

Interview: John Burrows (JB)

Interviewer: Patricia Wejr (PW)

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Transcription: Dawn Walker and Jane Player

PW [00:00:04] Now, I noticed right off the bat, sometimes you actually have a nickname. Do you go by your nickname at all anymore?

JB [00:00:12] In different circles, but Rocky is something that's been there for ever and a day. Long before, it was more out of my association in the sporting community, but whoever was around way back then still brings it up.

PW [00:00:32] Okay, could you just start by telling us your full name and where and when you were born?

JB [00:00:40] John Burrows, I was born in Victoria, November 21st, 1954.

PW [00:00:48] We're curious about your background. Was there anything in your family that would have led you to become a future union activist?

JB [00:00:57] Not really. We were a sporting family. I have three brothers, two sisters, so we were six kids and my mother and father. We were all raised through athletics, mostly basketball and baseball. I happened to latch on, or at some point it was 'go look for a job', and pounded the pavement, started out working at Victoria Plywood actually. It was a sawmill in Victoria. At the time, they were paying around seven bucks an hour, and they used to shut down in the summer. That was your force-fed vacation entitlement. I remember me and a group of friends went on a trip down South, and I had to end the trip short because I had to get back to work because my two weeks were up. I got back here and they said, 'We've extended the shutdown for another two weeks.' I was very upset about it and marched down to the City of Victoria. There was an H.R. director at the time named Norm Pollack, and he was a very athletic, enthused individual. Anybody in the sporting community, if you needed a summer job, you went down and saw Norm. I went down there, and he said, 'Well, we got nothing for you right now.' I went, 'Oh, well, that's a shame.' The next morning, I got a call that said report to work at the garbage wharf on Store Street at 7:30 in the morning. That's when I started and that's where I am.

PW [00:02:58] What did your first job entail?

JB [00:03:00] It was the sanitation department, so I humped garbage in the garbage routes. Then that sort of morphed into the street cleaning department, which were kind of a combined department, but that entailed pretty much cleaning the streets of downtown Victoria. Then I ended up, throughout all that because you were a casual employee, they called them at the time, which was fairly expendable individuals, so you got bounced around. I worked in the roads department and the parks department, ended up back in the street cleaning department and then just applied through vacancies over the years and ended up as the supervisor in the sanitation department. That's kind of where my last posted position was before my union presidency part.

PW [00:04:01] What led you to become active in the union?

JB [00:04:05] Well, the interest started back with Victoria Plywood. I could never understand—because we used to get—there was labour disputes there constantly. We had a railroad track that came across the parking lot that you had to drive into to work. The rail—the CN or whoever it was—they would send the empty boxcars there and pick up loads of plywood. If they went on strike, they put a picket up in front of the track that we had to drive over to get to the parking lot, so we were shut down. It was like, 'this doesn't quite seem correct,' but in those days we were okay 'cause it was a day off work, right? It was, 'Oh, well, we're out of here.' That kind of got my mind working towards 'this just doesn't seem correct'. Anyway, with the city, I was more involved in the sporting community still in my early stages of working for the city. As time went on and you applied for vacant positions, I remember applying for a painter's position—my father was a painter and painted for the B.C. government, actually, and I worked with him for years—and they deemed me unqualified. I was so upset about it that I went to my union and I said, 'I want to file a grievance over this, somebody they hired off the street with no city experience whatsoever.' The grievance got filed and I never heard any more about it. It turns out that they lost the form or something, I don't know, but I was not happy about it. Then I got involved as a steward in our section, and my first position on the executive, actually, because I was into it, no question about it. There was a vacancy in the first vice-president spot, so I ran for it and got elected. I was in that for probably eight, nine, ten years, and then the presidency position opened up and that's a long time ago. I've been ever since. Worked with the city, or on the books, shall we say, for over 45 years now, and president since '94. That's when I became president. Well, a long time.

