

**Interview: Peter Cameron (PC)**

**Interviewer: Phil Legg (PL)**

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**Transcription: Cathy Walker**

**PL [00:00:07]** Well, thanks so much, Peter, for making time to talk to us about your experience in the labour movement and some of the issues that you think are important in the time that you spent in the labour movement. Before we get into that, maybe talk a little bit about the early years where you grew up, any of the early incidents in your young life.

**PC [00:00:32]** Okay. I grew up in Edmonton till I was 12 years old and my father worked for the Alberta, I forget the actual name of it. It was a rehabilitation society for dealing with people that had tuberculosis, large numbers of whom were Indigenous in Alberta in those days. My mum was a piano teacher. We moved to Ottawa when my father decided to take a cut in pay and join the federal civil service. Those were the days of, it would be what, 43 and 12 be '55 or so. Lots of exciting stuff going on in Ottawa and was kind of the place to be if you were a policy-oriented middle rank civil servant, so off he went. That was my background. He was kind of in the middle ranks of the civil service. When I was in school in Ottawa (I left home at 17) and he continued up, ending up as an ADM in Ottawa. He kind of ended up as a manager but that's not my experience of him. Mine's more of a kind of a middle level civil service person and with great integrity. That's a big influence. I remember even back in Edmonton there was an occasion in which my mother called myself and my three sisters and told them that, things could be tough. Your dad may be out of a job. He's having to take a stand on a matter of principle and we don't know how it's going to turn out. Those were kind of impressive things to hear from your parents.

**PL [00:02:16]** Yeah. So what drew you out West?

**PC [00:02:22]** They moved out west. My family did when I was 17, I guess, for the stint in the colonies, that was part of the public service federally in those days. When they went back to Ottawa, I just stayed. I just came with my family and then I was 17, 18, just on my own. Along the way there, I had a labour experience that was quite out of what otherwise would have been my environment on a summer job. I was hired by a contractor who told me that I wouldn't get paid quite as much as the other people because I was guaranteed employment till the end of the summer as a student. That was a special reason that I should be paid less. Along the way there was a big screw up in the construction site and the guy came in and fired everybody. I said, 'Hey, just a minute,' so I called up the union, it must have been the Labourers, and I said, 'Well, I had the special deal that I,' 'Special deal? Tell me about it.' I told him about it. That afternoon the company came and delivered a cheque for the balance of what they owed me for the full labour rate on the job because the union called up, the Teamsters weren't going to deliver cement. I said, 'Wow, you know, this is pretty neat.' because you get fired from a job, you feel really down and humiliated and so on. Then I felt vindicated, hey, this union stuff's okay.

**PL [00:04:01]** All right.

**PC [00:04:02]** Then I was kind of into the academic left in the Vietnam War days and so on. My re-attraction to the labour movement was more or less on a sort of idealistic young

person coming from the university to get a job in the working class and join the union movement. That's kind of how I got in there.

**PL** [00:04:26] Okay. This is with CAIMAW?

**PC** [00:04:29] No, I had a job out in a box plant in Richmond and it was in the Pulp Paper, no, I was actually in the old Pulp Sulphite union. There was a little buzz around our place about PPWC and I got very interested in that, met some of the personalities. Then I got laid off there and along the way I got a job at Phillips Cables and that had just become Canadian Electrical Workers and was on the way into merging with CAIMAW at the very time that I started there. I met George Brown and Jess Succamore. We got all involved in that, shop steward, chief shop steward, national executive board member and so on, all the stuff.

**PL** [00:05:23] Give us the chronology, roughly.

**PC** [00:05:25] Well, I actually wrote that out because it's half a century ago. I started at Phillips Cables in 1969, so it's actually more than half a century ago. Yeah.

**PL** [00:05:41] You would have been active in labour circles as the government was changing hands from Socreds to the Barrett days.

**PC** [00:05:50] Yeah. I was kind of oblivious to the formal politics. My politics would be somewhere well to the left of the Communist Party of Canada when I was at university. I wasn't all that interested in electoral politics until a little while later. I said, 'Hey, actually this stuff makes a difference. We've got to get involved in it.'

**PC** [00:06:16] I was very active in the union from the beginning. It was an interesting time because it was, first of all, the merger between the CEW and CAIMAW. There was a little bit of holding your nose for the merger from the point of view of the CEW, because there were lots of things they didn't like about the CAIMAW constitution of the day and set about to see what they could do to make the changes. In fairly short order, were quite successful in getting sympathetic people in the mainly Winnipeg at that time location of CAIMAW to appreciate that there was a lot more to be looked at in terms of potential for a democratic union rather than just taking a constitution of an American union and sticking in a few Canadian references. We can actually start from the base and have a union the way we want it. I was participating in the early days of that where CAIMAW had a constitution before long that's pretty similar to the one it had throughout the years.

**PL** [00:07:24] Just stop for a moment. Can you highlight a few features of the constitution that were distinctive and you thought were fundamentally valuable?

**PC** [00:07:34] Yes, there was a big emphasis on democracy, the rights of local unions. That was a strong part of the CAIMAW constitution coming out of the experience people had had with, for example, in the IBEW, the Lenkurt Electric Strike, this was one of the formative experiences of George Brown and Jess Succamore in terms of leading them towards founding a Canadian union.

**PL** [00:08:06] The idea that the international could send in a rep and.

**PC** [00:08:10] Yeah, put it under trusteeship and just basically run it. The idea of local democracy was, that's the big thread. That's the thing that seemed to be in everybody's

mind to be connected to the Canada versus U.S.-dominated union because the experience within the American unions were both they were dominated by people in another country and they weren't very democratic.

**PL** [00:08:45] You saw that a lot. I know from my experience in the Woodworkers Union, less so because the international didn't have the strength to dominate, but there was still that pressure.

**PC** [00:08:57] Mm hmm.

**PL** [00:08:59] At what point does the local own its own collective agreement?

**PC** [00:09:03] Mm hmm.

**PL** [00:09:05] How can you, as a member at the local level, influence the shape and direction?

**PC** [00:09:10] Mm hmm. Yeah.

**PL** [00:09:14] When you were with CAIMAW, were you involved in specific sectors or were you kind of moving across different sectors?

**PC** [00:09:23] I was in CAIMAW by virtue of being a worker at Phillips Cables, so I was involved for quite a while at the shop level as the shop steward, chief shop steward. I also was elected to be the national executive board member from our area, so I became involved in going to national executive board meetings and conventions and so on from there. I carried on working at Phillips Cables for quite a while and then eventually they had need for another staff person. I came on as a very junior staff person.

**PL** [00:10:04] Did you have any particular assignments in that role or again kind of whatever comes through the door?

**PC** [00:10:13] Yeah, pretty well. The people that were otherwise on staff besides me were George Brown and Jess Succamore were very experienced trade unionists with a lot of advice and tutoring on tactical considerations of labour relations. That was an excellent learning environment.

**PL** [00:10:36] Yeah. In terms of disputes, were there any in your tenure with CAIMAW that stand out as things really made an impression on you or had a significant impact on a broader level?

