

**Interview: Anne Harvey (AH)**

**Interviewer: Phil Legg (PL)**

**Date: June 6, 2023**

**Location: Burnaby, BC**

**Transcription: Jane Player**

**PL [00:00:05]** Great. Anne Harvey, thank you so much for taking time to be part of our oral history project here at the Labour Heritage Centre. What I'd like to do is start by getting you to talk a little bit about the early years of Anne Harvey, where you grew up, and what were some of the early influences?

**AH [00:00:28]** I grew up in Manchester, which as you know, is an industrial city. It was the heart of the Industrial Revolution in Britain. It's where Marx—sorry, where Engels came and wrote about the future, what the industrial future was going to look like—and it was like that. It was a very dirty city when I grew up. It was later they banned coal, but everybody burnt coal in their houses, so the air was sooty and Lancashire had—I think it must be a record number of smokestacks. I mean, everywhere you look there was smokestacks for different industries. It was very industrial, and Mancunians have a really interesting culture. They're very cocky; they challenge everything. They really like test you. If you make a claim, you've got to prove it. They're very practical and liked—they're very interested in change because they've been at the forefront of change for 200, 300 years in engineering and all kinds of chemicals, all kinds of industries. So that's where I grew up. My father was a pattern maker, which is the group of (I don't know what you call them here), but they make the moulds to make the parts to make the machineries. An absolute key industry. He never was educated past grade seven, but he, and looking back, he had ADHD, which runs in the family.

**AH [00:02:19]** He became a tremendous leader in his industry. He started out in the back room of my parents' rental two up, two down. It was two rooms in the bottom, two rooms in the top. He started his woodworking business in the back room and my mother sewed clothes piecework in the front room to support them while they started the business. Yeah, no amazing stuff. I was born in that tenement. It was a tenement and, you know, toilets were in the middle of the courtyard. My father became very successful in the industry. He ran the National Apprenticeship Program. He was the chair of the National Apprenticeship Program for his industry. He eventually got an order of the British Empire, and he was never more proud. When he retired, there was a huge dinner for him, and they gave him a card that had like a crowded courtyard and two balconies looking on to this courtyard from opposite sides. Somebody said—underneath it said, 'What's the crowd? Is it the pope? No, it's Joe Harvey.'

**AH [00:03:46]** They were very proud of him. He brought in a lot of innovation, and he invested in apprentices from all over the world. They came. That was my background. My father always believed in unions, not that he'd ever been a member of one. In fact, as an employer, because he ended up having 400 people in his employ, he in his factory, he often had to negotiate with unions. He hated the politics of it, but he did believe unions were important to protect people's rights. He said you have to have unions to protect people's rights. That was my background.

**PL [00:04:33]** Wow. That's deep.

**AH** [00:04:37] (laughter) It was very formative, you know, those kind of things. I adored my father. He was so smart, so positive, you know. I learnt a lot from him.

**PL** [00:04:48] The industry was?

**AH** [00:04:49] Pattern making. It's a kind of engineering. It's more technical—the technology side of engineering. My father brought in the computer, the early CAD (Computer-Aided Design). He brought in an enormous piece of machinery from Germany when nobody said you could. It would be too big, and it wouldn't be economic. He did a lot of innovation.

**PL** [00:05:14] That's amazing.

**AH** [00:05:16] That's where I grew up. My dad and I—I didn't see him very often. He worked all hours. He worked six and a half days a week his whole life. When I did see him, we would have really good conversations about our ideas. Whenever I made a declaration, as one is likes to do, particularly when you're younger. Later you get a bit ginger about doing that. When he—when I would make a declaration, he would say, 'Now how do you think the other guy felt about that?'

**PL** [00:05:51] Oh, wow.

**AH** [00:05:53] Yeah. He always, always directed me not just to think about what I thought of it, but did anybody else think of it, you know. That was important too. He was a wonderful guy. I learnt a lot from him. I think he was probably very sad when I came to Canada.

**PL** [00:06:14] What drew you to Canada?

**AH** [00:06:16] Oh, what drew me to Canada was the class system. The class system in the U.K. It's still very strong and particularly in some parts, some activities. Back then it was stifling. We were—I married a guy from Liverpool, and he had a very strong Liverpool accent, so he couldn't get promoted. I mean, they actually said, 'Well, we can't promote you, you've got a Liverpool accent.'

**AH** [00:06:50] So my kids—It was the early seventies and the economy had gone down the tube. He wanted us to move to London where he thought he might get a promotion. I didn't want to go to London because we would end up living 30 miles out of London because of the cost, and I'd never see him and the kids would, and we'd be stranded. Then my son came home from the local elementary, which was a Church of England Elementary. It's just the local government school. He said, 'Mum, what does Dad do? Everybody at school keeps asking me.' (laughter) For some reason that was the switch that flipped me. I said, 'No, we've got to move away from England.' We had talked about going to another country in our middle age, but we weren't middle aged at this point, late twenties. That did it because my son, looking back, had ADHD. They didn't diagnose it then, but he was having real trouble at school. This one comment solidified—I'd been trying to get help for him, and I wasn't getting help from him, and I realized that we were up against a really snooty school system, and we couldn't do anything about it. So, he was having trouble. My husband was having trouble. I was—so I said, 'Forget London, let's go to Canada.' My sister was here, she was living—she had come here with her husband, a Dutch husband. They had split up and she had made a new guy from Mexico. My sister was here, and she was—she could sponsor us.