PW [00:07:01] Yeah. Now, you mentioned that you first started casual and wasn't that one thing that you were instrumental in trying to fix, the casual or auxiliary to—

JB [00:07:12] Totally, and it is still, I would say from my vantage point, the recognition of seniority—we ended up in a labour dispute with the city in 1994—was the most significant one in my, as long as I've been here. I wasn't the president at the time when the labour dispute started. I was by the time it was over. Our position was fairness. The fight was all about fairness. It was fairness in promotion and the recall, or the usage of the casuals at the time, which they were called, but they're now auxiliary employees. The city was steadfast in their position that bringing sufficient ability—which is promotion by way of recognition of seniority if you're qualified—they were adamant that it would destroy the makeup of the City of Victoria and in the whole process.

JB [00:08:29] What we had to our advantage at the time, we didn't really think about it, but it was the Commonwealth Games were being hosted in Victoria in 1994. I remember we were doing our bargaining down at the Harbour Towers Hotel in James Bay and we would drive from our office up on High Quadra. They had a metre at the corner of the Empress Hotel of how many days before the Commonwealth Games. I remember driving by that and it was like 230 days until the Commonwealth Games. I remember talking to other individuals on the executive while we were going by, 'Ah we got lots of time'. (laughter) I tell you that metre just kept going down and down and down. We got to the point where it was down to about 10 and I went, 'We're in a bit of a problem here.' (laughter) They were totally ramped up for a strike. We were out on strike by that time and we weren't budging.

JB [00:09:43] We were lucky at the time that there was an NDP (New Democratic Party) government in power, and so we were able to convince the Minister of Labour—and I unfortunately can't remember who it was at the time—but the Minister of Labour to get involved. They declared a industrial inquiry to be formulated with Vince Ready as the mediator, and we had already used Vince on two occasions through private mediation to

try and resolve the thing. Anyway, he came in and he listened. He'd already heard the positions for a while, and he came in with some (unclear) positions and what are their real outstanding—one of the things that we were adamant about was that his recommendations would be binding, and the city was opposed to binding recommendations, of course. We essentially said, 'Well if its not going to be binding, then we're out of here.' I don't know what he did, but he convinced the city that the binding recommendations were the way to go if they wanted to resolve this dispute before the Commonwealth Games started.

JB [00:11:17] We put together what the real outstanding issues was, and one of the issues, of course—the promotion process was one—but the actual recall of laid off auxiliary employees was a critical component from our perspectives and certainly mine. He was the one that really—with the binding recommendations and I believe on how passionate we were about that issue, and it wasn't about money—he put down an order that forced the parties to come up with a letter of understanding on the recall of auxiliaries. That was, as we called it at the time, the 'thin edge of the wedge' into correcting what we had visibly watched for years of the abuse of 'I'm calling in this labourer because I think this labourer is more qualified than that labourer' it was just, give me a break. He's the one that laid down the order through an industrial inquiry, and it's obviously expanded since then. We've ported the whole thing into the collective agreement as opposed to a letter of understanding. There's a process that once you get past your initial probationary hours then there is no question or dispute on the calling in 'Who was the person with the most hours? That's the person you call.' We created a thing called a labourer general, which meant anybody of that status was a labourer general, you couldn't hire them as something superior and then call them out of order. It was everybody came in at that level. They—on the list in order of seniority, and if a department needed three individuals to fill whatever the positions where they had, they had to use the top three on whoever was in order on the list. It's maintained to this day; it's still there.

JB [00:13:36] We went—we've gone through, we also were able to put a thing called the Auxiliary Employee Troubleshooter letter, and the troubleshooter is Vince Ready. It's perfect. Any time we've had a dispute over this, what we call the 'conversion process,' is that he's mapped out: if you work over half time in a year, is there the predictability of future employment? The employer has to argue there isn't. Because of the system in place where you don't get to leapfrog or call people out of order, then obviously the hours of those that make themselves available are going to be over the half time. Through arbitration process, we had to arbitrate this ten times, we've been to the troubleshooter. Every time you can tell he gets pissed off a little bit more with the employer where he writes something else in there. (laughter) Now, the last sort of order is: there's a requirement of the parties to meet every six months and review the hours of work lists and is there a predictability of future employment. Then those individuals will be—are required to be offered conversion to regular status and with that comes full benefits.

