

Charles Stewart and Peter Munro Pt 1.mp3
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Interviewer [00:00:00] This is an interview of September 15 with Charles McGregor Stewart and—

Interviewer [00:00:11] Mr. Munro.

Peter Campbell Munro [00:00:12] Peter Munro.

Interviewer [00:00:12] Peter Cameron Munro of the Street Railwaymen (Amalgamated Association of Street Electric Railway and Motor Coach Employees of America). Now, what we want is as much as possible, personal histories, which unions, when you got involved, what executive positions you held and anything of this importance.

Peter Campbell Munro [00:00:43] Well, how about a little background of what Vancouver was like then? Just a few words.

Interviewer [00:00:51] Go ahead.

Peter Campbell Munro [00:00:51] Well, that was in 1911. There was quite a building boom here. They, of course, it was mostly horse-drawn vehicles at that time. Nearly most of the people that worked in Vancouver were other builders or teamsters. That went on until about 1913, and then there was quite a depression, that was before the 1914 war. From 1914 up to 1916 and 17, you remember, Charlie, there was no conscription.

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:01:37] No.

Peter Campbell Munro [00:01:37] The result of that was that there was no jobs. They wanted, well, the slogan was, 'Your King and country needs you, we don't'. That's the slogan. So you didn't get a job unless you joined up. So that went on until 1916 and 1917 when conscription came into effect. There was quite an upsurge in the labor movement against conscription. In fact, the majority of the unions were against it because they believed it wasn't a workers' war, it was a capitalist war. And they made no bones about it either. They came out very plainly and said that they were opposed to it. However, that went on in spite of all these things, in spite of the opposition in Quebec, which was the biggest opposition of all, I think, to conscription. It was put into effect in 1916 and 1917. And the strange thing about that was that a week before conscription was put in, well, you couldn't get a job. But after conscription was put in, a couple of weeks after that, they were looking all over the place for men. It just was a regular boom in jobs. I might say that during this slack period of jobs, there were thousands left British Columbia and went to the States.

Peter Campbell Munro [00:03:12] That was during the war. You could rent houses then, there were so many empty houses, you could rent a house, a good four or five room house for four dollars a month. In fact, there were a lot of landlords giving you a house for nothing, they'd look after it. Now in 1918, we were both working for the B.C. Electric at the time and I was getting 27 cents an hour, a nine-and-a-half-hour day. By 1918, there was quite a lot of men came on the B.C. Electric, about 200, because to fill the gaps of those that were away at the front. These were all young at that time, and mostly they had worked

in jobs for others at trade union before. So as young fellows, we made up our minds that we were not going to have no 27-cents an hour. We were either going to get twice as much as that or quit. The result of that was we went to all the meetings, and we passed resolutions, and finally we got 54 demands put before the B.C. Electric. There were demands about three-feet long. When Mr. Murrin of the B.C. Electric saw these demands, he went purple in the face. He pretty near had an epileptic stroke. He says to the business agent, he says, "Why," he says, "you might as well take over the B.C. Electric." So the business agent said, "That's fine, but maybe we will." [laughter] We didn't get it. [laughter].

Peter Campbell Munro [00:04:59] Now, in June of 1918, we went out on strike, and we demanded a 100 percent increase in wages, time-and-a-half for overtime, Sundays and holidays, and a dollar-an-hour spread overtime. That means—and an eight-hour day, oh yes, that was the main thing, eight-hour day. If it took more than 10 hours to get your eight hours in, they had to pay you a dollar-an-hour bonus. That pretty near broke their hearts. Anyway, we went out eight days and we got all the demands. Every one of them, and we went back to work.

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:05:47] They got a six-cent fare.

Peter Campbell Munro [00:05:49] They got a six [coughing] They got a six-cent fare. Excuse the coughing.

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:05:54] So they made more than [unclear].

Peter Campbell Munro [00:05:56] Yes, so anyway. We were only back to work a week. By the way, at that time the electricians were in with us on the agreements. Our agreements came up at the same time, and they got the same thing as far as overtime was concerned, as we got. But a week after that, Mr. Murrin decided that he wasn't going to pay that overtime to the electricians. There was too much overtime and he couldn't afford it. So, Morrison, who was the business agent with the electricians at the time, he just looked up the top and he says, "All right," he says, "you've broken that agreement," he says, "so unless you mend it by midnight, there'll be no juice."

Peter Campbell Munro [00:06:42] So I was in Fairview at the time, I was a motorman, the Fairview, and I was doing my best to get in the barn. I was due in the barn at 12 o'clock. But the old bridge was open, and of course it's very often open these days. I was held up for 10 minutes, so I was stuck my last trip at Quebec and Main. I stayed there all night. All the cars had to, you know, they had to stay with their cars until they got the accelerators going, the steam plant at Prior, to make enough juice to go to the barn. Finally that was settled in about three days. We were out again for three days on strike. About a week or ten days after that there was a fellow by the name of Ginger Goodwin. I don't know whether you've ever heard of him. Well, he was a great guy. He was a socialist. He was also a first-class trade unionist and organizer. Well, they called him up on the conscription, but he only had one lung, and of course he was put in Class D. There was no chance of him going to war. After a few weeks, he was up in — was it up in Trail he was, Charlie?

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:08:03] Yes.

Peter Campbell Munro [00:08:03] Yes, and he organized the miners up there. And as soon as he did that, they called him up again and put him in Class A. So he decided he wasn't going to go. So he went over to Nanaimo among his friends, and he had plenty of friends there, hundreds of the miners, they all stood by Ginger Goodwin. They were

looking for Ginger, of course, and they had a special constable by the name of Dan Campbell. It's too bad that a guy like that would sully the name of Campbell, but anyway. He, uh, he shot Ginger Goodwin in the back one morning. The result of that was that all the trade unions in British Columbia decided they would have a 24 -hour strike, which we did. Well, it just shows you the temper of the rank and file. The executives of these unions didn't even have to call a meeting. All they did was put up a notice. So we pulled our cars into the barn at 12 o'clock, and we had another strike. That was three in just a few weeks, 1918.

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:09:12] These were the first strikes they had since the organization was—

Peter Campbell Munro [00:09:15] Yeah the first strikes they had.

Interviewer [00:09:17] When was the street Railwaymen first organized?

Peter Campbell Munro [00:09:19] Oh Division 101, what is it now? It was in the—

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:09:24] It was very early it must have been. When was the Amalgamated formed? 1897, was it? I was with 101, so it must have been one of the first organized.

Peter Campbell Munro [00:09:39] In the eighties, I guess.

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:09:43] Yeah, 1887 I believe it was, the Amalgamated was formed, wasn't it?

Peter Campbell Munro [00:09:48] It's just somewhere around there, I'm not sure of the dates.

Peter Campbell Munro [00:09:51] Well, now that's 1918. Then there's the 1919, maybe you could carry on from there, Charlie, the Winnipeg strike. That was another month and two days out.