**PL** [00:08:55] Right.

**AH** [00:08:56] Right? At that point, you just had to know somebody. The immigration people were absolutely thrilled to have my husband and I because we were what they were looking for. We were late twenties. We both had degrees and we had young kids that was—.

**PL** [00:09:13] Tick, tick, tick.

**AH** [00:09:14] You know, at that time you could get in really easily. We said, 'well'—they said, 'Where do you want to go?' We said, 'Well, we don't know.' The guy said, 'Well, you've got a sister in Vancouver, it's the best place. Go there.' (laughter) That's how we ended up in Vancouver, right? That's how we ended there. So yes, very scientific.

**AH** [00:09:36] And to make—we didn't have jobs. We came without jobs. We sold our house. Couldn't move the money out of the country, so my father loaned us some. Well, because of the they put economic restrictions on.

**PL** [00:09:52] Yeah.

**AH** [00:09:55] My father loaned us some money and we came to Canada. My husband got a job. Took me a little longer. You know, we made the journey across the long way because I said, 'We'll never have time to do it again.' So we took the boat from—

**PL** [00:10:17] South Hampton or?

**AH** [00:10:18] From Southampton to Montreal and then got the train from Montreal. Yeah. The kids thought they died and gone to heaven; they made a scrapbook of the journey.

**PL** [00:10:29] Oh, that is so sweet.

**AH** [00:10:31] Yeah, I know. It's fabulous. When we got to Vancouver, we lived on UBC [University of British Columbia] Endowment lands in the student housing in my sister's basement for—until we could get somewhere to live. The kids started school out there at UBC Elementary School. It was like night and day. My kids loved it because, like, one of the first field trips they went on was to Ucluelet. I mean. Oh, I mean, they couldn't believe it. 'This is what you do at school!' (laughter) 'Wow!'

**AH** [00:11:11] They had a fabulous program, a special ed program. They diagnosed what was the reading difficulties my son was having and gave him special help. It was night and day, and this was just when Dave Barrett had put in after school care subsidies so my kids could go to after school care while I looked for a job. It didn't cost—.

**PL** [00:11:37] An arm and a leg.

**AH** [00:11:38] No, I mean, we—I was here two weeks and then we said, 'Will you go back? Never. No, I mean, I'll go to visit.'

**PL** [00:11:48] Yeah.

**AH** [00:11:48] There's no way. Yeah. And it's so beautiful compared with such an industrial city.

**PL** [00:11:53] True. Yeah.

**AH** [00:11:54] Yeah.

**PL** [00:11:55] You would have come at—.

**AH** [00:11:56] Yeah.

**PL** [00:11:56] That would have been an ideal time.

**AH** [00:11:58] Oh, it was perfect time to come, and Vancouver was truly a garden city at that point. You know, there wasn't as—nothing like as busy as it is now. I remember going into Eaton's, which was at Granville, the corner of Granville, and there was nobody in the store. I'm going, 'This is huge store. Where's the people?' because I was used to shopping in Manchester where you're all [moves to indicate shoulder to shoulder], trying to get through the crowds to get to the store you want to go to, you know. It was—we thought we'd died and gone to heaven. My husband, at the time, he actually, he was, yeah, he missed England somewhat. Later after we split up, he went back a couple of times and lived there.

**PL** [00:12:42] You're kidding?

**AH** [00:12:43] Yeah. More common. Yeah.

**PL** [00:12:46] What he missed was?

**AH** [00:12:50] I don't know. You know, there's a lot of good things about England. The people are wonderful. The humour is incredible. (laughter) It's a way of life, you know. I don't know what he missed, but he did. Yeah.

**PL** [00:13:05] Just in terms of moving into the world of work, where did—.

**AH** [00:13:10] I was a journalist when I came to Vancouver. I had worked in a couple of weekly newspapers. I had started into journalism late because I went and did a degree in sociology, and it took me a while to get somebody to take me on as an apprentice journalist, but I finally did. I'd done a couple of years in journalism and just started doing radio pieces, and I had a good voice for radio, so it was what I wanted to do. When we came to Canada, I looked for work in radio and they wouldn't accept me because I had a British accent. (laughter) It was just when the Constitution was being repatriated. I went and tried to change my accent and I did manage a little bit. I went to a voice coach, but I wasn't very good at it, so I didn't do it.

**AH** [00:14:06] Then I tried to get a job in print journalism, and I did get two, three temporary jobs. The longest one was at the Sun [Vancouver Sun] for a year, but it was only a summer, you know. Then I was out of work for a while, and I'd been doing some stories about—do you remember when they were trying to put (what were they?) raceways, throughways through Vancouver? There was a big campaign against it, and I'd written some stories about it for the Sun. One of the people in that group of community

activists told me there was a job at BC Hydro in their communications department, and it was to write the employee newspaper.

**PL** [00:15:00] Yes, Right.

**AH** [00:15:01] I got the job writing the employee newspaper, and during that time, I also got divorced. I was writing the employee newspaper, and I thought it was rather boring. You had to boldface the names of the managers, right? Anybody in management got their name boldface, you know. I decided to institute a change and started both facing the employees and not the managers.