**PC** [00:10:54] There were a lot of strikes in CAIMAW's history and some of the battles. I think part of the problem we ended up with a bunch of really tough nosed employers. Fortunately, the place where I worked, Phillips Cables, the employer was quite sensible and reasonable, and it was a base for the old Canadian Electrical Workers, which merged into CAIMAW just shortly before I started. Sorry, what was the question again?

**PL** [00:11:32] In terms of negotiations/disputes that you were involved in either directly or on the periphery that you thought were significant in terms of the actual dispute or the implications like that for the entire labour movement?

**PC** [00:11:51] I would say there were a very large number of disputes over the years that were pretty significant. Phillips Cables was a good, it was the first plant organized into the what was the CEW, the Canadian Electrical Workers Union, and it merged into CAIMAW shortly before I started at Phillips. CAIMAW and the old Canadian Electrical Workers was a bit of a rocky beginning in terms of mixing some fairly different expectations about what the internal decision making should be. The Canadian Electrical Workers was very heavily dependent on the idea that the workers had to have real connection and control of the union. CAIMAW hadn't broken completely from the kind of predecessor unions that they'd come out of, so there was some period of time where there was constitutional issues that need sorting out and so on.

**PL** [00:13:13] These things would be decisions typically associated with bargaining. To what extent can the bargaining committee make those decisions without having to go back to the membership, it's those sorts of.

**PC** [00:13:27] Yes, that's true. That's probably the critical aspect of it, is what control do the members really have over the important activities of the union?

**PL** [00:13:46] Right.

**PC** [00:13:47] The B.C. group which was originally the Canadian Electrical Workers Union and it was largely an industrial model. Phillips Cables, the plant I worked at was in that union when I arrived.

**PL** [00:14:06] Right.

**PC** [00:14:08] It subsequently merged into CAIMAW down the way. Sorry, I've lost track of your question.

**PL** [00:14:16] Let's go back to the I'm thinking of the, particularly in mines, you mentioned you were up against mining employers who were not renowned for their progressive views of unions to begin with. It can be a rough and tumble relationship at best. Are there particular disputes there that held significance both for you personally and for the organization you were part of?

**PC** [00:14:48] The first union that CAIMAW got certified, first mining property was Bethlehem Copper, which actually was, does not fit that pattern of really hard ass mining employers. It was kind of a pretty reasonable employer. It was a base from which another one of the people that became later a rep and an officer of CAIMAW, Roger Crowther. It was his home base. It was originally in Operating Engineers and left and joined and came into CAIMAW. I'm losing track of your question. Where are we going now?

**PL** [00:15:34] In the case of the mining disputes, were there any particular disputes that were fairly important in terms of CAIMAW's impact on ongoing labour relations?

**PC** [00:15:49] Oh, yeah. Yes. The Noranda properties and the Placer properties were very hard nosed employers and they initially, I think, they thought this was a good thing. Arrival of a new union would sort of split up the existing unions and kind of confuse the situation and they could maybe use it to their advantage.

**PL** [00:16:11] Yeah.

**PC** [00:16:12] They quickly became disabused of those thoughts and realized that they had a militant union on their hands and that it might be actually more problematic than the somewhat cosy relationship they had with the other two main mining unions of the day.

**PL** [00:16:33] Did they come to that conclusion as a result of a strike that was going on for an awful lot longer than that?

**PC** [00:16:39] Yeah, I think just a number of strikes and a number of tough bargaining sessions from their perspective.

**PL** [00:16:48] Yeah.

**PC** [00:16:52] It's a tough industry for working people and for unions because, as one of the personalities on the employer's side said one time, 'You know, metal doesn't go bad in the ground. We can shut it down for a while, you know.' That makes it tough.

**PL** [00:17:11] You've also got a mobile workforce. If mine A goes out on strike and it's going to be six months or longer, well, I'll just up and find a job at Mine B.

**PC** [00:17:26] Yeah. That would be the strategy of choice, is try to get the picket line down as small as you can and encourage some kind of contribution for people working elsewhere who intend to return. See if you can get picket pay up to a good level, so survivable for the people left holding the thing together. Yeah.

**PL** [00:17:51] In the case of some of the disputes you had, what kind of progress would you highlight when the strikes were resolved?

**PC** [00:18:05] You mean what kinds of accomplishments coming out of the strikes? It typically was the case that CAIMAW got some of the harder nosed employers in the business. Bethlehem Copper was a reasonable employer, actually, and that was one of the first in the mine. That was lucky that we got our toe in with somebody we weren't immediately into a pitched battle with.

**PL** [00:18:31] Yeah.

**PC** [00:18:33] The Noranda, Placer group of employers was very, very tough and so that often required going either to the brink of a strike or actually on a strike, and sometimes a long strike in order to get a satisfactory agreement out of it. Bethlehem was more of a local employer in a sense. They were based in B.C. It was a little more, I think, responsive to the idea that maybe you shouldn't be a complete jerk as an employer in the mining industry. There's very obviously categories of employers in the mining industry that are sort of more or less reasonable ones and ones that are really tough assed.

**PL** [00:19:22] Yeah, Yeah. Hoping to make an example by defeating.

**PC** [00:19:26] Yeah.

**PL** [00:19:28] Before we got rolling, you mentioned the Kenworth dispute as an example of something that at least for your recollection, spoke very highly of the importance of solidarity at the shop floor level. Can you tell me a little bit about that dispute?

**PC** [00:19:49] Oh my, that one is pulling... I wasn't the rep responsible of the shop floor level or the picket line level for maintaining that one. That one's a little bit more difficult for me to sum it up than the mining industry disputes, which were kind of my bread and butter for many years.

**PL** [00:20:18] In the case of the Kenworth dispute, I know that equity within the bargaining unit became.

**PC** [00:20:26] You're talking about the data processing one. There were a number of CAIMAW battles with Canadian Kenworth but the big one was the equity one. That was I think a strategy on the part of the company to pick an issue they thought would be very divisive for us. There were only seven women in the data processing department. Our proposal, our thought, was that everybody, virtually everybody except highly skilled trades, were on a progression system which used to be much more common than it is now. You came in at one level and four years later you were at the top rate. The schedule for the data processing employees, all women, was significantly beneath the starting rate for men. Absolutely out of high school guys who knew nothing started quite a bit above the data processing rates. Our idea was, why exactly everybody is on this scale except a few specialized trades? Why exactly should the data processing be underneath everybody? That led to, first of all, an arbitration. It was mid-contract. We organized the data processing group in the midst of the life of a collective agreement, so the first collective agreement for them to get into the big agreement was sort of an appendix. Our view was they should just go on to the plant progression. In fact, if anything they should be more because they required quite a bit of training to enter the door, whereas the big production plant was taking people out of high school and they were learning everything on the job. We thought at least they should be on the main progression.

**PL** [00:22:33] Did you expand the bargaining unit to include the data processing, and were they in a separate bargaining unit, or in tandem with?

**PC** [00:22:41] No, we did have them varied into the main bargaining unit. From our perspective, they should at least be on the, I guess the opening argument would be they should start two years up on the progression, which I think was four years or something at that point, because they have to have two years previous experience to start here. The employer was quite resistant to that idea. It was odd because seven people out of a large plant didn't really seem to be an economic thing from their perspective, but maybe they thought it was a good issue to weaken the union on. They were really stubborn on that. Eventually they had to give in. They just eventually decided they needed to start the plant again.