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:10:06] Yes, I guess the boys know that there was a strong sentiment in the West for industrial organization at that time and the OBU (One Big Union) was formed, and the majority of unions in the West, they favoured the OBU including the Street Railwaymen, but we never went into it. But there was a vote taken, and it was strongly in favour of it. A lot of the craft unions also didn't go in because they had, although the rank-and-file favoured it they had quite a bit to lose. Some of them had very small pensions for the men and all the pensions that there was of these days, and they had life insurance and one thing or another benefits that they felt the new organization could not give them. There's been quite a lot of controversy in the OBU since that time, and I think most of us over the years, even now, believe that the industrial form of organization is the correct form of organization. But what it did cause in British Columbia was a serious split in the labour movement, which lasted for almost 16 years, where the militants were kept out of many of the unions. I think it was early in the thirties that the Workers' Unity League was formed and was formed for the purpose mainly of trying to organize the unorganized, which nothing had been done for many years to do that. Although it was only a small organization numerically, with some 40,000 members, they did prove to the working-class in Canada that the wages and conditions could be maintained and improved even during a period of crisis. They proved that in the thirties. I

believe it was 1935 that the leadership of the Workers' Unity League decided that the time would come to try to unify the trade union movement again, and they proposed that the Workers' Unity League should disband and go into the recognized trade union movement. Most of the AFL (American Federation of Labor), and there was some [unclear] came to the Labor Congress at that time too. Following that I think myself that the AFL unions and the trade union movement in this country generally took a big step forward and really went out to try to do some organizing, especially after the OBU was formed inside the American Federation of Labor. Even after it was kicked out, it was still a challenge to the AFL that if they didn't organize the workers, the OBU would. There was quite an organizing competition between the two groups. It was during that period I think that was one of the highlights of the trade union movement in this country. I think it was in 1938 the— What year was the OBU expelled from the American Federation of Labor?

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:13:32] I just forget that.

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:13:36] It must have been before that, I guess.

Peter Campbell Munro [00:13:42] 1939 was the start of the last 1939 was the start of the last World War, wasn't it?

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:13:45] I think we held them here in our Congress, the OBU, for some two years after the American Federation of Labor expelled them and I remember in 1938, even the Congress leadership and the trade union movement was opposed to the expulsion of them. But in 1939, I think it was, and I stand to be corrected in this—

Interviewer [00:14:07] Convention of 1939.

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:14:09] Convention that was then, Niagara Falls, they decided in a roll call vote and there was very few of the unions from Vancouver which hadn't instructed the delegates to vote to keep the OBU in. But this roll call vote, a man had to stand up and be counted. I remember there's one fellow, he's dead now, Bill Wilson. He came to us that day at the convention when the roll call vote was on, and he said, "I'm sorry, Charlie, I kind of threw it," he says, "because that man, [unclear], he was the board member for the Carpenter and Joiners, he said he would take my livelihood away from me." He wasn't the only one, there was many of them doing the same kind of thing. The roll call was passed, it was quite an enlightenment. There was one couple there, a man, he was a delegate from the Electrical Workers and his wife was a delegate from the Office Employees. He voted for the expulsion in the roll call of the OBU and his wife wanted to keep them in. So deep in the family, you know, but the majority of the western delegates anyway who were for the expulsion of the OBU didn't do it because they wanted to, they did it because they felt they were forced to. Our union, all our delegates voted to keep the OBU in. I remember, although it doesn't help you fellows any at all, anyone speaking on the roll call would have to go up and give your names in, there's so many who want to speak for and against it. And there was one fellow, what do you call that, the international board member again? The Scotchman. Magnus Sinclair.

Peter Campbell Munro [00:16:13] Yeah, Sinclair.

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:16:14] Magnus Sinclair was before me and he would take the mic, he had a tremendous voice and he gave the most anti-unity speech in the convention I think and I happened to be placed right behind him and I tried to do the very

opposite you see. So I was sitting beside him that night at the banquet. They had a banquet for all the Street Railwaymen and I tried to speak to Magnus two or three times and he wouldn't answer me at all. So, after the banquet was finished, Tom Duncan and I went up to the rotunda and here's Magnus standing beside one of these big ashtrays and smoking a cigar and I went over to him and I said, "You know Magnus," and he never turned around. I says, "a few months ago I attended a banquet in Vancouver. It was for Mr. Tim Buck, he'd just come out of Kingston. It was the first time he turned around and gave me a look. I says, "I went to this banquet and I saw a minister there. I said to someone, it was a kind of strange place for a Reverend gentleman to be. And he says, 'Oh, don't you know him?' And I said, 'No, I never met him.' He says, 'Well,' he said, 'That's the Reverend O'Dell he says, come over and I'll introduce you to him.'" So Magnus wasn't even interested, he never turned around again. He told me about working on the street railway in Toronto and he put himself through university by doing that and told me about drawing up a transfer, the same transfer we were using at that time, there was a competition on and he got the prize, whatever it was, for this transfer and it was the one that was accepted by the transportation company at that time. He turned around and he says, "What do you say that man's name was?" I says, "O'Dell." "Ah," he says, "That wasn't O'Dell. He says, that was Roddal, the old reprobate. He says, "I was his driver." [coughing] He came back up to his room then and he bid me get in touch with Rudell when I came back to Vancouver. They wrote to each other, I suppose, as long as they both lived. But I had heard before that, you see after the convention, that he was going to dig it up with international about me speaking in unity the way I did and countering him, you know. So nothing happened. I think that was a big mistake that the AFL made in those expulsions at that time. The same as the expulsions they made in the twenties was a mistake. It hurt the trade union movement. We can go on to these unions that set aside the organization. They recognized the trade union movement of Canada the day where they could all be in. Personally, I think the time will come before very long where the rank and file will demand that every bona fide trade union become part of the Canadian Council of Labor.

Peter Campbell Munro [00:19:30] Did you mention the Winnipeg strike in 1919?

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:19:34] No, I didn't. That was something else that we participated in too, most of the time, I think.

Peter Campbell Munro [00:19:41] A month.

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:19:42] During that period, a month or five weeks or something like that. It was quite a long spell anyway.

Peter Campbell Munro [00:19:48] I'd just like to mention that the telephone girls were organized at the time, and they were the last to go back. They stood it right when the rest decided to go back. They wouldn't go back. And they were out for three or four days longer. So you got to hand it to the telephone girls at that time. They were really very militant.

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:20:08] That was one of the black marks on the strike too, that the telephone girls were left in the lurch, and the organization was broken. The trade union movement could have saved it, but they — [coughing]

Interviewer [00:20:26] The Street Railwaymen voted against going into the OBU, didn't they?

Peter Campbell Munro [00:20:31] Oh yeah. The Street Railwaymen voted against, although there had been on record previously to join the OBU.

Interviewer [00:20:41] But you stayed with the Vancouver Trades and Labor Council, the old one?

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:20:47] Yes.

Interviewer [00:20:50] Did the OBU form a trades council too in Vancouver that operated do you know?

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:21:00] No, there was no duplication there that I remember. I mean, they didn't have any Labor Council.

Peter Campbell Munro [00:21:10] I can't recall, but I'd be surprised if they didn't have. (phone rings)

Interviewer [00:21:25] When did you first get onto the Council, as a delegate from the Railwaymen?

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:21:35] I think the first time we were on was in 1930. Somewhere in there.

Interviewer [00:21:43] Did you get at all involved in the Canadian Labor Party in those earlier experiments?

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:21:50] Our organization was involved and continued the delegates on—

Interviewer [00:21:57] Of course Angus MacInnis was from your organization.

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:21:59] Yes.

Interviewer [00:22:01] Do you remember how much support, direct financial support, he got in his election campaigns, this type of thing?

Peter Campbell Munro [00:22:10] From the union?

Interviewer [00:22:10] From the union.

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:22:11] I couldn't say, but I'm sure he got some support because he'd certainly supported the organization.

Peter Campbell Munro [00:22:21] Oh, he did get indirect support, you see, because of the constitution of the AFL. We couldn't use union money directly for any other purpose except in connection with the trade union movement, so that stymied us quite a bit, but at the same time, we used to have certain of our members go down on payday and have a list and get subscriptions.

Peter Campbell Munro [00:22:52] That's how they do mostly, get together. Help you in different organizations.

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:22:57] I know I went down myself one day and I got close to \$300 in the afternoon.

Interviewer [00:23:03] What was this for?

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:23:05] For the political candidates.

Interviewer [00:23:20] Bill, go ahead.