JB [00:15:11] It's taken an awfully long time to actually get it to a spot where it's pretty untouchable. Interestingly in our world, we're here pretty much forever, career wise. HR directors come and go. I'm probably on my tenth, and every time one comes in, they look at this: 'What's this seniority thing? How can we get out of this?' There's constantly keeping an eye on individual departments trying to, 'Well, we're going to create our own spare board, shall we call it, in the Parks Department, because those labourers are smarter than the ones in Public Works.' Anyway, we've stayed on top of it and it drives them crazy. My wish will be—and I desperately tried to educate the up-and-coming people that will replace me—that this was an issue that was resolved through a strike. It's an issue

that I would say every CUPE (Canadian Union of Public Employees) local that I know of across the country would wish they had the same language in their contract. I've been approached I don't know how many times to ask for the language, how it evolved, how is it policed, and how can we get it, as opposed to—unfortunately, seniority. In the world of employers, the right to manage and promote who they want is their motherhood issue, and the right to recognize seniority is the union's. Whether you can get there or not, well generally you probably need a labour dispute to get there. Will that get you there anyway? I can attest that the clock was down to, I think one or two by the time we actually finally got a memorandum of settlement to that dispute with the Commonwealth Games. We were roasted in the media over 'the city is filthy, look at the garbage piling everywhere' and you know, we're on this—'the world is watching us and look what these union people are doing to us.' Well, anyway, the rest is history.

PW [00:17:48] Yeah, the rest is history. The other thing I was, like—I'm amazed at how you've been able to resist contracting out.

JB [00:17:56] It's been a battle. Everybody's language is not very good—for lack of a better term. There is language in most of the collective agreements to restrict contracting out. Ours is a little better than others because we have what we call an equal wage provision, which is attached to the contracting out language. We are periodically—more times than I like to think about, but—we're arguing on behalf of the poor individual working for a contractor. The contractor will put in a bid. They know, based on the bidding process, that they're required to pay an equal wage to whatever a city employee would be earning, say, truck driving or whatever. Then we'll find out that the company is keeping the money and the truck driver's not—the truck driver's getting 20 bucks instead of the 35 and the owner of the business is pocketing the extra 15. We find out about it, or we're approached by—and it's difficult because we don't want the individual to get fired, because the second they shoot their mouth off or give us evidence, which would be a pay stub, then their name is no longer confidential. It's very—we try and do it in a fashion where we're not identifying anybody. In fact, we don't identify anybody unless they authorize it. Sometimes it'll happen when an individual works for somebody, and they're pissed off, and they quit. Then they come marching over and they flash their paystubs, 'You know that this contractor is only paying everybody their X amount.'

JB [00:19:52] Then we have an article, like I say, equal wage provision, and we flag it to the employer and with the evidence, if we're authorized to give the evidence. It's interesting, we had one just recently, the bylaw officers. We're in the middle of this pandemic, and so the city has ramped up the hiring of bylaw officers for the campers and things, and they hired the CRD, or they approached the CRD because they have a bylaw department—

PW [00:20:30] Excuse me, just for those who wouldn't know, that's the Capital Regional District.

JB [00:20:34] Yeah, Capital Regional District, and they're represented by Local 1978. They approached the Capital Regional District and asked if they could afford to allow the city to use some of their bylaw officers. Of course, we were, 'Wait a minute, it's our jurisdiction, it's our work. You can hire more, but if you're going to use them, then you got to hire them as auxiliaries, at the very least, temporary employees.' They were adamant they didn't have to do it. It was a contract issue with—the provincial government was funding the hiring or through their funding to have more bylaw officers, so it was actually the provincial—you know, so the end around was they were blaming the province. CRD

was just, 'Hey, we're just helping out where asked.' Then I discovered talking to the president of 1978 that the bylaw officers were making five dollars an hour less than ours. I filed a dispute under the equal wage provision, and they argued that there wasn't a contract with us, it was with the province, nothing to do with us. I went, 'Well, you know, you're a subcontractor. It doesn't matter. The language is pretty clear, contractor or subcontractor.' Anyway, it was about a 17—by the time the resolution—was about a \$17,000 dollar payout to these six or seven bylaw officers that I had never met. I had no idea, but they work for the CRD. I'm guessing because we're—CRD is in collective bargaining right now, I'm guessing, I'm hopeful they've tabled something that would raise the wages of their bylaw officers, because they're clearly far behind the city ones, in payment-wise.

