Interview: Colleen Fuller (CF)
Interviewer: Ken Novakowski (KN)
Date: May 23 2023
Location: Burnaby, B.C.
Transcription: Warren Caragata

CF: [00:00:05] I was born in San Francisco in 1952. But we never lived in San Francisco. We lived in San Jose.

KN: [00:00:16] Can you talk a bit about your family. Were they supportive of unions, progressive politics? I'd like to talk to you about that. And then you say you moved around a lot in your formative years and sort of fill us in a bit about that, too.

CF: [00:00:30] Sure. While my parents—by the time I was born—so this is six or so years after the end of the Second World War, and after the war, they both became very politically active. My dad became interested in politics and basically socialist or communist politics when he was in the army, and he was stationed on Amchitka Island. They were the front lines of the war against the Japanese, as he used to sometimes say, and one of his friends there that he became a real buddy with, gave him a copy of Karl Liebknecht's book on the military, and I think that really had a huge impact on him. He was in the military at that time.

CF: [00:01:28] When I was born, I don't know exactly what they were doing, but they were two working-class people who were interested in politics. And they both were in the Communist Party when I was born. My dad worked for the United Electrical Workers in California and was involved in organizing at Westinghouse, which is a battle that they lost with the help of the U.S. government and McCarthy. It was all part of the deal because the UE was a Communist-led union at that time. And my father—it's not that my mother was not political because she was, but my political relationship was with my dad more than with my mother until I was much older.

CF: [00:02:26] And my father had a huge, huge influence on me. And there were things that he told me that have stuck with me. One of which was, if you want to be part of a community, you have to live in it. You can't leave it and go off here or there. You have to be part of the community because that's how you develop relationships and trust and confidence and all that kind of thing. But my mother was involved with the farm workers in California when I was a young child and there was a lot of organizing going on and it was a pretty brutal effort to organize those workers in California because of lots of different reasons, including racism and specifically anti-Mexican racism. And so, in part because of their politics, they did move around a lot, even despite what my dad said. I don't know if it was because they lost their jobs or what. But we just moved every year. We, as kids, there were four of us, four children, and we never were in one school for longer than one year. So we just went from place to place to place while we were in California.

CF: [00:03:53] And then my parents moved to Oregon, first to Eugene. My father was working for Greyhound. He was a baggage clerk at that time and he and my mom both decided to go back to university. My father, interestingly, had gone to high school in Los Angeles where he met Johnny Rankin. So they had a kind of an interesting early history together. But so my dad got a teaching certificate; my mom got her librarian's certificate, and we stayed in Eugene for a year. Then we went to Coquille, Oregon, and then we went

to Portland. And my father had got a job with the IWA (International Woodworkers of America), the international office in Portland, through a friend who was the executive director there. He loved that job. It was the first time he was involved in adult education, which he loved doing. But there were some problems, family problems, really.

CF: [00:05:01] So my parents decided to go back to California. And I guess that was 1966 or maybe '65, anywhere around there. And they found out that they were on a blacklist in California, that they would not be able to get jobs. And my father had been very critical of the school system in Watsonville, California, which was the last area that we lived in in California. So that would have been '63, '64 sometime around there—'63, I think, no, '62—anyway. Yeah, so he had been critical of the school system for the way they tracked Mexican-American kids into the sort of lower levels in each grade. And that was a big story in the newspaper there. And that was the end of his teaching career in California. My mother had worked in a school, and I can't remember if it was somewhere in that area as well. And she had been visited by the FBI. They actually went to the school, and I don't know why they had gone, but they went to the principal of the school and said, We are from the FBI and we'd like to speak to Doris Fuller. Which in 1962 or '63 was a big deal. And so, my mother told them never to visit her at her place of work again. And I don't know what the discussion was with them at all. Probably nothing, because she probably told them to bugger off. But anyway—so she was not going to get a job in California either.

CF: [00:06:47] In addition to that, my mother's family—my grandfather was the editor of the Sacramento Bee in California, so he was a kind of a big wheel in that world. And her brother was in the Air Force. And her brother informed the FBI that she was in the Communist Party, which would be why she had got a visit when she was in California. And when my grandfather found out that she was in the Communist Party, his wife—because he didn't have the courage to do it himself—wrote to my mother and said, We're loyal Americans and we never want to see you or your children again. So her family relationships were completely severed for that reason.

CF: [00:07:37] And so there was nothing for them. They were on a blacklist there. My father's family was from Texas, and they also had been visited by the FBI and disowned him, basically. So their family connections in the U.S. were over with. I don't know what prompted them to apply for a job in Gibsons, but they did. And they each got a job. My dad got a job at Elphinstone High School and my mom got a job at the elementary school in Gibsons. And so instead of going back to California from Portland, we came to Canada and that was in 1967.

KN: [00:08:19] Okay, So that sort of explains why you came to Canada and can you talk a bit about coming to Canada. you would have been, I think, 15 at that time or so, 15, 16 And what do you remember about coming to Canada, different country and coming to a different part of the world, to a place called Gibsons? What are your memories of that?

CF: [00:08:45] Well, I was 14 and I felt a real betrayal that we had left Portland because I had invested a lot of effort in making friends there, really probably for the first time. And when you're that age, also friends are more important than your parents, like by far. And so, my parents had said, this is the last move: we're not going to be moving again. So I think all of us kind of felt disappointed that we were moving yet again. And by the way, when we moved to the Sunshine Coast, we moved every year to a different part of the Sunshine Coast because they were addicted to packing, out of something. I don't know what it was. But at least we weren't changing schools. I have two older sisters, one of whom stayed in the U.S. until 1971, and then she came to Canada and my other sister

came up as part of the family and she stayed maybe for a year and then wanted to get into the Haight-Ashbury thing. And anyway, she left. And so, it was my brother and I who grew up and became attached to that community because it was the first time we were anywhere for any length of time. And so when people say to me, where did you grow up, I always say, on the Sunshine Coast, because I have no sense of anything in the U.S. in a sense. But anyway, it took me a little while to settle in, I would say. And the Sunshine Coast was a kind of a bizarre part of Canada at that time. There were by 1969, I would say, 1970, there were young men going to the Sunshine Coast because they were dodging the draft in the U.S., right. And so, there was just this influx of counterculture, you know, hippies, and some of whom were political, and some of whom were not. So that was interesting to be a young woman coming into her own when there were all these young guys there, which freaked my father out all the time.

CF: [00:11:19] I left the Sunshine Coast for lots of reasons, but one of them was the racism on the Sunshine Coast and the racism against the Indigenous people, Sechelt people, was unbelievable and my parents were very active in the civil rights movement in the States before we came up here. So they were interested. They had never been exposed to an Indigenous culture or politics or anything like that, but they were both really interested in that. So our family became very much part of the Sechelt reserve life, so to speak. And some really close friends, which are still close to all of us, who are my family. And so, the racism amongst young people of my own age, which of course they had inherited from their parents, was just unbelievable. And that's why I left. I couldn't stand it. I came into Vancouver and started working in Vancouver.

