

Interview: Mark Gordienko (MG)

Interviewer: Phil Legg (PL)

Date: June 13, 2023

Location: Burnaby, BC

Transcription: Jane Player

PL [00:00:04] Great. Mark Gordienko. Good to see you. Thanks so much for making time to come in and be part of this Labour Heritage Centre project. We're doing interviews with people who've been active in the labour movement up and down the coast, and you were certainly part of that. What I'd like to do is start with—maybe tell us a little bit about Mark Gordienko in the early years.

MG [00:00:31] Well, I was born and raised in Victoria, and I started longshoring there when I was 18.

PL [00:00:39] Oh, no kidding. Longshoring off of where?

MG [00:00:43] Down at Ogden Point. The cruise ship terminal now, but there was an old shed there, and there was lumber there from some of the mills around there. There was a lot of American pulp that used to come over from Port Angeles. That shed all burnt down in 1978. It was around then I started thinking I got to get out of here because there was no work. I ended up in Prince Rupert, couple of years later. I got married in '78, and that's when I also—I got to get a real job.

PL [00:01:16] Prince Rupert doing what?

MG [00:01:18] Longshoring. That's all I've ever done.

PL [00:01:21] Yeah. Was Ridley Island just opening up?

MG [00:01:24] Well, yeah, I lived through that. The construction of that. I was out of office at the time when the—We first made some really crude attempts to organize that place, and failed, but it was done later. Tom Dufresne in his time, and they got it done, which was really good. It's a separate collective agreement from the main longshore agreement, which some people think is bad. They've got some things in their agreement that you'd give you a right arm for. Overall, you know, I was used the longshore agreement, and some of the things they got aren't as good. That's life, you know, that's what you get. It was a funny thing though, because it was hard to get in there because the employers didn't want them to be part of ILWU [International Longshore Workers' Union].

PL [00:02:18] Yeah.

MG [00:02:19] They paid them a premium, and they were well paid to keep out of the union. People like the construction. Oh, what's his name from—Fred, from the Operating Engineers [International Union of Operating Engineers].

PL [00:02:36] Oh, Fred Randall.

MG [00:02:37] Fred Randall. He told me once they had been approached to certify with them when they finished the construction there, but they left it for us. Then we made a mess of it, and it took another 15 years or so, but ended up that way.

PL [00:02:53] For 15 years it was—

MG [00:02:54] Non-union. Yeah. It's funny, though, because I did get them a couple of raises. I had people come to town, and I took them on tours there. Every time I did, I'd hear back. 'Oh, we got 25 cent raises (laughter) just from showing up on site.' Anything to keep them away from us.

PL [00:03:11] Wow. Once organized with ILWU did the Prince Rupert [unclear] have a dispatch system or how did that work?

MG [00:03:21] No, they have a dispatcher. Gee, that's a long time since I've been involved with that local. The employer in there does it. They're on shifts, so it's—they kind of modelled it a bit after the coal terminal here at Robert's Bank.

PL [00:03:38] Right. Yeah.

MG [00:03:39] Which is a separate collective agreement too. They have their shifts and it's worked out. I'm not so sure they're how far ahead, but a guy at Roberts Bank, when they sign a collective agreement, they know what their shifts are for the life of the agreement.

PL [00:03:52] Oh, no kidding. Oh, wow.

MG [00:03:56] There is some dispatch. We go to the hall. There's some jobs that go from the hall. Not at Ridley though. Everything was self-contained. They didn't want anything to do with the hall, and even though I've been gone for seven years, I'm pretty sure they still don't. Just because they've got their own and they have more flexibility with their people if they don't have a job for them on the ship [unclear] today then they'll get on a cat or whatever. With a coal terminal, it's a dirty place. There's always coal to clean up.

PL [00:04:27] Yeah. The main part of Ridley is coal?

MG [00:04:32] Well, they've tried a couple of other things. I don't—I haven't been to really since just before I retired—or Rupert. That was in 2016. I know they were looking at some propane. I don't know what came of that. There was some talk of sulphur. I don't know what came of that and some other commodities, but coal was their main thing.

PL [00:04:57] They do container stuff out of there, don't they?.

MG [00:04:59] Not at Ridley. There's a—on the old pulp mill site out that way, I think there's somebody that's got a [unclear].

PL [00:05:07] Okay.

MG [00:05:09] I don't know what's coming in there. That's—I did go out there with Glen Edwards once we took a look around, but that's so long ago.

PL [00:05:18] Yeah.

MG [00:05:19] I can't remember yesterday. (laughter)

PL [00:05:22] [unclear]. The image I have in my head I go back to in addition to this C.N.'s [Canadian National Railway] got, I mean, they moved heaven and earth to try and get the, you know, by the B.C. Rail line, and for them, it was having an alternative to a lower mainland port.

MG [00:05:42] Well, that's what Prince Rupert always was. Prince Rupert was originally, 1910, became a town.

PL [00:05:48] Yeah.

MG [00:05:49] It was the—where the Grand Trunk Railway ended, which ended up getting bought by C.N. A famous guy in Prince Rupert is Charles Hayes. The mountain there is Hayes mountain.

PL [00:06:01] Yeah.

MG [00:06:02] He was head of the Grand Trunk Railway, and he was on a trip to Europe and sank on the Titanic. All the big dreams for development in Prince Rupert went down with the Titanic.

PL [00:06:12] No kidding. Wow. So, it never amounted to the port that everybody thought it—

MG [00:06:22] It never did. You know, even as late as—I remember when Vander Zalm was premier, he was saying Prince Rupert was going to have a population of 50,000 people in a few years. It's not going to happen, but it's pretty—I loved my time in Prince Rupert. I was there for ten years, but the weather there is—it's everything you ever heard and worse. I remember my first winter there because I was in the garage—yeah, the entrance to the harbour, pretty much—it seemed to me that it blew and rained for three months straight. Now, I'm sure it didn't, but that's what I remember. This when I first went there, when my wife came up because I was there for about five or six weeks before she came up. We went down there. You mentioned Doug Sigurdson before. I worked with his nephew there, and he had Doug's boat. The first day she came into town, we went down, and we sat on the boat and had a couple of beers, and it was a beautiful sunny day in June. She said to me, 'Oh, this isn't as bad as what I was expecting.' Yeah, no, that's nice.' Then the next time the sun came out in August, she wasn't nearly as happy about it. (laughter) That's not an exaggeration. You always get some nice weather in Prince Rupert, but it's not necessarily in the summer. You can get two or three weeks of sunny weather and in December.

PL [00:07:42] Yeah, okay. (laughter)

MG [00:07:45] The people there are funny because any time you do, if you go a week or two without rain, all the people start saying, 'Boy, we could sure use some rain.' It's just rained for three months straight, you know, but they're just not used to it. They expect rain and all the communities around Rupert start running out of water if you don't get rain for a couple of weeks. They're all really shallow water supply, so two weeks and there's no water in like the villages.

PL [00:08:14] What?

MG [00:08:16] Yeah. They start running short of water because they're used to their supply being refilled every day.

PL [00:08:20] Every day. Yeah. Put the cup out the window.