**PL** [00:15:36] How did that go over?

**AH** [00:15:38] Well, you know, nobody said anything. They were all very polite, but there was a lot of kerfuffle up above me. One of the managers had written a story about—who was a Scot and wrote poetry and all kinds of stuff—warned me that I better start looking because he thought that people were upset, even though they hadn't said that to me. He suggested—there was an opening at the union, "Why didn't I go there?' I went to the OTEU [Office and Technical Employees' Union] as the newspaper editor. They hadn't had a newspaper before. It was the first newspaper.

**PL** [00:16:20] This is the local? Local 15?

**AH** [00:16:23] No, 378.

**PL** [00:16:26] 378?

**AH** [00:16:27] Yeah, well, it was Hydro and ICBC [Insurance Corporation of British Columbia].

**PL** [00:16:30] ICBC had been folded into—yeah.

**AH** [00:16:31] Yeah. I went to the OTEU, and after a couple of months I found that—and I really enjoyed it. I went round interviewing members and doing stories and whatever. After, (I think it was three or four months), I heard that the president had never wanted a newspaper and he didn't like this news going out. (laughter)

**PL** [00:17:01] Yeah.

**AH** [00:17:03] I didn't realize that the executive had voted for this newspaper and kind of—.

**PL** [00:17:10] oh, right.

**AH** [00:17:12] Yes, and he hadn't been able to stop it. So, there I was yet again writing a newsletter that nobody wanted.

**PL** [00:17:20] Well, somebody didn't like. Yeah.

**AH** [00:17:21] That somebody didn't like because it involved the people too much, so he told me that I had to become a business rep. That's what they called them in the OTEU and do grievances. I says, 'Oh, well, I've never done that before. I don't mind, but I, you

know, you're not using me for what I'm good at. What I'm trained at is journalism, but yeah, okay, fine.' He put me as a business rep and had me create—oh, and work with the stewards. I put together a training program, a steward training program and worked and, and did some—I really enjoyed being a business rep. I organized a glass factory, out in Burnaby, of foreman and took it to the Labour Board and argued the case that they should be included because they really didn't have managerial authority. Any decision they made had to be—and we won that case. We got a new local, a new bargaining unit, and I did another one with a car rental agency. I was doing all these, and every now and then the president would get annoyed that this group was getting too—.

**PL** [00:18:48] Uppity.

**AH** [00:18:49] And then he'd move me. (laughter)

**PL** [00:18:52] He hoped that somehow, you'd do a face planter.

**AH** [00:18:55] [unclear] I don't know what he thought. He wasn't very strategic. Anyway, after I'd been there, I think—and then I met my second husband, had another baby while I was there, was pregnant on the picket line for the glass plant. Oh, that was fun.

**PL** [00:19:19] Yeah.

**AH** [00:19:21] We went into court. They did an injunction to stop us, so we had to go and argue it with Eric Harris, who was representing the employer (laughter) and a week later, I had the second baby. About, I think it was six years in to the OTEU, there was an election. I'd been moved around, and I knew a lot of people throughout the union, and I'd run the job steward training and, you know, I knew people were not happy. They didn't feel like we were representing them very well.

**PL** [00:20:08] Yeah.

**AH** [00:20:10] They thought the union had essentially taken a buy. [unclear] I thought, 'Well, hey, I'm going to run for president.' I had no idea what I was doing. Nobody on the executive supported me, and nobody on the staff supported me, as I found out once I launched my campaign. I was running essentially against, you know, the entire works, but I thought, 'Well, it's an adventure.' I've always liked adventure.

**PL** [00:20:51] You have that right.

**PL** [00:20:52] You can't travel a lot when you have kids. I never would've been able to travel a lot, not as much as I would like, but it was an adventure. I didn't really expect to win. I just—it was an adventure, and it was something I believed in because I knew what people wanted, and I wrote it in my campaign literature. Some people came forward to help me from the members. A communications person from ICBC, who was a member of the union, helped me put together stuff, and we had quite a nice organizing group, and it was really quite fun. It was—there was a couple of tense moments. There were some—yeah—there were some nasty, nasty cartoons and stuff sent in the mail. Really misogynistic. Graphic sexual penetration kind of stuff. It would— those were not nice, but by large, it was a good experience because people were very keen to talk.

**PL** [00:21:58] Yeah.

**AH** [00:22:01] Yeah, I won. (laughter) I won. You've never seen such surprise and upset on people's faces in that union office. They were, like, dumbstruck. The president had got worried about halfway through the campaign and withdrew and put his picked successor in instead, into running—a guy called Franz Ruble. Franz was really nice guy and really smart, but he hadn't talked to the members.

**PL** [00:22:43] Yeah, right.

**AH** [00:22:44] All he knew was the president's ideas of how to do things.

**PL** [00:22:49] Yeah.

**AH** [00:22:52] Yeah, so, I won and (laughter) there's all kinds of comments, you know, the vice president of the OTEU, who being one of the most staunch opponents, said, "Well, it wasn't just because you were a woman, we were against you." (laughter) [unclear] 'Oh, yeah, okay.' Right.

**PL** [00:23:20] You win as president. Is there a slate with you or is that—

**AH** [00:23:23] No.

**PL** [00:23:24] No. You're just—

**AH** [00:23:25] You see, they had—it was an old business model. The president appointed the business agents, who were not elected. Then there was a council that met twice a year which had, oh, I don't know, 20, 40 people on it. Some of those people were helping me.