**PL** [00:23:41] There was a dispute?

**PC** [00:23:42] Oh, yeah.

**PL** [00:23:43] It lasted for?

**PC** [00:23:44] Hmm, well,.

**PL** [00:23:48] Weeks, months?

**PC** [00:23:50] I think it was. Actually I was reading something recently in old history days from the CAIMAW days and there's some places said six months and some places said

nine months. I think it's six months, but it was a long dispute to hold out, a basically male bargaining unit over an issue of pay equity.

**PL** [00:24:14] Was there much hoped for division? There were.

**PC** [00:24:17] No, it didn't. It was amazing. Well into the strike, the company threw a fairly attractive offer to the, but still not recognizing that pay equity issue, but increasing the offer to the data processing group and also to the main plant group. That was absolutely roundly rejected and thereafter the company just collapsed. We got pretty well everything we were going for in the actual settlement.

**PL** [00:24:50] Yeah. It's interesting that it's true. Bargaining units are tested, especially when there's a strike that's ongoing. I was talking earlier with people about the IWA's dispute in '86 where it went through a series of mediations. Always they were trying to throw another cherry on top.

**PC** [00:25:14] Yeah.

**PL** [00:25:16] Successively, every mediation-proposed settlement was rejected by a higher number.

**PC** [00:25:20] Yeah.

**PL** [00:25:21] Which was heartening to see.

**PC** [00:25:24] Yeah.

**PL** [00:25:24] That's how it works. So that's.

**PC** [00:25:28] In that case, the employer ended up kind of chasing us to get the settlement because we said before the strike started, if you solve this one issue, we can resolve the whole thing. They said no. As the strike went on, you have to keep the rest of the bargaining kind of interested in some personal outcome, they might benefit as a loss of paycheque goes on from week to week. Some more issues got thrown into the mix. By the time of the settlement, the employer would have done a lot better to, I think Jef says, Jef Keighley in his project with you guys said that there was a point at which the employer was offered another, take a penny from everybody in the bargaining unit and as a multiplier, give it to the data processing people and this thing can be settled. That's a detail I didn't actually remember until I read the transcript of Jef's comments. Certainly that was, we said to the employer before the strike started, just settle this one issue. It's not a big issue for you guys. It's a small part of the bargaining unit. The only rationale I can think of for the employer's position, because in Seattle, the same employer actually had much better rates than we had in Vancouver, but the plant rates weren't.

**PL** [00:27:02] When you say better rates for everybody, including data processors?

**PC** [00:27:04] No, better rates for the data processing people and not better rates for everybody. In other words, the gap was very small in Seattle compared to the gap they were seeking to maintain in Vancouver. What's the point of this? I have had to think in retrospect that they must have figured this was going to really create a problem for us and maybe weaken us and that must have been the motive, because there wasn't really a financial motive or even a company policy reason.

**PL** [00:27:38] Yeah. Then, of course, the bloody mindedness that kicks in once you.

**PC** [00:27:41] Yeah.

**PL** [00:27:43] Over my dead body will I settle with you guys.

**PC** [00:27:46] Yeah.

**PL** [00:27:48] Moving from the time of CAIMAW, you moved on to other unions. I'll just start with the HSA, Health Sciences Association. What was your role there? How did that come?

**PC** [00:28:07] I started as assistant executive director. Jack Campbell was the executive director and these were staff positions. I was, in fact, I think the HSA model as the staff being hired. Jack would have been hired by the elected people. I was hired again by the elected executive board on Jack's recommendation, basically as his assistant. Subsequently, Jack went over to the BCGEU and I became the executive director of HSA, and that was the senior staff position.

**PL** [00:28:47] Right. The timeframe for this was?

**PC** [00:28:51] Hey, I got that. I have my little cheat sheet here just for this purpose. A lot of events in CAIMAW before I get over here. 1983, I was hired as assistant executive director. Then when Jack went to the GEU, I became executive director.

**PL** [00:29:21] You would have been with HSA during the tail end of the Bennett's and the beginning of the of the Vander Zalm era?

**PC** [00:29:28] Yeah.

**PL** [00:29:30] In terms of issues, during that period of time, was it basically dealing with restraint or were there issues in terms of health care reform?

**PC** [00:29:42] Yeah. Yes, that was the big era for the beginning of the health care reform. Before it got fairly far into it, I was actually, because the NDP was seeking, after 1991 to make big changes in the, originally a kind of an ultra democratic change in the governance of the health care system and subsequently they kind of organized it into bigger units. I was at HSA for that, during that period.

**PL** [00:30:20] This would be the period when the NDP was forming sort of health authorities.

**PC** [00:30:25] Yes.

**PL** [00:30:26] Municipal health authorities.

**PC** [00:30:28] Yeah. They started with a very complicated structure or a very decentralized structure, and eventually figured that really wasn't workable and aggregated the, I think they were called community health councils originally, into bigger units called health regions.



**PL** [00:30:47] Did the HSA play a role in? I'm going to assume that you were part of the, I'll call it negotiations, with government as it was forming these ideas, or was this? To what extent did the union play a role in advocating for the changes or participating in the changes as they were being implemented?

**PC** [00:31:14] We had positions on it. I don't feel any authorship from the HSA, in any event, on the actual form of the original health authorities and then the health regions. I'm sure HSA had positions on it, but I don't remember us kind of leading the way of aggregating the community health councils into the bigger health regions, but that occurred while I was there.

**PL** [00:31:48] I know that within health unions, it's always, there are contentious public health issues that come up against bargaining unit issues. I'm thinking in the case of, where do you draw the line in terms of the bargaining unit for professional staff and facilities and those sorts of things?

**PC** [00:32:17] Mm hmm.

**PL** [00:32:17] Anything from your time in HSA that would clarify how that plays out in the end?

**PC** [00:32:27] The big centralization in the health system labour relations occurred actually when I was with government, not with HSA. At the time the model was individual hospital certifications for each of the unions. In reality, they behaved much more like there was one big collective agreement, but they were still separate certifications. I don't think anybody really tumbled to the idea that, for example, you could decertify if you're really mad because you only had this one little group with the hospital certificate in the certification or that you could raid one unit in one hospital. The unions carried on as if they had a broad certification, even though they had to take individual strike votes and so on and were technically separate certifications for each of the unions and each of the hospitals or health centres, whatever, long term care.

**PL** [00:33:32] Right. You're describing a situation prior to the NDP taking power in '91, '92.

**PC** [00:33:41] Yes. Yeah, it was the NDP's initiative through the, I think the original, the idea of the study of it, the Royal Commission on Health Care and Costs, actually came into existence with the previous government. It was left for the NDP to make sense out of it and try and take the recommendations and implement the ones that they thought should be implemented.

**PL** [00:34:12] Right. I note, and I'm a bit vague on this one, but I know that Judi Korbin played a role in terms of, and that was when the NDP took over. Was that the beginnings of this sort of, how can we re-examine the health care, labour relations side of things, how it could be re-examined? Public sector bargaining generally.