MG [00:08:23] Exactly.

PL [00:08:24] Wow. Okay, so back to your work in Rupert. How long did you end up working there?

MG [00:08:32] Well, I don't know if you know anything about the casual system in longshore. I spent almost 13 years as a casual before I became a member. I put eight years in Victoria, and Victoria was going nowhere. It was a—you know, and everything that the shed burnt down, all the contracts for pulp coming across were gone. The only real work was travelling up island, but there was two locals up island. My work opportunity was drastically disappearing. I picked up with a few other guys and we went to Prince Rupert. What was the question? I went off track there. (laughter)

PL [00:09:11] You're working in Prince Rupert, but you're doing casual?

MG [00:09:13] Yeah, so I was still casual.

PL [00:09:15] Maybe stop there and just explain how the casual system works.

MG [00:09:19] Well, the easiest to explain is in Vancouver because—I've been in a whole bunch of places, but in Vancouver you start out and now they do a big hiring and hire a whole bunch of people. They put them on the lowest board, and the boards are basically set up by seniority. They're union members. Then they're A board. A board is basically the same as union members. They get the same benefits, they get pension. B board, they get some lesser benefits. Below that, I think there might be something on C. I never got that finished when I was working, but then they got other boards. Well, same thing there, so you work your way up the boards. They took me (and I was in two different places), but it took me almost 13 years. Then I got sworn in.

PL [00:10:04] The equivalent of A or?

MG [00:10:06] Yeah. The boards were—it was different in Prince Rupert.

MG [00:10:12] It was really different. It was like stepping back in time, the way it was done there with favouritism. I was there five years, and I became a member. Then a year later I was president of the local, which was time to get things changed—and we did. There was a bunch of us.

PL [00:10:34] How did you shake things up in terms of, you know, favouritism and wink and nod and that kind of stuff?

MG [00:10:41] The first thing was to get more members because I said right away, if we don't have more members by the end of this term, I'm not going to be re-elected.

PL [00:10:51] Right. Yeah.

MG [00:10:52] I was I was elected. Nobody else wanted the job, basically. Three years there as president, I never had anybody run against me. Well, we did—I when I got sworn in, I was like member number 32, and there was a lot of work. There was work for 100 people every day. The idea was a bunch—they kept it small, and it was out of greed. There's more work for them. They didn't have to share it with more people, and they could have the jobs that they wanted.

PL [00:11:24] Right.

MG [00:11:24] Which in all the other locals—they're not all perfect, and they never were all perfect, but they were never anything like Prince Rupert.

PL [00:11:33] Right. Okay.

MG [00:11:34] So there was one crisis after another. There was a complaint with human rights for a woman, the one that was kept out of working. Which I inherited, which I ended up settling in my term. It cost us a big deal money. It was \$40,000.

PL [00:11:56] Yeah.

MG [00:11:58] Which when you only got 32 members is a lot of money. That helped in getting more members. That did sway some people. Like one guy said they'd swear their dogs in if their dog would pay a share of it. (laughter)

PL [00:12:16] Something came up [unclear]

MG [00:12:17] The first year we took in 30 members, so we doubled the size of the membership. Once we got the first ten in, I knew I was okay, and then we took 20 more anyways.

PL [00:12:25] The cap on members is just this—it's the members that let new members in? or is it the employer that says they don't?

MG [00:12:34] Historically, the employers had a lot to say about it. The old collective agreement, the employers actually got a chance to interview members. That comes back from the days with the company union when the union got broke here in 1935. Then there was ten years of no union. There was a union in Prince Rupert, but it was the East Coast Union, the International Longshoremen's Association. Prince Rupert broke away from them in I think '46 or '48.

PL [00:13:04] Yeah.

MG [00:13:06] That was the cause, you know, cause I had one of the employers when we were in—the head guy for one of the companies that came to me and said, 'You're taking in members. I want to interview them.' I had words for him. I said, 'Not only are you not going to interview them,' and said, 'It's against the law because that would mean that you're in an employer-dominated union.' Anyways, we got that sorted out. Him and I, we had words like that many times; it was a funny relationship. Could have words, you know, with him and then you could carry on normal too.

PL [00:13:43] Yeah. Rupert is a town. I mean, it's a good union town in many respects?

MG [00:13:49] It is. It's got a very long, strong labour history. With the waterfront the, ILA [International Longshoremen's Association] came in. I forget when—because they had the first charter, and so the local was charter—oh, it was in 1911 because, you know, they had the 100 year anniversary. I went up for that. Then, like I said, in '48 they, or '46, they switched unions, but there was a strike up there up in one of the mines and it used to be all coastal shipping there. The deep sea shipping is a much later thing. It didn't happen until the seventies, but all the coastal for all the mines and forest camps and everything else, and native villages in the towns, everything went through Prince Rupert on the old—well, it became Northland but—

PL [00:14:43] Oh, right. Yeah.

MG [00:14:43] I remember reading this story once about a strike up in Anyox, and they were bringing scabs in, in coffins. The longshoremen, 'How come empty coffins are so heavy?' They opened them and they had scabs in them, and so they put a stop to it and had a strike there. Prince Rupert, you know, long, solid history there.

PL [00:15:07] Yeah.

MG [00:15:09] You know, I was proud of that when I lived there. I wasn't part of those things because obviously I wasn't old enough, but it was a nice thing to talk about and have a few beers over.

PL [00:15:19] It is. In so many ways, it's like this amazing little town. Like it's got its own telephone company, it's got its own—

MG [00:15:27] Well, they built the railway, but there was no road, so the only way in was by rail or by boat. That's why they had their own telephone company.

PL [00:15:35] Yeah. The other one I remember was, you know, I don't know if you're around for this one, but when the—there's a battle over fishing between Alaska and Canada but essentially B.C., and the fishermen in Prince Rupert basically put a picket line around the boat thing to kind of prevent the ferry from going—

MG [00:16:03] Well, when I first went to Rupert, there was a sign outside town, and it was 'Halibut Capital of the World.' Then they lost the fishing rights to those Alaskan waters, so they had to come up with a new slogan. There's a sign there now. It says 'Prince Rupert, Rainbow Capital World.' People go out there and erase or cover up the bow, part of it, all the time. That happens very often. I guess it's a joke that never gets tired. (laughter) City of Rainbows so they make it City of Rain. Yeah, so I did live through that—that protest with B.C. Ferries, I remember that. I lived there in the eighties. I went up there in the spring of '80 and I left in the winter of '89, so just short of ten years. I made lots of friends. I still have friends from Prince Rupert.

PL [00:16:59] Yeah.

MG [00:16:59] You mentioned Dan Miller before. I haven't talked to Dan for a few years, probably since Gail passed away. I was friends with Dan. I still talk to—I was talking to a guy in a Osoyoos yesterday. He's from Prince Rupert, so—

PL [00:17:19] Yeah.

MG [00:17:20] It was a nice part of my life.

PL [00:17:22] Yeah. Well, it's a great union town, and it's got that kind of spunky hard rock feel to it.