KN: [00:12:27] Okay. So when was that roughly when you came to Vancouver? And can you tell us about some of your early work experiences in Vancouver.

CF: [00:12:34] Yeah, well, I had mentioned to you before that one of my first jobs was at St. Mary's Hospital in Sechelt, and I was the dishwasher there and HEU (Hospital Employees Union) had just organized the hospital, and at that time it was Local 180 of CUPE (Canadian Union of Public Employees). And when I became a member, they were in the process of leaving CUPE because CUPE was kind of a political war zone at that time. So this would have been 1971. I graduated in '71, and so went to work right away. And no, I didn't understand any of the politics at all, but I was interested in becoming an active union member. And so I ran for the executive and I was elected. And the main thing that was going on that I remember at that time were working conditions. And there were other things that were going on that I found out later—that I didn't know at the time and I wish I had—one of which was St. Mary's was a fairly new hospital that had been built on Indian land. It was donated by the reserve to build the hospital. And one of the conditions of that donation, probably never written down, was that they would hire people from the reserve to work in the hospital, which of course they didn't. And so maybe, I don't know if I knew it. I don't think I did. Anyway, I worked in the kitchen, so the woman who was the manager of the kitchen, the administrator, I asked her why there were no Indians working at the hospital and she said, because they steal, which of course is the worst kind of stereotype and not true. And so that was the end of it. And so that, and then all the racism from my friends, so I moved into Vancouver.

CF: [00:14:35] I got a job on a boat, a ship, a 2,000-ton freighter called the Northland Prince, which used to sail from Vancouver to Stewart, B.C. And it was very hard work. I mean, I'm not a big person. And I worked in the kitchen. I was a dishwasher there also. And the pots that you would have to haul around were like this big and huge. I was a member of the CBRT (Canadian Brotherhood of Railway Transport and General Workers

Union) Seamen's Section, Local 400, and Tom McGrath was the president and David Crane was the secretary-treasurer at that time. And McGrath was just a unique character in every way. And he was also the contact for seamen coming into the harbour of Vancouver from wherever they came in the world. If you had a grievance, you contacted McGrath, and so he was this very high-profile trade unionist, not just here but internationally as well. There was a crew of 40, including the officers, and I can't remember how many seamen there were.

CF: [00:15:57] There were nine women who worked on the boat. It was the only boat that employed women at that time. So it was unusual. And the women—we were unhappy with our working conditions for a number of reasons, one of which is that we had nowhere to sit down and eat a meal. The seamen had the seaman's mess, the officers had a smaller mess for themselves, and that was it. So women didn't have a place to sit down. We had to wait for everyone else to finish eating, which kind of pissed us off. And we also, because of tech change on the boat, we used to—it was the job of the dishwasher—take the garbage bags, and you'd take them out onto the deck and throw them into a huge bin. It was completely doable. You had to sort of haul them into it, you know, over your head. And then—this was the brilliant idea of the employer—they got what we called a garburator. It was a machine with a box in it that was about this big and about this high. And you would put the garbage, the food garbage, in a chute and it would go into these boxes, and then the boxes had to be taken out on the deck and they were too heavy. So it's the first time I heard of the Workers Compensation Board because women weren't allowed to lift more than 50 pounds, or maybe it was 35 pounds. So we refused to take the garbage out. It would have been a real struggle for us to do it anyway. And then the seamen were told to do it and they said they weren't going to do it because it was not in their scope of practice, it wasn't in their job description. And so the garbage that was piling up and piling up and piling up became quite a huge issue. But when there was some job action—I started working on Northland in 1973 or so, '72, and it became a strike issue. We forced the men in the union to take the garbage situation seriously. Also the fact that we didn't have a place to sit down and eat, and they were kind of fluffing us off, you know, like it wasn't one of the big important issues. And we said, Well, you're not going to get a meal unless you do this. And so, they embraced the issue, let's put it that way. And we did win. The garbage issue was resolved. We were not taking the garbage out. The men had to do it. And we had a place to sit down and eat. So that was good.

CF: [00:19:09] I loved that union. It was a dispatch hall. That's how you got the work. Most of the men working on that boat were from the old Canadian Seamen's Union. They hated the SEIU (Service Employees International Union) with a passion. In fact, one time, the union mistakenly dispatched a guy who was an SEIU member to work on the boat, and all hell broke loose on the boat. It was just incredible. Anyway, so you learned a lot in that environment about the history of the waterfront in Vancouver, the history of the Seamen's Union and the seamen's section of the CBRT. And, yeah, I really liked it. So, I worked there for over a period of time. And, you know, I started working there when I was 18, so I was quite young and travelled, came back to Vancouver and got a job as a dispatcher at a place that repaired washing machines in 1974.

KN: [00:20:20] So, Colleen, one of the things that I actually remember is that your dad, he founded and was very active in the Labour History Association, a Provincial Specialist Association of the British Columbia Teachers Federation. And I wonder if you'd talk briefly about your involvement in the work of that group and say something about that group itself.

CF: [00:20:46] Well, in 1975 or '76, I got a job with IDERA, the International Development Education Resources Association, which was funded to do education, including in the trade union movement, about issues in the Third World. And it was funded by CIDA (Canadian International Development Agency) and the Ministry of Agriculture, oddly, the federal ministry. And so, I was asked to apply by a guy that I knew that worked there. And I said, What do you guys do? And he said, We teach trade unionists anti-imperialist education. And I thought, Oh, that sounds okay. So I applied for the job. And because I had been involved in a campaign for the NDP, I was on good terms with the NDP, and they wanted somebody because they were all like far-left young activists, right? They were in Struggle and the Workers Communist Party, which was some kind of off-fringy type, you know, left politics, and student politics, a lot of them. And I was a young working-class woman, and all of them were not. They were sort of looking for somebody with credentials like that.

CF: [00:22:25] I was hired as a program developer. I was in charge of the library, the print library idea. IDERA had print materials and a film library with documentary films. I worked there for a while, and then the place kind of imploded for lots of different weird reasons. And so I was looking for something to do. And because I had put out IDERA's newsletter on an old mimeograph machine, my dad asked me if I would put out the newsletter for the Labour History Association. So I said great. And I think it had just been set up at that time. So after I left IDERA, it probably was 1976 by this time, maybe even '77, I can't remember, the Labour History Association was looking for somebody to put out their newsletter and my dad asked me if I'd do it because I had this experience at IDERA. So, I said sure. It sounded interesting and I found out that I am so much my dad's daughter. I loved labour history. I just found it so interesting, and I just learned so much working with the Labour History Association. I think when they first got going, there was a lot of suspicion about the Labour History Association because, one, they were teachers and doing labour history, rather than the trade union movement proper doing labour history, if you know what I mean. And they were all left activists in the BC Teachers Federation. Everybody knew my dad had been in the party, everybody knew my dad's track record. Denis Ottewell—you just look at the guy and you know that he'd never jerk you around. He's just a nice man and very sincere also. And he, I think, really helped build confidence in the Labour History Association.