**PL** [00:23:53] Yeah. Stewarts from different—

**AH** [00:23:55] Yeah. But the board—how did the board get elected? There must have been board elections. I don't know. I don't remember how the board got elected but there was a small board. Right. Yeah, so it was very—the president was both the chief operating officer and the political president. It was both roles in one.

**PL** [00:24:18] Yeah.

**AH** [00:24:18] Right. I didn't have a slate, and I remember the women's movement in B.C. went insane when I got elected, and sent me all kinds of cards and invited me to go to an event and—

**PL** [00:24:36] So, within the broader B.C labour movement, you would have been a rarity in terms of an elected woman in this—

**AH** [00:24:43] Oh my God, yes. Yeah. I was the only one at the time. I remember going to I don't know what it was some kind of event where they invited me to speak and I said to them, 'Well, listen, guys, you know, this is a great win, but it's not going to be for long. You know. (laughter) I got no support on the board and no support in the office, so I'm really in the heavy seas here. So it's going to be—but it's a big win. We should just enjoy it while we can. Right? [unclear]. Yes.

**PL** [00:25:24] Just in terms of the business reps, could you change any of those or was that you were locked into?

**AH** [00:25:32] Oh, no you couldn't—well you had to have good reasons to fire them. Eventually, I did fire one. It became a defamation suit, and I lost it, and I lost the presidency because of it. That was six years later.

**PL** [00:25:46] Yeah, six years. That's a good run.

**AH** [00:25:48] I did. Yeah. Six years was a good run, especially given what I started with. (laughter) It did change the union. It did become more in touch, more—it did become better.

**PL** [00:26:02] Yeah. Well, there's nothing like a unexpected election outcome to move—.

**AH** [00:26:06] Oh, really shook things up. Some of the business agents did over a period of a couple of years, kind of come to terms with that and were cooperative. One particularly wasn't. Yeah.

**PL** [00:26:24] Your term was from when to when?

**AH** [00:26:29] I think it was May to April, something like that.

**PL** [00:26:33] Years?

**AH** [00:26:34] Oh, three years, so I did two terms.

**PL** [00:26:37] Two terms and what—this was 1980 something or other—I'm just trying to get a sense of what would have been going on in terms of bargaining with the employers over that six year period.

**AH** [00:26:55] It I would have been '85 or '86.

**AH** [00:26:59] The tail end of Vander Zalm?

**AH** [00:27:02] Yeah. Vander Zalm was in. Yeah. I remember going to the legislature and when he was in. Yeah, I went with Ken Georgetti. (laughter) We went to try and persuade him on some legislation.

**PL** [00:27:15] Well was this the—whatever that famous bill was that we did the general strike.

**AH** [00:27:21] No, that was Bennett. No, Vander Zalm was something else. I don't remember.

**PL** [00:27:27] We did a—the general strike, it was just a half a day. It was in June. My recollection was it was like '87, '88, somewhere in there.

**AH** [00:27:39] Operation Solidarity?

**PL** [00:27:41] No, that was in the—that was '83—but this was—.



**AH** [00:27:48] It might have been labour code changes or something. We were trying to persuade him, and I remember Ken, Georgetti saying to him, 'Well, think about it like this Bill. What if Lillian (laughter)—

**PL** [00:27:59] Oh my god.

**AH** [00:28:01] (laughter) Vander Zalm just [raises arm] and walked out of the room and we never saw him again. It was hilarious, but he was very, very touchy. Yes.

**PL** [00:28:11] But he was—I mean, not a competent leader. I'm talking about Vander Zalm.

**AH** [00:28:16] No, it wasn't.

**PL** [00:28:17] Yeah.

**AH** [00:28:18] No, he wasn't competent. No. Very—well he's like Trump. Populist.

**PL** [00:28:23] Yeah.

**AH** [00:28:24] Not competent.

**PL** [00:28:25] Yeah. The last—Whatever idea was lost in his head was what came out as [unclear] policy—

**AH** [00:28:29] Yeah, exactly, and he kept changing his mind.

**PL** [00:28:32] Yeah. There was a time in the middle eighties, the '86 woodworkers strike when he was—he decided that he was smart enough to intervene in that and it was a disaster. He just—I mean, it was one of those moments when not only the union was upset with him, but the employer community was outraged.

**AH** [00:28:53] Yeah, caused chaos.

**PL** [00:28:55] Yeah.

**AH** [00:28:56] Yeah.

**PL** [00:28:58] So, that was your experience—

**AH** [00:29:00] Beginning.

**PL** [00:29:02] In terms of active politics. Where to from there?

**AH** [00:29:06] From the OTEU?

**PL** [00:29:07] Yeah.

**AH** [00:29:08] I did two terms at the OTEU. Lost the second term and from there I went back to B.C. Hydro because I had a leave of absence—

**PL** [00:29:18] Oh, yes, right, a union.

**AH** [00:29:19] Yes, a union leave of absence. I went back to BC Hydro for about a year, and which was a very—it was very boring and they couldn't decide what to do with me. Communications had become excluded function, so they didn't want to put me in an excluded position.

