

Interview: Sy Pederson (SP)
Interviewer: Phil Legg (PL)
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Transcription: Cathy Walker

PL [00:00:05] Great. Sy, it is so good to see you.

SP [00:00:08] Good to see you, Phillip.

PL [00:00:09] Good to see you. I really want to thank you for being part of this project, because—

SP [00:00:16] I always wanted to see the museum.

SP [00:00:18] It's a long drive. My wife says, you're taking a long time. You won't be home for your nap, will you?

PL [00:00:25] I promise not to keep you that long. What I'd like to do is just talk about your time in the IWA, and, let's start by talking about Sy Pederson in the early years.

SP [00:00:36] Yeah, I was born in 1946. 77 years old now and born into a logging family. My dad was a faller. All of my uncles, his brothers, were fallers. Six of them were fallers, here on the Island, all around the Courtenay area. As long as I can remember, I thought, I'm going to go work in the woods and be a faller. I was 21 when I started falling, and we were on contract then, you know, piecework. I did that for five years. I remember my dad who rode the crummy and caught the crummy at his house. He used to keep the busses there and went to work. How I got falling was, I just kept bugging the bolt buckler because there was no training program. I said 'I'm a faller.' He said, 'Well, how could you be a faller? You're a scaler.' I just bugged the foreman that much, he finally said, 'Okay. You think you're a faller. You start on Monday.' I had to run around, get saws, get ready to go. I was 21 and I went falling. Fortunately they gave me a pretty good setting, but I pounded wedges, I pounded wedges, and I worked. They used to give you a little scale slip, how much scale you made. Riding home, sitting beside my dad. He says. 'So how did you do today?' 'Oh, you know, well.' I didn't want to show him what I got. 'Come on, show me.' I showed him. He said, 'Oh, that's okay.' I did about a third of what they would normally do, but I just stayed with it. Five years later we went on day rate.

PL [00:02:11] Setting wedges, describe that. What's physically going on when you're cutting a tree?

SP [00:02:19] If you can, you follow with the lean, you don't need a wedge. You pick the wrong lean, you got to wedge it. You're falling the tree and it sits back a bit, put the wedges in, wedge it up and fall it with the wedges.

PL [00:02:34] The hazards, because there are many, describe a few of those.

SP [00:02:39] Branches that you don't see hung up in the tree. You always walk up to a tree, you look it over, and see if there's any hazards hanging. Snags are bad because you don't really know until you start cutting it what they're going to do. A green tree, you got to look for windfall, things hanging up in the tree. Mostly that's it.

PL [00:03:01] What about this idea that the tree might split?

SP [00:03:04] If you don't cut it up quickly enough. Unless you got a fast chainsaw, you saw it up. You don't want to leave too much hinging wood. That's when it barber chairs, it kicks out, it starts to fall. There's too much holding wood and it splits and kicks, kicks it out. You're falling the tree here and it'll shoot out a 30 foot piece up in the air, barber chair. You better run your ass off because it's dangerous. That's why the tree starts to go, you don't just stop. You saw it right up till there's only a bit of holding wood. Then it breaks off.

PL [00:03:43] In terms of maintaining the saw, because I'm thinking, that's your saw, you've got to make sure that it's up and ready to go.

SP [00:03:52] I never learned to do much mechanically because you always had a spare saw. If you weren't cutting, especially when you're on piecework, if the saw wasn't working, you weren't making any money. Your saw breaks down, grab another one. A little bit different on a day rate. Sometimes I did do a bit of monkey-wrenching. People used to say there's a big difference in contract work, piecework and day rate, but you wanted the day to go by, you didn't want to just stand around. You kept working. You worked. You didn't do anything differently. It was always a misnomer to hear some rigging guy or somebody say, 'oh yeah, those fallers.' It was like some guys, you just kept working. You worked basically the way you always did.