CF: [00:25:00] And so the newsletter—it was first a newsletter and then it became a magazine—it was Anne Fall and I who were the two that actually did all the layout and all the editing. I started to write when I was putting that thing out too. And we had really good material that dealt with the history of workers in different sectors and in the public sector, rail. We did a special issue on Indigenous workers in B.C., which Rolf Knight made a huge contribution to. We did a fantastic issue on the logging industry, on the fishing industry, so we did a lot of work. And the magazine also included lesson plans. And so the teachers who were not familiar with any of the history also were learning themselves about how to teach labour history. And I'm not suggesting that there wasn't a huge contribution from every single person involved in the association, but my father was one of the first teachers to really start teaching working-class history, and he wanted his students to know where they came from and to feel that they had a history first of all. And even now, I talk to people, including a lot of people who are my age, who live on the reserve in Sechelt, who really remember my dad, he was their teacher. They really appreciated the work that he did and what they learned from him. I think that he had a huge imprint on the way the Labour History Association conceptualized its approach to labour history. But others did too. I mean, Peter Saxis was a fantastic guy, and as I said, Denis. And Anne Fall was an amazing woman. And those are the people that I remember. Well, you were involved, Jim

McFarlane, and other people. So it was a focus also for a lot of the work being done in the BCTF to build support for joining the BC Federation of Labour. So the journal, I think, helped in those efforts. I don't know for a fact that that's the case, but my sense is that there was some bridge-building being done there, and the Labour History Association and the efforts that they were making to teach working-class history had a positive impact there.

KN: [00:28:09] The film, For Twenty Cents a Day, was a significant contribution to the historical record of depression experiences in British Columbia. Can you talk briefly about your involvement in this film. Talk a bit about the film and your involvement in it.

CF: [00:28:27] Well, when I was at IDERA, a big part of IDERA was documentary films. We didn't produce any of the films. We tried to produce a film about what was going on in Jamaica. While I was there, there were a number of us, Jef Keighley was one of them who went on to become very active in CAIMAW [eds: Canadian Association of Industrial Mechanical and Allied Workers] after he was through at IDERA, and Jim Monro, Mark Bostwick, who was my husband at that time, Liz Walker. A lot of people— we wanted to do something. This is in the shadow of the coup d'état in Chile, right. And we were looking at what was going on in Jamaica. And Michael Manley was the prime minister of Jamaica at that time. And so we felt that Alcan, which was a B.C.-based company, was mucking around in Jamaica because of talks in Jamaica about nationalizing bauxite, the industry. We just had a sense that there were all these politics that were going on and we were interested in doing a film about that and about the Manley government and so forth. And so Jef Keighley went down to Jamaica and interviewed Manley and his finance minister. And it was a great trip. He told them about the film that we were interested in doing. They were very interested. Came back and his passport, his tapes of the interviews—I don't think there was a transcript—but anyway, everything was in my office, and I had a meeting on a Saturday morning at IDERA. So I went in. The door was open. I saw in very short order that somebody had broken in. They'd gone through my office. They had rifled through my files. They took Jef's passport, they took the audiotapes, they took all of the material that was related to the film, basically. We figured it was an RCMP thing. And when we phoned the police, we could tell that the police figured it probably was the RCMP as well. And so that was the end of my filmmaking career until the Labour History Association.

CF: [00:31:03] We talked about doing something because there was so much interest in the edition of the journal that focused on the Depression, a lot of interest. And this is at a time when the unemployment rate amongst people, especially young people, was super-high in B.C., well in Canada, across the country, and this is the late seventies. So, we thought it would be a good idea to do a film. And so Jim Monro, who I had worked with at IDERA, was running the Challenge for Change program at the National Film Board. So I went down on behalf of the Labour History Association to inquire about support for doing a film. And that film had also been the end of Jim's filmmaking career. So we talked and he said, That's a great idea. And he wanted to produce or to direct it. And he purportedly had experience directing. He didn't really. I mean, I didn't have any experience either. So we were both, you know, very naive in some ways about what was involved.

[00:32:23] But Challenge for Change was kind of on its last legs. So we went to the Boag Foundation and met with Jim McKenzie, who was the main person at the Boag Foundation, and said what we wanted to do. We went to the BC Fed, said what we wanted to do, and there was a lot of interest. So we raised $11,000. And that's what it took to produce the film. And I'm pretty sure I probably didn't make a dime, but Jim probably made

a little bit. The person who made the most money was Liz Walker, who was the editor. We all were very enthusiastic about it. The Labour History Association was really excited about the film, and it was a good film. It went on to win Honourable Mention at the Berlin Film Festival in the documentary film category. The film board has included it in their library. And I know that it's here as well. I think it should be seen more. I mean, it's not the high-quality documentary film that you would see these days, which uses a lot of techniques that weren't available at that time, and they usually have a lot more money. But it's a good film and it really has unique film footage in it—a lot of it was found in somebody's garage. So I learned a lot from that. And I continued to do film actually for a number of years after.

KN: [00:34:08] And that leads into another film that you were involved with, also of historical significance, and that's the one that was based on the book Dangerous Patriots. Can you tell us a bit about that briefly and talk about your involvement in that.

CF: [00:34:29] Yeah, that was the last film that I worked on and unfortunately, we weren't able to produce that. We just couldn't raise enough money. It was a docudrama, so it was a full-length, feature-length film. And it was based on the book called Dangerous Patriots, which is about the men who were arrested at the beginning of the war and for being—I don't know if they used the term traitors exactly—but the Communist Party had been banned. And all of these men were in the trade union movement. They were active organizers. C.S. Jackson, Ben Swankey are the two people that I remember the most. But all these people from Ontario, from the Maritimes, they were arrested because there was a huge organizing campaign going on in Canada during the 1930s and they were part of it. They weren't part of the CLC [eds: Canadian Labour Congress], they were part of the TLC, the Trades and Labour Congress, which some people say was Communist-led. I think obviously there were a lot of Communists in the leadership of the TLC but it was much more diverse than that, politically diverse. And so that's why these guys were rounded up and they were put in prison in Hull, Quebec, side by side with German and Italian fascists. And I think that was probably a deliberate thing. And they were there—I can't remember how long they were there, probably a year. And then they were released. The people that I met in making the film were—they're people who spent their whole lives in the working-class movement and their names are just not known by Canadians, which is terrible. Including C.S. Jackson, who I got quite close to—Clarence Shirley Jackson, who hated his name and called himself Jack. He was the leader of the United Electrical Workers. So I felt some connection with him because my dad had been a UE organizer in California, which also interested him. And Jack had retired. I can't remember when he retired. So this is 1986, '87. He would have been retired, probably in 1979. In fact, I know, now that I remember, I know he retired in '79. He retired as president. He'd been president for decades of the UE, and he never made more money than the higher-paid members of the UE. So the skilled trades in the UE would make a fairly decent living in the 1970s. And that's what he made. And he retired on a pension, the same pension that everybody else got, which wasn't a lot of money. But, you know, he was fine with that. He was a real man of principle that way. And then in 1979, just before he retired, he won a lottery ticket. He won $1,000,000. And he and his wife, Mary, moved to Etobicoke and got this kind of very nice condominium.

