**Interview: John Calvert (JC)**
**Interviewer: Ken Novakowski (KN)**
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## John Calvert May 29 2023.mp4

**KN** [00:00:05] Good afternoon, John.

**JC** [00:00:06] Good afternoon.

**KN** [00:00:09] We want to start by getting some background from your early life. I'm wondering if you could tell us when and where you were born.

**JC** [00:00:19] Okay. I was born in Oshawa, Ontario, and I grew up actually in London, Ontario, because my parents moved to London in about 1951. Largely they moved there because my mother had rheumatic fever, and there was an organisation there called the Shute Institute, which my father and my mother felt she needed access to. There wasn't something similar in Oshawa, Ontario.

**JC** [00:00:50] My parents had both been born on farms in eastern Ontario near Lindsay, and both had been members of large families: my father, one of ten, second oldest, and my mother one of six. I heard many stories from them about how tough it was during the Depression to be on the farm. My father would say that one of the standard things that they ate was what he called white pot porridge, which was flour and lard mixed up with maybe a bit of pepper or something. They'd give it some salt as well to be able to get it down. Nonetheless, he and my mother seemed to have emerged from that relatively unscathed, although my mother got rheumatic fever shortly after I was born in 1947.

**JC** [00:01:41] My father had worked on various jobs and farms during the Depression. Luckily, towards the end, he apprenticed as a carpenter and had just finished becoming qualified as a certified tradesperson when the war broke out. He ended up working for about three and a half years at a General Motors factory near Oshawa, which was converted from making cars to making mosquito aeroplanes. The reason for that is that mosquito bombers were made of wood, and he was a carpenter, and they needed people with his skills to work on the actually very delicate work of putting together an aeroplane that actually didn't fall apart.

**JC** [00:02:42] My father was a strange combination of somewhat traditional values from where he grew up. Some of his family had been involved in the Orange Order, for example. My father had joined the Masonic Lodge. At the same time, he was also a strong trade unionist and had a strong identity as a carpenter and was very proud of the work he did. He was one of the people who formed the Carpenters' Union [United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners] in Oshawa right after the war—again something he was proud about. He wasn't a traditional sort of socialist or social democrat in his politics at all. He had these sort of, as many people do, this contradictory sort of politics on the one side, very conservative, and on the other side, quite a strong union supporter. That was part of my background when I grew up. I was an only child, and I have to thank my parents. They were very supportive of me. Neither of them had gone to secondary school, so from the point I reached high school, they really didn't know what was happening in terms of the

school system or anything like that. Luckily, I had good teachers and I seemed to do all right. So, they were—as long as I was progressing, they were happy, and they were very supportive.

**KN** [00:04:08] You talk a bit about some of the highlights of your school experience, like you learned [unclear].

**JC** [00:04:13] Yeah, I ended up taking the academic stream. In those days, students were streamed and commercial was one side, trades was the other and then the academic stream. The reason for that in part was that I formed a good friendship with a fellow named David Bartlett, and his parents were—his father was a teacher, and his mother was a stay at home homemaker, but was a very smart, intelligent woman. I think partly because Charlie Bartlett, which was his father, was a teacher, they encouraged me to continue my studies in high school and to pursue the academic agenda. Then a bit later, as I got into my late teens, 16, 17 and I started to think about the world a bit, they became sort of mentors to me in terms of politics. I spent lots of time at their dinner table, basically chatting about one thing and another. It turns out and as I later learned, they had both been members of the Communist Party during and after the war and had actually suffered a great deal for their politics as a result as well. They had left the party, I found out in 1956, and there were reasons for that, but they never became anti-communist either. They just didn't feel that the party was doing some of the right things that they thought should be done by people who are of their left wing persuasion. That was for me, very influential in terms of my formation as a socialist, essentially, to have those discussions and to meet with or to be with people who actually had that sort of labour and socialist activism in their background.

**JC** [00:06:22] I went to University of Western Ontario; I got in, it was in London, Ontario, so that was something that was affordable for me. I was living at home for much of that time, and I never really felt socially that I fitted it in with the relatively affluent student body there. I was a working class kid from the east end of the city. There were only a few of us, very few from my high school who went to Western. It was not as a sort of a stream or a occupation or career path that many did. The other thing I would observe as well that most of those of us who went to Western because we didn't have professionals in our sort of network, in our family network, we didn't know what it meant to be a lawyer or a doctor or anything like that. We all ended up doing essentially academic studies like history or like philosophy or that sort of thing, but not professional. Most of the people that I graduated with from high school ended up doing a standard B.A., but not going into a professional stream. Anyway, I found Western socially very—what's the right term—not very pleasant because I didn't have money or anything. At the same time, I found it intellectually very stimulating because I was very lucky to have some very good teachers during that period, and they encouraged me to read and to basically to study. I actually liked that. I found I had a real appetite for it.

**JC** [00:08:11] Another part of my time there, which was a bit different, my father, as I mentioned, built mosquito bombers and he had an interest in aviation, and we lived about a mile from the airport in London, Ontario. When I was about 17 or 18, I really got into hunting and fishing and I thought, what is the greatest job you could ever have? Well, that would be a bush pilot, because that would get you into the bush and you could do all those great things there. Because we're close to the airport, I decided I would see about getting a pilot's license and I enrolled. Initially, I got a private license and then I continued with that and got a commercial. In those days, I was very lucky because I had good summer jobs because of a neighbour who had worked at the Public Utilities Commission. I earned very

good money. It was a union wage, CUPE [Canadian Union of Public Employees] local actually. Between that and the fact that my parents' income was relatively low, I could borrow significant amount of money as well. I also just borrowed some others as well and was able then to pay for my commercial license.

**JC** [00:09:31] I ended up going up north to White River, Ontario. Initially, the first summer I was a dock boy, and this would be about 1968. Then the next—I was lucky that lake, Tukanee Lake and White River, had a small commercial air base on it, as well as a forestry airbase. I'd worked with the forestry as a dock boy that one summer, but because I was on the lake, I got to know the folks in the commercial operation, and they offered me a job when I came the next summer. That started me on my bush flying career, actually, which I enjoyed very much. In those days, the school term at Western ended around the end of April or beginning of May, and the flying started after the ice went out around the 15th of May. I was able to go up and fly all summer, and then I would come back to Western and register in mid-September and then go back to the bush and come back around the end of October. Normally, I just tell my professors why I was I was going to be away, and as soon as I got back in October, I would try and catch up. Luckily, they never created a stink about my being away, so this meant I could fly the whole summer.

**JC** [00:10:55] It was very hard work, actually. People don't realise that. The first full summer I flew, I went three months without a single day off. That was the work pattern; it was dawn until dark, essentially. When you weren't flying, because I was a junior pilot, then you're helping load and unload the planes on the dock, or we would go in and clean up the campsites. There are about 45 campsites, and some of them had little cabins and others are just tent camps. There's all the work of setting up the tent camps in the spring and so on. One of the things that was really nice about the work, though, is that it really taught me how to be, I think, a reasonable pilot, because the junior pilot, as I was initially, had the job of doing check flights in the middle of the week. We had all these tourists who were in at these various camps, and in the spring and in the summer, they were in there fishing. We take them in normally on a Friday night, Saturday, or Sunday, drop them off, and then we'd pick them up the following week. In the middle of the week, we were going and check to see how they were doing, and so the great thing about doing the check flights is you got about normally 20 takeoffs and landings in a single day. You just went. You hopped over every hill into the next lake and then the next lake. Often you just landed beside a boat if they were out fishing and asked how they're doing. You dump off some beer or motors or some gas if they needed that and so on, take back some fish that they had caught to the airbase so it could be frozen. It was an interesting work—hard work actually—but a challenge and I enjoyed it.