Interviewer [00:23:21] There's a number of things on there. Were you in the Socialist Party?

Interviewer [00:23:24] Yeah, there's another thing too. We wanted to try and trace some political connections.

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:23:30] Well, I was in the Socialist Party for a period of time.

Interviewer [00:23:34] Were you there during the war? The First World War.

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:23:40] I was in the States up until 1917, I come back here, and I think it was about 1917 I joined the Socialist Party of Canada.

Interviewer [00:23:50] That's what I meant. [coughing] Was either of you ever on the executive of the Socialist Party of Canada?

Peter Campbell Munro [00:24:01] I've never joined the Socialist Party.

Interviewer [00:24:04] You never did.

Peter Campbell Munro [00:24:07] I was very much in favour of the Socialist Party though. I used to attend all the meetings in the old Empress Theater there, you know, every Sunday. When we had—oh, what's his name now?

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:24:18] Kingsley?

Peter Campbell Munro [00:24:27] Kingsley. E.T. Kingsley.

Interviewer [00:24:29] He was editor of the Clarion at that time.

Peter Campbell Munro [00:24:31] Yeah, he was. That meeting, that Hall, used to be packed every Sunday night.

Interviewer [00:24:43] As a matter of fact, I've met a lot of those people.

Peter Campbell Munro [00:24:46] There were so many meetings in these days it was very hard to get speakers.

Interviewer [00:24:49] I'm sure I've met enough of the people for a quorum in there. [laughter]

Interviewer [00:24:55] There's still a lot of them around.

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:24:58] Sometimes there was a little agitation and propaganda that they— I think the educational campaign was kind on the Socialist Party of Canada there's still telling the effect on western Canada even though they had British Columbia.

Peter Campbell Munro [00:25:13] Well, that was a stronghold of the socialists, you see.

Interviewer [00:25:17] It certainly was.

Peter Campbell Munro [00:25:18] They've always been militant, the people of British Columbia, right from the old days.

Interviewer [00:25:21] Well, what connections were there between the Socialist Party and things like the Canadian Labor Party, which the Trades and Labor Council set up?

Peter Campbell Munro [00:25:29] Well, of course, the Labor Party came on later, of course, but these were mostly socialists in the Labor Party. But I suppose it was for political reasons, I'm not very sure, I stand to be corrected, but I think to myself it wasn't for political reasons [phone rings] that they changed the name to the Labor Party, you see, so that a lot of people would vote for labour that wouldn't vote for socialism. They were quite dogmatic in the old days, you know, the Socialist Party.

Interviewer [00:26:04] Yeah, that's what I was going to ask you, because some guy called A. Goodwin was turned down for membership in the Socialist Party, and Ginger Goodwin's initial was A. Alfred, you see, and I'm just trying to find out whether this is the one.

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:26:20] I don't know.

Interviewer [00:26:21] Because I know a lot of people get turned down for membership.

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:26:27] He was a member in the Socialist Party of Canada.

Interviewer [00:26:27] I don't know.

Interviewer [00:26:31] Well, did you stay with the Socialist Party until it went out?

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:26:35] I stayed until after the 21 points, they affiliated with the Communist International. It didn't go out then, it still lived after that. I didn't join the Communist Party then either. But I felt that the— My personal opinion was that the Socialist Party should have been unanimous in what they did.

Interviewer [00:27:03] So how long did the Socialist Party go on for?

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:27:06] I couldn't tell you that, but it went on quite a little time after that. Jack Harrington and—

Peter Campbell Munro [00:27:15] Well it kept on going until the early thirties when the CCF was born. I think it did.

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:27:20] I think it did too.

Peter Campbell Munro [00:27:23] That's right when the CCF took over. But a lot of these old chaps of us in the Socialist Party, they might have been sectarian but by golly they were true to their class principles anyway. [coughing] There was Jack Harrington for one, I don't know whether Jack—

Interviewer [00:27:41] He's still around.

Interviewer [00:27:42] He's still alive.

Peter Campbell Munro [00:27:45] I believe he's in Australia, isn't he?

Interviewer [00:27:46] No, he's around.

Interviewer [00:27:46] We've interviewed him too.

Peter Campbell Munro [00:27:47] Is that right?

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:27:48] He was a wonderful man, I think, and even after the Socialist Party was finished, and there was lots of Jack's old friends went into the Communist Party, he was never an enemy. He still believed it was their privilege to go away and help. He was, he wasn't in our Division. We were in Division 101, he was in Division 113, New Westminster. But he must be an old man now. He was older than I was. I know one day he was on superannuation before I was. [coughing]

Interviewer [00:28:28] Well, I was going to ask you a couple of things. What did your union do politically about socialism? I mean, this morning we talked to a guy from the Western Federation of Miners, and they'd have debates on Sunday, and a big meeting, and there was debates on. Was there anything like that in your union? Any promotion of—

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:28:52] Our union officially supported the policy of the American Federation of Labor to reward your friends and punish your enemies. That was the official policy, I think.

Interviewer [00:29:04] But how come you were affiliated into the Canadian Labor Party?

Interviewer [00:29:09] It was sponsored by the Trades and Labor Congress.

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:29:12] Yes, it was the 1907 convention I think who brought up first the question of a labor party, and then it was resurrected again later on.

Interviewer [00:29:21] 1921.

Interviewer [00:29:22] So that's still quite a departure from the [unclear].

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:29:25] It is, but at the same time, mind you, the international unions were opposed to the Labor Party, and the political action like that, they still persisted. That was the policy, and eventually our organization went out of the Labor Party. I just forget what the trouble was at that time. Do you remember, Pete?

Peter Campbell Munro [00:29:47] Oh, I don't remember.

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:29:49] But it was caused mainly by the international unions and their opposition to it.

Interviewer [00:29:55] A big break-up came over the Workers' Party resolution to enfranchise the Orientals. I think it was 1926, 1928. The Canadian Labor Party went on record as in favor of enfranchising the Orientals, and a lot of the trade unions voted to get out. This is one thing I wanted to ask you about, is your reminiscences on the anti-Oriental campaign, and particularly on the activities of people like Bengough. Do you remember much of this?

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:30:41] Well, I can't say much, I do, but I remember when I came here, I was just a lad when I came to Vancouver, and I thought it was terrible. I had never seen a Chinese in my life before, and the fights they used to have down in Chinatown Saturday night, I couldn't understand that. I thought it was something awful, you know. When you go into the history of the labour movement, that the antagonism to Orientals was generated by the powers that be. It's hard to believe now you can see the Chinese people living all over town and any part of the city. But it wasn't that, they were certainly in a ghetto.

Peter Campbell Munro [00:31:21] Yeah, and labour believed that they were underbidding them and working for low wages. That was the whole thing.

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:31:30] And even in later years, not so terribly long ago anyway, it was during the thirties, I was chairman of the Organizing Committee of the Vancouver Trades and Labor Council. The board member of the Machinists' Union came to us and asked us if the Organizing Committee could organize the garage workers. So we started to organize them, we organized many Japanese and Chinese, and we held a meeting in a hall down Hastings Street, I forget what hall it was. He came to the meeting and he said how sorry he was, and he got up and read the obligation of the constitution, and there was no Orientals allowed in their union. He told us how bad he felt about it. I'll never forget there was one, the Chinese lined up there and they said that they're condemned for undercutting the living standards of the Anglo-Saxon people, and now when they organize to try to overcome that, you won't take a stand, you know. It was a terrible thing and that organization didn't amount to anything, although we had the majority of the garage workers organized. It was years before the attempt was made again to organize them, and after we did organize them that time, the jurisdictional fight came on there, and the Teamsters claimed that they were going to have all the washers and greasers, and the Machinists was going to have the rest. So the jurisdictional fight there and the organization didn't amount to anything at all, and it was some time following that before the garage mechanics were organized. But they worked under terrible conditions, too, in these big shops at the Vancouver Motors there. They would be down there in the morning, and they, even to get an hour or two's work, they would stand around there all day for it, or would sit around, not with any paper waiting either, just to be in the job.

