody was welcome. But in the city, there was an alienation that had descended and I think it continues that is hard to penetrate. Now, I mean it makes campaigning really difficult because you can't phone people because they won't answer the phone if they don't recognize the phone number, they will not answer to the door often. You know they're in watching TV and won't answer the door. How do you campaign? So we've developed a bunch of nefarious tactics which I don't like, we've got to find a way to get back engaged with people. And I think the trade union movement could play a real role in this because the trade union leaders are engaged with their members. They have to be. They're not going to stay on as leaders if they don't. And I think they can provide a window into how to engage with community and engage with people. And the labour movement has a really important role to play with the party, in that respect.

JDH [02:18:30] Fabulous. Colin that is so good.