**JC** [00:12:50] My career ended accidentally in a way, because at Western I had done reasonably well in terms of my academic career, and I did a master's degree at Western as well, and I applied for and got into Cambridge and also to the London School of Economics [LSE]. I also got what was called at that time a Canada Council fellowship. I decided to go to the LSC and the LSC—which I'll talk about more in a minute—but the LSC was a school that required you to be there until the beginning of July. The school term didn't end in May, it ended—and you had to be there. I had a Canada Council for four years living in London, so I didn't need money, not that I was rich or anything, but I could get by as a student with that money. It was generous, and so I didn't need to work. I didn't resent not going back and flying in the bush. What that meant was that I actually never went back to flying again because I ended up working in England afterwards and so on.

**JC** [00:14:08] I did my Ph.D. there under a wonderful supervisor named Richard Greaves, and he had been editor of "The Political Quarterly" for about 35 years, I think. He was in his early sixties when he took me on, and he'd taken on a few other Canadians as well, interestingly. He was an old Fabian socialist, basically; he was friends with, although much younger, with many of the people that we read about in terms of that period of history in England. George Bernard Shaw was one of the founders of the school. R. H. Tawney. There was—Bertrand Russell was connected with the school at one point. The Webbs—Beatrice and Sidney Webbs. This is the whole panoply of the Fabian Socialist tradition in Britain. He had been teaching at the school unbelievably from the time he was 21, and that was, I think, about 1931 or 32. He had started—so he overlapped, although he was very young—with many of these people that became or were very famous at the time.

**JC** [00:15:25] I did my thesis on the issue of industrial democracy, and it was something that was being talked about quite a bit in England at that time. We're talking here—I started at the LSC in 1971, so Labour had been in office. They were re-elected, I think it was '74. There was also a famous election in '72. In any event, there was just a lot going on in terms of the politics in the UK at that time. The issue of industrial democracy was something that there was a lot of interest in and the Labour government in 1970, either '75 or '76, actually appointed the equivalent of a royal commission to look into the issue of industrial democracy. It had on its membership, George Bain, who was a Canadian, actually, very famous in England though, and Lord Wedderburn, who was a law professor at the London School of Economics, and a number of other significant players in terms of either labour or politics in the UK at that time. The issue was not sort of far out or something completely off the wall. That they appointed this commission to look into the issue signals, you know, the extent to which that was something that was of interest at the time in the Labour Party. I finished my thesis and got the degree at the end, which I was never going to go back to Canada without. That's for sure.

**JC** [00:17:14] There are some other things I could talk about being in England. It was a very interesting period, I must say. There was just so much going on politically there at that time. In 1972, there was the first of the two big miners' strikes. I was interested in supporting them, basically, because I thought that was the right kind of thing to do. I went around the corner—there was a Labour branch office there, and I went to my first branch meeting of the Labour Party. It was chaired by a fellow named Ted Knight, who really was the dominant person in the party at that time. I thought it was interesting the first meeting everybody was called comrade, (laughter) which was not something I expected to go there. Anyway, it was a unique party because also Ken Livingstone, who subsequently became well known as the leader of the GLC [Greater London Council] and then subsequently Mayor of London many years later, he was one of the other sort of leading lights of the local Labour Party. We used to have some of our meetings around in his home, which was on Trinity Rise. He and Ted Knight sort of became mentors of me in the Labour Party at that time, and the Labour Party, the local branch, was incredibly active.

**JC** [00:18:40] Now the structure of Labour's involvement with politics in the UK was a bit different from here because you had the local Council of Municipal Councils, we would call it here, and then you had, at that time, the Greater London Council (GLC), and then you had the national government, Parliament, and each level had issues that people had interests in. The local municipalities in the UK at that time not only took care of the standard sort of municipal services, but they also were responsible for the education system. Inevitably there were lots of issues that people had concerns about. The GLC had a lot of housing, as did the Municipality of Lambeth, but it also was responsible for public

transit and a range of other areas of public services. Again, things that people had interests in. Then finally, of course, the national Parliament where the sort of big picture things were being discussed regularly. When I was there, the Labour government under Harold Wilson had been elected again in 1974 with a tiny majority, but nonetheless—and there were lots of very interesting politicians. My favourite, as it were, that isn't perhaps the right way to say it, but the person that most influenced me at the time was Tony Benn, who I saw him speak at a number of the rallies and I just thought, this fellow really, he knows what's what, and had a lot of influence on my thinking about politics at the time.

**JC** [00:20:30] The Labour Party, just to say a couple more things quickly about it, was incredibly active. We used to campaign virtually every other or every third Sunday, a group of us, a dozen or maybe 15 people, would meet at the Labour Party office in Herne Hill, which was the branch that I was in.  There were three branches within the municipality of Lambeth. The Herne Hill branch, we would meet together and then we would normally have a leaflet of some sort and we'd go off and knock on the doors of people in the estates or individuals homes or whatever. We'd take a number of streets and just canvass basically not for election, but rather just to deal with issues that were being dealt with by the GLC or by the Lambeth Council or some issue that we were concerned about at the national level where we might have a petition or whatever. The idea was to have this relationship with the people in the constituency—that you didn't just show up when you had an election going on. You were actually there talking about decisions that were being made by the local government or by the GLC that Labour had some influence over. The level of activism was really quite amazing.

**JC** [00:21:45] The management committee for Lambeth at the time had 55 members and I was on the management committee for a couple of years.  The rule was basically if you missed two meetings you were out.  You had to be there. At those meetings, the member of Parliament came every meeting and he always accounted for what he had been doing in the previous five weeks, and was questioned, actually.  People asked him all sorts of questions, especially—he was a junior minister in the government, the name was John Fraser, There was this sense of accountability that he, you know, he had some obligation to actually inform us of what was going on and what the discussions were in Parliament—and the same with the Greater London Council. Now, in terms of Lambeth, we didn't at that time have a Labour majority on Lambeth Council, but we did have council members and they were obviously doing various things to try and push Labour agenda there.

**JC** [00:22:44] I do remember one time John Fraser, towards the end of the Labour government, this would be 1978, he—Labour government was tottering.  They only had a majority of two or three, and you know, if somebody was sick or something, this was—they could lose a confidence vote. There was a lot of pressure on the MPs to be there—three-line whip sort of thing. We had had a meeting of the management committee, and this was in the—maybe about 6:30 or seven in the evening, and John went down to Parliament. I think the vote was at 8:00—I've forgotten the exact time, but something like that. We had taken a position on something that the government was doing, which we didn't like, and I've forgotten the issue specifically, but there was the sale of British Petroleum. I think that was probably one of the issues that we thought was inappropriate, that they shouldn't be privatising this national oil company, but the IMF [International Monetary Fund] was pushing the government to do that. The government under Edward Heath was—not Edward Heath—sorry, it'll come back to me—the Finance Minister, anyway. They were essentially feeling forced that they had to comply with the IMF directives. We said to Fraser we didn't think he should vote in favour of this, that he should defy the three- line whip. Well, this is pretty serious stuff. He went down to Parliament. He then decided he

would comply, and then he came back about 10:30 at night. We were still meeting, and there was almost a fistfight between him and Ted Knight, who was the chair of the—because he had voted the way we had not said he should vote anyway. I only relate that one incident to give you a sense of the level of engagement really that was there and the discussions that we held. For me, that was a real learning experience about politics.