Interviewer [00:33:41] Well now, how about you, do you have any recollections of that, Mr. Stewart?

Peter Campbell Munro [00:33:47] Mr. what?

Interviewer [00:33:48] Mr. Stewart, do you have any recollections of the anti-Oriental campaign?

Peter Campbell Munro [00:33:52] Of what?

Interviewer [00:33:53] Oh, Mr. Munro, I'm sorry. Do you have any recollections of the anti-Oriental campaigns?

Peter Campbell Munro [00:33:59] No. You know, I heard about it, but I have no recollections of anything specific about it. I knew about it at the time, but there was nothing in it.

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:34:15] It was even worse before we came here, I read about it in the early 1900s, was very bad. The most that I can remember of it was even the sentiment of some of the trade unions against the Orientals. But these battles on a Saturday night, that was the main thing I do remember about it.

Interviewer [00:34:34] Well, who would you say organized that?

Peter Campbell Munro [00:34:41] Oh, that's a pretty hard thing to say now, because people get ideas about things. Now, you take the Negro question in the United States, in the different cities in Mississippi and so on, you can't just tell who organized it. It seems to be just something that everybody thinks is right or wrong, as the case may be. You know, you can't put your finger on it. But I know that the organized labor as a whole, with few exceptions, were very antagonistic to the Chinamen. The reason was, of course, that they figured they were undercutting them in jobs. That was the main reason.

Interviewer [00:35:27] Well, it seems to me that I've picked up things like they felt the Chinese were dirty, and it was more than that. They also accused them of things like all kinds of things, being dirty, spreading disease.

Peter Campbell Munro [00:35:42] Opium smoking.

Interviewer [00:35:43] Opium, et cetera.

Interviewer [00:35:44] Immorality with white people in restaurants, you know.

Interviewer [00:35:50] How widespread was that kind of stuff? For instance, right now, I'm sure that 75 percent of the males that think they're very liberal on negroes would say that West Indians are very aggressive with girls, you see, much more so than white males. I would say that's racial prejudice. Now, how widespread was the—

Peter Campbell Munro [00:36:19] The worst kind of racial prejudice, too.

Interviewer [00:36:20] How widespread do you feel these other things, other than just the job factor were amongst the unions?

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:36:37] Well, I think the job factor was the main thing. These other things were secondary.

Peter Campbell Munro [00:36:43] They were excuses, you see.

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:36:45] Most of them manufactured as excuses. Of course, mind you, if you had any race of people that's oppressed and been oppressed for

over a period of generations, they might not live the same as you do. If we had suffered the same oppression, would we have been any better?

Interviewer [00:37:07] Oh, well, that's quite true, but I'm just trying to find out how widespread were these secondary things in the union? [coughing] Do you think they were widespread? Did your members think that way? In your union?

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:37:20] I don't know, I think our membership generally, in the past and even up to the present time, we had a pretty good membership, a pretty good trade union membership, and the action taken most things yet, I think was still taken the same way, quite liberal-minded.

Peter Campbell Munro [00:37:41] Well, you see, our constitution in the AFL, as far as the Street Railwaymen were concerned, and I have initiated quite a few members myself. "You shall not discriminate against a brother because of race, creed, or nationality."

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:38:01] And that's never been changed.

Peter Campbell Munro [00:38:02] No, it hasn't been changed.

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:38:03] We've been through two international presidents, the original one, Bill Mahon, he was there over 50 years, I'm sure, as the international president. He never forgot his early days in organizing the transportation workers. He was a driver of a horse car in Chicago. and quit the job, and went all over the American continent, even came into Canada, came in on boxcars, traveled all over the country that way, no wages. And Bill never forgot that. Even when many of those international officers were getting high wages, Bill was getting \$8,000 a year. I was at the convention, they tried from the motion from the floor to increase his wages to \$10 ,000 a year, and he opposed it. They still that principle. [phone rings] I remember when I was expelled from the Trades Council, I didn't appeal the expulsion, but I stood as a delegate from the organization. The president, he said seeing I had been expelled from the Council, I couldn't stand as a delegate from the union for the Congress Convention. That was in 1941 I think and I appealed that to the international, and Mahon wrote back and supported my appeal. He said he didn't support my politics, but I had as much rights as any other individual in the organization, and the president was wrong in devoured me from standing. When the election came up, I was allowed to run and I was elected. Didn't know that Pete went down that time to the convention of Calgary, I believe, wasn't it?

Peter Campbell Munro [00:40:04] Yeah.

[00:40:04] Didn't know whether we'd be seated or not. Went down and be seated and I'm quite sure it was the position that Mahon took at that time. As far as the autonomy was concerned, we had almost full local autonomy. He said several times that we could do anything we wanted to do that was in the interest of the membership. The only time that the international would take action as long as he was president was if there was an appeal from a group that the constitution had been violated. So we had no pique with our organization at all. We think it was one of the most liberal-minded AFL unions, and still is.

Interviewer [00:40:48] How radical, if I can use that word, was your own local, 101?

Peter Campbell Munro [00:40:54] Well, they were quite militant. I think that would be a better word. They were quite militant. Very militant. There used to be an old saying in the

Division that we never won an arbitration or lost a strike. So I think that sums it up. We generally went up in negotiations. We'd take a strike vote first. Then we'd up and negotiate. The business agent or whoever was in charge of the negotiations he'd tell the company that that's what we want, and we have a strike vote in our pocket, so figure it out yourself. Think it over for a few days and then, generally speaking, we didn't have to go out. We had the strength behind us.

Interviewer [00:41:49] Well, yeah. It's a good point, but I was thinking more in terms of political. The fact being, of course, that MacInnis was one of the early parliamentary radicals, and all through I noticed in the minutes that the Street Railwaymen were donating money to things like the MacKenzie-Papineau Battalion and all this, and passing resolutions for the nationalization of all the resources and industries of the country. Was this a pretty left-wing union?

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:42:32] It was.

Peter Campbell Munro [00:42:32] Oh yeah, it was generally a bit left -wing union.

Interviewer [00:42:36] Did you take any political activity, except as individuals, of the union itself?

Peter Campbell Munro [00:42:45] Well, in what way? You mean, well, we take May Day parades, for instance. We've taken part in that as a union plenty of times. That's quite a radical thing, you know.

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:42:58] Yeah, we were officially represented on the May Day parades.

Peter Campbell Munro [00:42:58] I was one of the delegates myself.

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:43:05] I got a kind of disillusioned myself. There was one time, during the war years of course, and we had a business agent and he participated in the May Day parade. I would say the only thing he did that for was to get the support of the left-wing, both in our union and other unions. The election was coming up for the secretary for the Trades and Labor Council and he was elected and I am pretty sure that his participation in the May Day parade was just for that purpose. I had a different idea always of May Day parades before that but I thought well the people that could use this law to go. It was Roly Gervin.

Interviewer [00:43:55] Roly Gervin. He's now with the —

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:43:57] He's manager for the building contactors.

Interviewer [00:44:00] Exchange, yeah.

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:44:02] He's on the opposite side now.

Interviewer [00:44:05] Why do you feel your Local was radical?

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:44:10] Why was it?

Interviewer [00:44:12] Yeah.