**PL** [00:29:41] Oh, right, yeah.

**AH** [00:29:44] It was actually quite useful because it was just when personal computers were coming in. So I got to spend a lot of time on both Macs and, you know, and PCs so I kind of learned some new computer skills. Then the nurses' union were looking for a new chief operating officer, so I applied for that. A friend mentioned it to me, and I applied for that, and I got hired on by the nurses union.

**PL** [00:30:15] Interesting. Wow.

**AH** [00:30:16] Yeah.

**PL** [00:30:17] So now this is diving into health care in a big way.

**AH** [00:30:20] Yeah. No. I was totally new to it, and they asked me what was going to be the problems in the— what did I think would be their problems in the next couple of years. What would the COO have to, you know, work on. I said I thought they were going to have layoffs and that they needed to think about this whole reorganization of health care. Apparently, the previous, the other applicants had all said, oh they had to look at women's issues (laughter)—

**PL** [00:30:57] Oh right, yeah.

**AH** [00:30:59] And the nurses were a lot more pragmatic than that.

**PL** [00:31:01] Yeah.

**AH** [00:31:02] I went layoffs—okay. (laughter) That happened, turned out to be prophetic. Not that I, you know, knew a lot, but I just reading the signs. I ended up working with Carmela Allevato and, oh god, from the HSA [Health Sciences Association].

**AH** [00:31:27] Oh, Cindy Stuart.

**AH** [00:31:28] No.

**PL** [00:31:29] Prior to her?

**AH** [00:31:30] Yeah.

**PL** [00:31:30] Oh, Peter Cameron, wasn't it.

**AH** [00:31:32] No, prior to that.

**PL** [00:31:34] Oh, my gosh. Well, you got me there.

**AH** [00:31:35] Maureen—wasn't Maureen Whalen—Maureen somebody else.

**PL** [00:31:42] No, it'll come to me. Two a.m. in the morning. I'll phone you.

**AH** [00:31:46] Yes. She had red hair. Tall and slim. Yes, with red hair. She was wonderful. She is from the Maritimes. She was great. S.

**PL** [00:31:58] Right.

**AH** [00:31:58] The three of us—so, I was elected first, then Carmela. I came into the BCNU [British Columbia Nurses' Union]. Carmela, was in the HEU [Hospital Employees' Union] as the chief—as the president—so the chief negotiator—

**PL** [00:32:11] Yeah.

**AH** [00:32:12] And Maureen was the chief negotiator for the HSA, and they never had a woman before. There we are, three women, the only three women in the labour movement in these kinds of positions. We started working together, and that's how we came up with the idea of having a labour agreement that would moderate the influence of layoffs because health care was moving from being focused on hospitals to realizing that you had to have hospitals linked to long term care and community care to make the system work better for patients. There was a huge push to bring down the number of patient days per 100,000 of population, which would have meant we did the work in the nurses union to estimate it. I'm a great data person, so everywhere I go I had data people and we had a data person. He estimated that we would lose 2,000 jobs in nursing with the changes that were being proposed by the NDP government.

**PL** [00:33:32] Yeah, this was—so you had the—there was a royal commission that the—

**AH** [00:33:37] Royal Commission on Closer to Home [Royal Commission on Health Care and Costs], which happened just before I started with the nurses union.

**PL** [00:33:42] And it happened just before Harcourt became Premier. They basically picked up the file after that.

**AH** [00:33:48] Yeah, but Glen Clark actually was the one that was masterminding the whole negotiation.

**PL** [00:33:56] For them the template was the shutting down of Shaughnessy.

**AH** [00:34:01] No, that was just one part of it. No, the whole thing was bringing down the number of patient days. Shaughnessy was one piece. It would take a bunch of patient days out, but it wasn't the only thing. It was going to go across the province. Right? Yeah, shutting Shaughnessy was— it didn't work anyway.

**PL** [00:34:21] But the Health Labour Adjustment Agency. Yeah. Was part of this—

**AH** [00:34:27] The health—what we bargained the Health Labour Adjustment Agency and a framework for layoffs.

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

**AH** [00:34:35] Right, but more importantly, we bargained a reduction in the workweek for the same pay.

**PL** [00:34:42] Very good.

**AH** [00:34:43] Right?

**PL** [00:34:44] Wow.

**AH** [00:34:44] So an increase in the hourly rate, A reduction in the number of hours.

**PL** [00:34:50] Yeah.

**AH** [00:34:51] Right, so people got the same pay for less hours.

**PL** [00:34:56] Right.

**AH** [00:34:57] That saved a ton of money. A ton of jobs, and so then that was the basis. Then what happened was the labour adjustment agreement said that you had to look for people who had more than X amount of seniority. You had to look for options; they could bump. You had to give them temporary work and refer them to the Labour Adjustment Agency who would find them a job in another location. They had to—they could move 80 kilometres and all that. It was huge framework. Huge framework. We bargained all that as three unions, and it was a really fascinating process. We tried for months to get this shorter working week in. You know, I remember when we finally got to talk to Glen Clark personally and explain it to him, I knew we got it because, you know, when you're negotiating, you get that click in some of these eyes, and, you know they got the message. He got the message of why this would be good because it would save 2,000 nursing jobs, X number of jobs for the HSA, X number of—and achieve the same goal, which was reducing the acute care beds. This is what they were trying to do, Reduce the acute care beds. It was a wonderful experience. Once in a lifetime. I don't think I've had such a lot of fun at the bargaining table that I never would have dreamed of. It's kind of interesting. I remember when I was doing the employee newspaper at BC Hydro, one of the interviews I did was with the IBEW (International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers] bargaining committee and they explained to me about bargaining. I went, 'Oh, that's fascinating. How wonderful. You can ask for things. (laughter) I always liked jobs where you can ask for things. Being a journalist is fun too because you can ask questions, and people think it's normal. They don't get offended because you are a journalist, and so you can ask questions. I've always been curious. Anyway, yes, I digress.