SP [00:04:37] That was a big strike in '72, illegal strike where we ended up on day rate. I was one of the fallers that said, I wanted a day rate, but I wanted the strike, and I was in opposition big time, to that, because the fallers had a faller society. They wanted to stay on piecework. I said, 'Going on an hourly rate. It's safer. Pay attention, do your job.' I was in support of the strike. After four months and an illegal strike, we got \$84 a day and a 6.5 hour day. We started out in '72. The company came in. I was making about 100 bucks a day, 95 bucks a day for six hours. The company came in and said, 'Oh, we got a deal for you, Sy'. The bargaining committee, 'What's that?' 'Eight hours a day, eight dollars an hour.' I'm not a mathematician, eight times six, what's 64. 'Oh, you want me to take a \$30 a day cut and work an hour and a half or two hours more? Don't think so.' Because we took an illegal strike. Four months later, we went back to work, and it was an illegal strike. It was a big deal for us.

PL [00:05:51] Describe the illegal strike, because this is—

SP [00:05:54] We did it in Jim Kretz's front room, over the kitchen table. We started phoning fallers around the province, and within about a week and a half, we had 1,200 fallers out on strike illegally. The union's saying, 'We're negotiating. Get back to work.' I said, 'No, we're just, we're not working. We won't picket. When you run out of timber, we won't picket. Let the rigging crew work. When they run out of wood, they got to start to come to us.' Well, that took a while. The union, they kept saying, 'Well, you got to go back to work.' We said, 'No, no, we're not going back to work.' Four months later, we agreed to go back to work for, instead of an eight hour day, we had a 6.5 hour day, and we had \$84 a day instead of \$64 a day. The big deal.

PL [00:06:39] That was a big deal. Where you were when you were picked up to—

SP [00:06:52] Marshalling point, marshalling point.

PL [00:06:53] When was that one?

SP [00:06:55] That was the same. Oh, God. When was that, subsequent negotiations that come up? It was a big deal because we had marshalling points established under day rate or under contract work. Then they all went. The company wanted different marshalling points.

PL [00:07:14] You guys, I remember it being described as people would go to the place that they had previously been picked up from and just wait. If it didn't show up, I guess it didn't show up. That was a good—

SP [00:07:31] I remember that strike. I was only, I was 26 years old. We were in the Hotel Vancouver, in the Ritz Hotel across from the M&B building.

SP [00:07:42] It was on Georgia. We could look down on there and say, okay. We were there all the time because we had to hire our own lawyer, Chamberlain, Chamberlain for Harry Rankin. We took up collection and hired our own lawyer because we were always in court for injunctions. I remember, John, old faller, they kept serving injunctions, right? John would come the door. 'John Bodnar here?' 'No, no. Not here.' 'Oh, well.' It was John Bodnar, right? He used to work on cars. One day he was under his car working on the car and the guy says (he could just see his feet) said, 'Hey, John Bodnar.' 'Yeah.' 'John Bodnar, you're served.' He had his cutting torch, he just burned up the summons. Zip.

PL [00:08:37] Gone. I'm impressed by how quickly you were able to organize a strike of fallers across the province.

SP [00:08:46] It was mainly Vancouver Island. In Vancouver Island it was a big deal, but it took a week and a half and we phoned and phoned and phoned and got people out. The fallers' society had meetings and there was a big, there was already an organization of fallers that were plugged in, were aware of all the issues. They were following negotiations. They knew what was going on. Once we decided, April the 17th, we started pulling people out because they'd been negotiating for a while. The companies hadn't moved. They were still the eight hours a day, \$64 a day. They weren't moving so we pulled them out.

PL [00:09:30] Let's talk a little bit about getting organized within the community of Courtenay-Comox and some of your involvement, at both the local and other, labour council.

SP [00:09:43] I was president of the labour council for a while, a couple of years, just a term. Good labour council, they did a lot of community stuff, community work.

PL [00:09:58] There's a huge amount of history in that.

SP [00:10:01] Cumberland. Cumberland's got a great mining history. Ginger Goodwin. There's a movie coming out about him, and it's a big deal. A guy pitched it at the Whistler Film Festival, and it was called 'Ginger.' He's written an hour and a half script, going to produce a film about Ginger, so I'm involved in that. I met with the producer and, going to be involved and come back to you, labour connections. I want to hook in with the labour community about it. I've got to phone him, actually, next week. They're meeting this week with distributors. They've got HBO on board, others. Well, not on board, but they've got meetings with distributors, HBO.