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:44:12] Well, one of the main reasons is what Pete said, was that during the years that a great many people came into the Street Railwaymen, from the Longshoremen, from different building trades where they had a fairly good knowledge of the trade union movement and the socialist movement. A few IWWs (Industrial Workers of the World) was in there too. All these things, associating with the other young people coming on the job had an effect on them. They knew that it was the left-wing element in the organization that they gotten the conditions that they were working under. They realized that, and that's had a great effect. Many fellows that they might not accept your political ideas, they did support you in the trade union. Some of those fellows, they haven't changed their mind yet. I would say in politics, they're quite conservative-minded, but they still have a great respect for the left-wing that was in the union in those days.

Interviewer [00:45:20] Did you hold any offices in the union other than delegate to the Council?

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:45:28] Yes. Pete, you see, we were quite ultra-left, not only us but the majority of the class-conscious workers at that time. We wouldn't stand for to go to a convention or anything. We gave the delegates that went there hell for not doing what we thought they should do when they went. So it was after one convention that the international board member was there. He says, "every time," he says, "I come, I hear those fellows talking the same way." "But, he says, "It was a strange thing they never stand for anything themselves." I think that same night was the nominations, Pete. We decided to run, and we run all the time after that. We found that instead of being an official opposition in the union, you could do more by being in the union and trying to give leadership. We found that to be correct, and we found that we'd been very wrong over the years.

Interviewer [00:46:27] What positions did you hold?

Peter Campbell Munro [00:46:29] Well, I myself held the position of vice president for, I don't know how many years.

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:46:36] Quite a long time.

Peter Campbell Munro [00:46:36] A long time, anyway. And then I held the position of acting-president, business agent and financial secretary. Long time. So, I pretty well was in all the positions over a number of years.

Interviewer [00:46:53] What about you, Mr. Stewart?

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:46:55] I was in the same category. I was business agent for three years. President for a short time before I stood for business agent. Prior to that, we were representing the platform men on the executive.

Peter Campbell Munro [00:47:13] Quite a few years too.

Interviewer [00:47:20] You were employed all through the Depression too, right?

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:47:23] Oh yeah.

Peter Campbell Munro [00:47:25] Yes.

Interviewer [00:47:27] How well off were you people that were employed?

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:47:32] Well, I would say we were better off during the Depression years. That's another job than everywhere before or since, taking everything into consideration.

Peter Campbell Munro [00:47:41] That is from outside, but I know my wife used to say that we were just about as bad as unemployed during the Depression, because we had so many friends in Vancouver who had been here so long, and they were all out of a job. So there's nothing for the wife to make a dinner for 10 or 12. [unclear] as they call it, was an open house. The unemployed came there by droves, and there'd be no way to turn them away. So sometimes, we were almost as bad off as unemployed, let's put it that way.

Interviewer [00:48:20] Well, one thing that seems to me in the minutes of the Council is that during the thirties, the Council got more and more and more conservative.

Peter Campbell Munro [00:48:35] [Coughing] Well, that happened about the twenties, actually.

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:48:39] Yes, and we'd kept these too.

Peter Campbell Munro [00:48:41] Yeah.

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:48:41] I wouldn't say that the Council as a whole got more conservative but the some of the board men.

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:48:51] They're going to fear that their control over the workers was being jeopardized and they put an extra drive on to oppose everything that the left-wing would raise, even though it was in the best interests of them and the trade union movement as a whole. I'll tell you one thing, the press gave these fights, it was carried on quite often in the Trades Council. They gave them prominence that the majority of them didn't really bring to the forefront at all the constructive things that was done in the Council. The best newspaper reporter we had that was in the Council there was Barry Mather. I think it was for the morning newspaper at that time. These battles between the different groups in the Trades Council was secondary as Barry Mather was concerned. The issues that came forward was to help labour generally, at least what he concentrated on. Barry would never, if there was a fight between two factions in the Council, he would never put that report in unless he spoke to both sides and showed them what he was going to put in the paper.

Interviewer [00:50:18] How permanently organized was the left-wing caucus in the Trades and Labor Council?

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:50:26] I wouldn't say it was very well organized.

Interviewer [00:50:31] You don't think so?

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:50:32] No, except in ideology that was all. Insofar as any structural form of organization, I don't think that existed.

Interviewer [00:50:46] Well, I mean, how regularly did you meet? I mean, was it just every year before elections, or was it?

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:50:55] Oh yes, before election time, we quite often did have a meeting, and build the support.

Peter Campbell Munro [00:51:04] But that was quite broad, any meetings that we did hold before the election were quite broad. People like Bill Wilson, and Bill had been a road man, even before that, he was sitting in those offices. And nobody could say that he was a left-wing radical, that he was a good honest trade unionist. Over the years, you see, we'd begun to realize, most of us, people could think differently politically than we did and still be doing a good job for their membership. In the early days we didn't think that. We thought we had to be as politically conscious as we were before they could do a job.

Interviewer [00:51:44] You can go back to the —

Interviewer [00:51:47] Finishing this up I'm just trying to find out, what about the right-wing? What about the caucus there? Do you know anything about their caucus?

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:51:57] I don't know anything about them. I never even heard of them meeting but I'm quite sure they did. [laughter]

Peter Campbell Munro [00:52:10] They had a slate drawn up for every election for the union and the Trades and Labor Council and all that.

Interviewer [00:52:15] I just want to go back a little bit to the particular political organizations. There was the Federated Labor, the FLP, and the ILP and of course the Socialist Party, and various organizations. Now, particularly after the break-up of the Canadian Labor Party, were you supporters of the ILP or the FLP?

Peter Campbell Munro [00:52:42] The Independent Labor Party?

Interviewer [00:52:43] Yeah.

Peter Campbell Munro [00:52:47] Well, if you ask us, were we supporting that as an organization, of course we'd say no. But as individuals, we would support any progressive person that was running that we had thought would get a chance of election. That was our policy. But as a trade union affiliated to the American Federation of Labor, of course, we couldn't do that as an organization.

Interviewer [00:53:18] Did you maintain any sort of close relations with the CCF when it formed?

Peter Campbell Munro [00:53:26] Well, the CCF manifesto that was drawn up in Regina was a very good one. I myself supported that. I think that you would too, Charlie. But since that time it's been watered down now, so you wouldn't know it was the same manifesto. In other words, the CCF long before the New Democratic Party got in, they had tried all these years to become respectable, you know. So when you become too respectable, then you don't get the word of the working class. I think that's the trouble with the majority of the members of the New Democratic Party, too. You see, there's an old-country saying in Scotland, 'you're neither fish, flesh, nor good red herring' and I think that sums it up.

You've got to be one thing or another before you're going to get support from the working-class.

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:54:45] Although the establishment of the New Democratic Party I think was a big step forward for the Canadian working people.

Interviewer [00:54:56] The establishment of the NDP was?

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:54:57] I think so.

Peter Campbell Munro [00:54:58] Oh, yes, because Canada is a very backward country politically, and they haven't even learned to work for themselves as a class yet, and that's something that the NDP yet might help to carry on workers to do.

Charles Stewart and Peter Munro Pt 2.mp3
Recorded c. 1964
Transcribed by Donna Sacuta, 2025

Interviewer [00:00:00] Toronto by-election that's really. The Toronto by-election result did you see that? Looks very good to me.

Peter Campbell Munro [00:00:08] What happened there? I've been sick for three days.

Interviewer [00:00:09] The NDP won, in an east end Toronto seat.

Peter Campbell Munro [00:00:15] Oh, the New Democrat won that?

Interviewer [00:00:16] That was a Conservative cabinet minister's seat.

Peter Campbell Munro [00:00:19] Oh, that's good. That's good news.

Interviewer [00:00:21] Beat the prospective leader of the Liberal Party, Charles Templeton.

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:00:27] Yeah, that was wonderful.