**PC** [00:34:41] Yes. The Korbin Commission was set up by Glen Clark as finance minister. There was very little connection between the government and collective bargaining in the public sector. Gary Moser was a bureaucrat, senior bureaucrat from the previous government held over, perfect pro, held over by the NDP, and he used to kind of check in on what was going on in the public sector bargaining, but it really was very decentralized. Glen, I remember him saying that I'm tired of reading about a settlement in the newspaper

and nobody's briefed me about it. It's got all kinds of implications for others. There's something wrong with the system, so he appointed Judi to have a look at it.

**PL** [00:35:34] Right.

**PC** [00:35:35] Peter Berton, who you also know was the counsel for the Korbin Commission. They held all kinds of hearings with all kinds of groups of people and came up with the Korbin report, and it was largely implemented. That became the basis for the formation of employers' associations and ultimately, not out of her recommendations, but along the way came the centralization of the employers' associations and the bargaining unit restructuring in health. I was in government by that time so I was involved in that stuff as the Public Sector Employers' Council was the name of the entity, and we were the secretariat for it. We did a lot of advising on legislation.

**PL** [00:36:39] Just prior, in that period between the end of the Vander Zalm government and the beginning of the Harcourt government, the notion of a mandate for bargaining from the employer, the employer's mandate, who is that coming from?

**PC** [00:36:56] Moser played that role for the previous government as well, Gary Moser. I think it was very informal. There was no, it's kind of a back of an envelope sort of exercise. It was my impression of it. There was nothing like what happened when the Public Sector Employers' Council was formed and there was all kinds of consultation and discussion and papers and all that sort of stuff to come up with a mandate.

**PL** [00:37:29] Right, Right.

**PC** [00:37:31] Even the idea of a mandate, I think previously was pretty amateur day in public sector bargaining, which wasn't completely disadvantageous for the unions.

**PL** [00:37:41] Yeah. My general sense from the '80s, from the beginning of the '80s, the end of the '80s was there was some sort of notional sense of pattern bargaining in the sense of, okay, so the big settlements in the province have got three years, it's whatever percent. I guess that's the ballpark we're going to live in.

**PC** [00:38:07] Mm hmm.

**PL** [00:38:08] Something like that. Was that your sense of it?

**PC** [00:38:13] I think it was poorly coordinated and easily pushed around by the unions. You remember probably the settlement that in Fryer's days with the BCGEU. Fryer was sure that nobody was going to go higher than this. Then the Nurses got 30%. I forget what multiple of Fryer's settlement that was. That was very uncomfortable for him.

**PL** [00:38:46] There was, I vaguely remember a moment when John Fryer was on the Jack Wasserman TV program. At some point in that back and forth with Wasserman, made some reference to bonds that would be given to government employees, or something. It was just.

**PC** [00:39:08] Oh, yeah.

**PL** [00:39:09] Yeah.

**PL** [00:39:09] It was a moment.

**PC** [00:39:11] Remember that one?

**PL** [00:39:13] We just thought, what have we just witnessed here?

**PC** [00:39:16] Yeah.

**PL** [00:39:18] Back to this idea of mandates, you know, generally speaking there, it was informal. It would be a polite way to describe it.

**PC** [00:39:26] Yeah, that might be overstating it. It was really no system. It was terrible from the public purse perspective. Even from the point of view of the employees, somebody like the GEU members, they thought they got an okay deal and then the Nurses got like several times what they got. It's frustrating everybody.

**PL** [00:39:51] Let's move back to the.

**PC** [00:39:53] I guess that one didn't frustrate the Nurses but everybody else was frustrated.

**PL** [00:39:57] In the post, quote, Korbin world, where were you situated? Were you now working in government?

**PC** [00:40:04] Yeah, I came over to government in... I could look it up. It was with the. I will look it up. Let's get the date here. I was pretty heavily involved in the restructuring of the public sector, myself, and Peter Burton came over as, was counsel to the Korbin Commission. Then Glen brought him on in some capacity or another to give advice in government. Then they got me involved. Originally I was ADM in the Ministry of Health. After a while in that position, I was kind of the government front person for the negotiations for the, it was the biggest negotiations in the province, I think ever. All of the employers and all of the health care unions were at one table, that is, in the acute care system, didn't include the long term care and community care, but the entire acute care sector was there in the room. All the three main unions and HABC as HLRA as it then was, and the collective agreements were opened up and extended and all kinds of employment security things went into it. A big deal putting that all together. That was before there was actually the formal big bargaining units that exist now. That came out of a commission that we kind of promoted, we being the PSec people. Burton and myself largely were the ones that were thinking about this stuff and inspired by the Scandinavian model of big centralized bargaining and the public sector with some relationship in theory anyway, to the level of private sector settlements.

**PL** [00:42:24] Yeah, right.

**PC** [00:42:25] That was the kind of the Norwegian model, for example.

**PL** [00:42:29] Okay. Now I note somewhere in here there was a, I can't remember the name of the hospital that was being closed down and as a result there was a labour adjustment, health labour adjustment program that was put into place. Was that part of that bargaining as well?

**PC** [00:42:47] That was part of the bargaining. What was happening was the government thought it was going to be engaged in a radical reform of the delivery of health services and to a large extent getting away from institutions. That turned out to be much more modest than they thought it was going to be.

**PL** [00:43:07] To say hard to do.

**PC** [00:43:08] Yeah. One of the first things was going to be the closing of Shaughnessy Hospital because it had all kinds of problems. It had seismic problems. It was an old dump, as they said affectionately in the day. I think it's still operating. That was the theory. It was going to be closed down.

**PL** [00:43:33] Plutonium or something?

**PC** [00:43:39] You may recall the Royal Commission on Health Care and Costs had recommended, 'Closer to Home' was the name of the report, this was going to be community health centres all over the place and the big hospitals were going to be de-emphasized and so on. There was expected to be major shifting of personnel around the system. Some of the old hospitals would be either drastically reduced in size or in the case of Shaughnessy, was supposed to be eliminated altogether. HEU was hair on fire, completely.

**PC** [00:44:21] Remember those days sure, with good reason. It seemed a bit half baked to them for good reason, because it was half baked. The unions weren't on board with this at all. I said, it was actually my idea, kind of a back of the envelope idea, why don't we actually look at seeing whether we can get the unions to some degree on board, if we could offer them some kind of super job protection for this process, then maybe they wouldn't be so opposed to it. I was set out to talk to unions. Nobody believed this was going to go anywhere at all, and no, no, Cameron go out and talk to unions. Give him something to do. There was some interest in this. The idea became, that my idea became, I was reporting to people in government, but then nobody really believed this was going to happen. They weren't taking it that seriously. The idea gradually became shaped up into we would reopen the collective agreements. We would put in a high level of employment security, we would extend the terms, do this and do that.

**PC** [00:45:53] Then someone says, what is Cameron doing out there? Gary Moser was quickly sent in to see whether this was as alarming as it sounded like it might be. It kind of settled down into discussions. Proper reporting lines were established within government, somebody we could talk to about whether this was acceptable, but Glen Clark loved it. It was pretty hard for the other people in the bureaucracy to really put it down.