SP [00:10:57] That's what I'm doing now. I'm making films, short films, and writing and directing and acting in them.

PL [00:11:03] I remember you were involved, and we're jumping ahead in terms of chronology. I remember you were involved in a couple of movies.

SP [00:11:12] I wrote one about my granddaughter. calling me a tree killer. My dad in 1957 put in the campsites at Miracle Beach, getting paid a dollar an hour. I was showing Diamond, my granddaughter this, where he worked. I said, 'Oh, your great-grandfather cut these trees. He cut that trail there. She goes, 'Tree killer.' Oh, where'd that come from? She was pissed, right? I love my granddaughter, I said 'Tell me about it.' 'Well, I go to school and we learned about climate change and how important trees are, but Dad builds houses, so we need lumber. I like to read and write and draw, so we need paper. But we shouldn't cut too many trees and we should use what we cut, and we should plant lots of trees.' That's not a bad way to look at that. Ten years go by, COVID hits, I said I'll write a little story about a tree killer, it become a 12 minute film. I phoned her up. I said, 'Diamond, this is what I remember you saying.' 'Oh, Grandpa, that's ten years ago. I don't remember what I said.' She said, 'Write down whatever you want.' That's what I'm doing. That's why I'm a bit enthusiastic about it, because it's my continuation of things that I'm doing now instead of just sitting home and watching TV.

PL [00:12:33] Just back to Courtenay-Comox, lots of labour history in that.

SP [00:12:37] Lots of and good involvement. We've had a great labour council for years. Steelworkers involved, IWA, the Fishermen's Union, public sector and good turnouts and always organized there. They got strike committees and things. There's a strike going on, they're there to support the strike.

PL [00:13:00] It varies from town to town. An awful lot of it is personalities. When it clicks, it's powerful stuff. It's good to see.

SP [00:13:12] You stay away from the politics and the egos and try to say, look, we're all in this together. We're all trying to organize. We're all trying to make a better world, and put aside. You're going to always have some differences between unions but if it doesn't impact on the overall aspect of a union, then set that aside and agree to work on something specific. Don't get bogged down in 'Wait a minute, what about that?' 'No, that's nothing to do with what's going on now.' How many angels are going to dance on the head of a pin? Oh, wait a minute, no, no. Not relevant. Not relevant.

PL [00:13:53] Let's jump ahead a bit and talk about some of your experiences in terms of being part of broader provincial bargaining, because I know that was—

SP [00:14:05] It was 1986, first contract. I remember, maybe you remember differently, but I remember going into the Hotel Vancouver or wherever it was and trying to find where I was going to sit. I had all my binders and things. I was kind of looking around and where I'm going to sit. I don't know who led it off. It was Jack or Keith Bennett, but Keith Bennett said, 'We're out of here.' Jack said, 'We're out of here. This is bullshit.' What happened at the last meeting, which I knew nothing about, and I was still trying to find a place to sit down. They blew us out of the room. We cooled our heels at the Chateau Granville for three or four days before somebody, you know back room stuff, and got back at the table. That was my first negotiations.

PL [00:14:47] That was a momentous strike.

SP [00:14:50] Yes. Where it culminated was down here. We were at the BC Fed Convention, just jumping ahead a bit. There was Schon Timber. There was, we phoned— Ken Cottini and I, my vice-president, were on the phone, the pay phone at the PNE and we were phoning people from Port Hardy, Port McNeill, Gold River, wherever, said, 'Look.' 'Well, we don't have any money.' 'Steal some gas, get in your car, go there because this is going to break the strike. We got to get lots of people there, tons of people there. Find out a way to steal a car, whatever, you know, and go down there.' That pretty well broke that strike.

PL [00:15:31] Let's set the context for people who are going to be watching this. The strike is over what issue?

