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Transcribed by Donna Sacuta

Dan Radford [00:00:00] Just to go back to the setting up of the Federation, and that was done in 1944. The call went out and at that particular time, I was President of the Mine Workers Union in Nanaimo, when the call come. Of course, which I objected to personally feeling that there was going to be another Communist front and we wanted no part of it. I was sent as a delegate to hold a watch and brief to see what it was. At that particular time I was approached to run for office against Harvey Murphy and was defeated by four votes. O'Brien was elected as the President, which more or less give the fair label stamp on because he was a CCL (Canadian Congress of Labor) director. I could never say that O'Brien was a member of the Communist Party, but I think that they had something on him, and he more or less had to toe the line.

Interviewer [00:01:26] They call them, what do they call them? Fellow travelers?

Dan Radford [00:01:29] Yeah. Yeah.

Interviewer [00:01:32] What about Pritchett?

Dan Radford [00:01:33] Pritchett was a member of the Community Party. The build up from there was that the Congress controlled it because the executive, Harold Pritchett got the full-time secretary's job and of course this went on. The Canadian Congress of Labor at that time did want to clean up this mess because we had quite a number of the large organizations which were Communist controlled, such as the IWA (International Woodworkers of America), Mine Mill (International Union of Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers), UE (United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America), were all within our organization. Our Labour Council was controlled by the Communist Party. Ed Leary was the president. John Turner was the secretary. Now some of these I could not vouch whether they were Communist, such as John Turner, but at least they went down the line. Ed Leary, there was no question.

Interviewer [00:02:43] What happened when Dan O'Brien became President of the Fed? Did he resign his post immediately?

Dan Radford [00:02:50] No, no. The president of the Federation has never been a full-time job, the same as it is today. It's more or less of an honorary position. The only full-time job of the Federation was the same as it is today, a full-time secretary. This went along, of course there was quite a move within the IWA what they call the white bloc to start to eliminate the Communist control of the organization. It stems back where Pritchett and some of these people can't even go across the line. They were stopped from going across the line at that particular time. This white bloc was becoming pretty powerful within the organization. I think—

Interviewer [00:03:45] Within the IWA?

Dan Radford [00:03:46] Within the IWA I was speaking, because the IWA in the days of the old CCL practically controlled the Federation because they were the larger organization, they seated more delegates, and of course, this was one other problem. The big move come when Pritchett made the cessation movement from the International. This is when it all started from there. By this time, Danny O'Brien was not the regional director of organization for the old CCL. He got in trouble. He was up— [recording is interrupted]

Dan Radford [00:04:41] I haven't got the date for the damn thing [unclear]

Interviewer [00:04:52] [unclear]

Dan Radford [00:04:58] One thing another.

Interviewer [00:05:01] Well, tell me, Grant McNeill suggested that management at this time used the dissension within the IWA to agitate for Bill 39. Would you say that management used [recording is interrupted].

Dan Radford [00:05:28] There's no argument the guy was guilty, my own personal opinion.

Interviewer [00:05:32] Yeah, sure. Right. But I mean, could management.

Dan Radford [00:05:35] I don't want this put in.

Interviewer [00:05:37] No, no. This won't be, it's irrelevant.

Dan Radford [00:05:41] The point is, you understand, that it has a bearing on the history of the Federation. As you go through this, while O'Brien was no longer with the Canadian Congress of Labour, he still retained the presidency of this Federation. Of course, when the split come he naturally supported Pritchett and this meant then that we had to get rid of O'Brien. What happened was that the—and I had to look this one up because bloody marked. Oh it will be back here.

Interviewer [00:06:33] Was the white bloc as active in the Fed as it was in the IWA?

Dan Radford [00:06:40] More in the IWA, oh yes.

Interviewer [00:06:40] That was the key to the solution to the problem, I guess, because the Fed was telling—

Dan Radford [00:06:47] Right, because until you've cleaned out the IWA, then you're never going to get control over the Federation. This has quite a bearing on getting control of the Federation and taking it out of the hands, because when they pulled the cessation movement within the IWA and threw all the IWA Commies or fellow travelers out. The IWA in coming back and reorganizing were able to put in all good people, so all of the

delegates were good delegates. We didn't have—and I was going to get that because it's in here. I had the bloody thing marked, there's so much stuff, of course this is all— In '46 is when the rumour was, of this here. Bill 49 didn't come into being 'til 1947.