**PL** [00:46:37] Yeah.

**PC** [00:46:41] It proceeded along. A key to it, which maybe was naive on my part, but the idea was this was a transitional arrangement for a period where there was going to be a high level of otherwise disruption in the system if we didn't organize this grand downsizing of the hospitals that was supposed to occur. This would be transitional and the unions would have all kinds of wonderful powers through this period of consultation and ways of getting involved. Then it would go away. The mechanism for it going away is it was to expire one day, I think it was, before the collective agreement expired, some period, might have been a month, but it was going to be done. Of course everybody on the union side

got very used to this sitting down and talking with employers about how they were going to manage the workplace. This was great fun. Yeah. They didn't want it to go.

**PC** [00:47:59] There was eventually the solution, of course, was Vince Ready the Industry Inquiry Commission was appointed with Vince as commissioner, and he decided that the solution for this was to extend, put it into the collective agreements.

**PC** [00:48:15] No, no, that wasn't the idea. The employers hated it because they had all these things. They had, you know, poor Murray Martin at Vancouver Hospital, Vancouver General in those days. They just consulted him to death.

**PL** [00:48:31] Well, there would come a point, they were trying to run the hospital.

**PC** [00:48:36] That did occur to him.

**PL** [00:48:37] Yeah. No, no, we've got 28 meetings dealing with that.

**PC** [00:48:42] Yeah. The employers were very unhappy with me on an ongoing basis. I kept trying to remind them that actually it was supposed to be over like the end of the agreement. Moser, who was also involved in these negotiations and a role he completely minimized thereafter when it became so unpopular with employers. It's all my accord. Yes.

**PL** [00:49:14] Well, speaking of this, it's a bit of an aside, but I.

**PC** [00:49:18] By the way, that's where that Bill 29, that was the teachers' one, Bill 28, the one where the Liberal government decided just to throw it all out, we'll just pass a law, cancel it all. By the way, while we're at it, we're going to privatize a whole bunch of it. There was room in the middle between those two positions to lighten up on some of the restrictions on the employers being able to do absolutely anything on the one hand, and not privatize half of the HEU's membership. There was quite a gap there. Somebody should have been able to find something in the middle there.

**PL** [00:50:03] It's interesting within health care generally there are hierarchies, you've got doctors and then there's conflicts between doctors and nurses and then conflicts between techs and all those sorts of things. Is it your sense that to some extent collective bargaining is almost beyond the reach of health care? Is it just something that is a bit hard to get everybody on the same page in a way that reflects the reality of the workplace?

**PC** [00:50:40] Hmm. No, I think collective bargaining works pretty well in health care, actually. Collective bargaining in the public sector. This is one of a subsequent role of mine that annoyed many previous friends was that it works pretty well but the employers actually have to behave as employers and the unions have to behave as unions. They all have legitimate interests and collective bargaining is the way you work that out. It can include strikes or lockouts if the parties can't find any other way of solving their problems. No, I actually think it works works pretty well.

**PL** [00:51:15] How do you take the? The public sector is unique in that it's so public facing.

**PC** [00:51:23] Yeah. And paid for.

**PL** [00:51:28] How do you manage things like essential service and if you want to have a strike but you can't really do the kinds of things that you would normally do in a strike, shut

everything down and close the doors. In that respect, is there a level of complication in the nature of health care or is it the nature of the public sector that makes that kind of aspect of labour relations difficult to do?

**PC** [00:52:00] Yeah, the essential services, the whole concept is pretty fraught. You get labour relations people ultimately like the Labour Relations Board of British Columbia, making what really comes down to health care decisions about, what really is essential and so on. The unions can't agree. Some people have got a background in labour law to make the decision. They don't feel very comfortable. If you talk to past chairs of the labour board, they found that that very difficult and kind of nerve wracking to be responsible for potentially making decisions, actually making decisions potentially affecting human life. It's tough. What are the other alternatives? It's like Winston Churchill said about democracy, it's essential services in health care and in public sector generally, the worst of all systems except all the other ones.

**PL** [00:53:08] You are obviously active on the health care file. Were you also drawn into other aspects of public sector labour relations?

**PC** [00:53:17] Oh yeah. I was vice-president of the Public Sector Employers Council for a while, which dealt with the whole public sector. We were very active in briefing papers, the government and so on. Really, we took that centralized model and kind of brought it across the system. Social services, in most cases it was the employers were okay with it and the unions in most cases liked it because it was, CUPE is a classic example of social services. The funding is largely coming from the provincial government, but you got to go out and negotiate with each separate employer each time. Some of them are cranky. It's just enormously resource consuming for no good reason.

**PC** [00:54:15] The unions were generally pretty happy with the consolidation of bargaining, except the Teachers' Union. They were very unhappy with it, but all the others were pretty happy. In fact, I remember when I was, for a while I was appointed by the NDP to be the administrator of the Social Services Employers' Association. The board was suspended and Sharon's old union came and picketed my office one day demanding something or another, I act on something. What I think they wanted, they basically wanted to rationalize this bargaining. The monetary sources coming overwhelmingly from the government and why are we reinventing the wheel like 50 times with all these little bargaining things. Some from the employer sides, they felt pushed around from the union side. The nice employers were unhappy because they didn't like it and the bad employers were difficult to deal with. Everybody seemed to be unhappy. People on both sides were very happy with the putting together. I was appointed administrator of the employers' association in the sector. I was told that my mandate included writing some legislation to deal with what was perceived as being a bargaining mess, so that's what I did. I had big consultations with all kinds of people.

**PC** [00:55:56] They convinced me absolutely that you could not possibly put continuing the residential care together with the other services, and I believed them. They are separate segments within the employers' association. Two days into bargaining it was perfectly obvious that 95% of the collective agreement was going to be exactly the same. Everybody seems more or less happy with that outcome in terms of structure.

**PC** [00:56:31] The BCTF, no, not at all. Their locals were very important to their culture. The local officers are pretty big shots in that structure compared to most unions, where the local is relatively a smaller player. It was a pretty good deal for the BCTF. They'd find one

school district. This is before they're put into the one bargaining unit. They'd find one school district where they had former teachers making the entire board and they'd get a collective agreement there. Then they'd roll that one through the province. No wonder they're unhappy.

**PL** [00:57:21] It's also the case that there's this levelling up issue. Social services is a good example where you'd have difference. You'd have people doing essentially the same work, but there would be differences in pay, but to your point, the money's coming from the same source.

**PC** [00:57:42] Yeah. If it works the same and so on.

**PL** [00:57:46] Let's have a coherent way to make sure that the pay reflects the evenness and fairness thing that should flow back and forth.

**PC** [00:57:56] When the NDP, remember was the government of the day, and I'll let you take issue that they had a bargaining advantage in the hospitals, put up a picket line, create all kinds of havoc, they have a strong bargaining position. Okay, let's take that one and run with it, and then you're out in some alcohol and drug foundation in Princeton or something and they have no bargaining power whatsoever. Now it's, but you're NDP, this is the government. These are people, working people. Oh, okay. Now we're going on principle and sentiment, before we were going on power. Okay. The consequence to me, if the hospital negotiations are going to be setting the pattern for alcohol and drug foundation somewhere, we might as well have them in the same bargaining unit.

**PL** [00:58:55] The logic on the health care side and on the social services side, you could see how that would be in the middle. On the teacher's side, the notion of levelling up. Is it fair to say that isn't the same or it's just a function of how they operate democratically?