MG [00:17:29] Yeah. I became—I got sworn in as a member in '85, in May of '85, and a year-and-a-half later I was president of a local. That's when, you know, it wasn't just me. There was a group of us, and we had a lot of success and made a lot of changes, long lasting changes. That human rights case, it wasn't as clean as you would think. What they did to her was unconscionable, but there was a lot worse things done to a lot more people than her. But good for her. She stood up to it.

PL [00:18:06] Yeah.

MG [00:18:08] It was really funny thing because when I took over the—and I knew the insides of the case because I knew her, and I knew her husband—but the members had been convinced by their leadership that there was no case, and they were going to win it. Well, there was absolutely not the slightest chance you were going to win it, because I saw her. She'd stand in the hall and document it. They wouldn't give her a job. Told her only come back if there's a first aid attendant required and if I don't need one, I don't—so, she stood there day after day and wrote down who got a job. All these other people skipped by her, so she had a rock solid case. We ended up in mediation. I didn't like dealing with human rights, even though, you know, I was on her side. I wanted to get the thing dealt with, but I didn't like the way human rights operated.

PL [00:18:58] Who was doing the mediation?

MG [00:19:05] Harvey Faracy was involved, in there, but he wasn't human rights, was he. He was a labour relations board (CLRB in those days). Boy, we're talking close to 40 years ago and I just can't remember.

PL [00:19:25] Yeah. Okay. Somewhere in the middle of the night, you'll remember the name.

MG [00:19:30] No. That's part—I've tried to block that out—the dealings with human rights—because if I was putting up a defense, it would have been really frustrating because, well, there was one thing. This is really dumb, and it sticks out in my mind. The case was all done. We'd come to three part agreement. She had—she went into our lawyer's office in Vancouver. She was in Vancouver went—Norm Meyerson up on Granville Street—went to his office, ask to see Norm, signed the agreement. Okay, it's over. Right. I got a call from human rights the next day. She says that she should get pension credit for those years, and I said, 'Well, she should have said that before.'

PL [00:20:12] Yeah.

MG [00:20:13] I said, 'Well, but she's already signed off.' He said, 'Well, that doesn't matter. We haven't signed off.' I said, 'Look, she travelled to Vancouver, went to his office. You know, how's that going to look in court?' He said, 'Well, you can take it court if you want, because we have a pretty good record.' Obviously, they had deeper pockets than I did, and it wasn't a big deal. It was just the nature of it. I'm used to, you sign a deal, you shake hands, it's over. If you want something else, you could come and ask nicely because that wasn't a hard one to fix.

PL [00:20:41] Yeah.

MG [00:20:42] I went to the employers who assured me that they would speak to their trustees, but they had no power over their trustees. Then I went to our guys, and it was no problem. It's just, you know, you have a deal. You've worked on it hard for a long time. You get it, and the day after, 'Okay, we want to reopen.' What? Yeah. That was frustrating.

PL [00:21:08] Yeah. No, it gets you, like, who was whispering in what ear and why.

MG [00:21:13] Yeah, and it wasn't an unreasonable request. She should have got it, and she could've asked for it afterwards. It didn't have to be part of the deal. I've done things like that in my time. I've done hundreds of those, but—and I was obviously sympathetic, but—oh well, that's life.

PL [00:21:28] Yeah. Crazy. Did you say you had done three contracts while you were in Rupert or just you were—

MG [00:21:40] Contract? Well, I was on the bargaining committee, which in those days was interesting because our whole executive board was part of the bargaining committee, which I always found to be pretty unwieldy, and we never got anything done.

PL [00:21:57] Sounds like a big bargaining committee?

MG [00:21:59] Yeah, it was. You know, it was kind of based on some of the things the Americans had done, and they had done that. They'd also done—one time when we have a long, short caucus where you have delegates, and it's like a mini convention and do contract demands, and when you bring the contract back, it has to go to the caucus first before it goes to the members. Well, down in the U.S., they had, at one point, brought their whole contract caucus into bargaining back in the sixties, I think it was. They called it bargaining in a fishbowl. They had like 60 people there.

PL [00:22:35] Yeah.

MG [00:22:37] Longshore has always tried different—all kinds of different things—never with any success because we always ended up on strike or walked out. When I first started, I remember my first— I think it was a lockout but might not have been—but it went three weeks before the government sent us back to work.

PL [00:23:03] Yeah.

MG [00:23:04] Later days, they went down. They had like just on the strike vote that I hear they took last week; they've probably got everything ready. They get it down to one or two days, though.

PL [00:23:15] Yeah.

MG [00:23:16] Because it is critical. It does shut down the country.

PL [00:23:19] A domino effect.

MG [00:23:22] Yeah. [unclear interviewer in the background] The problem the people here now don't understand, though, is the threat of a strike is better than and it's way more dangerous than the strike itself. Once you're there, they start the paperwork and you're back to work in two days. The threat of it sends ripples across the oceans.

PL [00:23:39] Yeah.

MG [00:23:40] They start wanting—they're in a panic in China, everywhere in Asia. Where's our cargo going to go?

PL [00:23:46] Yeah.

MG [00:23:48] It's a funny thing because we got down where we negotiated a few agreements. This latest bunch, they want to re-invent and not learn anything from the past. Anyways, what they're doing, the Americans, were in a strike once when I was president, and I went to the—I didn't do anything different than any of my predecessors had done. I went to Stephen Brown, who was head of the Chamber of Shipping at the time, and just in conversation I told him, 'You know, we're not going to handle any American cargo.' Nobody asked us to. I said, 'You know, if any ships change direction in the ocean and come here then, and they were heading to Los Angeles or something, you know, we're not going to touch it.' Stephen actually gave an interview and said that in the newspaper. It was kind of like conversation you don't want out in public (laughter) because what I said was completely illegal. You know, that's what it was, and everybody understood that. Prince Rupert did a dumb one, though. They took in a ship, and it was a lot of containers. Prince Rupert—you know, I worked on that terminal for ten years and it was a lumber terminal. Well, they converted into a container terminal, and they put the cranes in, but they took a ship, an extra ship from I think it was COSCO, one of the shipping lines. No, it wasn't because it was a Costco guy that complained to me about it. Whatever ship they took in, they dumped 4,000 containers or something. They completely screwed up the place. They plugged it with containers. All their other operations came to a standstill. It was the COSCO guy that told me. He said, 'We're working there now. There's no room for any containers, because what they've done you can only work two cranes at a time, and you got the ship.' The container business is time and its money, and they're just in a hurry, and they'll pay more money because they're in such a hurry. He said, sitting there, 'You know, the ship is there for eight shifts instead of two or whatever.' I'm making up those numbers, but they can only as fast as the containers are going out on the train. That's as fast as they can take them off the ship because there's no place. None of the other employers would do that because they made such a mess of it. Then I had Bob calling me from San Francisco (the president), and he was saying because the Journal of Commerce had written this story that Prince Rupert was going to save the day for the American West Coast (laughter) because they were going to handle all these containers. He's saying, 'What are you guys doing?' I said, 'Bob, you got how many container cranes?' I said, 'There's four cranes in Prince Rupert. You've got 150 in Los Angeles. You got them everywhere on the coast. Come on. Do you think that—what are you going to do with four cranes, even if 24 hours a day pumping out the maximum.' You know its—

PL [00:26:50] Favour [unclear] to work.