SP [00:15:40] Contracting out, big deal. Contracting out.

PL [00:15:43] It's not like we want, 50% wage increase.

SP [00:15:46] No, forget about the money. It was trying to save our jobs. We'd seen the Interior go lose all their loggers, not all the loggers, but the great, great majority. They didn't deal with it for whatever reasons. We said, hey, wait a minute. That's happening here. That's going to happen here. And, Munro and we took it on.

PL [00:16:09] As well, the pulp industry had already settled. In many respects, the industry had already figured out we're locked and loaded when it comes to money. Let's talk a little bit about the tactics that the provincial bargaining committee decided to deploy.

SP [00:16:30] Oh, my gosh, they had...

PL [00:16:33] Selective strike.

SP [00:16:34] Selective strike. Great in theory, great in theory. Should be able to pull it off when you've got large companies that are so integrated and not knowing. Great in theory. We did our best. Did our best. Did our get our best with it. Good idea. Did our best with it.

PL [00:17:00] It didn't crack them?

SP [00:17:01] No.

PL [00:17:04] The selective strike was we've got all of these operations on the coast that are on strike. We will go one by one to companies and say to them, if you're prepared to do this and prepared to do that, you can go back to work.

SP [00:17:19] Yeah. Generally, it was okay. There's always issues with it, but in hindsight, it was not the worst strategy in the world.

PL [00:17:34] The problems that emerged from selective strike, describe some of those.

SP [00:17:40] Just the lack of understanding and from the trade union consciousness about what you were trying to do. People seeing people going to work, and they're at

home. That was a constant battle to deal with that. People pissed off about somebody working. I've been on strike for three months. What's going on here?

PL [00:18:04] My neighbour is still making car payments. I'm going to put the dates on here. It's July that everybody hits the street. We're now back into August. September? When things start to—

SP [00:18:28] I remember being at the BC Fed convention. The BC Fed convention was always the end of November, last week or so in November.

PL [00:18:38] Pressure is building as you work your way into the fall. As well, there's a number of mediation efforts that are underway. Each one of those, you have to sort of deal with them and harvest what you can from whatever the mediators say. The first one was the judge.

SP [00:19:01] Boy, I wish I would — I didn't do my homework.

PL [00:19:06] What was his name, the judge? He was a nice old man. Hudson or something like that.

SP [00:19:13] Hutchinson?

PL [00:19:15] Hutchins? Much to our surprise, because he was the first, I think he came out with a report in like September, let's say.

SP [00:19:28] Yeah, I'm really foggy on this stuff, I haven't thought about him for a long time.

PL [00:19:34] There was a key paragraph or two in which he said, basically, when it comes to contracting out, this is a legitimate issue, they've got a legitimate beef. That sort of put some wind in our sails but then it started to splinter again. Now we're at this moment when you're describing what happened with Schon Timber. Go through the details of that.

SP [00:20:07] It just shut everything, shut that place down tight. They couldn't get anything in. There was a massive, the working class, if you will, massed up and showed how serious the issue was and they were going to be involved.

PL [00:20:21] Why was it sort of tactically important? It's down on the waterfront, right?

SP [00:20:29] Yeah, they were sending out timber, which was going to be one less place was going to be able to send out timber if we shut them down because they got injunctions. We said screw the injunctions. Up till that point, people had honoured injunctions. We're not honouring injunction. We're going to get enough people there. We're just not going. We're not leaving.

PL [00:20:50] More is better than less.

SP [00:20:51] Done deal and we were serious. Serious.

PL [00:20:56] I can remember reading that there were all sorts of stories that come out of that. Just the fact that as you described it, bring everybody you can, bring everything you

can. Get here as soon as you can. It's neat. The effect of that was it kind of sent a shockwave back through the industry.

SP [00:21:15] Yeah. Oh yeah. That was the first real mass protest.

PL [00:21:25] At this point I'm going to guess the government who have been watching from afar and industry are saying these guys are prepared to ignore injunctions big time.

SP [00:21:38] They got nothing to lose. The people that are still surviving are surviving, but there's been already a lot of casualties and the others that are, they're just not going to cave in.