**JC** [00:24:50] You know, I gradually got more involved. I was a student there, of course, and then I—when I got my Ph.D., I wanted to work for the trade union movement. That was my number one objective. I wrote to all the unions in the Trade Union Congress [TUC]. There was a booklet that you could get which had all their addresses and who the general secretary was and everything. I had 73 letters sent out to all of them saying, 'I'm here. I've just done my degree, I like labour, etcetera. I like unions, I'd like to work for you, whatever.' Of course, I got, I think, three replies and they were sort of like, 'Thanks for your letter. We'll get back in touch with you if we have some something that we might offer.' But one of them was, 'Well, perhaps you should come in, and you should have a chat with us.' That one was from an organisation called the Merchant Navy and Airline Officers, and they were in the Trade Union Congress, and they had about 40,000 members, almost all of them, except for a thousand, were—they were working out at sea. Most of them were on deep sea vessels, and some of them were on the ferries across the channel. They're all—they're not military. There are merchant navy officers. I went to their office and had an interview, and they offered me a job as a research assistant with them. I took it, of course. I wanted to get into the labour movement, and there I was—the opportunity to join it. I got my job.

**JC** [00:26:37] As it turned out, I worked under a very astute, competent research director who was in his mid or early sixties actually. His name was Tom Gough, and he always insisted that he was a policy researcher. He wasn't just a researcher, he was a policy researcher, and he had quite an influence on the union and was extremely well respected, not just in the union itself, but more broadly in the labour movement. It was nice to have a mentor like that to work under for a couple of years and I enjoyed it. You wouldn't think that Merchant Navy Officers would have a council and staff that were sort of centre line Labour Party, but that in fact was the case.

**JC** [00:27:25] Quite interestingly—and this gives you a sense of the broad church to use Tony Benn's term—the way in which the Labour Party was very open in those days about different political streams and different views that people had and so on. When the Merchant Navy Officers needed a new editor for their newspaper, which went out to the 40,000 members on their ships and which was read because you're on a ship, there's nothing you know, not that much else to do often, I mean, aside from your work. The journal for the union, that was the communication with the membership. Pretty important politically. They interviewed a bunch of people and the person that they hired who was a good journalist was also and very upfront, 'well, I'm a member of the Communist Party,' never bothered them, just like they just—as long as he was a good journalist and did his job properly, which he did. Dave Turner was his name, but I was kind of like, 'Wow, this is interesting,' you know. This was not a left wing union particularly, but there was just a sense of—a kind of openness, which I thought was really quite interesting there.

**JC** [00:28:39] Anyway, so I'm not sure what else I need to say about that time in London or in England. It was—well, I can say something as an aside, but not relating to union work. I met a young woman when I was there, in the second year I was in England, and we went out for four or five months and then she invited me down to her mother's place for a weekend. I went down with her there and I was astonished. I got there and her mother was

a very nice Danish woman whose mother was also living in the estate, as it turned out. My girlfriend's grandmother was a countess. Her grandfather was an earl, and they lived in a 60 bedroom—a 60 room, rather, castle with a moat, the whole bit, and with servants. They had, I think, six or eight gardeners and they had chauffeurs and the whole bit on this. Anyway, it was interesting to see all of that in the UK. We went, she was—the grandmother, Lady Beecham, or Mona, as we called her, was Danish, and she had an incredible personal history. She had very young married a Danish property millionaire, became quite rich, had run her own finances, and had gone out with rich, super rich men, after her first husband died. She, apparently, almost married a fellow from Venezuela who was an oil millionaire, and he was killed in a car accident in Paris. She had a long term affair with the British ambassador to China. She travelled across Russia—this is when it was under the Soviets—by train to China, and she had all these interesting stories to tell. She was a Dane, so she was not arrogant at all. They never—I never felt ever uncomfortable there. It was so strange. One of my stories, things that happened to me, so funny, they had a place in London as well, and they were connected with Duke Westminster. Duke of Westminster was the Earl's cousin, and so they had a place on Belgrave Square. If you know London at all, it's one of the very rich places. Anyway, I remember one time I was getting a ride in the Rolls Royce and my girlfriend at the time and her grandmother went into their place to do something. We were going to be taken to the opera. Anyway, I'm sitting in the back of the Rolls-Royce and the chauffeur is in the front. What's going on at that time was a big strike, and so I'm sort of, and I was always very upfront about my politics. Well, as I was saying, 'I really support the workers. I hope they win.' The chauffeur and I were having this argument about him supporting why the government should suppress them, (laughter) and there I am sitting in the back of a bloody Rolls-Royce. Anyway, so I saw a whole part of England that most people never, ever see. It never occurred to me that I wanted to be dependent on their family or anything like that. I was my own person. That was not something that attracted me, you know, that they had money or whatever. Why would I do that? I was arrogant, basically. Young and stupid maybe, but it never occurred to me. The granny wanted me to marry her daughter or granddaughter, no question about it. That was (laughter) anyway, so that's just an aside. I'm not sure I should even say more about that, but just to say that I saw a whole different part of England that most ever people would ever see.

**JC** [00:32:54] Coming to Canada, as I mentioned, I was very much involved in the Labour Party and in 1978, in the fall, there was a selection for the running for the Lambeth Council. Lambeth Council was at the time maybe about the size of Vancouver Council. I was about 30 years old, 29, 30 years old at that time, and I was selected as one of the three people in our sort of ward in Herne Hill to run, and the Labour Party took over the council in the elections that spring. I had been selected in the fall and then I got a—I guess it must have been a letter from Bill Walsh, who was someone that I had enormous respect for in Ontario. I knew a lot about him from other contacts I'd had. Bill was offering me an opportunity to work with him in Ontario, and he was a very well known labour arbitrator. He had also been one of these people who had been rounded up at the beginning of, during World War Two and spent time in the camp. He had been in the Communist Party at that point. Afterwards, I mean, he in Ontario, he was one of the key labour arbitrators, and a lot of people really had such respect for him. He was he was very smart, so working with him for a couple of years, I thought that would be a good thing to do. I was 30 years old, and I'm thinking. 'Am I going to stay in England the rest of my life or come back to Canada. I'm not sure.'

**JC** [00:34:37] Anyway, I agreed I would work with Bill, and so I told my union I was going to leave. I didn't leave them because I had any problems because they actually—they

were—they treated me very decently and I liked being there. Although I would say one thing, I had never been to sea, you know, and I was hired—I should have mentioned this earlier. I was hired because when they saw on my resume that I was a commercial pilot. They had they had a small group of flight engineers in the union, about a thousand of them, and a few navigating officers. Those folks were gradually being pushed out of the cockpit by the pilots so they wouldn't join the pilots union because the pilots wouldn't have—you know, so there was this conflict. That's why they were with the Merchant Navy officers. The historic connection was that the navigating officers learned how to navigate in the schools that were run on the naval side because the naval folks knew how to navigate, well obviously, because of what they do at sea. The council member who was representing the flight engineers, Roger Bivins, was his name. He flew Concorde. He was the third person in the Concorde. Anybody know what Concorde was? This was the supersonic plane. This was like the pinnacle of aviation. If you're the third officer, and he was a flight engineer on Concorde, and he was always complaining there was nobody in the head office who knew anything about aviation—and there in my little, in my resumé. I don't think they were so interested in whether I had a Ph.D. or not. It was—I was a commercial pilot, and I was going to do research. This guy, Roger Bivins, was always complaining, nobody in the head office knew anything about aviation. I think that's a major factor as to why I got hired, anyway.