**PC** [00:59:18] The teachers, have you looked at teacher collective agreements? They're all different, like the different wage scales, and it's not like for a reason you could figure out, like this place way the hell up there, it's difficult to get teachers to go there. It should be higher. Lower Mainland rents are terrible. It should be higher. You can make a rational, but there's no rationale. You can, I challenge anybody to explain why there's different wage grids in the teachers' collective agreement along any kind of relationship to some reality, but that's their local collective agreement. If you have unlimited massage, that was what's her name's the premier of the day's favourite subject, Christy Clark's thing, with they have all this unlimited massage. No, maybe two locals have unlimited massage.

**PC** [01:00:16] If everybody had massage here and two locals had it here, and you said, 'Look, can we do it this?' 'No, no, you can do this, but you can't do this.' Yeah, because the one collective agreement that has the best provision anywhere, that's the model for the rest of them, we're not going to ever get that, so there was no common collective agreement in teacher bargaining. There's just a bargaining unit. Even the last two settlements, as I understand it, have taken, twice they've taken the bottom increment off and added another one at the top, which, to me it looks like this, but they didn't take the government of the day. Nobody had any interest, I guess, basically, in saying, while we're doing this, could we rationalize it across this sector? What's with all these different start rates and so on?

**PL** [01:01:16] Literally within each school district there were different collective agreements.

**PC** [01:01:19] Yes. There still are.

**PL** [01:01:22] Still are.

**PC** [01:01:25] Yeah.

**PL** [01:01:25] Different.

**PC** [01:01:26] It's called one collective agreement, like you take all these agreements and sew them together in one big thick book. You page through to find your school district's collective agreement. Theoretically, it's one bargaining unit, so that's that one collective agreement, just has a lot of chapters.

**PL** [01:01:41] Yeah. I'm now thinking about what your experience on the public sector side of things has informed your view about where you see the big challenges for the labour movement going forward.

**PC** [01:01:59] The labour movement going forward?

**PL** [01:02:01] Let's start there.

**PC** [01:02:06] The big challenge is in, we're running out of time? I'll talk faster. The big challenge is organizing in the private sector, right? We're following behind the United States in the unfortunate trajectory from the point of view of the union movement of this dwindling private sector unionism.

**PL** [01:02:32] Is the answer to that we just have to, the labour movement has to get serious about organizing? Or is it?

**PC** [01:02:40] Well my theory on that which has got no interest whatsoever from the labour movement, possibly because of some of my other activities over the years, is why not do the minority union thing? There's quite a few things a union can do that doesn't get certification. Certification is the goal, but you can do a lot for a group in a non-union situation. You can represent them in workers' compensation, employment standards stuff, advice. Why not? There's some legislative changes that could make a big difference. One of the ones, David Doorey, a prof from back east is promoting all the time is the American section seven of the National Labour Relations Act, which is 'protected concerted activity.' If you're in an American plant and you find that it's too cold, the furnace isn't working, everybody's really getting cold and it's likely to lead to accidents and so on, so you stop work. That's protective activity. It's an unfair labour practice to discipline anybody for that in a non-union setting. There's nothing comparable to that in Canada. Doorey says, 'Well, there should be.' I kind of agree with that.

**PC** [01:04:11] It's a hard sell for, any of the right wing governments are not going to do it and the NDP is afraid they'd be open to being attacked for being too soft on labour or whatever, so it doesn't happen. David Doorey has been banging that drum for quite a few years, and Roy Adams, from little academics. They're big academics. They're, haven't got much purchase for that stuff. My question was, why doesn't the union, because union activity is protected. Participation absent a union in trying to improve your working conditions isn't protected at all, but if you're undergoing union activity, you could have a member only at a Starbucks. If you needed somebody to come in and do something on a



health and safety thing, you can, don't have to disclose yourself to the employer, you can contact the union. The union can come in and say it's a problem here. There's stuff you could do. That might well lead to certification. You wouldn't have to be banging that drum all the time. You could kind of make yourself useful. I thought at the time, a union could charge a very low level of dues for members in that situation. You could have retired old farts like myself and others that would be willing to do stuff on behalf of non-union members. Just for the, keep your toe in.

**PL** [01:06:01] That concept of, the right to refuse is part of it.

**PC** [01:06:05] Yeah.

**PC** [01:06:06] I used to say it's an obligation to refuse. It's more than a right.

**PL** [01:06:09] Yeah. Okay. But just this notion of trying to seed the ground.

**PC** [01:06:15] Yeah.

**PL** [01:06:15] Or thinking collectively.

**PC** [01:06:17] Yeah.

**PL** [01:06:18] How do you do that?

**PC** [01:06:18] Yeah.

**PL** [01:06:19] Maybe if the labour movement were more strategic in the way it would pinpoint the use of that provision, it could put some success as.

**PC** [01:06:31] The card check certification thing, get a majority and get certified. You know, that works. It's just that it's a hard reform for the NDP to sell and seems to be. You know the appeal of saying, well what's wrong with having a vote.? It's tough to overcome that.

**PL** [01:06:58] Yeah. Democracy. We covered a lot of ground and.

**PC** [01:07:03] I never did get to talk about the Kenworth strike or the Gibraltar, Endako strikes.

**Sharon Prescott** [01:07:09] Go ahead.

**PL** [01:07:09] Go. Go for it. Give us the CAIMAW.

**Sharon Prescott** [01:07:12] We can edit stuff out.

**PC** [01:07:13] Okay.

**Sharon Prescott** [01:07:14] You don't want to have that whole piece of. It's.

**PC** [01:07:17] Okay.

**PL** [01:07:18] Let's. Let's do the Endako one.

**PC** [01:07:20] Okay. Gibraltar and Endako kind of go together because they're both Placer properties or they were in their day, and it's quite a yarn in itself. Gibraltar, they had a tumultuous labour relations background, and I need to take the little detour down why that is so in mining. The problem in mining is first of all, they don't last forever, mines, 15, 20 years. Twenty years is a long time for a mine. You're kind of having to start over, that's the nature of the field. Also, as Dave Barrett once said, metal doesn't go bad in the ground, so if the price of copper is low, an employer can take a unreasonably tough position at the bargaining table. They don't really care if it's a strike when the price of copper is low. When it goes back up again, they can operate, they can make more money. They didn't waste copper on low price returns. It's a tough industry.

**PC** [01:08:37] Aside from all of that, there was a thing that developed, I think probably in the Steel/Mine-Mill days when the mining companies were able to play one off against the other. They'd invite them in when the mine was starting, each, and say, what would you be looking for in a first collective agreement? They would basically negotiate the outline of a collective agreement before anybody was hired. The company would take the favoured union, the one with the lowest bid, and say, send ten or 12 guys up from the hiring hall, we'll have them do something around the property and you can apply for certification. That's literally what happened. I did a thing one time before the labour board because I was getting tired of hearing about a certification when I was pretty sure there was almost nobody on the property. I asked the board to provide information on all the certifications in the mining industry for the last whatever, 20 years, how many people were actually on the property when the union got certified. It was ridiculous, Fording Coal and 500 employees or something, got certified with 15, that kind of thing. Though these numbers are impressionistic, but that's the general drift, very small numbers.