**PL** [00:37:30] No, those are, these are important details. Just sort of back to the—so this was an ongoing process that was mid to mid [unclear].

**AH** [00:37:40] There were people on both sides of the table who made their careers out of the (laughing) labour adjustment agency and framework. They became experts in what you could and couldn't do and how to achieve it, and Vince Ready issued, I don't know how many opinions. We had, you know, we renegotiated parts of it. I mean, it was a whole cottage industry, the whole thing. Employers hated it. Very few people moved locations (laughter) because when push came to the shove, the employers usually found some contract work or auxiliary work or whatever, transient work, and, you know, mostly it worked out. We did save that many jobs because we tracked the union dues in the BCNU, and we could show that we'd saved 2,000 jobs.

**PL** [00:38:42] Very interesting. Data can be your friend.

**AH** [00:38:45] Oh, was data was absolutely, you know, it was absolutely the key to that whole process. It was really good, and we could demonstrate the cost benefit. It was it's great fun. It was really good work.

**PL** [00:39:01] The transition from the Harcourt years and then the election in '96, were you still active in the OTEU in 1996 when the provincial election happened, and Glen Clark became premier?

**AH** [00:39:21] I wasn't—ah, '96—

**PL** [00:39:23] He was finance minister during the early nineties.

**AH** [00:39:28] I'm trying to think when I went to the nurses' union.

**PL** [00:39:33] The Health Labour Adjustment Agency would have been '93, '94, '95 in around there. Sort of rings a bell. I remember this vividly because the forest industry was trying to do the same thing, but we never—

**AH** [00:39:48] I have three recollections of Glen Clark.

**PL** [00:39:50] Okay.

**AH** [00:39:51] One was when I interviewed him for a business agent job at the OTEU (laughter) and turned him down. He never held it against me, but he was close, but he wasn't the best. Well, no, I think we would have had to make an extra position, and I just couldn't make it, you know, couldn't make it fly. I was really sorry, but he was an union organizer at the time.

**AH** [00:40:20] The Painters, I think.

**AH** [00:40:20] The next time was when he blinked on the 36 hour week, and the third time was when we got the Labour Adjustment Agreement. We all went dancing. (laughter)

**PL** [00:40:31] Very good.

**AH** [00:40:32] So that was great.

**PL** [00:40:33] Wow.

**AH** [00:40:34] Yeah, We went down to—what is that down on Main Street. The—

**PL** [00:40:41] Oh it used to be the jazz club or something like that?

**AH** [00:40:44] No, this wasn't. This was the [unclear].

**PL** [00:40:47] Oh.

**AH** [00:40:49] Oh, maybe it wasn't on Main Street. Maybe it's on South Granville. Anyway, one of those places that everybody went to drink and dance.

**PL** [00:40:57] The Commodore?

**AH** [00:40:58] No. It was somewhere much less reputable than the Commodore. (laughter) And the funny thing about it was the negotiator from the government ministry side was Gary Moser. I don't if you ever met—

**PL** [00:41:12] Yes, I remember Gary Moser.

**AH** [00:41:13] We always called him the three piece pyjama because we figured he wore three pieces everywhere he went. He never—he was always very formal and there he was dancing. (laughter)

**PL** [00:41:25] Wow.

**AH** [00:41:27] It was a huge relief to get that for everybody in healthcare. Everybody was really worried because it was the start of the reorganizations, and health care's hasn't stopped reorganizing since. That was the beginning, and it was very new and very scary, and everybody was very worried. The fact that we got a labour agreement that dealt with those issues and gave people some security was huge. Absolutely huge, and we supported Glen ever afterwards.

**PL** [00:41:59] Yeah. He's a tough, tough nut.

**AH** [00:42:03] Yeah, I know. He got a lot of votes from nurses. I have to tell you, in that election and the following election where he managed to preserve the budget, the health care budget in B.C., when everybody else across the country was cutting health care budgets because transfer payments are being reduced. He maintained health care spending. That was big.

**PL** [00:42:26] Yeah.

**AH** [00:42:26] Yeah.

**PL** [00:42:27] Yeah. You're right. It's tumultuous times. That's for darn sure.

**AH** [00:42:31] Tumultuous times.

**PL** [00:42:32] Because you had—I think it was Paul Martin at the time was federal finance minister and was prepared to do some pretty ugly stuff.

**AH** [00:42:40] Yeah, and we were part of the Canadian Nursing Union [Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions], so we were doing a lot of stuff across Canada.