JB [00:22:34] Those are the kind of things with—they brought some work in-house. They brought in the parking; they're called parking ambassadors. We were always, yeah—we had the jurisdiction of the parkade attendants, which is there's five parkades. Then they wanted to make them personless, automate them, but we had these parking ambassadors. The parking ambassadors were at an embarrassing low level of pay, in schedule B they call it. We were able to, you know, because we had put out fight back campaigns in the past over 'please do not automate our parkades,' we would go out to the public and anybody using the parkades, we got signatures. We had like 5,000 some odd signatures years ago on stopping the automation. They're always aware of these things that—the city is aware—that we're prepared to put up a fight, if necessary, over the potential of loss of jobs. They came—they actually came to us and said, 'Well, we have a proposal because we don't want to get into this potential fight that we would automate the parkades, but at the same time, all the parkade attendants would become parking ambassadors. The parking ambassador position would be lifted to the rate of pay of the parking attendants.' Now, we were we're down to make—

PW [00:24:19] Can I just ask, what does a parking ambassador do?

JB [00:24:22] The ticket person, like your parking tickets. They call them ambassadors. I didn't make the name up (laughter). Yeah well. They had for—it's interesting cause for years they had either the Corps of Commissionaires doing it, or they had, I think it was just them, they might of had a private company doing it too. It was never under our jurisdictional umbrella until city council or, the current city council brought in this thing called parking ambassadors, and it was because they were having nothing but trouble with the Corps of Commissionaires, right. There was complaints on how they were treating tourists when they got a parking ticket and stuff. They thought bringing it in house and having control, and of course, we were, 'this is a great idea.' The original agreement to bring them in-house was to put them in the schedule B at a rather inferior rate of pay. That was, again, back to the thin edge of the wedge. That was to get them in under the umbrella of the collective agreement. Anyway, so then the parkade attendant issue came to us, and they didn't want to fight about it. We were down to about eight parkade attendants anyway, and meanwhile, this parking ambassador thing was about 30 plus employees, almost. Well, it's about 50 employees now. The agreement was they would get paid the parkade attendant wage in schedule A. So, the—all of those individuals, it was an immediate 11 dollar an hour increase. There was no arguing about that. (laughter) That was work that was brought in-house, which doesn't happen very often. It's usually you're fightin' over stuff while walking out the door. My experience on the contracting out stuff per se is usually been: they will contract out a project and within six months the city crews going back repairing or fixing or updating whatever shoddy work that was done by the contractor. They've kind of realised that. There's some stuff, it just isn't worth contracting it

out. I must say the makeup of city council over the last, probably 30—25 years anyway, has always been right on the fringe of a tie. It's either five-four this way or five-four that way. We've always kind of only had to convince one individual of what the right thing to do is, and so it's kept things on the straight and narrow from a council standpoint. We really haven't had to fight about a whole, 'We're going to get out of paving roads, period. We're going to shut this section down, and we're just going to contract it out.' We've never—we haven't run into that in a long time. They've threatened it about the garbage, about 30 plus years ago. Then all hell broke loose, and so they backed off. None of those managers are here anymore. I am, but they're not (laughter).

PW [00:27:53] If we could go back to the early eighties, were you involved in any of the Solidarity actions?

JB [00:28:02] I started in '77 was my—when I actually started with the city. Again, my early stage of life, I guess, leaving high school and working it was about being involved in the sporting community and such. I did—like there was Operation Solidarity in the eighties that I would participate in marching down Government Street to the Ledge. That was more of 'it's a day off, let's go.' As far as from a union activist standpoint, I was a participant, but not a leader of any sort in that respect. The more—where things I would have had a direct hand in was the Hospital Employees' Union's dispute and then right after that was a teacher's dispute. From a feel-good, proud kind of standpoint, I was the president under both of those scenarios and because of Local 50's history and our activism—you know standing up for whoever needed standing up—we would get the call from the provincial office that, 'Do you think you can get your members off the job? We're coming over, here's the date. It's not going to fly if the senior Victoria workers are going in the city hall and we're going to start this whole—launch this solidarity effort in Centennial Square right where they work.' We were able to deliver on that whenever CUPE called. We were able to shut the place down and convince the individuals that a day's pay was worth standing up for. Yeah, both of those were kind of cool.

PW [00:30:15] Yeah, definitely. Thinking back over your long career, do you want to tell us about some other major achievement that you feel particularly proud about?