**JC** [00:36:34] Where does that leave me? I was going to go back with, to work with Bill, and then Gil Levine, who was the research director of CUPE, convinced him not to take me on after all, because he was—Gil said he was too old. That Bill Walsh shouldn't do this anymore. He'd been doing this over a number of years with various people. Gil said, 'No, you can't do that anymore. You've got health problem, whatever it was. Then I got a letter back saying that he couldn't take me on after all, but then I got other correspondence from Gil Levine in Ottawa at the research department saying they might have a job for me. Then Grace Hartman came to London, actually on some other CUPE business and arranged to meet with me and I think we had coffee or whatever for an hour. She was president then, and then she said, 'Yes, you know, we have a job in the research department, so if you're interested.' That was how I ended up being hired. Now, foolish me, I thought the job was in Ottawa. I literally did, and they offered me the job. I accepted it and I'd already burned my bridges in the union, and I'd also gone back to the Labour Party and said, I'm sorry, I can't run after all. And so I'm going to go back to Canada.' That's what happened there in terms of my aspiring political career. (laughter)

**JC** [00:38:07] Anyway, so I ended up coming out to B.C. here. [unclear] I was back in Canada and that's what I agreed to do. That was the beginning of my work in CUPE. I spent two years here in B.C. as the first research rep for the union here, and I also covered Alberta as well. It was a huge learning curve for me. I'd been out of the country for over seven years, totally immersed in a somewhat different labour culture in the U.K. compared with here. Obviously, lots of things: I didn't—I'd never lived in B.C. before, so I didn't know a lot about the politics here. I'd not worked in the way in which unions operate here in Canada with a particular labour relations approach that we have. The way in which negotiations and so on took place in the U.K. was very different at that time. Collective agreements were not legally binding. There are almost no lawyers involved in any of it, etcetera. It was a different kind of system basically that I had to learn very quickly about.

**JC** [00:39:28] My first really major piece of work involved the West Kootenay Schools dispute, and this happened before I arrived here. There had been a position taken at the time by CUPE to resist what was called accreditation, which was to link a group of employers and a group of unions together and require them to have basically a similar

framework, collective agreement. CUPE had wanted to maintain the independence of the locals and not have them forced together by the government, essentially. In the West Kootenays there had been a dispute over this, and it had led to a strike, which had been then deemed illegal by the government, and this would have been, I think, in the summer of 19 or spring of 1978 or early '79. Anyway, just before I arrived here. The government legislated the five CUPE locals back to work, and then they set up an arbitration process to resolve the collective agreements for those five locals. My job as a researcher was to go in and represent those locals in the arbitration process.

**JC** [00:40:53] Interest arbitration is very different from rights arbitration because you're dealing with the entire collective agreement. You're dealing with a whole range of economic issues and comparative issues in terms of what other collective agreements have, either in the sector or in other parts of the labour movement and so on. Those are not the kinds of issues that you find in a rights arbitration where you're really interpreting what's in the collective agreement itself and whether you violated it or not. I had the luck of doing a conciliation board in Edmonton, which was very similar in many respects, and the staffer up there was a fellow named Bill Petrie, who was very good. I spent a number of weekends there in Edmonton during the conciliation board and learning that whole process of how that was put together.  Now, its not identical to an interest arbitration, but much of it was somewhat similar. Then, of course, I got lots of support from the research department in Ottawa. They sent me examples and we talked back and forth on the phone and so on. That was for me, a sort of a baptism of fire. It was a lot of work entailed. I had to go back and forth for each local into the Kootenays, drive back and forth, meet with the locals, find out what the issues were, and then subsequently write the submissions, the arbitration briefs, and then after that go and manage the arbitration.

**JC** [00:42:30] You know, being naive and perhaps foolish or whatever, I didn't realise, and in some respects a lot of this is more formal, so it was not always the practice that members were asked to come and participate in the process by basically talking about their experience there. It seemed to me that in this particular case it made sense to ask the members to be, not only to be there to watch while I did my song and dance, but also to be asked to speak at the hearing to the arbitrator. It was Noel Hall, as I recall, and he was very tolerant and open, probably more so than many. We were also—I was also lucky because the employer representative was rather obnoxious and arrogant and actually a little bit slow in picking up cues. He kind of alienated the arbitrator to some degree by the way he behaved and made it a bit easier for me to kind of get to make sure that the members had a chance to talk. Some of these hearings went on like two or three days and nights.  The last hearing—I think that was Selkirk College—I might be wrong, but I think it was Selkirk College—went on like till about 2:00 one morning and then again till about 3:00 the next morning. Again, it was members were actually explaining what happened to them in the context of this dispute.  I was lucky that I did quite well in terms of what Hall actually decided when he brought down his decision. It was good for the locals, and it was good for CUPE, actually, that essentially, we won those cases, the five of them together. So, that was part of my sort of baptism of fire in CUPE.

**JC** [00:44:30] At the time when I arrived in CUPE, there was a huge conflict between, I think some folks in the NDP and the Communist Party at that time. I guess I would say fairly bluntly, the folks on the right and the staff on the right of the NDP were happy to see the Communist Party's influence diminish in CUPE and happy to see some of those folks essentially leave—lose their positions  on the executive and so on. There had been, I think, a fairly strong or bitter struggle. I wasn't part of that, but I arrived and there I was (laughter) in the midst of that and coming out of a very different culture in England where

people didn't worry about that kind of thing in the same way at all. When I arrived, I was sort of told by one of the staff that it was my obligation then to sign an NDP card. I said, 'Well, you know, that's something I'll decide.' I wasn't going to be told what I should actually do politically. I was, you know, and I was new here and sort of what was going on. That seemed to be a black mark (laughter) on my copybook because I was immediately identified as not a team player.

**JC** [00:45:56] There was other politics going on as well because there were conflicts with Gil Levine and the department in Ottawa, and again, a lot of it had to do with the NDP and people outside the NDP on the left, whether they were in the CP or some of the other left organisations at that time. Gil had been in the Communist Party, as I understood back in the I guess probably late forties, early fifties, but he had left the party I think again in '56, as many did, but he was never hostile to them, and he was always seen as some sort of secret member of the Communist Party, which was not true actually. I worked with Gill for almost 20 years, so I know that that's true, you know. He was never anti-communist particularly. He worked for whoever and whatever he thought made sense for the union. Anyway, there was a sort of sense that Gil was on the wrong page in Ottawa, and that sort of spilled over to some degree here because I was sort of seen as his—what's the right term—follower, I guess it would be, or something like that, here. I wasn't particularly welcomed in the B.C. office when I arrived.

**JC** [00:47:14] There was also this perception, which was floating around, which I don't know the history of that, but a lot of people that I met in CUPE thought that I was someone hired from England, that I was English, and why was CUPE hiring an English person to take a job here in B.C.? Well, I was Canadian. You know, what can I say? They thought I was British, that the union had hired somebody from England to stop somebody here getting a job. Whatever, right. There were these kinds of things that had to be eventually worked through.

**JC** [00:47:51] After the—one other story. I'll tell this story because I should. There was a lot of conflict, and this was happening right after I arrived, between folks who were in B.C., not particularly supportive of Jean Claude Parrot and the postal workers and their strike that was going on. I think this would be the fall of '78. I could check on the date, but something that—and, as you know, Parrot was quite militant. Kealey Cummings in CUPE, who was the national secretary treasurer to his credit, was actually giving financial support to the CUPW to Parrot, and very supportive of him, and the national office was supporting the union. In the B.C. office there was a very different view of what was seen as being very sort of irresponsible militancy or something of that nature or whatever. The people were not particularly supportive of CUPW here. I think got myself in a little bit of hot water by, you know, basically saying that I really was a strong supporter of Parrot and I thought he was doing the right thing and that he needed 100 percent support. There were some meetings and conflicts around that, that I ended up being involved in, which didn't enamour me to some folks in the staff of CUPE at that time here in B.C. and was totally at loggerheads with what was going on in Ottawa and I knew what was going on there.

**JC** [00:49:34] I guess the other small experience for me was that in writing the arbitration briefs, this was a huge amount of clerical work. There was over a thousand pages of typing involved that was done over three months. That tells you how much I was writing. It was all handwritten, had to be typed. When I was hired, they never had a researcher, so they had no idea that researchers churned out a lot of material like that. Right. I got the clerical person who was sort of the one that I guess no one else really wanted, or whatever that was not—was at the bottom of the totem pole, and poor woman had all the stuff that

she was supposed to type and, you know, caused her a lot of stress, I'm sure, because it was totally unusual for that sort of thing. How this emerged was that then the regional director at the time started writing to Ottawa about all the demands that I was making on the office staff in Burnaby that seemed to be over, you know, excessive but never carbon copying me, so I was not responding to the letters, and I didn't know about this. He'd written several, and then I got a call from Lofton McMillan in Ottawa and said, What is this letter about that we've got?' I said, 'What letter?' It turns out I was not copied on any of it. What was happening was the regional director was building a case without telling me. I hadn't responded to anything that he'd said, so therefore, what he said was that—and so then that all blew up and blew up in his face, actually, because of the deceptive way he operated. After we won the West Kootenay arbitration, I was fine. Like that was—there was no issue.