MG [00:26:51] Picked up one vessel out of the 20 that call every day. Ridiculous. Wouldn't even be that much, you know.

PL [00:26:59] Well, and the rail line too, because the rail line is gonna [unclear].

MG [00:27:02] Exactly.

PL [00:27:03] It would take them forever.

MG [00:27:04] Well, that's right. Well, the rail line, it's actually a little bit longer. It's 180 kilometres longer to get east, going up that way to the C.N. Route, but it's shorter in time because the C.P. route to the south, they have to break up trains. They don't have to break up trains going through Jasper.

PL [00:27:24] Yeah.

MG [00:27:26] I think some of those trains, they break them into fours to take them through on the C.P.R. route.

PL [00:27:30] Yeah.

MG [00:27:31] That's just what I've heard over the years.

PL [00:27:33] Yeah. Back to you. You've been active in Prince Rupert. What moved you down to the Lower Mainland?

MG [00:27:43] When we moved there, I had thoughts that we were only going to stay for a couple of years, and I had told my wife we were going to stay for a couple of years. After ten years, she figured it out that I had lied to her (laughter) and her mum was sick at the time. Her mum had moved over from Victoria. She was living in Queen's Park in the hospital there, so she had come down a few months before and spent time with her mother. Then I got out of office, and I followed her. Then her mum passed away about three months later, but I was here when—I loved my time in Prince Rupert, but I don't think anybody moves to Prince Rupert twice.

PL [00:28:25] Yeah. (laughter)

MG [00:28:28] So, I wasn't going back. Growing up in Victoria, I never had any thoughts I'd ever end up living in Vancouver, especially by way of Prince River, but that's what I did. Then I started working here. I was a member, but being a member from another local, I was treated differently. I'm not complaining. It's just life. I always said, 'I'm a guest in your house.' I was happy I made a living.

PL [00:28:55] Yeah.

MG [00:28:56] Eventually, I got a transfer. I traded with a guy. A guy who wanted to go to the Prince Rupert, who—it was really funny because he said to me at one point, he says, 'I want to go up there because I want to quit drinking.' (laughter) I did tell him I didn't think that was going to work, but he figured that out on his own. That was a funny thing though, because he was a foreman. Foremen have a different local, but they mostly come from Longshore, and they have the right to come back.

PL [00:29:27] Yeah.

MG [00:29:28] I went to work for him one day, and I had a—he didn't need me. I was a driver, and the driving was done. He said, 'Hang around, I want to talk to you.' The least I

could do was walk down and have a chat with him. He started asking me questions about Prince Rupert, and he'd been up there as a foreman. He's asking me about schools and stuff, and I didn't think anything of it. Right? I politely did my time there, and then I went home. I was back the next day, and it's the same thing. He didn't need me, and if there's any driving at all, he would do it for me. He says, 'I want to talk to you again. I said, 'Okay.' You know, I'm on the payroll. The least I could do is go and have a chat with a foreman. He says, 'Oh yeah, I went home, talked to my wife.' He said, 'Yeah, I want to move there. I want to trade with you.' 'What!' This come completely out of nowhere. It took a few months because he gave—oh, or he gave a fair bit of time to Western for notice. Then he returned to the local, and then he went to Prince Rupert.

PL [00:30:28] When you say trade, how does that work?

MG [00:30:30] It was just a one for one trade. I took a spot in Local 500, and he took my spot in Local 505. That's the rule. There's exceptions to the rule but I wasn't an exception to the rule. There was an exception because five years later he wanted to come back, and they took him back. I was on the executive then and I said, 'I can't be part of this discussion.'

PL [00:30:56] Yeah.

MG [00:30:57] I recused myself and went sat in the library. It wasn't a problem; he was a good guy.

PL [00:31:03] Yeah.

MG [00:31:03] He had some buddies there, and it wasn't a problem. I just thought, this just doesn't seem right. I'm the guy that traded with him, but of course, people were making jokes. Well, Tom's back and you've got to go to Rupert. I said, 'Take it up with my wife.' (laughter)

PL [00:31:21] Okay, so you're back to work in Vancouver, and you're where are you working, which?

MG [00:31:27] I started working out in the river in Local 502.

PL [00:31:30] Yeah.

MG [00:31:33] They because, you know, I had lots of friends there. I had actually taken some controversial stands in bargaining for my local. You mentioned destuffing before over the stuffing clause, so I had I probably had more enemies in Vancouver than—so I worked on getting into a local 502. It it didn't work out. They wouldn't take a transfer. It's a long dirty story, but that's life. That's way behind me. Then I just started working in Vancouver and then I worked there for a couple of years. They had that foreman that told me he wanted to trade. I couldn't believe it.

PL [00:32:14] Yeah.

MG [00:32:17] Then Vancouver became my home, but like growing up in Victoria, there's rivalry between Victoria and Vancouver, right?

PL [00:32:25] Over what?

MG [00:32:25] I don't know, just local rivalry, like in Prince Rupert. They don't like people from Terrace. People from Terrace don't like Prince Rupert, but they—everybody likes the people from Kitimat. I don't understand (laughter) and Kitimat of likes everybody. It's just—I never dreamt I'd live in Vancouver. I never dreamt that longshoring would take me there. Maybe I could have come there directly instead of going to Prince Rupert, but my time in Prince Rupert, I learned a lot in Prince Rupert.

PL [00:32:54] Yeah, well, certainly if you're in a small local like that, you get to bump your way into leadership pretty quick, and it's really in those positions of leadership where you start to see a bigger world.

MG [00:33:09] Absolutely, because yeah, I used to have a pretty small world.

PL [00:33:13] Yeah.

MG [00:33:14] When I was a casual my problems were all as being a casual in treatment of casuals, which was always dear to my heart when I became a member. I have always—I've done my share to fix up the casual system as much as I can, including one of the last things I did. We worked on a big pension thing that brought a bunch of the casuals into the pension, but they always were in it, but after the fact. When they got sworn in, they'd get hit for a bill for past service.

PL [00:33:47] Okay? They had to pay it?

MG [00:33:48] Yeah, well, you have to—

PL [00:33:50] Employee portion?

MG [00:33:52] No, because there was no employee contributions, but what it was tax things like RRSP [Registered Retirement Savings Plan].

PL [00:33:58] Oh, right.

MG [00:33:58] It was RSP [Registered Savings Plan] room. You couldn't put money into RSP and people that did, all of a sudden, they get a big bill and they going to take money out of RSP. That's just one of the things, worked on and got people into the pension plan sooner. They're not getting anything more than they would have. It's just more orderly.

PL [00:34:17] Yeah.

MG [00:34:20] That was always there. In my time in Local 500, I was chairman of the Membership and Grievance Committee, and the Membership and Grievance Committee manages the casual boards. I always liked that.

PL [00:34:32] Yeah.