**PL** [00:42:49] Yeah.

**AH** [00:42:50] We were lucky in B.C. that we had such smart—mind you, I mean, partly we were supported by people coming back from Hong Kong. (laughter)

**PL** [00:42:58] Yeah.

**AH** [00:42:59] You know, an influx of that.

**PL** [00:43:02] Yeah. Interesting. Yeah. I don't know if you want to—if there's more to add about the nurses, but you eventually moved into health care at the administration level.

**AH** [00:43:15] Yeah.

**PL** [00:43:16] Now, what was your sense of the system and some of the challenges that [unclear].

**AH** [00:43:21] Well, I was—I worked on a set of bargaining in 2002 for the nurses union. We got a really good deal in a really harsh climate by focusing on policy issues rather than financial ones. We built in a lot of new influence on the system in the future and people were pretty impressed. I got invited to a number of places because we used the kind of bargaining they teach at Harvard, you know, interest-based bargaining. We had a very difficult negotiator on the HEABC [Health Employers Association of BC] side, but we still managed to make interest-based bargaining work. What happened after that was a number of people like Don Wright and people wanted to know how to spread that idea. Then the CEO of the Vancouver Health Authority contacted me and said she'd like me to apply for the vice-president of HR, which was called vice-president of employee engagement. (laughter)

**PL** [00:44:39] Yeah. (laughter) Is this Penny Ballem at the time?

**AH** [00:44:43] No, Penny Ballem was deputy minister afterwards, but not at the time. This was still when Gordon Campbell was premier. I said no initially, and then she came back to me three times. I finally decided I would do an interview just out of interest with the head hunter just seeing what was around. The nurses were—I don't know if I should say this—but we're headed for another internal tumult (laughter) which happened every few years. I didn't really want to go through another internal tumult, so I eventually was persuaded to move over to the health authority, and they got me a coach to learn the corporate language (laughter) which I found very confusing at the beginning. They used to use words like robust and—

**PL** [00:45:48] Pivot.

**AH** [00:45:49] Yes. All kinds of change. I'd go, 'What!' I started writing my own dictionary. This means bad. (laughter) It took me a good year and a half, I think, to get my hands around the management side of, view of things. You know, in the end, a lot of the issues are the same issues that you're facing from the union. Fact, I was never so pleased that when one of the HSA executives said to me—we'd been—I was at the health authority then and was discussing stuff with the unions— said, 'You know, the good thing about you Anne is you say the same thing, whichever side of the table you were on.'

**AH** [00:46:35] So I always felt that was somewhat a success, that I did manage to bring some of the union's side into the HR view in the health authority. In fact, quite a lot of it. We managed to find some good issues that we could work on jointly. For example, the health authority have very high overtime because nurses were supposed to put in their vacation a year ahead, but they usually didn't. They never knew when nurses were going on vacation, and they had to find somebody. It was always somebody on overtime, so the overtime was out of sight. We negotiated a letter of understanding that the nurses would report, you know, book their vacation in two slots, one at the beginning of the year and one in June—gave them some flexibility. We would hire new extra nurses who would be vacation relief nurses who would have regular positions and they would fill in for the

nurses on vacation. The nurses had to slot their vacation in on their unit so that you could have a vacation release nurse doing it. It was a good deal for everybody. The overtime came down tremendously. Nurses stopped getting pleas to work overtime when they were off because that was driving them crazy, and the whole thing worked much better. It was really good. We did some really good stuff that was different than the other health authorities. Initially the other health authorities complained like fury. Then HEABC started negotiating some parts of what we'd done into the collective agreement. Then again, you know, it's the story of my life. You get things going swimmingly, but I think it's the story of life. You get things going swimmingly, and then HEABC decided that we were creating too many waves, and we couldn't do any more letters of understanding without them. (laughter) The whole thing then solidifies somewhat, you know, but as that's what happens with change.

**PL** [00:48:55] Yeah, you know, system changes.

**AH** [00:48:56] Yeah. That was fascinating. You know, got a whole lot better understanding of what makes the health care system work and what makes it not work, and a lot more about physicians issues, of course. Yeah. I mean, half the senior team of physicians, so, yeah.

**PL** [00:49:19] I wouldn't mind touching a little bit on what your sense is of the challenges in health care generally. I mean, if you had to pick the big three and I realize each one of them, you could probably talk for an hour, but have you got some sense?

**AH** [00:49:38] Well, the basic problem is that we've got a larger population, with more old people, and we've had improvements in health care. All of which create more demand, and we're not keeping up with the demand. Now, to keep up with the demand, we need to radically restructure how doctors work. That is the biggest challenge. Ministry has negotiated some improvements. This latest thing that they did with the GP's [general practitioners] is hugely helpful. Yes, I've noticed even in the practice I go to, and I've managed to get one of my daughter's friends a GP who wouldn't have been a GP, wouldn't have taken it on, except for this new deal, which is much more realistic, you know. Mostly it's, that's it. Then we've just got to catch up with demand and that's really hard. That's really hard, catching up with demand because we are really running behind a very fast moving train. I tell people and they very often don't like me saying this, but it'll be all right by 2032 because the baby boomers will have died. (laughter) And it's true.

**PL** [00:51:02] Don't look at me when you say that. Okay?

**AH** [00:51:04] Well, I didn't do this, and nobody's older than me. I'm an old baby boomer. Yeah.

**PL** [00:51:10] An anecdote is going to lead this conversation. But my brother, who's 73 complained for years about a sore hip. Finally got it. And you're right. The technology is outstanding.