**JC** [00:51:41] I was settled here in Vancouver, and I was actually getting comfortable in being at CUPE. I felt, you know, I felt—but things changed. There was a huge conflict in Ottawa between Kealey and Gil and the politics of the union at that time. Gil had the view that he was going to get pushed out as the director, and this had to do with an appointment that was going to be made of a new research person. Kealey and he were not on good terms at that point in time. There was a sense that Gil had, I think probably rightly, that Kealey was trying to stuff the research department with new people that would change the balance and essentially create a dynamic in which Gil would no longer be very comfortable there, or he could be replaced easily, as the case may be. Gil came to me and also Larry Katz and said this position has come open in Ottawa, and it would be important for them in terms of staying with the union and not having somebody else come in that they didn't want, if I came to Ottawa. They asked me if I would do that. I thought about it, and I said, 'Okay, I'll move to Ottawa.' My parents were in London, Ontario, so that was a factor as well. I never—I didn't leave B.C. because I didn't like it. I'd been here two years and I actually was starting to feel comfortable. I liked so much working with the locals here was such a good time.

**JC** [00:53:30] Then I went to Ottawa, and again, a big learning curve. The nice thing about—and this is the—I mean, to have that job in Ottawa was just—this was wonderful. It was the greatest job I ever had working under Gil and with Larry and the other members of the department, Randy Sikes, and so on, all of these good trade unionists, really strong people and smart people. The department was so well organised. One of the things that was great is that Gil, working with Randy, had put together the SALA system, the system for the analysis of labour agreement data. For quite a number of years, we had much better data on collective agreement provisions than any of the employers. Now this was also needed not just for negotiations but for interest arbitration. The computerised system that Randy had put together was so valuable that we had all—because— and we had normally two people working full time coding collective agreements. By the time I started with CUPE, there were about 360, 380,000 members, and there were, I think about 2,800 collective agreements. There were a lot. To code a collective agreement, and there were quite a number of fields, you had to actually understand what the meaning of the terms was and then be able to translate that into the coding program, so that it then could be computerised. You could have a printout to show you like the—say, the level and quality of sick leave provisions and collective agreements and school boards in Ontario, or in municipal governments, or school boards in Saskatchewan, or vacation after two years, or four years, or whatever it was. Right. You work out then the percentage of members or of locals who had what level of coverage, etcetera. You had access to that sort of data, which was really marvellous in terms of making your case in interest arbitrations, which I did once I was in Ottawa, or in bargaining for reps to have that data showing, you know, that

68 percent of school districts have this provision, that's better than what you've got here, and that's why we should have something better—that sort of thing. That was part of it, to learn all that. A couple of other things—maybe I'm nattering on. You've got some other questions here, but—

**KN** [00:56:04] Well, I did want you to talk a bit about the public policy work you did around the NAFTA [North American Free Trade Agreement]—

**JC** [00:56:11] Yes.

**KN** [00:56:12] [unclear].

**JC** [00:56:15] The research department was always engaged in some public policy work, and that was—in those days, actually, Gil was frequently on CBC Radio when there were labour disputes. He was—"As it Happens" and those programs—Gil was often someone who was asked to give a labour perspective. He was always interested in the economics issues, the big picture stuff, right, and was well connected with other people who are also involved in that on the academic side. I ended up doing work with him and with Larry and with others who were part of a sort of Ottawa network of people. Leo Panitch was part of our network in those days. Duncan Cameron. Then there are people who were in Montreal as well who we were connected with. This is about the time that the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives [CCPA] was getting formed. I think it was 1982, '81 or '82, in that period. There was a lot going on in terms of discussion about economic policies and so on. Gil also was close to Madeleine Parent. They were good friends, and we had been putting together what was called the Working Committee on Social Solidarity, and that started with some meetings of people in Montreal and in English Canada in Ontario, basically. Around 1982, I think, roughly. This was an attempt to try and lay out a kind of a social policy-economic vision for Canada that would also be very much one that was accessible to rank and file people, that was where economic issues were translated into straightforward language without all the nonsense that you often get in terms of fancy terminology and so on, and also using it as a mobilising tool.

**JC** [00:58:29] We were working with a lot of organisations: Madeleine Parent in Montreal and some others around her; and then the Catholic bishops, Mike McBain and Tony Clark, were part of this network; Duncan Cameron played a key role as an economic adviser; various other people around the CCPA; and then the National Action Committee of Status of Women was also plugging into this; many community coalitions in Ontario; folks from the artists' community, filmmakers and so on.

**JC** [00:59:08] We had developed this document, which is still a very good document. I've forgotten the precise title, but anyway by the Working Committee on Social Solidarity. We were—so just at the point of really trying to expand that, and then the debate around free trade started. It was many of the same people got engaged in that very quickly because we had the Macdonald Commission in 19—I was appointed, I think, in '83, and then Macdonald just before the election in '84, came out with this leap of faith that we should have a free trade agreement with the U.S. We started then pivoting over to how do we respond to this free trade agenda, and what can we do around that. We built on the sort of research side, a network of people who were analysing the agreements, as we knew, and a lot of it was still secret. There had been some documents that got released around 1980—end of 86, beginning of '87 stuff was trickling out.

**JC** [01:00:15] More fundamentally, we understood that this was an agreement that was going to basically tie us much more tightly into the U.S. and erode Canadian sovereignty in a very significant way. The whole sort of market based what we now call neoliberal agenda was really behind that. Well, we didn't use the term neoliberal. We used neoconservative at that time, but it was an understanding that this was really a threat to the kind of social democracy, to the extent we have that in Canada, and to the social programs. I was privileged enough to be asked by Jeff Rose as the president, to work with the coalition that was emerging. This is the Pro-Canada Network and, again, a really wonderful experience. There were so many interesting people involved and I mentioned a couple. We had the churches, and also the Protestant churches were involved in that as well as the Catholic churches. We had NAC, National Action Committee [on the Status of Women]. There were a number of First Nations groups. There were lots of local community coalitions involved. ACTRA [Alliance of Canadian Cinema, Television and Radio Artists] representing the acting and cultural community was there, and so on. All of these different organisations. We would meet regularly; I think about every two months or so for a couple of days in Ottawa and around a huge table. There'd be maybe 40 or 50 people there and all of them represented organisations. They were not there speaking on their own behalf as individuals, but they were there with a kind of mandate from their organisations to participate and to engage in this discussion. I forgot the environmental groups. They played such a key role. Steven Schreibman and so on.

**JC** [01:02:09] Out of that, the Pro-Canada Network developed the campaign against free trade. There was a wonderful comic book that was done largely by Rick Salutin and others. Terry Mosher from Montreal (I think it was the Montreal Gazette) did the—Terry did the cartoons on it. It was basically how free trade is going to screw us. It was so—but it was done in such a nice popular way, and literally hundreds of thousands of those were distributed across the country. This really had some impact. Now, in CUPE, we did "The Facts" on free trade, and here again, I had the privilege of working with Ed Finn, who was one of the gems of the labour movement. I mean, like, unbelievable person who as a journalist, I've never met anyone as—well, I use the term clever, but not in any negative way. He would take articles that others had written and submitted to "The Facts", which we would use and with absolute minimal number of changes, he would make what text that was kind of awkward and not clear and so on into something that was absolutely perfectly clear and understandable. His ability to do that with a minimal number of changes and understand what should be there, but without rewriting it, which is what I would normally do. No, he had that skill. Anyway, so working with him and with Gil and with Larry Katz on both "The Facts", which we developed around 19, I think '83 or '84, which went across the country ten times a year, we did it. Also, "The Facts on Free Trade", that special book, which also was a book by Lorimer.