MG [00:34:35] [Unclear] I started in Prince Rupert, when we did that, because there really wasn't any boards. Like I said, there was 35 members at the most. After me, there was only a couple more that got in under the old system. In the old system, you had to get two sponsors, and then you had to win a popularity vote.

PL [00:34:55] Like a 58, 51 percent type of thing?

MG [00:34:57] Yeah.

PL [00:34:57] Oh, my god.

MG [00:34:59] So some people got in sooner than others.

PL [00:35:03] Oy-ya-ya

MG [00:35:05] That's what I say. The human rights case up there wasn't the worst thing that was going on. It was part of the problem, but there was a lot of problems. Anyways, got all that cleared up, and that was really wild times. We had some meetings, big meetings with casuals, and every morning I'd come to the hall, and I expected to see just smoking ruins, right—somebody burn it down. We put a system in that nobody liked. Everybody hated it, but three months later, if you tried to get rid of it, they would have burned it down. That was funny times.

PL [00:35:44] In the casual system, it's—like to overhaul it, what does it take? Does it have to—is it a internal union agreement that has to?

MG [00:35:53] Absolutely. When you start getting into the higher boards like the A board, you have to have agreement of the employers because—for getting on the benefits and that. You don't have the right to—the union doesn't on their own, it's joint. That's fine. They never, to my knowledge, ever said no to any local, even though—well in most locals—they've always kept their nose out of it. Prince Rupert was such a bad example, and it was so out of whack with, you know, 150 people working and a lot of days and only 30 members. There was training problems because the local wouldn't train people to do jobs because they didn't want to share them with anyone else. You had jobs going down all the time for a lack of trained people, which means a lot of people go home and don't get paid for the day. You know, they show up at work, and there's no crane driver and everybody goes home without pay.

PL [00:36:52] Oh, not great.

MG [00:36:53] Yeah, there's reasons you can get paid, but the lack of personnel is the union's fault, so you don't get paid for that.

PL [00:36:59] Wow.

MG [00:37:02] Getting that all going and getting training for people and, oh, there's a clause in the collective agreement. It's really an entry thing for getting a medical exam done, and it's paid for by the employers, but it's for entry.

PL [00:37:20] Yeah.

MG [00:37:22] I inherited the job of getting like 150 or 200 people through it that had been there for years and years. Arguing the case, when, this guy's got this condition, but if he had tested him when he should have been tested 20 years ago, he didn't have it. It's not fair to do it to a guy because the collective agreement actually says if they fail their medical, they may be deregistered. Never had anybody deregistered, but it was a threat of it. You know, that took up a lot of my time. I was crazy when I first started, though,

because I had a steady job. I was a heavy duty mechanic, but I did so much stuff for the union. I never used to be able to start a job and go home at night. I was there 2:00 and 3:00 and 4:00 o'clock in the morning working on things and then got to go to work at 7:00. My second term, I got a little bit smarter. It was only a year term, so it didn't take me that long. (laughter).

PL [00:38:23] A quick study.

MG [00:38:24] Yeah. You're up like that, and then you don't go to work so you don't get paid for the day. Meanwhile, the people I'm working for are all getting paid. Finally, it took me a bit of time to—this isn't right. I was always, always in my whole career, I was never a big one for getting paid, but I had to pay bills, too. I was never in those jobs for the money.

PL [00:38:45] Yeah. Tell me—when I think of longshore, especially on the West Coast, was there coordination North and South between, you know, bargaining strategies and that kind of stuff?

MG [00:38:57] Back in the early days, but it's so different now because they—Harry Bridges was the president there for 45 years, and Harry was left wing. Some say he was communist. He was registered as a Republican, (laughter) but I think that was for cover. I don't think Harry was a Republican, and Harry was involved when the union formed here in Vancouver—

PL [00:39:27] Yeah.

MG [00:39:27] And his people. A lot of the people here were—a lot of my friends, you know, older friends—but they were friends of Harry's, and they were in the same party as Harry.

PL [00:39:40] Yeah.

MG [00:39:40] Some of them had dual membership. Some were NDP, and some were—

PL [00:39:44] Yeah.

MG [00:39:45] The Communist Party. There was a lot of Harry's influence. I remember a statement Harry made once. He says, 'If I come into the office in San Francisco at 3:00 in the morning and there's four people there working on a Gestetner machine putting out leaflets for the union.' He said, 'Chances are they're members of the Communist Party.' (laughter) The same influence here which—the union that was here in places—it wasn't complete union in Vancouver. There were still small locals doing specific jobs. The first aid attendants had their own local, but that was of the International Longshoremen's Association, the East Coast Union, so they were divided. It was the deep sea, the people that worked on ships that had no union for all the years that they didn't have a union, 10 or 12 years. When they did form a union, the Americans actually kicked them out at first because they—it was same as the company union. It was company dominated. They had thrown that all out in 1934. They had a strike down there, and four years later, they broke away from that East Coast Union and formed the ILWU, in '38. Harry was the president and stayed president into 1970 or '75 or something, through some pretty wild times.

MG [00:41:09] Yeah.

MG [00:41:10] Harry was a saint. I don't care what his politics were, Harry was a saint. I don't care what anybody's politics is. I have my own, and I'm quite firm on that, but I work with anybody. I always have.

PL [00:41:25] Yeah.

MG [00:41:26] Whether they're wrong or right. (laughter) There was a lot of that influence here. It took a while. They eventually took over, and it became, you know, a left wing union. There was a lot of conservative views in there. Local 500 for the first 30 or 40 years of existence there was a lot of factions, and part of it was in '68, they put it all together into one local—Local 500—out of about six locals. There was a deep sea, but then there was the warehouse. That's the people that worked on the dock. The first aid attendants, the checkers. If I sat here and thought about it, I could remember them all. They all came together, but they all remained as factions. The first president of Local 500 of the combined local was from one of the—not the biggest local, which was a surprise, but I guess he gave the best speech. He wasn't the best president, but he gave the best speech. (laughter) I wasn't there, but I've heard all these stories. A million times. It was always—the employers could never get a collective agreement because there was only—oh, man, it really was herding cats. It just took time. There was another faction in it, too, because when the union was broken in '35, a lot of people were blacklisted and never got back on the waterfront. You know, there was a lot of new people—all those scabs that came in. It was ten years later—it was actually the scabs that said, 'They were right. We need a union here.'

PL [00:43:20] Wow.

MG [00:43:21] Bill Kemp, who was business agent, and he became an officer, at my level, at the level I was at in the National Office, you could call it. It was called the Canadian Area then. Bill says he remembers the 1959 strike. One guy got up and he said, 'I scabbed in '35, but I'm not scabbing this time. (laughter) It was right out in the open. There was—all the people, the scabs worked with everybody—you know, longshoring gets passed on generation to generation. There's lots of guys there. Their grandfathers were scabs. Nobody calls them that anymore, but there was times when they were called that.

PL [00:44:03] Yeah.

MG [00:44:05] When I started, there was a lot of foremen that turned out that they were '35 scabs, but, you know, their attitudes changed. I can't think of anybody that was ever bad because they were a scab. Even when I started, you know, I didn't know all that history. I worked with a lot of people that were scabs but, you know, nobody ever talked about that anymore. It all came together at some point and became a real union.