**PC** [01:09:59] I know what happens because I was on one of those calls. I got called by the industrial relations manager of a mine opening up and said, 'I'd like to talk to you about what kind of a collective agreement, what you're looking for.' 'I can't talk to you about that. It's got to be some employees that I'm representing before I can have that kind of a discussion and I'll have it with my bargaining committee.' Somehow or another Steelworkers ended up getting the certification of the place. This was a period in the seventies, by the way, that was a high inflation period. We'd say, 5.9 is awful, but they were 10.7, 11, nine.

**PL** [01:10:44] Yeah.

**PC** [01:10:44] Yeah. These first collective agreements and sometimes like Craigmont had five years of a collective agreement signed when a handful of people were on the property and there was a bad collective agreement and five years could be a quarter of the life of the mine. Then the employees would get fed up and they'd call us, us being CAIMAW, then the Steelworkers or whoever would say, look at those dirty raiders, they never do the hard work of organizing the workers. I know how 'hard' that work was. I think it came out of the Mine-Mill/Steel days. I think both of them did it, but they kind of justified it ideologically, like the Steelworkers were going to save the world from communists, and the communists were going to save the world. They all felt justified in getting in there any way to get their toehold and build from there. It carries on.

**PC** [01:11:47] I actually brought along the Masters paper that a woman did, Pat Atherton was her name, on CAIMAW. She talked to mine managers and Lory Fairfield was the head, the vice president of industrial relations or something for Placer Development. He

was the mastermind behind and Lory was quite a character. He was oddly frank in his discussions with people, and we'll come back to him in the Endako context. He's talking to her and he says, she's actually got a quote. This is Fairfield talking to her, "The chief spokesman for the union meets with the chief spokesman for the company and they map out where they're going. Most of the contracts I've settled with the Steelworkers have been worked out beforehand. Before negotiations really get going, we go over the union demands of the leaders and what we're prepared to give them, and we work it out."

**PL** [01:12:58] That's handy.

**PC** [01:13:00] Yeah. That's how the first collective agreement gets, but that carries on. That's what's Fairfield saying and in fact he's criticizing CAIMAW for sort of being amateurish, for not going and doing the same thing with him. He gives an example in there, 'I'll say to the union, you know, we might be prepared to go for a COLA in this round,' the union rep, not the union bargaining committee. The union rep says, 'Okay but don't give it, don't offer it, we'll demand it.' Then they go in and go through this little play acting thing.

**PC** [01:13:40] That's what I was saying, the connection between nationalism and that, is like in the Moulders' Union, that was a different model. They just didn't do anything. I don't think, they went in and made a deal with the boss. I guess they they must have. They had collective agreements, but they just, this was back in Winnipeg. They didn't seem to be doing much of anything, like the workers were really. The workers connected that with, it's based in, I think the head office for some reason it's just south of Winnipeg in Minneapolis or something. They seemed to be absolutely non-existent as far as the workers and the plants were concerned, so that was a different model. The Steelworkers were not non-existent and Mine-Mill, they all run around doing all kinds of things, but still had this.

**PC** [01:14:31] Our theory was that the reason why workers join a union, amongst other things, is to have some control over their day to day life in the workplace, not to have somebody else bullshitting them about what their reality is. That became pretty obvious in this period of high inflation in the '70s. You sign a collective agreement at Craigmont, say, for five years and two years from then, it's an absolute stinker. The workers aren't happy. What can they do? There doesn't seem to be any reform that they can achieve within the union that they're in. Although I must say that one of the results of CAIMAW's activities is there was quite a bit of pulling up of socks in the servicing end from other unions. Initially they just thought, we're just treated like crap. That's probably got something to do with the headquarters being in the United States anyway. It was almost the other way around. The nationalism was kind of secondary to the initial discontent with the lack of perceived democracy. To the activists in the union, participating in bargaining, it's a big deal. You don't want to feel that you've been kind of manipulated through the process.

**PL** [01:16:00] You spend the weekend at a motel to find out, Oh, this is what.

**PC** [01:16:05] Yeah.

**PL** [01:16:05] I don't remember this.

**PC** [01:16:06] Yeah. That's the thing I was talking about Afton mine. I don't know if I mentioned the name, the one where I got invited in before the mine opened. The Steelworkers signed the first collective agreement and it was a terrible collective agreement. As soon as the first raiding season came, the people phoned us up and we

made some kind of preliminary meeting with a few people, and the employer offered to reopen the collective agreement and give everybody a raise.

**PC** [01:16:43] That was CAIMAW's kind of experience with. Sometimes we only suspected things went on but in Afton I knew, because as I say I was invited in. I'm sure the employers missed the old Mine-Mill/Steel days from that point of view because those unions were in fierce competition with each other. They were both prepared to do the deals to get the first certification.

**PC** [01:17:16] When we were called in at Endako by the group in the mine, the company then met with the Steelworkers, not a bargaining committee with staff rep, Bill Rudichuk was the staff rep, and agreed to reopen the collective agreement in a way that changed the open season, seventh and eighth month for raiding. Then the Steelworkers said that our raid was out of time because of the new reopened collective agreement. Unfortunately for that theory, the workers turned down the new reopened collective agreement. Then they went off to some, who this guy was, a retired judge supposedly, to do a recount. Amazingly, it passed after all.

**PC** [01:18:06] It was so phony. We went to the board on that, and the board did not accept that was a valid collective agreement that created a new open season. We had a vote and we beat them. That was the first of many happy interactions with Placer Development.

**PL** [01:18:28] That led to a new collective agreement with the bargaining units certified by CAIMAW?

**PC** [01:18:35] Yes. I'd have to go to my little cheat list of the sequence of these things. The big blow up with Placer was '78, '79. We had a 34 week lockout and strike at Gibraltar and then a 36 week strike at Endako immediately afterwards. It was quite a go around. The case of Gibraltar was interesting because the price of copper was very low at that time, so the mine didn't really mind that much, but they didn't want to lock us out because the community doesn't like that. They want to blame somebody and they'll blame the company if it's a lockout. They didn't want to do that, so they called our shop stewards' committee in and said, okay, now the collective agreement's over and here's what we're going to do. They had little booklets out, some things crossed out. We're not going to do this. We're not going to do that. We'll do this. There it is. That's your new collective agreement. They were absolutely, they were a very militant local. They're absolutely certain that they'd walk off the job. I had this meeting with a, 'We're not walking out the door with copper at this price. It's better to be working.' We can take a little bit of crap now because otherwise we're going to be down to picket pay, so let's just suck it up. We went to the labour board and complained about this unilateral change to the terms and conditions of employment.

**PC** [01:20:13] At the labour board, I said to the... I was counsel. I was on the board at one point for four or five years on the labour board, so I had that stuff to do in addition to organizing, servicing and so on. Busy boy. I said at the labour board, you know what, this is just an attempt to avoid a lockout by a company that hasn't got the guts to take the decent thing that any company would do and lock us out.

**PC** [01:20:48] So they locked us out, so then we had a lockout. The reality is that they were going to come around to that position, but I thought I'd rub it into them a little bit first. That went on for, I think, half of the 34 weeks and then the copper price started to go up. In those days, I was actually pretty good at figuring out copper prices. It's not so mysterious.

There used to be a publication called Metals Week out of New York. I talked to the guy all the time because he was interested in what I knew about, like, molybdenum production. Is that mine going to go down? I'd ask him all kinds of things. You can see the copper was overhanging them. When the copper prices are high, everybody starts producing copper. It's capitalism gone nuts. Then they get great backlogs of copper and the price crashes.