**JC** [01:04:11] We had a bit of a conflict with Jeff Rose, who, by the way, I thought was a very good president and who I enjoyed working with and for whom I had a lot of respect, not least of which because I knew how hard he worked and how many nights in Ottawa that office in his—you know, it was a corner office on—was it Florence Street—yeah, in Ottawa, a corner office in our building on the third floor, that light would be on until midnight most nights. He just worked his butt off. Anyway, Jeff knew a lot about economics, and he understood a lot about the U.S. as well. He had the view that Mulroney will never get the deal because Mulroney was saying that he would have a disputes mechanism embedded in the deal that would allow panels to override what were effectively decisions by the U.S. Congress on trade issues; that a dispute panel would make a decision about whether or not the U.S. had violated the agreement; and that dispute panel's recommendations would actually be implemented fully regardless of what

Congress decided. Jeff understood that Congress was never going to give up its authority in the area of trade. It's in this constitution. Why was Mulroney saying something like that because it's not true and it never happened, by the way. We got a fig leaf added the agreement. His view was that was not going to happen. As the negotiations proceeded and so on.

**JC** [01:06:02] Then we developed "The Facts on Free Trade". We had it done basically, and we got all these people to write for it, like Margaret Atwood, for example, and Rick Salutin and Duncan Cameron did a piece and so on. All sorts of people that are well known in Canada to do their chapters on a particular part of the economy or society that would be adversely affected by free trade. We had that, and so Ed Finn and I and Gil had these arguments with Jeff because Jeff said, 'He's not going to get the deal. It's not going to happen. We've got this we're ready to go, but it's not going to happen.' We said, 'No, we have to get this out.' We had a limited—he was going to give 10,000 copies. We thought, 'No, we've got it done. Sure, it's going to cost a bit more money, but let's do a couple of hundred thousand. Get it out there to everybody.' 'No.' Ed Finn, I think snuck through, I don't know 20 or 30,000 more, something like that. I was always a bit disappointed because we had what I thought was really the best analysis of that agreement that was done in a way that was popular with credible people. If we had been able to dump a quarter of a million of those across the country before the election, I think we would have had a real impact, but it didn't get that circulation then. We didn't have them printed and so on. Anyway, that was a bit of a disappointment, and one of the few things that Jeff did that I really didn't like. Most other stuff I really—and he supported me so much on the Pro-Canada Network that—so I had no criticism in that regard because he did a good job as president when I was there, in my view, anyway.

**KN** [01:07:48] You made a personal decision, John, in 1992 to return to B.C. and soon after that you ended up working for the NDP government. You were seconded from CUPE to work for the NDP government. Can you talk about that? In particular I'd be interested if you could tell us something about the public policy accords that you worked on in the B.C. public sector with Tony Penikett.

**JC** [01:08:11] Happy to do so. Let me say first, you know, I really loved my job in Ottawa with CUPE. I thought that was the best job you can have in the world as a researcher, and especially because at the time, because of Gil's influence, he was one of the two key staff people who built that union, and he negotiated many of the first agreements that CUPE had. He had such clout across the country, knew so many people that—and his view of research was that we should be out there in the field. It meant a lot of travel, a lot of weekends at conferences and so on, but the idea was not to sit in Ottawa and churn out a bunch of paper. You had to do that, but you should be out there with the members regularly and meeting them and finding out what their issues were. That was the way he ran the research department, which made it so interesting, basically.

**JC** [01:09:09] I love the job, but I also love someone else, Colleen Fuller, and we met in Ottawa around 1987 and got together. We did a bit of travelling back and forth and Colleen worked here very briefly as well and so on, and then she moved to Ottawa. Then her father became quite ill with cancer, and her family was here, and she also hated the Ottawa winters. After a lot of angst, we agreed that I would come to B.C., and I was able to use a deferred salary leave payment to come and do some sessional teaching and SFU (Simon Fraser University) and get settled here. Then that left a question, 'What would I do when my deferred salary leave ended?' Fortunately, Govind Sundram, who was at the time Glen Clark's labour advisor, indicated to me that it might be something that I'd be

interested in working for the provincial government. I said, 'Okay, well that's in B.C. that's good.' He connected me with Clark, and Clark offered me a secondment from CUPE to work in his ministry. Clark, at that time, was Minister of Employment and Investment. I then started in his ministry in 1993 in the trade policy division of the ministry.

**JC** [01:10:48] I came to really like Clark because he was, I think, the only provincial premier at the time who had any sort of guts to stand up to Ottawa around free trade because we were now dealing with the fallout of NAFTA [North American Free Trade Agreement], and the way in which NAFTA was driving changes to a whole range of policies and B.C. Clark was doing his best in a very difficult situation to push back on that, so that was good.

**JC** [01:11:18] Like I said, I didn't sort of leave Ottawa because I didn't—that I wanted to get out of there. I reluctantly came here, but I fell—it just fell into my lap that I ended up working in a part of government that I thought was really interesting to be in. Then I was commuting to Victoria, which was a hassle, and then I was asked if I would like to join the Crown Corporation Secretariat here in Vancouver, and which I did, which meant I would work downtown here. In that capacity, I was involved in the Island Highway project. Blair Redlin was the deputy minister at that point, and that was a wonderful project in terms of creating employment for—not only for people on the Island, but training and especially for opportunities for women in the trades and for First Nations in the trades. Again, to have the opportunity to be part of an initiative like that was really quite wonderful from my point of view. Then I would be 1980, sorry 1998, I guess, I was asked if I would be interested in a new initiative that Clark was going forward with.

**KN** [01:12:43] He was now premier?

**JC** [01:12:44] Yeah, he was Premier by then, (sorry I forgot). By then he was Premier, and it was to work with Tony Penikett, who Clark had decided he wanted to do the public sector accord process. Now the background to this is essentially that at the time the NDP government didn't feel that it had a lot of money for generous wage settlements with the public sector, and there were a quarter of a million public sector contracts coming due almost all at the same time. The earlier wage restraint policies had been zero delayed one, so people had not got raises that were even equivalent to inflation preceding this round of negotiations.

**JC** [01:13:41] Clark's idea, which I think was quite brilliant—it was like we don't have money, but maybe on the policy front we can do some things that really would matter to the unions, that they would see as benefits, not monetary benefits, but real benefits that would improve the circumstances of their members. In doing that, it would make the climate at the bargaining table better that people see we're doing some other stuff that is of benefit to union members. That was the idea. The other component of it was that it would be completely separate from collective bargaining because otherwise everything gets mixed up. The mandate for the accord process was that we had no money. We had—we could make policy changes, but they couldn't cost the government new money, new spending. Right. Now, in reality, there were a few areas where we bent that a little bit, but not really very much. That rule was very important because otherwise we'd have two sets of negotiations going on, one at the bargaining table and then the accord process and nobody would know what to do. Like it would be a total mess. We were pretty vigilant about keeping that.

**JC** [01:15:00] Now I have to say that being asked to do this job again, I didn't know Tony Penikett at the time. I was a bit worried that it might look like that horrible social contract in Ontario, and I'd been in Ontario when that happened in 1991, '92, and Bob Rae did that. Bob, who I knew, I didn't understand why he did something so stupid, basically. I was a little apprehensive that we might be heading down that road, but once I got some time with Tony, I realised, no, that's what we're not doing. We know this is a different agenda. This is something that makes sense. Initially the accord process was new. Nobody knew exactly how it would work, and we frankly didn't know if it would work.