JB [00:30:26] Well, from a collective agreement negotiating standpoint—gosh, I should have counted them out, but I—we represent eight jurisdictions now. It's not just the City of Victoria. I'd say 'em all out, but god if I miss one, (laughter) but there's the Victoria Police civilian workers; there's the Langford RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police) civilian workers; there is the Grove Trail Golf Club Greenskeepers; the Royal Oak Burial Park, all of the workers there inside and outside; the downtown Victoria Business Association, the green individuals that go around and litter pick, we organized them; the SPCA (Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals) Victoria branch, we represent them. We have a broad group, and we've always looked after the small ones. The United Way of Greater Victoria we represent too; there's only eight or nine individuals there. We've been able to use our—the big house looks after the little house, and our reputation from forever has been we're not afraid to spend the resources in order to do what's right for—no matter the size or the individual. Based on all of the collective agreements I've been the chair and negotiated, there's got to be probably 30 or 40 I'm guessing, and various lengths right. Generally, you're looking at a three-year deal; there was a couple of five-year ones in there. We've never gone backwards on anything. There's never been a concession of any of those collective agreements that I've been involved with. We've never gone backwards on anything. I think from a reputation standpoint, I think the employers have got to the point where they just are prepared to table concessions. They're prepared to—'what's the

littlest we can deal with here as opposed to trying to claw something back?' It's never, it hasn't happened, which is kind of a proud thing for me.

PW [00:33:24] Absolutely, there aren't too many unions that can say that.

JB [00:33:26] Yeah, I don't—it's never happened under my watch, so hopefully it maintains. I sadly suspect that from an HR standpoint they can't wait for me to get lost, but, you know it's too bad so sad, right? (laughter)

PW [00:33:46] I think we're getting close to the end, but I just wanted to ask you this question about what kind of—what would you say to young people these days who really don't know what unions are all about and are perhaps less than union friendly, let's put it that way.

JB [00:34:04] I mean, obviously the biggest issue is what's good for one is good for all and if you stick together, you'll get to where you want to go. From our local standpoint, that's been our mandate from the get-go. We've been very successful in connecting with the membership. The youth out there have a different perspective of—I'm a father, I've got two daughters, and clearly, we as parents have spoilt the heck out of that generation where some of them have seemed to think that it's all about themselves as opposed to the collective. I think from a parental standpoint, we're probably to blame for that somewhat attitude that might be out there. Convincing them is not an easy task, but you got to keep trying. We do things differently from a messaging standpoint in our local where, if we have a message to give out, we're—I'm still kinda, well I'm not kinda, I'm still very old school in the world of if you want to vote you got to show up to vote, if you want—don't get me started on electronic voting. If you want the answers to things, then show up to a meeting. We have—right now, we're stuck in this kind of virtual world of meeting virtually and my concern of that process right now is it's become too easy for unions to not necessarily connect with everybody because of the COVID thing that's going on.

JB [00:36:13] You know, I just kinda look upstairs and go, 'This is all it took was to get people to open the doors and people are here.' The message when we have something that comes up that will impact a significant number, we put out a bulletin or a memo, and we have what we call a gate handout. We go to the work site; we get a couple of stewards at the front gate; we get a couple at the back gate; and you hand out the information personally to the individual as they're driving in. It's worked for a long time that, you know, the sort of connection is there as opposed to, 'I put the information online; you go and read it.' It just doesn't work for me. (laughter) That's been our process, and we still do it. Again, through the COVID thing it's a little bit different right now. We're prepared to get back into, say the swing of things with in-person meetings and all that kind of stuff where—I mean, through the COVID, we didn't—we're lucky through all of the jurisdictions there were no, 'We've got to shut down.' Everybody worked. In that respect, we didn't get into, you know, we were very open minded to the employers on how can we keep people working through this, as opposed to, 'we have to shut this whole section down' or this whole scenario and then get into the battleground of wages and loss, and people not being able to afford to live based on that. I feel incredibly sorry for those industries, restaurants, and etcetera that had to go through that. Those employees, hopefully, it hasn't left such a sour taste in their mouth that they don't go back, or they don't come back. You can see it in the shortage of workers out there. I don't know where they all are, I don't know what they're doing, but the people still exist. They're just either not working—I don't know what happened to them all. Where'd they go? I know there was the alternative employment

opportunities that paid more money than a significant number marched off to, but it couldn't have been that many. I mean, there's just, I don't know.