PL [00:44:38] You mentioned that it was always difficult getting a collective agreement, in other words, concluding negotiations. For the most part, were these strikes always ones in which the feds would come in and force a mediated settlement?

MG [00:44:58] My opinion always was that because the government intervened so much that there's so many things in the agreement that are really archaic. They never got dealt with in bargaining table, because when the government would step in. They would solve the money problems and force you back to work.

PL [00:45:14] Everything. All the relics.

PL [00:45:15] Yeah, so then you get the employers complaining, well, this and this. There was a thing in there once, and it was just crazy 'cuz I'd been around for like 20 years at the time. I brought this demand, and it ended up through the process and made it to the bargaining table. It used to say in our collective agreement that your holidays, you had to book your holiday 60 days in advance, and you had to get permission from the employers for it. That was in the agreement from like in the thirties or something. The practice was you want holidays, you take holidays, you just don't get—you get paid once a year for vacation pay in a lump sum. Do what you want with holidays. That was the kind of thing I just, you know, look at these archaic things—60 days and permission of the employers. If you said that at a union meeting, you'd get killed.

PL [00:46:04] Yeah.

MG [00:46:04] If you don't want to work tomorrow, you don't go to work tomorrow, you don't get paid tomorrow. That's it.

PL [00:46:07] Yeah.

MG [00:46:09] There's a lot of things like that in the agreement. Some have been sorted out, some haven't, but that's like I said, from government meddling. If the parties were ever allowed to actually sit and go through a strike and there was pain on both sides, you resolve those things. That's never happened. Like I said, my first one, I think it was 21 days or 27 days. It's way back in '75 or '76.

PL [00:46:38] Yeah, it's interesting. When you take the lump sum, I'm just immediately reminded of when I started to work for what was then the Regional Council of the IWA [International Woodworkers of America]. The Coast Master Agreement said June 15th, everybody gets paid their vacation and that was also contract expiry date. (laughter) You know, you didn't have to be too much of a rocket scientist to figure out, 'Wait a minute.'

MG [00:47:09] Well, ours was February 15th. It's been played with a little bit, but everybody gets a lump sum, and we negotiate the amounts. That's gone up over the years, and at the end I was at the highest and that was 14 percent vacation pay. You get the lump sum, but—and you get so many holidays to take, and you can use those against 'cuz of hourly requirements for stat holidays. You can use them, put them in for that, and I always did, but there's no requirement to take them.

PL [00:47:38] Yeah.

MG [00:47:41] Take them whenever you want.

PL [00:47:42] Yeah.

MG [00:47:45] When I—things like that, I like to think I have a bit of a logical mind. I look at this in the agreement where it says 60 days—this is insane you know.

PL [00:47:54] I know.

MG [00:47:54] It's never been done.

PL [00:47:55] And employer permission—

MG [00:47:56] What if—I know if they all of a sudden they said they're going to do it you get into estoppel arguments and that but why? Just get rid of the damn thing. That's about this big [holds finger and thumb a tiny distance apart] in what I think are my accomplishments. That's just the little technical one that I brought that forward and made it through the process, and it actually got cleared up at the bargaining table. Then I remember—oh, I hated those caucuses. It was a debating society—

PL [00:48:22] Yeah.

MG [00:48:23] Then people were saying, 'Well, now if you bring it to their attention, they're going to want to demand.' (laughter) Give it a try. All of a sudden, you tell that hall there, you all have to give us 60 days' notice on holidays.

PL [00:48:36] I'm gonna stop you there [unclear] I'm reminded when you talk about the debating society. It was '86. There's the [unclear] in the middle of a god awful strike—and I realize this is an interview where I'm supposed to be asking you the questions. (laughter) The strike's going on and on and on and on. We had to have a special convention to determine that we were going to increase union dues so that we would increase pay for those who were doing selective striking, which we've never done before in the past. We've always done industry wide, everybody's down, or whatever. There's a long debate ensues over how much the union dues should increase and this and that, this and that. Some genius gets up and makes the point that union dues are tax deductible. Therefore—and he's done the math in his head, and Gerry Stoney finally says, 'enough, enough,' and gets up to the mike and says, you know, 'Would the brother over there, please shut up, because the minute that happens, you know, that's going to get over to C.R.A. [Canada Revenue Agency] in a heartbeat, and you know, we're up to our eyeballs in enough trouble. We don't need more of this.' .

MG [00:49:51] I remember Gerry because he was president of the NDP when I first started going to NDP conventions.

PL [00:49:55] Right. Yeah. Let's talk about that for a minute. The connection between your union work and the NDP.

MG [00:50:03] Well, I joined the NDP before I left Victoria in 1979. We had two elections then a provincial and a federal a couple of weeks apart. I was working with my brother, and I was actually reading and my politics, I was thinking was more to the left of that, but he convinced me to join the NDP. I'm still a member of the NDP. He's not. Yeah, I joined the NDP when I was 25. I have always—not always—it was times with the union I was too busy to do a lot of stuff. When I retired, the first election after I retired, before COVID, I went and worked in the Ravi's [Ravi Kahlon] campaign in in North Delta. I went there every day. Steven Howard was like—oh, I ran into him a week ago—but I said, 'Just whatever you want. I'm not coming at night.' I'm an old guy, I don't go out (laughter)

PL [00:51:05] I'm in bed by eight.

MG [00:51:06] I'd get there in the morning. 'What do you want me to do?' Mostly I put up a lot of signs with Ravi's father-in-law, and I'm friends with Ravi's father-in-law now. We actually went to Victoria about six months ago. Ravi arranged for our lunch. We had lunch in the speaker's lunch—

PL [00:51:24] Oh neat.

MG [00:51:24] I didn't know the speaker had his own dining room. We were there with—

PL [00:51:28] Yeah.

MG [00:51:30] Raj [Raj Chouhan] and Harry [Harry Bains] and Bruce [Bruce Ralston] and Ravi.

PL [00:51:34] Neat.

MG [00:51:36] Yeah, I've always—even in Prince Rupert I was very active. Then when I became president, it was more—that took up my life. I still did what I could. I was never president of the NDP up there. Dan [Dan Miller] was. I was vice president for a while. Oh, and Ray Gardiner, Donna's [Donna Sacuta] father-in-law.

MG [00:52:01] He was president. Ray wasn't there one time, and I was supposed to chair a meeting, and I forgot about it. I was busy working in the dispatch. Dispatch closes at 5:00. It was like 8:00 at night. I'm still doing whatever. Then, oh, jeez! I run over there, and Dan had taken over. He was chairing the meeting.

MG [00:52:19] Yeah.

MG [00:52:20] I felt really stupid about it, but, you know, it's always been an important part of my life.

PL [00:52:27] Yeah. It's been the connection between the labour movement. It's the people that are the crossover point. I mean, you know, Gerry, perfect example of that. Really active in IWA and really active in New Westminster politics.

MG [00:52:45] One thing I always remembered every time he said it, it bothered me. He would say, 'If you want to have conversations, please step out into the foyer.' He always use that word—foyer. That's kind of a problem with me correcting people.