SP [00:21:52] Sorry. I know I'm all over the map here. I talked about my granddaughter, and —

PL [00:21:59] That's kind of what's neat about labour history is it's all over the map. It has anything and everything in it. The other thing that I always remember about the '86 strike was, in a sense, it was a revival for Munro because he had been beat up pretty good over the Solidarity.

SP [00:22:24] Jack was a wonderful guy. He made his farewell tour. He phoned me up when he was sick. He took Norm Garcia and I out for lunch, and we went to the golf course at Courtenay.

SP [00:22:43] He said, 'Sy, remember the time I told you you had your head on upside down?' 'I remember, Jack.' 'You got so pissed off at me.' 'Yeah, because you were insulting me. 'Yeah,' but he said, 'I told you then and I'll tell you again. I just meant you had a beard and you were bald and so it was nothing about your intellect or anything else. You were sharp guy.' 'Yeah, I know Jack, I apologized then I'll apologize now.' He laughed, he was a good guy.

SP [00:23:15] The revival is a good point because he was so pissed off. He said the only guy that would stand up and say, look, the Solidarity of '83, all that was falling apart. He said, 'All these other union guys were ducking for cover. Kube got sick, all that stuff. The only guy that could go up there and deal with that was me and who would have the support of his membership, so on behalf of these guys, I did it. Then too many of them were saying, oh yeah, Munro's a sell out.' I don't want to debate the finer points of all that, all the big politics of it. I just want to state that personal, how bad he felt because of what he was, how he was set up for that. He said, goddamn it, then they sit back and say oh Munro did this.

PL [00:24:06] What I remember of that strike was by the end of August, the strike fund was gone.

SP [00:24:14] We borrowed lots of money, but we paid it back. Everybody paid it back. Millions and millions of dollars.

PL [00:24:24] The labour movement came through.

SP [00:24:28] Yeah. Big time, big time.

PL [00:24:32] Nobody blinked. I remember Jack saying, I think we borrowed something like —

SP [00:24:38] 10 million, \$10, \$15 million.

PL [00:24:41] All of it on the basis of a handshake.

SP [00:24:43] Yeah. Which is crazy.

PL [00:24:46] I know, I love it. Only in the labour movement could you pull off something like that.

SP [00:24:52] Yeah, a handshake was good to go.

PL [00:24:57] Let's just go to this thing of he had been somebody who had been vilified by some, and that strike seemed to be...

SP [00:25:07] Put some wind in his sails.

PL [00:25:10] It was tremendous. I also remember too, there was at that time there was a provincial election right in the middle of it.

SP [00:25:21] Yeah.

PL [00:25:22] Vander Zalm went to the people and he tried to pull off a stunt where he was going to intervene and be the mediator in the election. He called you all out to Richmond.

SP [00:25:40] Yeah. Okay. I don't remember that.

PL [00:25:44] In Richmond, he was going to shuttle back and forth between the—

SP [00:25:49] The bosses and the...

PL [00:25:50] Yeah, and somehow pull a rabbit out of a hat. It never happened, but famously, at one point, Munro said to Vander Zalm when he came in to report that he was having problems with the industry, Munro said, 'Well, you just have to tell them that's not acceptable.' He said, 'How do I do that, Jack?' He said, 'You're the fucking premier.' Which I just thought—

SP [00:26:26] It's not hard to say no.

PL [00:26:28] You're wrong. Say no. It was a baptism by fire in terms of being involved in —

SP [00:26:40] Negotiations.

PL [00:26:43] Did you stay involved? From that point on how active were you?

SP [00:26:48] Well, I was the president from '86 to 2003.

PL [00:26:57] What did you see in terms of big changes once the BC Liberals took over in 2001, when Gordon Campbell came in?

SP [00:27:09] It just made it tougher. Tougher, everything. I can't name them all, but everything just got tougher. There wasn't the support. Couldn't phone up people, couldn't deal with things direct. You try to arrange a meeting. You didn't arrange a meeting. Nobody would talk to you.