PW [00:39:11] As you say, that's—it was really wonderful that your members didn't—

JB [00:39:16] Oh yeah. It's interesting. I've always—in a percentage standpoint, we've got, I don't know, maybe 1,100 total, and it's about 7 percent are not happy, about that, right. There's 70 of them (laughter) that said, 'How come I have to work?' It's like, 'Seriously? Okay.' It's a different kind of question, but anyway, you can't please everybody. I've noticed that. I've been able to—I don't know, like water off a duck's back, but it's—I recognize that I deal with 7 percent of the members, and the employer gets to deal with 93 percent of the good ones. You don't hear from the good ones, really—contract time, but that's 'how much of a raise are we going to get' that's, yeah. Anyway, it's all good.

PW [00:40:25] So you got any?

DS [00:40:27] No, I don't think so.

PW [00:40:28] Unless there's something that you were dying to tell us about?

JB [00:40:35] One thing, when we were Local 50, we were just the outside component, and we merged with the inside back in 2004. It was, obviously it was a great—at the time it was like, 'Oh my goodness, you're gonna mix inside workers with outside workers? You're going to go from a 95 percent strike vote down to a potential something in the seventies.' That sort of fear was out there in some of the components—or some of the individuals—from an executive standpoint. I was able to go, 'Listen, we're going to cut from a standpoint of administration, and our, as Local 50, our history, bleeding it into the inside mindset can only be a good thing.'

JB [00:41:48] We were able to collaborate with the inside president at the time, which was Susan Johnson. She became a CUPE national representative later. We were on the same page with respect to merging them together. I got a binder—I got to tell you, it's about six inches thick because we had to—the process of doing it was not like, 'Well let's just do it.' We had to conduct votes with all of the subunits, the like every—I remember we went through it all, of course, I bindered everything. If you ever want archives, I can tell you, you wouldn't believe the stuff we've got. The binder is huge, and I remember after it was done (Paul Moist was the president at the time) and he actually proposed—he didn't follow through on it, but he proposed—that we, the two of us, would go across the country to all of the locals out there that had the separation of inside and outside workers and explain the upside of merging, so that was what the binder was all about but we—the binder is still there, but we didn't get to go across the country.

PW [00:43:16] Did you expand the executive then?

JB [00:43:19] Yeah. The whole process was—what we did is we merged the two executives, and then we had a—so we had a large, super large executive. As attrition came along, we—and then we had to change the constitution—we had to go through all that stuff of what the make up of the executive would be. It dealt with the merger: that we were two presidents, two vice-presidents, or two recording, two treasurers, or two—so, we went through all that. It probably took three or four years where it got down—like the size of the executive was laid out in the revised constitution, but in the interim, until it got down to that size, we had everybody that—it was five years there was no—and Susan, at the

time, she all of a sudden got hired by CUPE. There was one president fairly quick, (laughter) so that solved the problem, so that was all good. Financially, it was a huge—because of our activism in the outside. We were only, I think, probably 220 to 230 members, but our activism and never not take on a fight, we didn't have any money. (laughter) We were pretty broke; in fact, we were in an overdraft, and my memory serves me. When we merged (laughter)—

PW [00:45:15] It's interesting, because it sounds to me like there are pretty different cultures between—

JB [00:45:23] Totally, yeah.