**PC** [01:21:44] You can see that it was coming down and soon the price was going to start going up. Sure enough, it did. Then said, okay, the lockout is over, everybody can come back now. Meanwhile, the workers have dispersed to mines throughout Western Canada and so on. We don't want them coming back when the dispute is still on so we immediately said we're on strike. Now we're on strike instead. At the end of this thing, the company then actually wanted to get the strike over and production going again so they actually had to give up some real stuff in the collective agreement. We kind of won. After that, they were really out. They did, first of all, the whole strike, the bargaining committee, they fired. The settlement was they fired them first. Then during the settlement, the company said you can always take it to arbitration, so I kind of proposed, I said, 'We'll go to arbitration, but they won't be fired. Whether or not they'll be fired will be on the arbitrator. The arbitrator will decide whether they are fired or not.' Now, you know, arbitrators don't mind leaving an employer decision in place, but they don't want to do it themselves. It was Ed Peck. Remember Ed Peck?

**PL** [01:23:06] Yes.

**PC** [01:23:06] Yeah. The labour movement was all over Ed Peck, but I have this one thing to say for Ed Peck. He reinstated everybody, including one person who was found criminally guilty of misuse of a firearm.

**PC** [01:23:25] I said to him at some point after that, 'That was pretty gutsy.' He said, 'You know, I heard way more than the court heard, and your guy was lying, but they were absolutely lying.' The reason my guy was lying is the only way he could have defended himself in court was by saying who did it, so he wasn't going to rat him out.

**PL** [01:23:47] Oh.

**PC** [01:23:49] He reinstated everybody. Then one guy, Richard Jaffrey was his name, he'd been 29 days of work before the strike started. The probationary period said you had to work 30 days before it was over. He was in the bar with some boys, and a company guy was at the nearby table, and he said, 'You know, when my probationary period is over, I'm going to become a shop steward and make some waves around here.' That morning, the mine manager drove up at shift start to fire him before he stepped on the property. That went to arbitration. He was reinstated like so many people got reinstated. The company was so gross, that they kind of pissed off arbitrators.

**PC** [01:24:43] Next they, I'll say invited in, the Operating Engineers would deny it, no doubt. The company decided to sponsor a raid, so they hired some organizers from the Operating Engineers. They put them on various shifts and they could switch back and forth wherever they wanted to go and try and sign people up. That was very unpopular with the workers. They got packed out of town. I don't know the details, but they left town.

**PC** [01:25:11] The next thing they did, they started a company union. The company did. We heard rumblings about a company union starting. We got some guy, one of our members from the Lower Mainland was a tradesman, which is hard for the mine to get in

the aftermath of a strike, to go into the company and apply to go work at Gibraltar mines. He went up and then he went to a meeting of all these guys and there were 30 strikebreakers from the previous employees and a whole bunch of new employees hired. It was a meeting of these people about their employee association. This guy said, the problem, you're never going to get anywhere. The problem with you guys is you're all scabs. What you need is somebody like me as your president. He became the president of the employee association. Fun and games. There's nothing but fun. A lot of heartache, but not a lot, and interesting stuff.

**PC** [01:26:21] Then Endako right after that. Molybdenum was, the price was gone sky high. Lory Fairfield always said to us, 'You're going to have to take in your belt because the price of copper is so low.' 'I guess we can let our belt out now.' Then he said, 'Pete, here's the thing you don't understand. We have clauses, force majeure clauses, where we don't have to fulfil our contract if there's a labour dispute. The spot price now is three times as high as our contract price, so if we can produce a third of production while you're on strike, declare force majeure, we can go on forever.'

**PC** [01:27:11] The bargaining committee says, well, we'll see about that. We went on strike. They tried operating and we picketed everything, picketed BC Rail, wouldn't carry the ore down to the port, picketed the Port of Vancouver. They ended up driving this molybdenum from Fraser Lake to Calgary and flying it to Japan. You can see the price of all that's going up enormously. Then we used to follow along behind this convoy going to Calgary. Every time they tried to get gas, we'd picket the gas station. Gas station owners didn't like that, and didn't like the company creating this problem for them. The company had to hire fuel trucks to go along with this convoy, and then they had to hire security guards with cameras and so on to follow along in case something were to happen to this convoy. This enormous convoy was going through town and off to Calgary. Then there was an event about which I know no details, except that the electrical pylons going to the mine came down and the mine and BC Hydro couldn't get anybody to cross the picket line to redress the problem. The company had to rent diesel generators to create electricity to power the trucks that their strikebreakers were using. This was becoming expensive for them.

**PL** [01:28:57] They had a significant strikebreaker group in there?

**PL** [01:28:59] Yeah, they had the management people and they had kind of bulked up the management with people from other properties before the strike started. They weren't very good. The workers know how to do the job, not the management. Really, in a mine, that's so much the case. They were having lots of problems and then Securiguard was hired to have people secure the property. We had somebody go down and get hired by Securiguard, sent to Endako so we knew everything that was going on inside.

**PL** [01:29:42] Very good. So. Okay, because.

**PC** [01:29:45] You're running out of time. I'm running out of time.

**PL** [01:29:47] Okay. Okay, quickly.

**PC** [01:29:49] That's it.

**PL** [01:29:50] CAIMAW.

**PC** [01:29:51] What about it?

**PC** [01:29:52] What was it?

**PC** [01:29:55] Kenworth was a strike over pay equity for seven data process.

**PL** [01:30:02] You know, we did this one. Is there where you want to add to that one?

**PC** [01:30:06] Well as a yarn of course but it's a timely yarn and you're running out of time so it followed a organizing campaign and of the data processing women. They were included in the main plant bargaining unit, which was a groundbreaking decision by Donald R. Munroe that you could draw a line around it feasibly, so he put them in. We went to arbitration for their rates and the arbitrator didn't make a decision for months until we threatened to picket the plant. He made a decision four days later, and shafted them. That was the issue and the strike was bring these people up and the company refused. We said, we'll settle the strike. We'll settle our proposed strike, our upcoming strike, if you'll just give them, put them on the main plant progression. You can take a penny off everybody, take a penny off it all. There's only seven of them, there's 450 or whatever of the main plant. You can easily without any great suffering to your bottom line give us the demands. If you don't, if a strike goes on, we're going to have to have something for everybody. Other things will come back on the table, which they did. Months later, the company really lost that strike quite badly. They had to give a whole bunch of things that they wouldn't have had to give. The main point of the thing was that was a strike that went on for nine months for basically pay equity.

**PL** [01:31:47] For seven women.

**PC** [01:31:48] For seven women. Margaret Mitchell actually referred to it the next year, Member of Parliament for Vancouver East, in Parliament on the debate on the charter provision for equality.

**PL** [01:32:00] Very good.

**PC** [01:32:00] Yeah, that's neat. That deserves to be better known. I was annoyed at Rod for not putting that story in the labour history. He said, 'Well, Pete, everybody says that they had the most groundbreaking pay equity dispute.' I said, 'I know, but look at them all skeptically.'

**PL** [01:32:22] It was in Hansard.

**PC** [01:32:24] Yes.