PL [00:53:01] Yeah, well, there was that, and there was—how many times can you remember this, Gerry at the mike. 'Bo. Bo. Bo. Bo. Is this mike on?' 'Shut up. Of course, it's on.' (laughter) Let's go back a little bit to negotiations. When you're now active in 500, were you involved in negotiations?

MG [00:53:30] I had, when I first got there, and I was new—I got elected to the executive there after five years, which is pretty fast. I was a bit known from my time in Prince Rupert, but mostly I, you know, I was in a new place. I come from a place with 70 members—'cuz that's about what it was when I left and come to Vancouver and there's 1,500 members.

PL [00:53:52] Yeah.

MG [00:53:53] I just went to work. We weren't able to have children and we had adopted. That worked out just when I left Prince Rupert, because I left Prince Rupert the end of December and we got a call to pick up my daughter on the 3rd of January.

PL [00:54:07] Okay.

MG [00:54:08] My whole time in Vancouver, I can easily tell you when I came to Vancouver because I just tie it in with my daughter.

PL [00:54:14] Yeah.

MG [00:54:17] I went to work for five years and just worked, and I got to be known a bit more. Then I ran for the executive and I made it my first time. There was ten to be elected. I made it—number ten. I spent some years on the executive. There was a lot of politics in between, and after five years I ran for the secretary-treasurer job in the Canadian area office. Then I did a couple terms there. I lost an election, and went back to work for eight years. This is always a funny thing. I lose an election; I go back to work. Eight years later, I run for the higher office as president and win unopposed. The same union that threw me out, was happy to take me back in the higher office. There's nobody running.

PL [00:55:04] They wanted that all the way along. It was sort of a bait and switch.

MG [00:55:07] Yeah, just on the face of it, it looks really weird. Being inside it, it was really weird too.

PL [00:55:17] Bargaining during that period?

MG [00:55:20] I was off and on a lot of bargaining committees. When I became secretary-treasurer, we'd gone through some turmoil, and the guy before me was removed from the bargaining committee—just some of our politics. When I was there, they wanted me put back on, but I didn't want to go on. I had a very busy job and to sit there and take minutes of bargaining, which was all you basically did. I was able to keep away from the bargaining. I was very close to it. I had to pay them. Pick up their timesheets, and on and on. I was there most days for a visit because the secretary-treasurer, his job is a very busy job. It was a funny thing. I did my best. I worked hard at it, but I never really liked it. I used to think—some days I'd be driving in—I became a longshoreman so I wouldn't have to work in an office. 'What the hell am I doing?' (laughter) But then I got there, and I applied myself. Then there was a controversy, and I was gone, and I wasn't. I got over that election pretty quick.

PL [00:56:33] Yeah.

MG [00:56:34] I was happy to get out of there. I didn't want to get back into politics again. I did get back on the executive. I had been a trustee of the health benefit plan and the pension plan from being secretary-treasurer. I did run for that again. Of all the jobs I ever did in the union, I did that for 14 years. That's the best job I ever did, and that's the only one you ever really get any satisfaction helping people. A friend of mine told me once, he said, 'Enjoy the little victories because there's not going to be any big ones'.

PL [00:57:04] Yeah.

MG [00:57:05] He was president before me.

PL [00:57:06] Yeah. What about—so longshore pension plan is a big deal. I mean, it's very successful. It's got good coverage.

MG [00:57:16] They had from—I mentioned before about the '59 strike. Out of that came a pension plan, but it was very small, and it was very limited to just the deep sea workers.

Over time—and it was controlled by the employers. Over time, it had opened up and that original pension plan became the basis of the industry pension. There was a court case. I have read it. I don't remember the details, but that's how we got trustee—joint Trusteeship is out of this court case. I think it was 1966.

PL [00:57:51] Okay.

MG [00:57:54] When I was on the bargaining committee in Prince Rupert, I did a lot of work through the bargaining committee on pension. We bargained pension separately one time. I found out way more about pensions than I ever wanted, but it was a great interest of mine.

PL [00:58:10] Yeah.

MG [00:58:11] I got to know the pension plan pretty well. We made major changes to the plan in that separate bargaining. The plan—chronic underfunding, no employee contribution, all employer contributions. It was always—and this isn't in my words—it's people before me who basically said the last item on the table what was ever left over, we'll push it over to pensions.

PL [00:58:39] Yeah.

MG [00:58:40] The longshoremen want a bigger pension, but nobody was paying for it. Employer contributions are the same as employee contributions. They're dealt with different in tax wise, but that's my diverted payroll, right?

PL [00:58:50] Yeah.

MG [00:58:52] Even though we didn't have direct contributions, those were our contributions. I had the president of the association say that to me one time. He's saying, 'You know, you guys have these benefits. They come out of our contribution. This comes out of your contribution.' I said, 'Well, I kind of look at it this way.' I said, 'I think the stuff in trust A, that's my right pocket, and that's all ours. Stuff in trust B is different, but that's all ours. Then there's the joint that's in my back pocket, trust C'. I said, 'But none of it is yours.'

PL [00:59:25] Yeah.

MG [00:59:26] Couldn't let them say that. (laughter) I just couldn't allow that. I had been warned that over the years so I never let them say that, and I was very strict on that too. It wasn't their pension plan. There was some benevolence on their part because when we had success in that separate bargaining, I know that there was a lot of goodwill on the employer's part, even though it was hard fought bargaining.

PL [00:59:50] Yeah.

MG [00:59:52] Some of the things we came to, but there was also some things that were unfinished. We had a really low pension qualification for getting pension time and it was 800 hours a year.

PL [01:00:03] Right.

MG [01:00:05] Ask Revenue Canada, that's not acceptable because it's supposed to be reflective of what a year's work is on the waterfront. Well, you should be—lots of people make three times that much. I never did, but you know, 1,800 hours is not unheard of. We actually had—they did an audit one time in 19—2003. They came and did a lot, and they picked out all these people that had, by our calculation, they made 800 hours. They qualified for a year, but their earnings were lower, and they didn't qualify. They were kind of—they were going to lose at that time.

PL [01:00:51] Yeah.

MG [01:00:52] We got through that. We were able to patch those up. They came back for another audit two years later in '05. Everything was ready for them, the arguments for it, and they didn't look at that again. That was always there in the back of my mind. At someday, somebody's going to go in to retire, and he's going to say, 'I have 35 years,' and he's going to be told he's only got 31 years, or whatever, even though he met the industry qualifications. Industry qualifications weren't what was needed with Revenue Canada. That was a piece. It took a long time. Came to the bargaining table a couple of times with the employers. We were able to give them assurances we'll deal with this between bargaining. We never did but made it part of a big package. We basically did another rewrite of the 1990 agreement [unclear] agreement and redid the pension plan and fixed up things like that. It's now based on earnings, which is—Revenue Canada, it wasn't even happy with hours. They wanted—it's based on earnings.

PL [01:02:01] Yeah.

MG [01:02:02] We had all kinds of issues where people were getting increases above the inflation rate, which isn't allowed by Revenue Canada. We had an argument. We had—the benefit had been so low for so many years.