[00:38:18] And we were interviewing him for the film. And when it was clear that the film wasn't going to make it because we just weren't raising the money—we needed a lot of money for that film. So he asked me if I would write his biography. I can't remember what the term is, but you write it and then it's their biography, not an autobiography. But anyway, I said, yeah, that would be great. And I had given him the manuscript I had written on the history of the Painters union in B.C. And I remember when he'd read it. I was at his place. I

was living in Ottawa, and he would fly me down because the guy was loaded with money, and I would stay at his place and he'd read it. And when we were talking, I was saying, Oh, you know, I should have done this, I didn't write about that, it's really poorly written. And I was just going on and on because I wanted to impress him and let him know I could do a good job on his biography, a better job. And he just sat there and listened and he smiled. He said, I accept all your apologies—I liked it. And so that was a good opening to this discussion about his book. And I interviewed him when I went down maybe once or twice a week to Etobicoke, which was good. He was paying me. So I was making some money, too, because I didn't have a job. I was sort of wondering what I was going to do with the rest of my life.

[00:40:05] And in one of the interviews, he mentioned Ben Swankey, and I said, Did you know Ben? And he said, yeah, that they were really good pals back in the time that they were in jail and afterwards. And I said, Well, Ben is a really good friend of mine in my family, and he was so excited. So lo and behold, I gave him Ben's phone number. He phoned Ben and said, come to Toronto. And so, Ben was excited about it too, to see his old buddy. And so Ben came. And then the next thing I know, Jack says to me, I've decided I want Ben to do my biography. And so that was fine. I had no bad feelings about it at all. And so, Ben started to write it. And I don't think that they had disagreements. But Jack's daughter, who was from Manitoba and a very devout Mennonite— she wasn't close to her dad. Jack had basically abandoned his family, so she didn't know him growing up. And I mean, he was not a Mennonite himself. He also always told me he had never joined the Communist Party. And I believe him. I don't think that he did, but he obviously was very close to the party. And there were a lot of people like that, very close to the party, not a member. And he said, My first party is the UE and that's who I'm loyal to. Often, there are disagreements between the Communist Party and the union. And he'd always side with the union, always, always. But his daughter wanted that part of her father—his politics, and which was part of the thing that fueled his leadership in the trade union movement—she didn't want that to be a big thing. I don't know if she had an employment contract with Ben or not. But anyway, that came to an end. And it was this guy in Manitoba, whose name I can't remember, who wrote the book. And it's not a well-known book. And it's unfortunate, actually. That's what happened there. And then Jack moved to B.C. and he died in B.C. he wanted to be close to people that he felt were part of his community. And I guess that's why he came here.

CF: [00:42:51] But after that, I was never going to work in film again. The whole landscape for filmmaking had changed in Canada really radically, in part because of the free trade agreement, which screwed filmmakers in Canada really, really badly. And so, I got a job with ACTRA [eds: Alliance of Canadian Cinema, Television and Radio Artists], which represents actors, broadcast journalists and screenwriters, and I worked there in Ottawa in their national office. Then my mom called me and said, Your dad's really sick and he doesn't have much longer to live, according to the doctor. So I completely panicked, quit my job and came back to B.C. and as it turned out, that was wrong. My dad had another decade left, which was good, but I started working for the Carpenters' union and the Provincial Council of Carpenters, and Bill Zander and Colin Snell were both in charge at that time, and two more fantastic trade unionists. And I loved working for the Carpenters, actually.

KN: [00:44:14] Colleen, would you tell us a bit about your involvement in the Painters union as well.

CF: [00:44:20] The Painters union? Well, this was just before Solidarity took off and I can't remember why I was asked, but they asked me if I would do a history of the union. Well, obviously it was because of the Labour History Association. That would be the reason. And I was interested and, you know, I had like everybody else a very stereotypical, stereotyped view of the building trades. And the Painters union was part of a group. It was the IBEW (International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers), because the IBEW and the UE had some kind of an agreement, so the UE wasn't organizing in B.C., and the IBEW was a left union. So it was the IBEW, the Boilermakers, the Painters and the Carpenters, the four of them. And before the Boilermakers came around, actually the Painters and Electrical Workers and the Carpenters were united politically and so they organized really vigorously in Vancouver, mainly in Vancouver, rather than the rest of the province. And they were involved with the OBU, the One Big Union, all three of those unions were. They were involved with the IWW (Industrial Workers of the World), later on I guess. They had a very antagonistic relationship with their head office in the U.S., whichever city their head offices were in. And, they also had an antagonistic relationship with a lot of the construction unions who were here as well. And the reason was because those three unions wanted an industrial union in construction. And that was early on. And the push for that came out of the shipbuilding industry, the shipyards, because construction workers go from one job to the next. They have a relationship with people on this job that they may or may not ever see again. They go on to the next job. There's a new group of people that they're working with. The way that construction goes is, you know, not all trades are on the site at the same time. So the Painters are probably about last on the site. The Carpenters are probably first on the site. So the rhythm in the work is different than it is in an industrial setting. But when those people began to work in the shipyards, they began to have an industrial experience. Same place, every day with the same people. And so, that had a huge impact on them. It was very interesting. And so that's what I got out of the history that I did with of the Painters union—that it would make all the difference in the world. And you can understand why employers do not want an industrial union in construction, because the ability of those people to work together on these projects that are sort of short term—they're not like decades and decades long. And the power that that gives those unions, if they're all together in one union, rather than fighting all the time, which often happens. And so that was interesting. And I also felt that the labour historians had generally missed that part of the history in the building trades, which is really a crucial part, because some of those unions, not all of them, I think, probably the Electrical Workers and the Carpenters right into the sixties, were talking about one union in construction. And you know, eventually they had to say they lost the struggle there. But a lot of that came out of their own historical experience of their members. So anyway, I really enjoyed doing that project with the Painters union.