Interviewer [00:00:37] Where were we? Oh yeah. Now, the other thing too is the unemployed. Now, I have a fair idea of the unemployed organizations themselves. But what I wanted to know is, was there any relationship, any working cooperation between the unions and the unemployed organizations?

Peter Campbell Munro [00:00:57] Oh yes, the left-wing unions. You mean in the Hungry Thirties?

Interviewer [00:01:03] Yeah.

Peter Campbell Munro [00:01:03] Yes, Oh, there's no doubt about that. The left-wing unions, including our own union, we couldn't, as I said before, give them money directly, but we could indirectly, which we did. In fact, we called a mass meeting one time and we voluntarily made up our minds that we'd each give them a dollar. Each one we'd give a dollar.

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:01:25] And we had delegates too, also speak to the unemployed councils.

Interviewer [00:01:31] Do you remember much of the organization of these unemployed councils? Nowhere is it, I can't find it set down.

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:01:36] They had them in I remember mostly as the Block Committees.

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:01:42] And I wasn't working, but I was asked to set up a Block Committee on my street and I thought, well, by golly, that's an awful job for a man to do that's not working. I went out to every house on Chester Street, and a house couldn't

hold them all that night. The people came to the Block Committee, that's how easy they were to organize.

Interviewer [00:02:06] But there is no really official connection with the labour movement?

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:02:12] No.

Interviewer [00:02:12] Acting as individuals.

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:02:13] There was an official connection too with unemployed organizations and the unions, and I know our union, we had delegates in the Central Council of the Unemployed. We didn't have them through all the years, but I know we had them at one time because I was a delegate myself for some time there.

Interviewer [00:02:40] What was the Central Council of the Unemployed and what did it do?

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:02:40] It coordinated the different unemployed groups. Just the same as the Trades and Labor Council was to get out and get the trade union folks.

Interviewer [00:02:49] What programs, projects were carried on do you remember?

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:02:53] In the unemployed?

Interviewer [00:02:58] Unemployed Councils.

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:02:57] I can't remember. I would say most of the [unclear] that was carried on was to help workers on strike and to demonstrate for more relief.

Peter Campbell Munro [00:03:11] For jobs, jobs and wages and doing away with the camps.

Interviewer [00:03:20] What about the Tag Days? Were they put on by the Council?

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:03:23] The Unemployed Council, yes.

Interviewer [00:03:22] Who put them on exactly?

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:03:28] Well, I'll tell you, I'll give you an instance of one of them. I think it was before the Trek started for Ottawa. There was a Tag Day one Saturday and I think it was six cans I filled that day. That was how the support was for the boys that was going to Ottawa. It was illegal, they were told that they couldn't tag from the start of the tags, so many had tagged and nobody bothered them. And when the money all came in, they called for the Chief of Police to send the men out to guard this money and the money stayed in the police station overnight.

Interviewer [00:04:15] But I mean, were they put on by the Council? Were they cleared by the Council?

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:04:20] By the Vancouver Labor Council?

Interviewer [00:04:21] No.

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:04:22] The Unemployed Councils, yes.

Interviewer [00:04:24] The Vancouver Labor Council refused to have anything to do with it.

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:04:29] Yes, that's right. Once or twice, I had a speaker there but they officially didn't take any action.

Interviewer [00:04:36] Was it much of a fight over this policy in the Council? Were there attempts to get the unemployed people represented on Council? [coughing] To get the Council representative on the Unemployed Council?

Peter Campbell Munro [00:04:48] Yes, there was.

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:04:50] In Prince Rupert they had delegates from the unemployed sitting right on the Council, the Prince Rupert Council. We never were able to do that.

Interviewer [00:05:03] I know the Relief Camp Project Workers Union tried to apply four or five times, but were always turned down, as was in 1938 - 1939. There didn't seem to be any applications in the earlier part of the thirties.

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:05:19] No.

Peter Campbell Munro [00:05:27] They used to use the argument, you see, that the unemployed organizations were affiliated to the Workers' Unity League, and it was a dual organization. That was the position of the Council.

Interviewer [00:05:40] Well, was it affiliated to the Workers' Unity League?

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:05:41] Yeah.

Interviewer [00:05:41] Do you know by chance what happened to all the records, if such have existed?

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:05:48] No, I don't.

Interviewer [00:06:02] You mentioned a mass meeting, there was a—what was that? — there was a big mass meeting called by the Vancouver Council which the executive refused to condone. They sent out a referendum to the members about.

Interviewer [00:06:25] What was this about?

Interviewer [00:06:26] This was, yeah, this was in, for the Post Office strikers.

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:06:34] Oh yes.

Interviewer [00:06:34] It's the only recorded vote in the minutes, where every name is recorded, in all the minutes of the Council. This is when, if I'm not mistaken, Bill Stewart was thrown out.

Interviewer [00:06:50] Speak a bit louder.

Interviewer [00:06:52] Do you remember, the executive I believe took, or some of the members there took the position that mass meetings outside of the jurisdiction.

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:07:02] of the Council.

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:07:03] I remember something about it, but I couldn't, I can't recall just exactly what happened.

Interviewer [00:07:15] Go ahead Bill.

Interviewer [00:07:15] I have a whole bunch of questions.

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:07:16] I don't think Bill was kicked out then, because Bill was back with me at Niagara Falls in 19—.

Interviewer [00:07:27] Well, he was re-seated at the next meeting or something.

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:07:29] Oh yes, uh huh.

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:07:31] That might have been.

Interviewer [00:07:34] Want me to take this for a while?

Interviewer [00:07:35] Yeah, take a while. I just want to check a few points here.

Interviewer [00:07:38] OK. I'm going to go right back to before the war, actually, and back to socialism. Do you feel there was any friction between socialists, people who were mainly socialists, and trade unionists?

Peter Campbell Munro [00:07:58] Well, maybe evidence is part of that, anyway. You see, the old Socialist Party of Canada, they set themselves up as a educational organization and I was just reading today in some of these books here that while they said that they would have nothing to do with the immediate demands of the workers, that what they wanted in Canada was socialism, not reforms of any kind. These were the socialists.

Interviewer [00:08:29] Yeah, the same thing. Have you got any personal remembrances or recollections of this?

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:08:37] No, mostly, we had quite a few SPC (Socialist Party of Canada) men in our organization, and most of them was active trade unionists, like Joe Hubble.

Peter Campbell Munro [00:08:46] That's right, that's right.

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:08:48] But they were active, but there was others in the Socialist Party didn't believe in the industrial action at all. Geordie Morgan was one, Geordie was a fine man, but Geordie didn't think that the Socialist Party should— [coughing].

Peter Campbell Munro [00:09:06] And yet, when the Nanaimo strike was on, in 1912 and 1913, which was a long one, the whole thing became so ridiculous that the socialists, some of those that were even elected, what is his name again, Hawthornthwaite, Williams.

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:09:24] Jack Place.

Peter Campbell Munro [00:09:26] And Place, yes, they had to change that policy completely because of the fact that they were right in with the strikers. So if they didn't support the strike, they were out. So that was just as plain as that of course.

Interviewer [00:09:45] Okay, well, what about women's suffrage? Do you remember at all?

Peter Campbell Munro [00:09:50] Well, that was in 1912, 1913, 1914, 1915, and 1916. Helena Gutteridge was on there, and was later, of course, a member of the City Council here.

Interviewer [00:10:06] Do you remember, was this an issue in your union at all?

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:10:10] No.

Peter Campbell Munro [00:10:11] It wasn't. OK.

Peter Campbell Munro [00:10:12] I wasn't in that union at the time, I was a Teamster for the city from 1912 to 1917.

Interviewer [00:10:22] What about conscription now? I imagine you personally were opposed to conscription.

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:10:28] Absolutely.