PL [00:27:32] Since the early 2000s, there's been a lot of consolidation going on in the industry. What sort of an impact has it had on the Island here?

SP [00:27:47] I don't really know that much. I've been out of it for 20 years and I haven't kept up on it.

PL [00:27:56] It's not as though the Island all of a sudden became an economic wasteland.

SP [00:28:00] No. I'm sorry. People are involved. People are dealing with things. There are still union members are going to meetings. They're involved. They've got their grievances. They got everything. Nothing changed that way, on the ground. It's still. There's the employer and there's the workers. There's the working class and the employer class. Not to put too fine an old red point on it, but that's the conflict. That's the contradiction. We make the money for them. We want some of back.

SP [00:28:31] Have I got time to tell you my retained earnings story? I used to study financial sheets. I noticed that there was retained earnings and it came out of, it should have been in the profits section, but it was considered an expense, go to the expense side of the ledger for future use. I said what about this retained earnings? Well that's money we made but it's an expense because we're going to spend it later. The more money they made the more retained earnings they had because they're going to spend it later. Some of that's legitimate. I don't question that, involve, build a new plant or whatever. I said, 'Well, you made that money this year. Why don't you spend some on workers? Not a big percentage, but enough to cover what we're asking for.' Not a big deal? I would bring that up, retained earnings. Keith Bennett was head of FIR. One day he just got pissed off hearing that all the time about retained earnings. He said we've got a big room there and we just throw it up in the air. I go in there, I throw the money all around, retained earnings. I got a plaque from the lawyer, Lloyd Doidge. Does that show up on the screen?

SP [00:29:53] He gave me this plaque, said, 'This is a key, Sy, to the retained earnings because we go in there and we just play around with the money.' He was a great guy. Lloyd worked for FIR, good lawyer. He wasn't hard enough. I don't think he was tough enough for the industry. He was just a great guy. That's my retained earnings.

PL [00:30:15] The key to the kingdom.

SP [00:30:17] I never got in that room, though. I tried the key. Key wouldn't work. Set me up.

PL [00:30:23] Set you up for failure. The industry itself is kind of broken apart, like FIR isn't a force.

SP [00:30:33] I guess I'm asking you the question. There's a lot of different units now, right? There is an FIR?

PL [00:30:40] It's barely there. I think it has a dental plan or something like that. There's a couple of people.

SP [00:30:47] This has inspired me to get back and study what's going on with the unions. We're part of it. I'm just busy making movies, writing the script.

PL [00:31:02] In many ways it's not a surprise because they had for 16 years, the industry basically had a field day with a government that was prepared to cut them all sorts of slack, Gordon Campbell. They used to call it the pertinency clause.

SP [00:31:20] Yeah. We got no sawmills in Courtenay. We just had one sawmill but it employed 158 people, been there since the '40s, early '40s, right downtown on the river, it was a great place. No pertinency clause and it's gone. They built mills, took that money and built mills in the States, not even somewhere else in the province, but in the States. Shut it down. No pertinency.

PL [00:31:47] The minute the government came in and said, you know what? That's a piece of red tape. We're going to get rid of it.

SP [00:31:53] Red tape.

PL [00:31:55] Feel free to do whatever the hell you want.

SP [00:31:57] Yeah. Oh and by the way, we don't have a lot of people in the Forest Service, so you just administer yourself. We'll write some, still some good laws on the books about sustainability, just different things, you guys just look after it.

PL [00:32:11] We'll take your word for it.

SP [00:32:12] Take your word for it.

PL [00:32:17] Those kinds of changes really make a big difference in terms of how things are changing. Let's talk a little bit about IWA and the support that has been so longstanding for the NDP because I know that that was a big part of what we did. The work that we were always promoting, to get our members to vote NDP.

SP [00:32:44] It's the best alternative.

PL [00:32:47] You worked hard.

SP [00:32:49] I ran for the Communist Party, three federal elections. I proudly took my 300 votes. I was purer than the driven snow, but that's not how it works. I learned. I'm independent now. I'm independent. Somebody said, 'You can't be an Independent, that's in the States.' I said, 'No, no, I'm independent.'