KN: [00:49:07] Okay. You had referred to Solidarity. That was an important event in British Columbia history in 1983. And you had some involvement in Solidarity. Can you talk a bit about that.

CF: [00:49:22] Well, the first involvement I had was with the Lower Mainland Budget Coalition, actually. And there were a group of us who were all the usual suspects, you know, Fish, Carpenters. Who else? HEU, you know, all the left unions in B.C. And, of course, at the time, this is 1983. The province had passed what were called 27 bad bills, just this whole slew of legislation that was negative in every way and right across the board. So the government learned a lesson. Never do that again. You know, take them out one by one. But everybody was affected. And whether you were a mother collecting welfare, whether you were a parent with a kid in the school system, whether you were a union member, it didn't matter. The legislation really had a huge impact. And so, almost

immediately in the Lower Mainland, there was a huge meeting at the Fishermen's hall on Cordova Street. And I don't know, God, there were hundreds of people there. And I went and I was not a member of a union at that time, but I was active in the Killarney–Champlain Citizens for Action. I can't remember how I got involved with them. I'm just an activist, you know, it's sort of a genetic thing, I guess. And Saul Jackson was the head of Killarney–Champlain Heights. So we had a meeting and he said, All this stuff is happening, and we have to get involved. So I was delegated to go to the meeting at the Fish hall.

CF: [00:51:26] And, of course, there were huge fights there. The first thing that came up, of course, was we were going to organize a rally and we needed to decide who the speakers at the rally were going to be. And so there was a big fight about whether elected NDPers should be invited to the platform to speak, and the room was completely divided, and it wasn't along party lines. I saw people who were in the Communist Party who voted in favour of it, people in the NDP who voted against having the NDP there. So it was just a mixed thing. And I was watching individuals to see how I would vote, because I didn't know what I thought about it. So I voted with Fred Wilson, who voted in favour of having NDPers speak there. But the motion went down to defeat. And so it was, you know, this kind of sore point right through the very beginning of Solidarity. And there was a lot of people who said that that happened because of the Communist Party, which was completely false. And anybody who had been at that meeting would know that. But basically, I guess you could say it was the left who carried the day, whichever party they were in.

CF: [00:53:05] And so, we organized this big march and rally, and I was on the communications committee, so played a good part in getting it organized and it was so great, it was so exciting. I really loved it. And the Lower Mainland Budget Coalition morphed into the Solidarity Coalition once the leadership of the trade union movement got involved and—you learn everything in everything you do in life. And I learned a lot about the differences between community organizations and unions and what is required in both of those groups to get a decision made. And so one of the complaints, I guess you could say, of the unions was that that the people who were representing community organizations and they were, like Women against the Budget, like End the Arms Race, which is another group I was really involved in, gardeners for Peace—people wanted to organize and get involved and so they did. Women against the Budget was a significant group, but their method of making a decision was different. So in a union, you had to be mindful of what the members would think about your decision to represent them and spend their money and if you were going to be involved in something. Whereas on the community side, they had no money, none of these groups had any money really. So they didn't have to worry about that. And the leadership was entrusted in a way—I don't know if that's the right term—but they didn't go back. They didn't say, Oh, we can't make a decision about that. We have to go back to our members and see if there is an agreement there. So the two groups were on a collision course for that reason.

CF: [00:55:18] And that really became apparent around the issue of the general strike. And a lot of the unions, their members were not going to go on strike. They just weren't ready to do that. And I think the IWA maybe was one of the unions or maybe it was Steel, I can't remember. But anyway, most union members were not going to go on strike. And so they just didn't—the leadership weren't going to say, Yes, we'll call a general strike. It was that simple. I might be simplifying it more than—it was probably more complex than that. And I know that there were all these politics and so forth, but the teachers went on strike. And in our neighbourhood, in our community, Champlain Heights, Killarney–Champlain Heights—and CUPE went on strike. So I guess it was the public sector, not surprising, and so they were going on strike and we organized groups to go and collect people's garbage,

to set up childcare in the housing co-ops that were in the area. And we also organized picket lines. You had to get up at some ungodly hour to make sure the electrical workers didn't cross a picket line and because the teachers couldn't set up a picket line, I guess. And so it was—that was one of the most positive things that came out of Solidarity. So, there were these fights between community organizations and unions around important issues. But on the ground level, there wasn't that fighting going on. So, it was just a great experience. I loved organizing. We had meetings in our co-op because I lived in Le Coeur Co-op, which was in Champlain Heights, and we would invite people from CUPE to come and speak, or we had CUPE members who were there who would—we'd have a meeting and they'd talk about what was going on. It was a very powerful experience for anybody that was involved in it, and that was just my experience. But I know others had other experiences.

CF: [00:57:48] One of the things that happened, you might remember, was the occupation of the premier's office, and that was organized very, very quietly. There were a core group of about 10 of us, I think, maybe not even 10, maybe it was only eight. So we had this core group of people, a lot of them were in the party, and I had joined the Communist Party by that time as well. And so, Geoff Meggs and I were in charge of communications. I'm always the communications person. It's really weird. And so, he and I organized the strategy for what would happen when we were inside the premier's office, and Harry Rankin wasn't coming to the meetings, but he was apprised of what was going on, and his job was to talk to Mike Harcourt about it—Mike was the mayor at that time—to make sure that the police didn't come charging in to the premier's office and create havoc and arrest everybody. And so there were 60 people and everybody was told this: gather at this point, at this time in the morning, and you will be meeting with this person. So each one of the core people had a group that they had contacted. So there were 60 people, so there were probably six of us or so who contacted 10 people each. So it was organized in this kind of amazing way.

CF: [00:59:34] And so everybody gathered, and Lorne Robson, who was with the Carpenters union—our job, Lorne and I—our job was to go into the premier's office and go up to the poor woman who was the receptionist there and go up to her desk and say, Hello, we're occupying the premier's office and so you'll have to leave. And so, when we did that, she nearly had a stroke. She was like, didn't understand what was going on. And Lorne and I were standing there and Lorne was a giant. So I came up to about his belly button. And so this tall man and this short woman are standing there in front of her, and she's just sitting there and Lorne said, You can gather your things but you'll have to leave. And so, she picked up the phone and she was phoning somebody—no, pardon me, that's not right. I picked up the phone. My job was to phone BC TV and the CBC and the Vancouver Sun and the Vancouver Province and read a news release that started: This morning at 9 a.m., 60 people occupied the premier's office. I got that sentence out, and the receptionist banged the thing down on the phone, and we got cut off. By this time, all these people are coming into the premier's office and led by the Carpenters because they were the front-line people. And so, she saw everybody coming in, and she gets up from her desk and goes off and I calmly picked up the phone and redialed BCTV and the guy on the other end said, "We're all set up, just read us the news release, we're sending somebody down right now." So within like seconds, the media were all there, and everybody was in. And Lorne's son, Corey, had brought this big two-by-four and closed the doors from the inside. So, from the outside you couldn't open them. And so, everything was all set up, and the phone was ringing like crazy because the media were phoning and wanting to get more information, like what was going on.