**AH** [00:51:24] Outstanding. Yeah. They didn't used to put knees into people until they were really old because the knees that would only last eight or ten years—right—and they couldn't do a second operation. Now they've got much better. It lasts longer. They can do a couple or even three. My son is 56, and he's waiting for a knee operation, you know, and they never would have done that years—ten years ago, they wouldn't have done it at 56. We've got more demand, and we're trying to catch up with demand, and people don't



realize it because they only see it from what they're facing. The system is really challenged. It's not just us, it's everywhere. I mean, you talk to people in Europe, yeah, it's all over.

**PL** [00:52:15] Any comments on the hierarchy that is part of the doctor's role and influence in health care? My sense is that that they can be a lid that suffocates an awful lot of innovation.

**AH** [00:52:36] It's a tricky one because then you've got nurse practitioners. Nurse practitioners aren't part of the union. They've got their own group. So, you know—

**AH** [00:52:51] But scope of practice, is something that is jealously guarded by—

**AH** [00:52:55] Everybody.

**PL** [00:52:57] Okay, good point.

**AH** [00:52:59] (laughter) Everybody. You know, I remember when I was at the OTEU being on the Allied Hydro Construction Council. We spent every meeting talking about jurisdiction. Every meeting. Somebody had done something that wasn't in their trade, you know, and that. You've got doctors, you've got nurse practitioners. Doctors want control of the nurse practitioners. Nurse practitioners want to be independent, but they don't want to be part of the nurses union. Then you've got LPNs.

**PL** [00:53:33] Yeah.

**AH** [00:53:33] You know, it's—these things are—I remember—have you ever read, A.P. Taylor, "The Making of the British Working Class"?

**PL** [00:53:43] Yeah.

**AH** [00:53:45] It's a fascinating book. The list of trades and sub trades and the switch between the guilds and the trades. It's an ongoing story. You know, it's an ongoing story, so the biggest problem with the physicians is getting more physicians in and certified because we've got very—and it's the same with nursing—we've got very strict requirements for both physicians and nurses.

**PL** [00:54:16] Credentialing.

**AH** [00:54:17] Our credentialing—I mean, our physicians and nurses are the best in the world in terms of being credentialed. They are. They can go and work anywhere. The downside of that, of course, is it's hard to ramp up supply because you have to have a period of time when people are being mentored. They call it, different things, but, for physicians, it's a residency. For nurses, it's—I can't remember even what it's called for nursing. There's practicums in both the training and when and once they're credentialed before they start. Yeah, it's complicated, and it's not just a simple thing of getting rid of the hierarchy.

**PL** [00:55:06] Yeah. Okay. Interesting. Yeah. To your point about health care, it touches everyone, and everyone has an opinion and what they can't see is that broader scope. That's a tough one. Why don't we just wrap up with any sense of the challenges facing the labour movement.

**AH** [00:55:25] Now?

**PL** [00:55:27] Now, and let's go out five years.

**AH** [00:55:30] Well, still our biggest problem is attracting young people, isn't it. It's always, I mean, I remember when I started in the OTEU, we did a—I was on the women's committee and we did a survey of—well we did a survey of where women were in union executives, which got us in a lot of trouble. We also looked at membership of unions, and outside of the established bargaining units, people really didn't join unions until their forties. Even in the unions that were established, they didn't get involved until their forties. It wasn't—people started getting involved in their union, and I think is still true today, when they start thinking about their pension and that's in their forties. It's not sooner than that. So, it's making it cool, isn't it. Making it cool and admitting— giving people a realistic picture of what they're up against. That's always the challenge in organizing, giving people hope but not papering over the difficulties, the challenges, you know, very difficult, and— so connecting with people. I see there's been a slight uptick in the United States. I don't know if that's here because of COVID and labour shortages. I'm noticing stories about more unionizing at Amazon and Starbucks, some of those key, you know, but it's tricky.

**PL** [00:57:15] Yeah.

**AH** [00:57:15] Yeah, it's tricky.

**PL** [00:57:17] Even in some of the initial successes of Amazon, it's always the case that signing the union card is step one. Getting the first agreement is step two, and that's where the ball goes back into the employer's court, and they can find a thousand ways to—

**AH** [00:57:36] I did quite a bit of work on the organizing model. I did, actually, I did a master's in organizational design, and I used the organizing model for my thesis—

**PL** [00:57:46] Mm hmm.

**AH** [00:57:47] And so I talked to some of the American unions and the enthusiasts of the organizing model approach. Mm hmm. When was that? God, I don't know. Anyway, they did tremendous work. It's very labour intensive, though. You've got to contact the local churches, the local community. Mind you, I do think, you know, the strike at the Hilton in Metrotown, they took some of that community organizing approach and I thought they did a good job. Amazing that they managed to last out. I do think that is the way the labour movement has to go, and it's very labour intensive, and it's not as comfortable as we're used to because in the labour movement, we're used to union hierarchies. When you do community organizing, it has to be so much more organic. People make fun of it, and it doesn't always work, but I do think it's the way forward. I do think it's the way, and I am not a social media person. I've always avoided it like the plague. Obviously, there's a community organizing capability in social media, which I am ignorant of, but I can see must be there because other countries have organized political campaigns on social media, so there's got to be a way to do it.