Interviewer [00:10:31] What about the attitude of the rank-and-file in your union?

Peter Campbell Munro [00:10:38] Well, as I say, I wasn't in the Union, I just came into the Union in October of 1917, you see, but—

Interviewer [00:10:46] Well, that seems a good time, doesn't it?

Peter Campbell Munro [00:10:49] But I know that before that we were very much opposed to conscription, I helped to organize the Teamsters in the City in 1913 and we finally got 56 percent of the Teamsters to join the union. We immediately applied for a charter for the Teamsters but they didn't have any ever going down there in the States, because they didn't send us a charter for the Teamsters. They sent us a charter for the Hod Carriers and General Laborers' Union and they give us a big round button to wear. We used to walk down Main Street a whole bunch of us, quite proud of this. There was a red and white button, Hod Carriers and General Laborers' Union. [laughter].

Interviewer [00:11:39] What is a hod carrier?

Peter Campbell Munro [00:11:49] He carries the bricks up to a bricklayer when they're building houses, or lime and cement and so on.

Interviewer [00:11:50] It still exists, too, and I have one of their buttons at home as a matter of fact.

Interviewer [00:11:53] I know, I know the instance, I just wonder what 'hod' is.

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:11:59] Kind of over the shoulders.

Peter Campbell Munro [00:11:59] It's made of wood. It's got a handle coming down here and there's like a little trough on the top.

Interviewer [00:12:05] Oh yeah.

[00:12:05] And you put it on your shoulders.

Interviewer [00:12:07] I know what they are now. I just don't know the 'hod' was.

Interviewer [00:12:11] Well, were you in this, Mr. Stewart, were you in the Street Railwaymen before the war?

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:12:17] No, no, I didn't. I wasn't in the Street Railwaymen until 1917.

Interviewer [00:12:21] 1917. Well, at that time, when you joined this, do you remember at all whether conscription was discussed in your local?

Peter Campbell Munro [00:12:30] It were just about at the time that conscription come in.

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:12:32] Come in 1917.

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:12:33] But I'm quite sure that our membership as a whole was opposed to conscription.

Interviewer [00:12:39] I see. Well, do you feel that there was, that during the war, the government used conscription to repress trade unions and political organizations? What I mean is like this business with Ginger Goodwin.

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:13:05] The Socialist Party of Canada, alright.

Interviewer [00:13:11] You feel it was suppressed during the war by the government?

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:13:15] Yes, I think so.

Interviewer [00:13:18] How?

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:13:19] Suppressed the newspaper The Clarion. They brought another paper out, The Red Flag I think they called it, the next time.

Interviewer [00:13:30] Then there's The Indicator.

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:13:32] The what?

Interviewer [00:13:33] The Indicator.

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:13:34] Yes. Uh -huh.

Interviewer [00:13:35] Well, but I mean, if they could manage to do that, how would you say they were repressed? I'm just trying to get you to elaborate, if you can.

Peter Campbell Munro [00:13:52] Of course the same thing would apply to Communist papers. They had to change the name several times and it seems to satisfy the government for a certain time until the RCMP or whatever stooges they're having that look into these things until they get onto it and make a fuss and then they suppress them again. So then they have to change again and of course that applies not only to Canada but it applies to the States and it applies to France, Britain and practically all the rest of the capitalist world where they've had to change the names of their papers.

Interviewer [00:14:33] Did your union lose any of its leaders due to conscription during the war?

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:14:41] Not that I can remember.

Peter Campbell Munro [00:14:42] No, I don't think so.

Interviewer [00:14:55] Were you ever in the IWW (Industrial Workers of the World)?

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:14:57] I was for a short time in Butte, Montana.

Peter Campbell Munro [00:14:59] I was just trying to get my [unclear] in Spokane, Washington. I came out to the States first when I came out to this country. I went to Montana. I had a brother there that was forming a cattle ranch, so I worked there for a couple of years and that brought me a job called a cowpuncher. Not on the movie screen, but right on the prairie.

Interviewer [00:15:24] How did you get into the IWW?

Peter Campbell Munro [00:15:27] Well, I met a fellow there in Montana and we decided that we'd make a move. So after two years we went all over the place, we were in Butte and we went into Idaho and worked in the Taft Tunnel there for a while and we just moved from job to job until we finally landed in Spokane. When I landed in Spokane I didn't know a thing about trade unions or anything. I was always in the farming business, in the old country too. I was born and raised on a sheep farm. But when I landed in Spokane that November, we just got out of the station, my chum and I, and we see the damndest thing ever I saw in my life. There was cops, mounted police, and the firemen were out, and hosing the people down the streets. Everybody was getting knocked around, and finally there was a little girl, she was rolling down the street in front of this big hose. The fire, you know, the firemen. That just, oh God I don't know, something happened to me inside and I just saw red. I guess it went back about 400 years up to the highlands or something. [laughter] But I completely lost my temper. I ran after the kid and give her to her mother and I walloped that big fireman right in the jaw and knocked him out. I don't know how I didn't get arrested. Of course I was milling around there and guess that's what saved me. [laughter] Anyway that night in Spokane the Chief of Police, Sullivan, he was shot. Got shot through the neck when he was sitting in his front room up at Cannon Hill. I don't know who shot him, but it was a good shot anyway. [laughter] My chum and I went up to see it the next day and there was a nice little hole in that one, just about the size of your finger,

must have been a .22, but anyway, shot him in the back of the neck. He died the next day. Well, that started us off. They called a meeting that night. There was a ban put on the IWW. But they called a meeting despite the ban and we went to the meeting and we bought a bunch of pamphlets. That started me off in the labour movement. I swore that night that from now on I'm going to find out all about this thing. I couldn't stand this brutality of knocking people in the head like that.

Interviewer [00:18:04] How long did you keep up your membership?

Peter Campbell Munro [00:18:07] Well, I only stayed in Spokane for three months, so I just joined and that was about all. That was the time that Joe Hill was going around and Elizabeth Gurley, she was about 16 at the time. I saw her in Spokane with her buttoned shoes up on the side here and a long frock.

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:18:30] Is that so?

Peter Campbell Munro [00:18:30] Oh yes.

Interviewer [00:18:33] That was Elizabeth Gurley Flynn?

Peter Campbell Munro [00:18:34] Yeah.

Peter Campbell Munro [00:18:35] She's just dead now, eh?

Interviewer [00:18:36] She died about a month ago.

Peter Campbell Munro [00:18:41] She was a great girl, mind.

Interviewer [00:18:42] Do you know any of the old IWW songs?

Peter Campbell Munro [00:18:45] Oh, I've got them right here. I just love them.

Interviewer [00:18:54] [unclear] sung a folksong too.

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:18:54] Is that so?

Interviewer [00:18:54] You can buy the book as a matter of fact, The Little Red Book.

Interviewer [00:18:56] Is the Little Red Book still?

Interviewer [00:18:59] It's sold off and on by one of the bookstores, you know.

Interviewer [00:19:02] I know most of them I think.

Interviewer [00:19:06] I had one, once, been trying to get a hold of it.

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:19:09] I had one two and I give mine to Jack Stevenson, and I never got it back and he's dead now.

Peter Campbell Munro [00:19:15] The IWW, of course, they believed the Industrial Workers of the World, and it was a good idea, but of course they didn't believe in doing it through politics, they were just going to take over. But they sure took over in Washington.

Boy, these lumber camps. I used to go to the lumber camps and one night my chum and I we had to walk four miles to the blooming camp after getting off the train, pouring rain, our blankets soaking wet. That's the kind of conditions they had before the IWW moved in. When I say moved in, they moved in alright, they moved in there by the hundreds and burned the damn place the ground, mice and all. They were lousy, believe me. So they did a good job in the lumber camps. No more of that bringing your blankets along and lying with about 40 people in a two-row bunkhouse.