PL [00:33:13] That's good. On Vancouver Island, especially in your part of the world, the NDP always had a strong representation.

SP [00:33:19] Yes. We've got good MLAs, good MPs. We've got a great, they're good people and solid organization. Get the vote out, there'd be lots of volunteers. Things work along well that way.

PL [00:33:38] It's really important. I remember when I first started with the IWA, this idea of, it's one thing to bargain a collective agreement, it's another thing to make sure that it's surrounded by laws that support collective bargaining.

SP [00:33:53] Exactly.

PL [00:33:55] You've got to have the people in the right place to make that. My recollection goes to Dave Barrett but, I guess prior to that, there's all sorts of other people that played a crucial role in promoting that.

SP [00:34:11] Yeah, in 1972, Dave Barrett got elected and...

PL [00:34:17] Gave us the labour board. I mean the labour code.

SP [00:34:22] The labour code.

PL [00:34:24] Gone were the days of the injunction and all that kind of stuff. That was a sea change. Let's talk about where you see the labour movement in the future. Let's think of some things that we could be doing better at.

SP [00:34:43] Organizing. You've to get boots on the ground, so to speak. You can't do enough organizing. Get away from the egos of people and get them involved in community work. People should be involved in community work year round in organizing, not just at election time. Oh, my God, we got an election. People get involved 30 days. I've done my thing. Get involved. Council of Canadians meetings. I'm a member of Council of Canadians on the ground in Courtenay. Just get people involved in organization, get to know the people and organize. Get people organizing. Spend money on organizing.

PL [00:35:35] There's a gap there. If you can't be doing the organizing, then you're gonna find yourself with just that much less power. When it comes to organizing, is there different ideas around, what's the most effective strategy? Your point would be for community-based organizing is the platform that you want to build from?

SP [00:36:03] Yeah. You got to be precise about what your demands are. Coming back to me running as a red, you can't have your policies way out here and people going, 'Huh? What the hell are you talking about?' Organizing, if you get too carried away—find out what people need, find what people want. Don't make it too grandiose. They're smart people. They want to get organized because they want to improve their job situation. Find out what will improve their job situation, be specific and focus on that. Don't go off crazy about we're going to— and don't make any promises you can't keep. Oh, we're going to get you something. You are going to get what you get. If you organize, you become solid and you make demands and you stick with it, you're going to gain something, but it's up to you to stay with it. Nobody's going to offer it to you without a struggle, without a fight, so be prepared to fight for it. If you're not prepared to fight, don't organize.

PL [00:37:05] Well said. Boom! That's a mic drop, man, right there. I remember lots of people would talk about the hardest. It's easy to go on strike. It's harder to get people back from a strike.

SP [00:37:26] That's a big decision to go on strike.

PL [00:37:29] It's back to this thing of, if you think that you've promised something to people and you can't deliver that something.

SP [00:37:38] As long as you're honest with them. As long as you're straight up, and you can't deliver at some point, that's okay because you can go to them and say, hey, you did your best. We're not going to make it. We've got to go back to work or whatever, whatever we're taking. The honesty is really important because they'll be pissed off. They'll say, 'You know, Sy, you goddamned—.' 'No, no, we were straight up from the beginning on how it was going to work.' Didn't work? Hey, but on you, you guys did it. You got your contract.

PL [00:38:13] Back to this thing of not letting ego get in the way.

SP [00:38:16] Exactly. Exactly. I learned that the hard way. I got beat up.

PL [00:38:26] You were pilloried at the local union meeting for what?

SP [00:38:30] Oh, I don't know, nothing in general. You get carried away, make some stupid speech and then get called out, whatever, not to put too fine a point on it.

PL [00:38:43] Life goes in ebb and flow. The flow part hurts. It's good. I think we're done.

SP [00:38:54] Did I ramble off to different places too much?

PL [00:38:56] No, this is exactly what we wanted.

SP [00:38:58] Hey, thank you. I really looked forward to doing it.