**JC** [01:15:47] We started meetings. Now, the process rightly started with a meeting with Ken Georgetti as a head of the Federation to alert him to what the government was thinking about doing and to get his views about whether it made sense and also whether he thought there were some issues that the Fed believed we should be looking at. I should say also that one of the things that we learned from the Ontario Accord process and why it was so toxic is that Rae had decided he would tell the unions what they should negotiate, or what the policies were for them. Well, you know, like as soon as you start that, you're not going to get anywhere. People don't like that dynamic, so our approach was the opposite. Consciously. We are going to ask the unions and in some cases employers, because they would have to have to implement some of this stuff. We will have to ask them what their priorities were, what did they think made sense. Now, some of them we can't do. Just that simple, but some we could, so we have to explore that, but it wasn't like we've got the agenda, you know. No, that was a way to lose everything.

**JC** [01:17:03] We went to Georgetti and met with him, and he did flag one issue, which is pensions. He'd always been concerned about that. Then he had spoken afterwards to some of the other unions. Then we started a process of going around and meeting with the various unions in different sectors and also in parallel meeting with the employers in those sectors as well, because they would have to implement policy change and I think Clark wanted buy in from them wherever that was feasible. Again, there was lots of confusion about initially what kind of policy changes are we talking about and where is this going to go, and etcetera. From our point of view, the key thing then was to get a few wins to show that we could actually accomplish a few of these.

**JC** [01:18:01] Now, I may get these slightly out of order, but, for example, one of the accords that we got had to do with something that came from the college sector, from what's now FPSE [Federation of Post Secondary Educators of B.C.], CIEA [College Institute Educators Association of B.C.], I think was the name at the time. Ed Lavelle was the key sort of spokesperson for the unions there. They saw that the government was paying a lot of money to private training agencies, and this is money doing a lot of the same kinds of teaching work that the colleges could do or training work. The previous Socred government had basically banned or limited the ability of the colleges to bid on a lot of this work, and so they saw this work going to the private sector, which the colleges could do. If the work came back into the colleges, that would mean they would have more jobs for instructors in the college sector and more money into the colleges and maybe more job security. Right. Okay, this makes sense. There's not a cost to the government; we're spending the money one way or the other, so let's work on this. That was one of the first accords that we got, which showed that you can actually, by redirecting public money in a way that benefited the colleges and the union members in the colleges, that we could do something that was positive for them.

**JC** [01:19:27] Then we did a number of others, but the really big one—so that's what I should focus on—I think is on the pensions. Now, Tony and I were not responsible for so

much work that had earlier been done on pension issues, starting under Harcourt, basically. There had been changes in the governance arrangements for the seven major public pension plans in B.C. at the time. Advisory committees (that may not be the technical term) but advisory committees had been set up. They didn't have authority—it wasn't joint trusteeship—but the unions were starting to be consulted as a result of changes that were made, I think around '93 and '94. The advisory committee process had engaged a lot of unions to get involved in pensions in a really serious way and think about what role they should be playing. The result was that there was a lot of research already done on pensions and a lot of thought had been done by unions about where they wanted to go with the pension issue down the road, and particularly the question of joint trusteeship. We didn't invent any of that, but Tony immediately latched on to this is like, yes, but this has got to actually get through cabinet, and this has got to be finalised so that we actually get it done, you know. We linked the accord process with actually getting completion of the "pension negotiations" (in quotation marks), their pension discussions that had earlier happened. That's what we could do through the accord process. We could drive that through into Cabinet to make sure that the decisions to change to joint trusteeship, involving billions of dollars of money for workers and giving them finally the opportunity to have an equal say in how that money was invested and, you know, whether surpluses went to benefits for their members or whether they got to stop them from having the employers sort of scoop out the surplus to make holidays and contributions on their side—no, to give the unions a real say, a voice in pensions. That's what we could do, and so that accord process pushed that forward and got it through Cabinet. All of those pensions went into joint trusteeship. This was, I think in terms of money, in terms of big picture impact, this was the most important thing that we did.

**JC** [01:22:06] Now, we did a total—this may sound hard to believe—but we did 35 of these—took us two and a half years to negotiate. We negotiated with virtually every union in the broader public sector and virtually all private sector unions, because many private sector unions had small groups of workers in the public sector. We also had to work with all the employers and, through Tony as well, we had to deal with the folks in the various ministries. To get a policy changed, you had essentially to make sure that the deputy minister and his or her staff were onside and agreed. Also, you had to have that discussion with them about, well, what are the potential roadblocks? What are the cow pies here? That if we just go ahead with this and we're not thinking about it clearly, it's going to backfire on us and going to be a big problem. You had to have their input because they were going to be part of implementing many of the accords, and so those discussions had to go on.

**JC** [01:23:11] There was another part of the accord process that involved dealing with PSEC [Public Sector Employers' Council]. Now, PSEC has changed dramatically in the last number of years. My understanding of this from the folks who actually set it up was that it got established because employers were essentially out of control, that they were negotiating—this is in the early part of Harcourt Government—employers were making decisions that led to disputes with unions that were inconsistent totally with what the government was doing and wanted to do. The government then was left with a mess, so they had to have something to enable them to track the employers, to ride herd on the employers so that they weren't just going off and doing whatever they thought was for whatever reason in their interests as employers. And so PSEC was set up to do that. You know, it functioned initially in that. Gradually, I think, and after Campbell came in, it flipped over entirely to be an organisation that was driven by employers for their interests and essentially hostile to the unions and workers. In the early stage PSEC was designed to have that other role that governments wanted.

**JC** [01:24:32] We had to ensure that we were aware of what was going on at the bargaining table. Russ Pratt was the head negotiator for PSEC, and he was, there in charge of, or overseeing rather, the negotiations that was happening on all the different tables around. There was coordination with Russ, but as I said, we were not involved in giving out money. We needed to be aware of what was happening at the bargaining table. It was also essentially a condition of the accord process that the accord benefits that we negotiated didn't go into place until things had been settled at the bargaining table within the government's mandate. That was, you know, I always felt that was understandable, but not necessarily my ideal. The other stuff we were getting through was really, I thought, good. So, okay, and the government is going to do its financial thing regardless so let's see what we can get out of it. Maybe I'm being cynical here, but a lot of good things happened, I think, in the accord process, and it's quite unique. There is no—I can't think of anything that's happened in labour relations in Canada like that. I have—I can't think of any government that's done anything similar to what Glen Clark came up with. The idea, and it's a very simple and clear idea. There are so many policies out there potentially that governments can implement that will benefit workers, and yet they never get to the Cabinet table, and there's no process of getting them on the Cabinet table. Surely, that's what you want to do, especially if you feel constrained financially, that you want to go ahead with that. We had this process that Clark devised out of his brain. He came up with this and it worked, you know. I think at the end—and here others can judge me—but I think at the end of the process, neither Tony nor I were in the bad books of the trade union movement as a result. I mean, I'm not saying we got everything perfect. I'm not saying there weren't some issues that were awkward in some cases, but I think we came out of that feeling that we hadn't burned any bridges, and I didn't feel that I'd burned bridges at the end. Maybe I'm self-serving in saying that, but I think I think we got enough out of it that it made sense for the labour movement, and they saw that it was worth doing anyway. So that's the accord process.