CF: [01:02:04] It was exciting, actually. I was the person who was doing the phones and we had threatening phone calls. We had people phoning saying, Can I get in too, I want to join you. It was, you know, mostly really positive support. It was great. And Geoff was handling media on the other side of the glass because the premier's office in Vancouver is all surrounded by glass. I think he and I had the walkie-talkies and so we were sort of coordinating everything inside and out and we stayed overnight. There were people, they brought guitars, they brought sleeping bags, toothbrushes. And we sang folk songs, and then in the morning we left and there was this fantastic rally when we were leaving the premier's office—there were just hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of people there. It was just one of those highlights of that period, of that struggle.

KN: [01:03:15] Thank you for that. That's very interesting. Colleen, you worked for the Health Sciences Association of B.C., I think in the nineties primarily, and became involved in researching and writing about various aspects of health care. Can you talk a bit about your work for the HSA and also about the book that you wrote.

CF: [01:03:35] I started working at HSA in '91, and I had been asked by Peter Cameron, who was the executive director. I met him in Moscow actually because I was representing ACTRA at a conference in Moscow and Peter was there representing HSA. The nurses were there from Alberta. There was a real hodgepodge of trade unionists from across the country. The World Federation of Trade Unions was meeting there, which was the counterpoint to the International Confederation of Trade Unions. I met Peter there. It was a rocking time. We had a great time there, everybody, and when I got back, he contacted me. And while I was wanting to come back to B.C.—I think I may have got some of the timeline wrong here, but whatever, anyway. He contacted me and asked me if I'd be interested in working at HSA as their communications director because the previous guy was just about to leave and I was interested. I didn't like living in Ottawa. I loved John Calvert, who I was living with, but I didn't like where he lived, anyway. So I said yes. I was very interested. Peter went out to Ottawa, interviewed me and I got the job, and so off I went, and John came several years later— John was working at CUPE at that time.

CF: [01:05:18] I loved working there. It was a different type of union. I'd been an HEU member, and my sister Dale was also working at HEU, or maybe she started working there a couple of years later. I liked being involved in the health sector for lots of reasons, one of which is just a personal reason—I have diabetes. So health care is important, universal access is crucial. All that, you know, and plus just politically, I would always support public funding and public delivery. And, of course, those are two issues that are always contentious because of the public-private thing and all of that. And at the time in the nineties, the NDP were government, but they made a lot of mistakes like every government does, regardless of stripe. And the biggest mistake is that they didn't listen to us. But there were hospital closures. You know in the nineties, there were hospital closures across the country. And I think in retrospect that was a terrible mistake. The extent of the closures, the layoffs that happened in the health sector at that time. Almost every hospital in Canada did staff layoffs during the 1990s because of the consensus at the political level between the provinces and the federal government that we had to downsize the hospital system. And they literally produced a report called When Less is Better. Can you imagine? And so that provided the impetus to provinces who were faced with high deficits and all that kind of stuff to start downsizing the hospital system. And so, there were lots and lots of fights with the NDP government at that time. HSA was on the front lines of the battle in the lab sector because this big corporation, MDS, was getting a lot of money doing private lab testing in B.C. and that was having a negative impact on lab workers in the hospital system. So there was a huge campaign to redirect traffic into the

hospital system, and there was some support from the hospitals for doing that because it was a revenue generator for the hospitals. So people had their tests done. We did a huge campaign around that. The HEU was really the lead union on a lot of the struggles that were taking place at that time. And Carmela Allevato, who I had known since the seventies, was the head of the Hospital Employees Union at that time. They used to refer to the BC Nurses, HEU, and HSA as the three sisters because there were three female leaders in each of the unions and they were very, very effective during those battles. And one of the outcomes of that struggle was that the government appointed Tony Penikett to basically work out accords with each of the unions to enable the government to downsize, but with respecting the seniority provisions in the collective agreements. That was really important, and I think what they did was they expanded the seniority provision. So it wasn't employer by employer, but provincewide. It enabled some mobility within the province, and they also supported training. For HSA members, that was really important because often when you're a technically skilled person, you are trained by the employer to be skilled on their stuff and the technology that they're using. And if you're out of a job, it's hard sometimes to transfer. So Penikett did a fantastic job. John Calvert also was involved in a lot of that and so that was good.

CF: [01:09:56] The other really good thing that was done under the Clark government—HSA was the lead union on the discussions around the trade agreement with NAFTA [eds: North American Free Trade Agreement] and the agreement on internal trade, those two agreements. We were worried about the impact on our members being able to have their practices, the criteria for being licensed and so forth, harmonized with the United States and seeing a lot of American workers coming to Canada because of our wonderful health-care system and competing for jobs with our members. So that was a legitimate concern, but it wasn't the only one. We were worried about the impact, the negative impact, on universal health care, which the Mulroney government said, No, no, we're going to protect health care. And it turned out that that wasn't quite true. That was one of my jobs while I was there—to sort of lead the research and the efforts around there. And Clark listened to that because there were some really good people. Noel Schachter was one of them, Jim G-O [*eds: Jim Geisbrecht-Otto*], Scott Sinclair, John Calvert. There were really good people who had his ear and so B.C was the first province to say, We are going through and we will list every policy, every regulation, every law that we want spared the full force of the agreement. So there was an effort, which we were involved in, in listing all of the policies and so forth that had to be protected from the full force of the agreement. And all the other provinces were going pooh pooh, that's just ridiculous, you people are just conspiracy theorists and paranoid. And then almost overnight, because there were some things going on in the U.S. along the same lines—the state of Oregon actually started listing. And so, all the other provinces panicked and began listing their exemptions—exceptions is the word, not exemption. And so, that was pretty amazing. That was a real positive thing that came out of the push by the health-care unions for the government, and not just health care, but all of the unions, basically public sector mainly, making sure that the B.C. government was paying attention to what the hell was going on there. And so that was a very positive thing.

CF: [01:12:52] I was at HSA until 1998, or '99, I guess it was '99. And I went on a year deferred-salary leave, and I was asked by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives if I would be interested in writing a book on privatization in health care because of the work I had been doing at HSA. And I was amazed that they were going to pay me to do it. I was really happy to do it. So I wrote a book called Caring for Profit, and the name Caring for Profit came from a report to the Mulroney government that was done by the Fraser Institute, and the report was called Caring for Profit. And it was basically about how you

could provide care for a profit. Can you imagine? And so that was the name of the book. And of course it was understood that that was a negative thing rather than the positive spin that the Fraser Institute put on it. So yeah, I wrote that book and I went back to HSA.