Interviewer [00:08:04] Bill 39.

Dan Radford [00:08:04] Bill 39 and this was the first restrictive labour—then we had the hours of work, a lobby to reduce the hours of work from 48 to 44 to 40. Out of that come this here, of course, there was quite a controversy with the CCF (Co-operative Commonwealth Federation) and the Labor Progressive Party at that time. Bill 39 didn't come into effect until 1947. This is the time that O'Brien got in trouble because it has quite a history to it. When he was picked up, I got a phone call at about 10:30 at night to come down and bail him out of jail. I had no idea what it was about, but Bill 39, we were lobbying at that time. I thought that the thing was over this Bill 39, and I went down to get him out of jail. I got into quite an argument with the police officer for one thing or another, and there was a staff sergeant, Dave Fuhr, was the desk sergeant and I know him very well, I went to school with him. He could see I were crazy; I didn't know what the hell I was talking about. He called, went outside. He said to me, "Say do you know what this man has been charged with?" [unclear] said, "So what?" [laughter] [recording is interrupted]

Dan Radford [00:10:09] The guy, in my opinion was guilty, although he was cleared. On the first count, I forget what it was, how many months he got hard labor. But he appealed, and on the appeal, he won the appeal. In the finding, the old fellow's dead now, he said while there were some doubt in his mind, he was giving him the benefit of the doubt. He got cleared of that. There was all kind of history follows after that. He was up again for kidnapping.

Interviewer [00:10:41] Kidnapping? My goodness.

Dan Radford [00:10:45] Smart guy. He had a hell of a lot of ability. I never took that away from the guy. He had that quirk.

Interviewer [00:10:53] Was he married?

Dan Radford [00:10:57] Oh yeah, [unclear] has a history which I would never divulge. I have a research job [unclear] the Congress, it was quite a story. I had a copy of it, I wouldn't leave it in the office. I had it locked away. A few years ago. It wasn't anybody's business. He was married, he had four children, he come out from the east out here. [unclear]. Then, of course, with this lobby in Victoria, when Harvey Murphy made the statement against Mosher and these people, this again expelled Mine Mill from participating. By eliminating this one way or another we were able to take control of the Federation. That took place when—and it's in here if I can find the goddamned thing—this is the important part of it.

Interviewer [00:12:02] That first lobby to the Cabinet, you say was in '47 the same year that—.

Dan Radford [00:12:06] This was when the whole. No, we made a presentation from 48 hour, 44, or 40 hour. Before, but the big lobbies were in '47 against Bill 39 which was combined lobbies with the TLC (Trades and Labor Congress) and the CCL, the Federation.

Interviewer [00:12:32] What was this about Harvey Murphy? When he did what? He was expelled, you said?

Dan Radford [00:12:38] That's all in here if I kind find [Reading] "Labor scores again. Vancouver Labor Council calms down. We're told Tuesday night that they have been trying to get thrown out of the CCL" and it goes on. Must be before this one. Here you see, in November. "O'Brien quits BC Federation of Labor." This is when O'Brien got out. The next president was Bill Stewart of the Boilermakers. You got that.

Interviewer [00:13:18] This is November of '48.

Dan Radford [00:13:20] Yes, November '48. When he got out and Bill Stewart, being the First Vice President stepped up into the presidency. So actually, in the whole thing of the Federation there was only three presidents from its inception, with Danny O'Brien, Bill Stewart and then myself. I was in there for about five or six years. I haven't got the records on that. The reason O'Brien had to get out was because he went with Pritchett and these people and the Federation would support the IWA. That convention that we had, that's the one I'm looking for, is when we broke the back of the thing. You must have all of these anyhow. The vote was so close. It was 65-66, all in that neighbourhood. That's when George Home defeated Pritchett by one vote, and we got the main job, which was the secretary. Then we got control of the executive. I had the bloody thing. I read all these, they were kind of fascinating for me to go over them again. Then, of course, you have the records up to the time that we went into the merge.