PW [00:45:24] Have the—who managed to sway, did the out—

JB [00:45:27] Well, the outside would—actually what really, in the '94 scenario, when the strike happened, the employer made an error in a proposal. They put on the bargaining table a problem with the job evaluation, and we were all about equal pay for equal work. I remember going to their meetings and convincing them to support our issue 'cuz we were going to support theirs, and which was equal pay for equal work, and it was pay equity and job evaluation. I'm sure the employer, in retrospect, because we got them on side, because if that proposal wasn't there, they clearly—I don't believe they would be convinced over a seniority issue, because they had never—it was never an issue on the inside. They all had this promotion based on merit as opposed to the recognition of time served, quite frankly. We convinced them to support our issue, and we were going to support theirs. We achieved a huge settlement. It actually ended up in arbitration originally through the CRD award, where the arbitrator (I can't remember the person's name at the time) agreed with the union. It was all over about the compounding of the monies for job evaluation. The employer was arguing they had a settlement of one percent, so it was only one percent, even though it's been four years. It was like, 'No, one percent compounded.' It turned out it was a \$1.7 million award for the city workers to fix the inequities in the pay thing. That was a big achievement and a feather for the local. Again, that process impacted the region, right. There was 12 municipalities at the time there. We would always bargain first, we were the—they called it coordinated bargaining, but it was we're going first. Generally, whatever we were able to achieve at the bargaining table, everybody else got. There are a couple of the locals that, a few of them, that have the auxiliary troubleshooter letter in their collective agreements. In the world of the labour unions, the employer looks after the application of the contract, but you need to police it. They really haven't, you know, they haven't policed it. Some of the locals have a huge number of auxiliary employees because they don't have the process of the conversion process that we were able to achieve to make them regulars. You can lead them to water, but—

PW [00:49:02] Well, I think everything that you've talked about is probably the reason why you keep on getting re-elected.

JB [00:49:07] Well, (unclear). I'm very proud of the length that I've put in to survive any—I mean, there was only one election, the rest were all by acclamation. There was one election a long time ago that we didn't see eye-to-eye. That's okay. That's not a bad thing.

DS [00:49:33] I just have a quick question. Having served so long as your local president, have you attended Federation of Labour Conventions and CLC (Canadian Labour Congress) conventions over that period?

JB [00:49:46] All of them, yeah pretty much.

DS [00:49:48] Can you reflect a little bit on how the labour movement generally has changed in the period of time that you've been involved?

JB [00:49:56] The early days were, I got to tell you, were fantastic. Where people got up to the microphones and started screaming and yelling and you had a, the government in power, of course, was not who we all wanted. It was pretty easy to get up there and scream and yell. I remember (gosh, I can't remember his name) but the IWA (International Woodworkers of America)—

DS [00:50:23] Jack Munro

JB [00:50:23] Jack Munro, god almighty, big [gruff voice sounds] but he would get everybody going, 'Oh this is great.' Those days, it was a lot of fun. It's still—you know, they're okay, but it's not the—it's almost turned into a bit of a checkbox thing. You know, we went to convention, and everybody gave their report. Our local, over the years, we've—since I've been in charge, which is forever, but we've always used the attendance and convention as a reward to the executive members that have stepped up. It's not, 'You must be on the floor for eight hours a day.' It's like, if you go to Montreal, you want to see the sights, and being on the floor, is Halley's Comet going to hit because you weren't there? I don't think so. We always kind of—it's a reward system. It's no different than the group that's upstairs for Local 50 now. Those individuals have, over the course of the year, or couple of years now, have stepped up when called upon to do whatever needs doing and represent the workers and the subunits and such. That's how we've always, at least since I've been doing it, is it's a reward. 'You're going to convention; here is your plane ticket; here's your hotel, enjoy yourself; don't embarrass us, we'll be fine.' (laughter) It happens once in a while; somebody gets benched for—'You're not going to the next one.' Anyway, it's all good. Yeah, it's not the same as it was, but it's a process.

JB [00:52:21] I remember—I always look at the—when you get the resolutions, they give you the draft, and I get those, and I go right to the constitution ones to see if—what are they trying to—what are really up here. What are they really trying to change? A few years back, the CUPE BC one, they wanted to make it every two years and it was like, 'No. Okay, we've got to—now we're going to get involved. This is not going to happen; this is an annual event and it's stayin' that way.' There's been a couple of times where—I know the national hasn't done it, but ever since the CLC went to a three-year thing, I know there's that mindset out there that, 'Uh gee, wouldn't that be great.' It's like, 'No, it wouldn't, it really wouldn't.' The Fed, when they were annual and then when I think it was the HEU (Hospital Employees' Union) marched off the floor in protest just a few years back (and I think it's because of the raiding or whatever it is) but they marched off the floor—oops, okay. Anyway, they marched off the floor, and then, all of a sudden, this constitutional change hit the floor about changing it from one year to two years. They had the vote, and that was the end of the annual Fed convention.