PL [01:02:14] This is kind of catch up on—

MG [01:02:17] Right. We got away with it for a while, but we would never have gotten away with it forever. It was going to become to a big problem at some point. That was part of the rewrite that we did and that was in the year, year and a half or so, before I retired.

PL [01:02:33] Yeah.

MG [01:02:33] I stayed for an extra term because I was so involved with that stuff. I was in a unique position where I was president, and I was a trustee—an elected trustee. That wasn't normal. I knew both sides of that issue. Like I said, I know all the issues, but that one I knew very well, so it was to deal with that. We also brought in some contributions from the members. It was minimal, but there was a reason for that. Our pension plan had always been the actives got the same as the retirees. Every time you got an increase or whatever, and for a lot of years we were stuck at \$22 times 25 years service.

PL [01:03:25] Yeah.

MG [01:03:26] That went up, and now the \$22, it's, you know, it's a hundred and whatever. It became—we were giving illegal increases to the guy who retired 30 years ago. His pension is three times what he was making in those days because of inflation, right?

PL [01:03:46] Yeah.

MG [01:03:49] We got away with Revenue Canada. They asked the questions, but eventually that was going to come to a crash, and that would have been a disaster.

PL [01:03:57] Yeah. The argument being you retired 20 years ago, and you're getting the same bump that active members get, right? Yeah. Okay. Got ya.

MG [01:04:07] You didn't have the earnings to qualify for the contributions. The contributions weren't there. They were put in a later date. None of that is very good with Revenue Canada.

PL [01:04:16] Yeah.

MG [01:04:17] We got away with it. I hope they never see this interview. (laughter) What we did at the time when we did it brought in the employer contributions, employer contributions, which got the employers on side because they had been pushing for that for years. There's reasons—because one of the locals had done that. Anyways, so we did that. It was minimal. It only brings in \$5 million a year, and you get \$80 million coming in from all contributions and interest and that—way more than that [unclear] container clause. It's minimal but it was enough to get them on side, and we jumped the rate for engineers by about 25 percent. Then we cut it off there and went to full indexing, the CPI indexing, which was a complete success when it was put to a test this year because I got 7.5% increase on my pension. It had been in place for seven years, but that's the first time we had any real inflation. It worked well. I'm very proud of that being part of that accomplishment.

PL [01:05:27] Yeah, no, that's it. Indexing and the index plan is gold.

MG [01:05:33] Yeah, well, a friend of mine his wife died and he said (this is going to sound a bit sexist) 'Women always pay special attention to guys with indexed pensions.' (laughter) I haven't—I've been married for so long that I don't know that from experience.

PL [01:05:54] Very good.

MG [01:05:54] The only thing I—well, the only thing I've done longer than what I've been married, I started longshoring when I was 18, but I've been with my wife since I was 19.

PL [01:06:05] Wow, they're completely indexed with her. Good for you.

MG [01:06:09] You know, she's liked that in January when we get that increase. (laughter) She pays more attention to money than I do.

PL [01:06:19] Let's just talk a little bit about (we're going to win things up a little bit) but let's talk a little bit about what's going on in the labour movement generally and where you see some of the big challenges. Sort of looking back, looking ahead, that kind of stuff.

MG [01:06:36] You know, through the labour movement, I was always pretty focused on my own union. There had been times there had been talk about restructuring our office and taking the longshore duties away from the existing officers and just having longshore people to look after them—but they were longshore. Anyways, I had always said I'd have no interest in that office any longer if I was out of the longshore because that's what I wanted to be in, and that's what I stayed. But you still had to deal with the separate

agreements, like, Ridley Island, we talked about. Never did with the other coal terminal here because the local has always looked after that agreement on their own. My focus has always been offshore. What I see there, I see a lot of—I think a lot of people don't know the history and aren't paying attention to history. I see—and, you know, this happens every generation. People always look back and say, you know, they're not fit to do it. They can't do the job we did. I've always tried not to be that way.

PL [01:07:40] Yeah.

MG [01:07:41] I'm afraid I'm becoming more and more like that.

PL [01:07:43] Yeah. Do you think that the labour movement is up against some tough issues that it's not really equipped to handle?

MG [01:07:56] I was at a retirement party last week for a guy from the port. You know, like what he said once. He didn't say to me, but he said it to somebody else, 'Why do we need unions anymore? We have all these laws in place and, you know, and people don't need you.' If that were true, we have laws in place, but it's enforcement. I'm dealing with some issues with my daughter in non-union workplaces and it is disgusting because there's no place you can go. I think Harry [Harry Bains] is the best Labour minister we've maybe ever had.

PL [01:08:30] Yeah.

MG [01:08:30] Go back to Bill King, I guess, because he changed the world. Harry had a really tough job because what the Liberals had done is shut down all enforcement. Now you've got to come back from there. It's not there. It's not where it used to be. Even one of my American friends said once, 'We have some of the best labour laws in the world. You wouldn't notice it because of the labour problems in the U.S. and the lack of unions. It's enforcement. It doesn't matter how good your laws are, if they're not enforced, they're useless.' I think there's a lot of that here, and we need much better enforcement. I find it's harder to talk to people about unions today than it ever was just because so many people—there's so much jealousy. The people that do pay attention, they're just jealous. 'Well, he gets paid more than me.' Well, there's a reason for it.

PL [01:09:28] Yeah.

MG [01:09:29] To fix it, don't take it away from him. We got to fix you up. I think there's a—so many people think, I can do better on my own these days and some do, but most don't.

PL [01:09:41] Yeah.

MG [01:09:43] That's where I see where the problems are. I was talking to Donna before about how someone else had said, just on the waterfront, the changes in manning and the way you work now, there's not the camaraderie that there used to be. A lot of people aren't even in the lunchrooms. There's a lot of jobs, people, when they're finished, they go home, and they don't even see the people that they're working with anymore. That's across everywhere. If you're not working with people—how to identify problems is a bunch of people in the lunchroom. This happened to me, and everybody's angry, and that leads to something in bargaining down the road, and you fix it. That's not happening anymore.

PL [01:10:28] Yeah, well, it's simple things like comparing pay stubs.

PL [01:10:33] Exactly.

PL [01:10:34] Yeah. You know.

MG [01:10:35] That's a funny thing. Come up last week. I was talking to my wife about something, and I didn't pay so much attention, but when I first started it, it was really heavy work, and we used to do 500 pound bales of pulping that you lifted. In Victoria, we had different mills and different weights, and there were things if you went over a certain weight, you got a nickel more.

PL [01:10:58] Yeah.

MG [01:10:58] You know, and that would come down and somebody yelled, 'Hey, tell a foreman. You remember, we've just gone over 480 pounds. We get an extra nickel.' When you get to a certain point in the hatch where you—it was headroom—somebody'd yell up (and I was just a young guy, 18 year old kid.

PL [01:11:13] Yeah.

MG [01:11:14] Somebody's yell up, 'Hey, headroom.' That was worth 10 cents or something. It didn't matter. You still bend your head a lot, which in my case didn't hurt. Now I don't have hair to cover up the lumps. (laughter)