**JC** [01:27:05] After the accord process. I left; I had my secondment terminated a month before the Campbell government was elected. At that point, everybody knew that the NDP were going to be defeated, and so I didn't want to hang around and get booted out, in any case. I went back to CUPE and then I did a couple of years as a servicing rep. I serviced Powell River. I serviced the Richmond School District. I serviced Delta and did some other stuff, but there was no research job in CUPE available in the office in Burnaby at the time, and I wasn't going to go back to Ottawa. You know, we were settled here in Vancouver and Colleen wouldn't go back to Ottawa. CUPE had this amazingly good early retirement package. If you had 25 years of service and you met the 80 factor of age and service, you had an unreduced pension, you could leave. There was a bridge that gave you the CPP [Canada Pension Plan] for every year until you got to the age of 65. Between the pension and the bridge, I just looked at the numbers and I said—and I was still getting the Ottawa assistant director in Ottawa rate. It was the same as the regional director here. If I'd stayed as a rep, it would have taken me five years to get the same level of pension as I was already going to qualify for. I decided that I would take early retirement and I did have a Ph.D., so I'd see about getting back into the academic world, and so that's what I did.

**JC** [01:28:59] I did some sessionals at SFU [Simon Fraser University], and then Marjorie Cohen, to her credit, suggested to me that I go and speak to the dean at the new health sciences faculty, which was just being set up. David McLean was his name. I arranged to have an interview with him, and I told him a bit about my background, and so on, and that I knew about public policy basically. They didn't have anybody who did anything around public policy in the health science faculty. Also, I had some involvement with health in

terms of both the accords that we did and also CUPE in the health sector, and so he hired me as an associate professor. What can I say? I was lucky. It just happened. I was in the right place at the right time. I have 14 years working with the health science faculty there, which for me, again, it was a positive experience and I enjoyed it, and my colleagues were good, actually. I didn't have any huge conflicts basically, politically with people there. I thought a lot of them were on the right side, basically, not necessarily socialists, but nonetheless, you know, decent progressive people for the most part.

**JC** [01:30:23] I got involved again in the Labour studies program at that time, and the program was run by Mark Lear, and it wasn't well-resourced at the time. He was running it essentially, I think, off the side of his desk and doing the best he could. It was challenging with our resources basically. Then Jim Sinclair managed to arrange—and there's a whole history of this, which I'm sure others will know much better than me—but with Margaret Morgan to negotiate with SFU for the funds that she was prepared to provide and to use those funds to rebuild essentially the Labour studies program. I was, as a faculty member, on the board of Labour Studies. It's called the steering committee if you're a faculty member or there's the advisory committee if you're the members of the labour movement who are part of it. That would be, I think, probably around 2009 or ten I started getting involved again. I've forgot the exact date, but it has been wonderful to see the way in which the program has expanded so much, and the current director is frankly fabulous. What can you say? And a good, really great group of faculty now. It's gone from strength to strength and will, I hope, down the road be a full department. Meanwhile, but that's where we should go. A big step was to have the major for labour studies, not just a minor as it had been before. You get your B.A. as a major in labour studies and I think down the road we will eventually see graduate studies as well. I'm not sure what else I can say about that, Ken.

**KN** [01:32:18] I think that's good. Maybe, I would just ask you this if there's anything can you just maybe say a few words about what you've been doing since you retired from the faculty?

**JC** [01:32:29] Sure. Yeah. We never really retire. I have to tell you, I'll be 76 in one month, so I'm not a young chicken anymore. (laughter) Yeah. When I was working on the—first, my father was a carpenter, so I have that history of trades background. Not that I'm useful at that. I'm hopeless at it, but I know a bit about the industry from his experience and so on. The Island Highway Project brought me in touch with the building trades unions because there was a collective agreement negotiated between the 13 highway constructor unions and the Highway Constructors Ltd, which was the subsidiary of a crown corporation that had been set up by Clark essentially to become the employer of record of the workers on the Island Highway. There was a collective agreement, and then there were commitments in the collective agreement around local hire, around equity hire, training and so on. Right. It was a big project, 1.3 billion and went on for almost a decade. I was involved in employment equity work as a member of the Crown Corporation Secretariat at the time. That put me in touch with the building trades unions. Out of that, I developed a sort of relationship with some of the people who were representing the unions, like Wayne Peppard, for example, and others as well. I kind of kept on with that. Then when I as an academic, I was doing a lot of research with some social science grants that we got through York University. Initially, it was called Work in a Warming World was the first grant that we had, and we had four in a row. The last one was Adapting Canadian Work and Workplaces to Climate Change. This involved—was one of those community academic arrangements, and in our case, the community was labour. There were a number of trade unionists who were involved in that grant process. We were meeting four or five times a

year and looking at the research agenda and how that fitted in with things unions wanted. Out of that, I came to befriend Lee Loftus from the building trades, who had also been involved earlier with the Island Highway, a little bit, but we weren't engaged very much then, but Wayne Peppard was the main contact and that.

[01:35:18] Anyway, Lee and I became good friends working through this process with the short grant that we had. Afterwards, when I retired, we got together, and he had some ideas about what might be feasible in terms of moving the construction trades a bit. What's the right term? A bit more quickly onto the environmental issue and in particular seeing what could be done to introduce information or climate awareness or climate literacy with the apprenticeship programs. Lee and I then met with SkillPlan. Lee, as chair of SkillPlan actually, which does curriculum development, and they do that not just for construction, but for a whole range of other areas as well. They're a good size operation. They have, I think, 20, 22, 23 full time employees and another 15 part time employees, so they're very competent at doing this work. Then we also add another organisation, the Social Demonstration and Research Corporation [SDRC], which does evaluations. Lee brought these in, and Lee and I put together a proposal; ran it by SkillPlan; SkillPlan did a lot of the costing for it and put together the spreadsheets; SRDC jumped in, and they laid out how they would evaluate the effectiveness of the interventions that we wanted to make in terms of curriculum development. Then that was taken to the national Canada's Building Trades Unions [CBTU]. Then they reviewed it, and eventually they decided they would take that proposal to the federal government under what's called the Union Training and Apprenticeship, or sorry, Union Training and Innovation program, UTIP, and ask for funding for it. They received a grant under the UTIP program for us to do this project for the next well, a total of four and a half years. We're at the end of the—well, beginning of the third year right now.

**JC** [01:37:38] The focus of this is to identify, on the academic side, what's been done in other countries and Europe particularly, but also the U.S. and also across Canada, including Quebec, in terms of putting climate material, climate literacy into the curriculum of trades training programs. What has been done, how have they done it, and so on. I've been involved with some academics doing that, and then we have an advisory committee representing the 14 building trades, representing trades trainers in each of the trades to work with us, and to give us advice about how we—what we need to include in the curriculum that deals with climate related issues. We're not rewriting the whole curriculum for the apprenticeship program. Not that at all. We're doing one slice of this, but currently there's basically nothing around climate issues in the curriculum for the building trades. They are going to play such an important role in reducing the climate footprint of the building sector. It is so important what they're going to be and are starting to do. It makes sense that they should have in the curriculum material about what's happening with the climate; what the impact is on the industry, on the construction industry; how it's affecting them in terms of, you know, all these new situations, having to deal with the floods and the heat and the forest fires and all that other stuff, now that's happening because of climate change. Then they should understand and be proud of what they can do as building trades workers to actually do things positive to address the climate crisis that we've got. We lay that on a curriculum for the apprentices. That's what we're trying to do here but do it in a way that relates to their individual trades as well. Big picture, what is climate change? How is it affecting us, etcetera. Why we need to deal with it? Then what in your trade can you do and why that's important and why you should be proud of doing it? That's the agenda we've got.

**KN** [01:39:41] Fabulous. What an important contribution you'll make.

**JC** [01:39:45] Well, I hope I'm not exaggerating. This is my fantasy. (laughter) We're trying to do this. We'll see how it goes. We now, like the previous national convention of the Building Trades, net zero is being talked about all the time, and the same—I just came from the one in Ottawa two weeks ago, and everybody's talking about net zero. Now obviously the companies are thinking about net zero in terms of big subsidies for some of the stuff they want to do. The reality is that the narrative, as it were, is now starting to change and people are recognising not just what we're doing of course, but to talk about climate change and what the building trades are doing around it and so on in a positive way. This is now increasingly acceptable and normal and so on, so that's good.