Dan Radford [00:15:07] This is by Jack Webster. [reading] "Columnist rips" You can, you want this?

Interviewer [00:15:12] I'd like to have it.

Dan Radford [00:15:13] You take this, because the whole thing starts right from here. [reading] "At a banquet speech in Victoria last Thursday brought them a resolution of official censure Tuesday by 66 to 55 vote of the Vancouver Labor Council."

Interviewer [00:15:31] Then Pritchett and who else were censured?

Dan Radford [00:15:35] No, Harvey Murphy.

Interviewer [00:15:38] Harvey Murphy and?

Dan Radford [00:15:38] Yes. Actions of Harvey Murphy and Harold Pritchett. Then they sent out this Bill Mahoney, who is now the director of the Steelworkers. You got that?

You'll find his name in here. Well, he was sent out for that specific purpose, to organize, to eliminate these people. He was sent out. He was out here two years. Him and I worked together. I was director of organization at that time. If you start from here, you'll start from about April of '48 and this is when it all started.

Interviewer [00:16:19] That goes right up until—

Dan Radford [00:16:21] Until the split in the IWA and the expulsion of them up to the CCL convention where Murphy was thrown out. Right through. This will give you a better history of how it all started. Had Pritchett, in my opinion, never made the move he ever did, I don't think it have ever got rid of him. By the move he made, he made the one false move was when he pulled this cessation movement. The funny part about this was the night that this was made, I was going to do a broadcast right after this come out. I was sitting there. I could hear it coming in about this cessation movement. I was quite interested in, and then waited for Prichett to come out. In them days they didn't do too much of this kind of work [unclear]. It was a cut tape, it wasn't a live one. The theory was that this was all done even before the board meeting or anything else. It was all cut and dried, the plate was taped and everything else. I was there and went on a 15-minute broadcast right after he'd made this cessation movement on a Sunday night. This was when it all started. The Canadian Labour Congress did throw all its resources into this fight. I went on loan to the IWA and took charge of the Vancouver Island, the upper part, because they had no organization, they had nothing. They just took everything out, all of the positions, the sub-locals, every union was controlled. When they took everything out, they also took the records. You walked into an office, I went into the Duncan office, Local 1-80. All that was left in there was a phone and a dirty ashtray. That's all that was in the office, no records, no files, no nothing. It took organizing to bring it back, it didn't take too long, actually. A lot quicker than I thought it would be because it wasn't my first go into this kind of business. The United Mine Workers and the split in 1925 with the Mine Workers Union of Canada which went for about six or seven years before it finally healed and got back together again. I visioned it would have been a tougher fight, but the mistakes made by the opposing faction, Pritchett and these people is what helped, had taken the money and put it in the hands of Mine Mill and all these people.

Interviewer [00:19:23] At this time Harvey Murphy was with the Mine Mill?

Dan Radford [00:19:28] Yeah, they were out of the Congress.

Interviewer [00:19:30] They were expelled?

Dan Radford [00:19:32] Yeah. We had, I had photostatic copies here of a \$25,000 cheque by [unclear] and I give them all to Steel when they were in the fight with Sudbury. I had them all. Photostatic copies of where they turned this money over.

Interviewer [00:19:50] What were they expelled, the Mine Mill workers.

Dan Radford [00:19:54] Now, it's in here. I think it was '49 or '48 convention. It's in here.

Interviewer [00:20:07] What was the reason given?

Dan Radford [00:20:10] They had been expelled once before. There's no argument about that because as I said before, the minute they couldn't seat delegates that cut it down. That's how we got George Home in by one vote. Murphy was suspended at that time at this particular convention.

Interviewer [00:20:47] Otherwise you wouldn't have—.

Dan Radford [00:20:48] Oh no, we wouldn't have done it. We couldn't have done it. I mean, it was 66 to 65.

Interviewer [00:20:57] Just briefly, could you run over the unions whose delegates were with you and those who were against? You had swung the IWA by that time, but the Mine Mill were still against you.

Dan Radford [00:21:15] Eventually Mine Mill was thrown out too.

Interviewer [00:21:19] Yeah, I'm sure, but I mean, take those 60 votes, 60 you said to 60?

Dan Radford [00:21:26] 65 to 66 is when George Home got in.