CF: [01:14:02] I was seconded—I wasn't seconded—I went to work for the government for a short time in the premier's office as well, and the premier's office seconded me to the labour ministry because of some legislation, some amendments to the Labour Code that they were doing and they wanted a skilled communications person in there. So I went there and worked with the wonderful, wonderful Marg Arthur, who I really liked a lot, and Dale Lovick was the minister. I could only do eight months in the government. When you're in government, there's only one thing you can say, and that's yes to everything you're told. And I'm just not built that way. So I didn't last very long. I didn't leave in a big huff or anything. I just, you know, didn't want to do it. And so I left and got involved in other things.

KN: [01:15:02] Okay. Well, in the early 2000, you faced some challenging, even life threatening experiences, related to your having had Type 1 diabetes into your life. Can you talk about what happened and in particular, what the outcome of that experience spurred you on to do.

CF: [01:15:21] Well in the mid-nineties, I was switched from animal insulin, which I had used since I was diagnosed in 1969 with Type 1 diabetes. I'd never had any problems at all, ever. I'd hardly ever been sick. I was healthy. I climbed mountains. I was very physically active and obviously politically active. And I never had any problems. But when I switched insulin, that had a very dramatic impact on me. I don't understand it to this day and none of my doctors did either. But I couldn't use it. I just had a full systemic reaction to it that was very debilitating. I was switched in '95. I went into a coma because I was going in and out of coma all the time when I was using that awful insulin. I went back to animal insulin. My doctor said, You're just going to have to bite the bullet. It's not going to be available any longer. And so I went back to the biosynthetic. It's an insulin made with using biotech technology, biotechnology. And so, by 2000, I was pretty much full time on that insulin and my weight dropped. I weighed 88 pounds. I was completely wracked with pain. I couldn't raise my arms. I would be talking on the phone, I'd wake up 3 hours later with the phone on my chest—I'd blacked out. It was just a nightmare, and I obviously couldn't work. I did a little bit of work, but not a lot. I was basically handicapped in a lot of different ways.

CF: [01:17:27] I had this little article I was writing for a newspaper in Toronto on clinical trials in Canada, and my article was about how clinical trials had become big business. And it was the company, MDS, who was sort of making a profit from organizing trials for the pharmaceutical industry in Canada. And I just did a quick Google search to see—I finished the article and wanted to see if there was anything I was missing that maybe I should include. And this article came up. It was a transcript of a speech by a woman in London, England, who described what happened to her daughter when she switched from animal insulin to biosynthetic insulin. And it was almost word for word the experience that I had had, and that every doctor who I'd ever had talked to—and at that time I was seeing a lot of doctors—all of them said, You're the only one, nobody else on the planet had ever experienced this, and so forth. And yet, here this woman was describing her daughter, which had prompted her to organize a group called the Insulin Dependent Diabetes Trust, which represented people, initially people with Type 1 diabetes, who were unable to use biosynthetic insulin. And there were a lot. They estimated in Britain at that time that 20 percent of insulin users could not safely and effectively use biosynthetic insulin. And I was going, what? I was so taken aback. I was hurt also because my doctors had bailed on me.

They just gave up. And I know that they thought that I was doing something wrong. But I wasn't. I was following instructions to the T.

CF: [01:19:29] Anyway, so I started finding out about this thing I had somehow missed. I'm a researcher. I'm a health policy researcher. And how could this have passed me by? I just didn't understand it. And I was really angry. And then my sister, who was working at HEU, told me that one of her coworkers, Kathy Ferguson, had a son, Chris Ferguson, who died in the middle of the night. And this is called—there's a name for it—it's called Dead in Bed Syndrome. And it affects a lot of people who have these problems that I had. And I mean, John hardly got any sleep during this period because he was afraid I would die in the night, right. And so, Dale said, You should talk to her. And it took me a while to get around to doing that because I was so—I couldn't do anything. So the first thing I did was—Tom Kozar from the BC Government Employees Union was a really good friend, one of my best friends, and he also had Type 1 diabetes. And he had an amazing story, which I won't go into. But when he came over, I said, How are you doing on this insulin, this type of insulin? And he said, I don't know, I've never used that insulin. And I said, Well, What do you use? And he said, Oh, I use animal insulin. And I said, What? Where do you get it? And he said, From the drugstore. And I was like, What? And so, as soon as I found that out, I went and switched back to animal insulin. And within just a few months—I had gone into early menopause because my weight was nothing, I was skin and bones. I looked anorexic. And so, that wasn't surprising. But I gained weight. All these pains that I had were gone. My ability to detect low-blood sugar, which is one of the key problems with that insulin—if you can't detect low- blood sugar, you will end up in insulin shock or an insulin coma, which is what was happening to me all the time. And plus, the insulin, even if you can't detect low-blood sugar, with animal insulin, there's a pattern to it, and it's the same every day. It never changes. And so, if you aren't aware of when your blood sugar is dropping and you don't know how the insulin is acting in your body, it's a double jeopardy, so to speak. And so, that was what was happening to me.

CF: [01:22:24] Anyway, I switched back to pork insulin. It was dramatic, the impact that it had on me. I really was amazed. And then, I was really angry. And so, I phoned Cathy, finally, and by this time I had a binder this big with research I had done about anything to do with insulin. And I learned that that there was a class-action lawsuit that had been launched in the U.S. There was a class-action lawsuit, which had been attempted in Britain, and at that time Canada didn't have national class-action laws. In B.C., you could do a class action, but not in all provinces. So, we were just moving in that direction at the time. This is 2001, 2002. But Cathy was very hesitant to talk to me. She was still a grieving mother. So she said, Tell me what you've got, and I'll look at it and if I'm interested, I'll get back to you. And so, about maybe a month and a half later, she called me, and she was very emotional, and said that she had blamed herself for her son's death because he died in the night. I mean, he was in his room by himself. And she got up in the morning to get him up for school and he wasn't alive. And so, of course, she blamed herself. And so, we agreed to meet and we talked and talked and talked and talked and talked.

CF: [01:24:10] Then we went to talk to Erica Johnson at the CBC, who was the director of Marketplace. And Erica knew who I was because I was a research associate with the CCPA [eds: Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives]. And Seth at the time was her husband. And so, she knew who I was and she knew that I wasn't a lunatic that was just making wild accusations. And so, she was interested in the story. And she did a great story on it and interviewed my doctor, Hugh Tildesley, who was very supportive, even though he didn't prescribe animal insulin to people. He thought I was unique. He was one of the doctors who thought I was unique. But he was a good man. And she interviewed

him, and this Swiss doctor. She interviewed all kinds of people, including Kozar, everybody, and did the program. And Kathy and I had said, Give viewers this phone number. We got a 1-800 number that we paid for because we figured we would get phone calls. And that was the most watched program Marketplace had ever broadcast.