Interviewer [00:21:30] What unions were among the 65?

Dan Radford [00:21:33] It was pretty well the same ones. Here's what happened. Harvey Murphy couldn't sit there since the suspension. Harvey Murphy's last years, first vice president and former Communist labour leader, was not eligible for re-election because of his two-year suspension from the CCL, so he was up. So that would have made it one more. Then, of course, by this time the IWA, while we say that the IWA controlled them all, it's not true because New Westminster, 357, because here you see—

Interviewer [00:22:19] Fred [unclear].

Dan Radford [00:22:19] Fred wasn't there, he was in the loggers' local. Stew Alsbury, George Mitchell and these people, you see. First vice president, William Stewart, Marine Workers and Boilermakers defeated Pen Baskin, Steelworkers 66 to 65. He got the extra vote there, Stewart did. The second vice president, Stewart Alsbury, IWA New Westminster, beating Alex McKenzie, Oil Workers, 66-65 with one vote difference. I run against O'Brien. [Reading] "Head rep voting marked the fight for opposition. Final line-up of officers was President Danny O'Brien re-elected, defeating Danny Radford, Regional Director of CCL 68-64." There was four votes different in that one because of O'Brien. When it come down to the others then of course, "Secretary George Home defeating Pritchett, 66-65 by one vote." This was all hinging on this one vote.

Interviewer [00:23:38] So then the Steelworkers were Communists?

Dan Radford [00:23:41] No.

Interviewer [00:23:43] They had enough to vote against you.

Dan Radford [00:23:48] The Steelworkers had some Communists in there. I'm not saying our other locals were clean. You understand what I mean? You maybe had one or two delegates out of five or six that went along with Commie slate, you see what I'm trying to get at. The big thing here was this was the breaking of the backs because we got control of the full-time job of secretary. We got control of the executive. Then Pritchett, when he got defeated for the secretary's job, he run for the executive and was elected to the executive. When he pulled this move, he was automatically out because it was outside the CCL. Of course, then there was a lot of shenanigans in this thing here, I mean, it wasn't all so cut and dry because they wanted to call a meeting which Home and these guys wouldn't go along with O'Brien and them called a rump meeting. Pretty hard to go into it now, but there was all kinds of—

Interviewer [00:24:58] I got all that from Grant McNeill. Could you give me some idea of, say, the strength of the Communists in the individual unions? How strong would you say that there were in the Steelworkers?

Dan Radford [00:25:13] Not too strong, but Mine Mill, well, you've got to look at it in this light. Even in the IWA, you understand, it doesn't say that the IWA rank and file were Communists because they were a hell of a long way from it. But, they had control in other words. All the key jobs in the IWA, Dalskog, Pritchett, all these people [unclear], all these people were Commies and they controlled, and somehow kept in the top. It's like the old saying, they were doing a pretty fair job for the workers so they could care less whether they're Communist or what the hell they are. It's the same way with Harvey Murphy's outfit. This is what happened.

Interviewer [00:26:15] But on the delegates' level, on the leaders' level, how did you look at that particular meeting? Were there unions you just couldn't count on and other unions you were sure?

Dan Radford [00:26:27] We had one guy that was in our camp was giving us the ballot box. I'm not going to name names, that wouldn't be fair, but we knew. This is where this Party thing was coming up. We had it figured out what we should take these seats by. We knew that we should be by around two votes. We knew damn well that we weren't going to take it by a landslide or anything. We had our suspicions of one individual. In this game you got to use all kinds of ways and means to find out how the hell who's doing this. We had our suspicions. So the tellers who collect the ballots, collected this fellow's last. It was folded up, but it was right on top. Well, before it got to them, we grabbed this ballot and we found out he was a bloody traitor. He was the guy because we had his ballot. It was supposed to be secret, but it wasn't. He put it on the top. The instructions were, "Watch that ballot." You usually dump them all on the table. But the guy picked it off and dumped.

Then in the interim, the wife of this guy, "well, look, you better get in line." We might just tell him, "We know damn well you're not doing right." That guy is still working today.

Dan Radford [00:27:57] You can see what it was like in those days. You go to convention, hell you were scared to go to the toilet or something else, or somebody had to go to work. You're afraid to lose by one vote. I would say it was right up to that time. It wasn't 'til '49, then we went along and we had not too much problem. We did eliminate [unclear] and we had a pretty clean organization.

Interviewer [00:28:39] Tell me, to what extent were the other unions that voted under Communist leadership? Some were free of Communist leadership, I'm sure. Others weren't. So could you just name a few that were free and others that—

Dan Radford [00:28:56] You see, you didn't have in the old CCL, where they had a lot of small locals because we issued charters. We had Oil Workers. We could produce in the Oil Workers the biggest bulk for the White Bloc, let me put it that way. You could produce them. We knew that there were a few in there. Then you had Vancouver Trunk and Bag (Vancouver Trunk and Bag Industrial Workers). You had Nanaimo laundry workers. You had a lot of small locals that you could rely on. The miners you could pretty well rely on. That is our local. Nanaimo or Cumberland North. You couldn't say that everyone was clean. You could maybe have three delegates. You might get one voting for the Party. So you couldn't say even in the Steelworkers because they had people in the Steelworkers' locals that were voting for the Commies that were not Communist. You couldn't say, "Well, this was clean, that was clean." In the Packinghouse Workers for instance, which we would call a clean local, some of the locals were electing somebody who would go down the line with the Party. So you couldn't say that they were Communists, it wasn't that part at all. They just thought these were pretty goddamn good guys. This was the way the whole situation—

Interviewer [00:30:45] Give me some idea of how the positive, rather than this purge of the Communists, some of the positive things that were being done over the years in the BC Fed. Like this legislative lobby and the organizational—

Dan Radford [00:31:06] The positive thing that the Federation did, I think there's a need for a Federation. The Federation performed a function within our trade union setup to—I'm trying to think of the word for it.

Interviewer [00:31:28] I guess it just inspires—

Dan Radford [00:31:30] To bring together, you understand, all people in the province of British Columbia by convention by year. The Federation has one specific function and that is the legislative function of the trade union movement. This is a function of the Fed. The labour councils are different again. They deal strictly with the civic situations in a given area, that the Fed does. To give you some idea of why the Federation serves a very useful purpose, prior to any Federation, each organization would make a separate representation to the government on its own behalf. I used to make representations to the government,

the Cabinet on behalf of the miners and deal strictly with the Coal Mines Regulation Act. The carpenters would make a representation for their union. So each was going there in bits and pieces. When the Fed was formed, you coordinated the whole thing. You could go speak to the government and say, "I'm speaking on behalf of 100,000 people." Prior to that, you were going to say, "I speak on behalf of 3,000 people." It carried, in my opinion, more weight. It had the endorsement of a convention. These were passed by convention. Then, of course, you send to your biannual convention of the Canadian Congress of Labour, which deals primarily on the battlefield of presentation to the federal government. It serves a very useful purpose. I think when a union is in difficulty, in a strike situation, the Federation coordinates the actions of all locals by sending out an appeal. It's endorsed and sent out. So I think it serves a very useful purpose. This was why it was set up. There was a need for it.

Interviewer [00:33:44] Is there anything in particular that you think is particularly dramatic or interesting that should be included in the history of the BC Federation, from the years '45, before merger?

Dan Radford [00:33:57] Before the merge?

Interviewer [00:33:57] Besides the Communist stuff. Any particular highlights in your mind?

Dan Radford [00:34:13] Different situations that arose over the years such as the lobbies to try and stop certain legislation. I don't know if you would call it a highlight or not, I think the big downfall or the thing that really was a detriment to labour was when Bill 39 was first introduced. This was the first shackles that were put on labour. We had some of these labor leaders who felt that some of these bills were very good because you have to go back in history that when they first introduced the first I.C. and A. (Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration) Act, it gives the right to organize and compel the employer to bargain collectively if you got 51 percent. A lot of people hailed this as a victory. To me, it was never a victory because the minute that you were granted certain concessions, then you got certain things placed against you. In other words, there were certain things that you had to do because you've got this. You couldn't go on strike when you wanted. Then, of course, while Bill 39 was a bad bill, we hollered about this. The coalition government did set up what was known as the [unclear] Commission [recording ends]