CF: [01:25:29] So, there was a lot of interest in it. And we started getting phone calls from across the country. In fact, it was aggravating because every time I picked up the phone, it was somebody who wanted to know more about it and ended my social life. So we put together an organization and we demanded hearings. We wanted the government to conduct hearings about how this could have happened and how—we went through access to information. We got every report of serious adverse drug reactions to insulin that had been filed with Health Canada, and there were a lot. There was a lot of media coverage and we began organizing behind this demand and the Standing Committee on Health—Libby Davies was a huge, huge support of us at that time. The standing committee conducted two days of hearings and as a consequence—and Svend Robinson was the other one, he was the NDP person on the standing committee and Svend and Liddy were fantastic, both of them. I don't know everything that happened because you're not there, you're just there as witnesses so you don't know everything that happens at the standing committee. But they recommended that Health Canada ensure that Canadians had ongoing access to animal insulin because it was obvious that people were being injured. And there was a woman at Health Canada, Julie Hill, who also testified before the committee that these assertions that we were making were real, and so we felt completely validated by that. And the director of what was called at that time the Biologics and Genetic Therapies Directorate, obviously with the support of the health minister, called on the WHO to list animal insulin as an essential medicine on their essential medicines list. And we were one of two countries to do that. And we also continued to have animal insulin available on the market. There were key people that were involved in this. Kozar was one of the people—that guy was a natural-born organizer and he organized all the public sector unions to pass resolutions and write letters. So that was great. But it was these 400 people who were involved in the campaign that did it.

KN: [01:28:10] So I wonder if you could take a few minutes just to tell us a bit about some of the work that you've been doing over the last 10 to 15 years in particular, some of the more satisfying work that you've been doing?

CF: [01:28:22] It's been a great—this century has started off really well for me. Because of my experience with insulin, one of the things I did was to look at the whole area of adverse drug reaction reporting in Canada. At the time, in the earlier 2000s, only doctors and pharmacists and manufacturers could report adverse side effects. And so I joined with a group called Women in Health Protection, which was funded through Health Canada, to provide analysis and advice to Health Canada on policies, pharmaceutical policies that had an impact on women. It was a great organization, not that Health Canada ever listened to a single word we said. But we did a lot of public education and I joined and carved out an area for myself within the organization around adverse drug reaction reporting and the policies that either undermined that or supported it. And it was one of the things I learned is that people who have serious adverse drug reactions know nothing about what to do. They don't know that they should report it, that there's any use in reporting it. And they just don't understand all of the ins and outs of why it's important, why it's absolutely essential that they report side effects that are serious. Not unserious ones necessarily, but serious side effects. And through that work, I co-founded an organization called Pharma Watch with a number of people, including Alan Cassels in Victoria, people from across the country. And Pharma Watch began to do education around

pharmaceutical, specifically pharmaceutical policy, and very focused on ADR reporting and advocating that consumers be able to report directly to Health Canada. And it wasn't only because we were advocating that, but we made a significant contribution to moving Health Canada to enable consumers to report directly, which—consumers reporting on their experience provides a much richer picture of what the experiences than going to a doctor. Most doctors don't report because, well, quite bluntly because they're not paid, they don't do anything they're not paid to do. And if they're not going to get paid to fill out the paperwork for an ADR report, they're just not going to do it. And so it's estimated, at that time it was estimated, that probably 1 to 3 percent of all serious side effects were reported to Health Canada. Now, this has a dramatic impact on policy, right? If they think everything's fine out there in the market, then there's no need for them to do anything. And so, that was also a very, very important protection that we contributed to ensuring happened. So I was really happy about that.

CF: [01:32:04] I also have remained active in the women's health movement and women are often victims of the health- care system and drug companies. They're targets often for drug companies, not just because they buy drugs on their own behalfs, but also because they're the consumer who buys drugs for their children or their spouses or their parents or whoever it is. And so they're a target for the industry. And those experiences really undermine the confidence of women in the health-care system, their trust in the health-care system and so forth. Indigenous people have a different type of experience, but the experience they have undermines their trust and confidence in a system they know is going to screw them. That's basically what happens. So I really liked working with this group of very dynamic women across the country. For the last seven or eight years, we've been involved in campaigning for stronger controls on drug prices in Canada. We've had a good impact in a lot of ways, and unfortunately, we've lost a major battle because the health minister, federal health minister, has basically thrown consumers under the bus. I won't get into it, but it's an ongoing struggle. And so, we've lost this particular struggle. But the war is not over, as they say. But it's really personally satisfying to me. I feel that even talking about it now, some of the things that I've done over the last 20 years, it makes me feel that I've made a good contribution in this arena. And I've also contributed to a number of books, co-authored or authored, or contributed to, several books on the subject of neoliberalism and health care, labour policy in health care, women in pharmaceuticals, basically all in the same arena. And I've been involved in the B.C. Health Coalition, and since 1992 I've consistently been involved with the health coalition and have no plans to leave. I've been the president of the REACH Community Health Centre. I've been on that board since probably 2002 or so, and this is my last term, I hope. But yeah, so I've had a good rich life in the last 20 years.

KN: [01:34:58] Okay. I'm just wondering if there might be anything else you wish to say about your experience in the labour movement throughout, you know, overall, anything else that you want to add?

CF: [01:35:08] Yeah, I always—the labour movement hasn't lived up to its potential. That's my view of it and there's lots of different reasons for it. Weak leadership, conflicting leaderships. Their relationship with the NDP is highly problematic from my perspective. C.S. Jackson and I used to argue all the time about whether or not the trade union movement should be formally affiliated to the NDP, and I argued yes. And I use the U.S. as an example, a negative example. This is what happens when you don't formally affiliate to the NDP, we would be going down that road. And he was completely the opposite. He just really argued, and used his experience as a trade union leader, his experience in the TLC [eds: Trades and Labour Congress], what he felt was a betrayal of the CLC towards

working people who are compromised in favour of their relationship with the NDP, CCF before that. And anyway, he and I just had very contrary views. But in retrospect now, after all these many years, I agree with him. I think that the labour movement doesn't need the NDP as much as the NDP needs the labour movement and that there's way too many compromises with the NDP in order to assure that they'll get elected and that they'll stay in office. I think that's a problem. And the other thing that my experience in the labour movement and everywhere actually—when my father and I had a conversation one time. I was joking with him. My parents never had any wealth at all. And so, I was sort of joking and I said, Well, what are we going to inherit when you die, when you and mom die? And he said, you're going to inherit the struggle. And I remember thinking, well, thanks a lot. But actually, that is the best thing that you can inherit. And this is me now. I'm 70 years old. So, I can look back and say that really is true. This is where you develop the most important relationships in your life. Come through these struggles for something that you believe in, in common with other people. And so, yeah, my dad was right.