Interviewer [00:20:10] Were you in the lumber camps in British Columbia at all?

Peter Campbell Munro [00:20:14] No. No, I got enough lumber camps down there for a few months.

Interviewer [00:20:18] Did you take part in any of the IWW—were you in any of these?

Peter Campbell Munro [00:20:22] No, I didn't take part in any.

Interviewer [00:20:24] Oh, what about you, Mr. Stewart? You were in the IWW, too?

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:20:28] Yes, I was only in a short time too. I went down to Butte, Montana. There was quite a few Vancouver people going down there by the time I went down, and there was no organization there in the mines at that time. They were dominated by company gunmen. There was a big fire in the Speculator Mine, I think it was the 75 men burned to death, and every man in the camp closed down the next day. There was organizers there from different organizations trying to organize the Butte miners and Frank Little was there. He had been in an accident, he was going down on a stake and attended a meeting at the [unclear] Hall I think it was, [unclear] took him out of the hotel and hauled him down to the flats and hung him. They called for pallbearers, we carried him all the way from Butte down to the flats where he was buried. I wasn't in the IWW then, but I volunteered as a pallbearer and I joined the IWW that same day that Frank Little was murdered. I stayed with them until I came back to Vancouver in the end of 1917.

Interviewer [00:21:53] What were you doing in Butte?

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:21:55] Work in the mines, uh-huh.

Interviewer [00:22:01] In a sense, both of you got your political initiation in the—

Peter Campbell Munro [00:22:06] in the Wobblies.

Interviewer [00:22:08] In the Wobblies.

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:22:09] No, I had a little bit of connection with the Socialist Party before I went there to the States. In Vancouver, I used to attend the meetings with Pete, but I wasn't a member at that time. I didn't join until after I came back.

Interviewer [00:22:23] Did you ever have anything to do with the Socialist Labor Party?

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:22:33] No.

Interviewer [00:22:33] Okay, just thought I'd try. What about the OBU, were you a member of that?

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:22:39] No, I wasn't, but there was individual members in our organization that was members, and they were very proud of their button, and despite the fact that it was a dual organization, they used to wear their button in the lapel. Jack Johnson was one of them you remember?

Interviewer [00:22:51] Did they make them take them off?

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:22:55] No.

Interviewer [00:22:55] They never did.

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:23:00] No.

Peter Campbell Munro [00:23:00] Division 101, the Street Railwaymen of Vancouver, they've always been more to the left than most of unions, I mean, except the real leftist unions. But for the AFL, they were really to the left.

Interviewer [00:23:18] What about, did your union local support the OBU any other way, give them money?

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:23:27] Not that I can remember.

Interviewer [00:23:28] What about the strike fund after the Winnipeg General Strike?

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:23:32] Oh yes, we raised a lot of money for the strike, even after the strike was over. But it was through collections, it wasn't donated by the organization.

Interviewer [00:23:48] But did you get a pretty good response from the members?

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:23:51] Oh yes, the members were strongly in favor of the—

Interviewer [00:23:56] Was it an official executive collection, or what was it?

Peter Campbell Munro [00:24:03] Yes, it was official, all right, because quite often these things, like myself, I'd be, I was quite a collector, you know, once or two, perhaps, they'd be sent down there. (laughter) It would be passed by the union that they would pay someone to go down there and collect money.

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:24:30] That wasn't the constitution at all. If you asked for permission, it was very seldom you were ever turned down. You'd get permission to collect. They would give you union stationary to put your collection, to head your collection list with too.

Interviewer [00:24:48] Do you think the OBU did anything, do you think it accomplished anything?

Peter Campbell Munro [00:24:56] I think they did. I think that, you see, you have to go according to the times. At that time, I believe that what they needed in the States especially, was direct action because it was so brutal. You know, if you were down in

strength, you were up against a bunch of stooges with guns and blackjacks and all that sort of stuff. So there was no use in talking about politics when you're in front of a guy that's going to beat you in the head. But I think they did a good job in that way. The fact of the logging business itself is a good illustration.

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:25:42] I think, Pete, that they did a good job, beginning. But taken in the long range, I think that it harmed the trade union movement for some 16 years after that because it weakened it tremendously.

Peter Campbell Munro [00:25:58] Yeah, well, of course, there might be some truth in that too, Charlie.

Interviewer [00:26:04] Was there much of this type of oppression from the employers, direct action oppression in British Columbia?

Peter Campbell Munro [00:26:14] Oh, yes. It was pretty tough in the old days, you know, in British Columbia, because the most of them would try and, it never happened on the BC Electric of course, but a lot of unions were up against scabs and, you know what happened up to the miners there when they put bulldozers in front of the women sat in front of the—

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:26:37] Corbin.

Peter Campbell Munro [00:26:38] At Corbin, yeah, and they run bulldozers over them. They were really tough.

Interviewer [00:26:48] When was this?

Peter Campbell Munro [00:26:48] That must have been—

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:26:49] In the middle thirties I think it was. I just couldn't tell you exactly when.

Interviewer [00:26:52] Where?

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:26:52] Corbin.

Peter Campbell Munro [00:26:57] The miners were out on strike. They got the scabs in there and the women went in front of where they were bringing in the scabs and they got a bulldozer there and run right over them.

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:27:07] So far as the Street Railways are concerned, in our union we had nothing like that at all. In fact, I don't know whether it was the management or whether it was the kind of people they had as employees, but I remember one time when the Citizens Committee was formed, you remember, and they were going to break up the different organizations, and we set up a labour police to guard the meetings. There was an 'L' badge, a red 'L', you know, and the superintendent came to me one night, and he was in the bullpen at Prior Street. He told me that he knew what that was, that that was the Red Army. He says, "You know," he says, "We like you working for the company, Charlie," he says, "But we're not going to stand for that sort of thing." I went and spoke to Harry Cutham [unclear] he was acting business agent, and he says, "We'll see about that." So he took it up with the management about the superintendent talking to me that way.

And Mr. Murrin called the superintendent in. He had never seen me but he told him, he says, "I don't care what Stewart's politics are," he says, "As long as he does his work," he says, "That's all I want off him, and you remember that, Mr. Dinsmore."

Interviewer [00:28:26] Why was the BC Electric, in this sense, such a good employer?

Peter Campbell Munro [00:28:32] Well, we never thought it was too good, you know. [laughter]

Interviewer [00:28:36] No, I mean in comparison to the others, I mean you admitted it.

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:28:41] I think the union had a lot to do with it.

Peter Campbell Munro [00:28:44] The union was strong.

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:28:45] It was a strong union, it was one of the best unions, I think it was one of the best unions in British Columbia.

Peter Campbell Munro [00:28:50] And probably in Canada, of the Street Railwaymen. I think it was.

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:28:53] I think that had a lot to do with it.

Peter Campbell Munro [00:28:56] They were strong. Even the last strike that we went out on, that was in, what was that, 40? That was only a few years before I quit.

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:29:04] That was 1947.

Peter Campbell Munro [00:29:07] 1947, yes. Well, we were out a month that time but we got what we wanted, 15 cents an hour. I know I was the publicity chairman at that time, and I went on the radio at night. The last time I went on I said, "Now, speaking to the public. The BC Electric is capitulating now and giving us 15 cents an hour. Why the heck couldn't they do that in the first place and save all the trouble that the public went through for a month without transportation? That's what we wanted in the first place. But they said, 'No, no', so we had to go on strike for a month to get it."

Interviewer [00:29:49] I think it's partly—I think there was a socialist in the management somewhere. No, I'm serious. I think Harrington was telling me this, that there was a socialist somewhere in management, in the BC Electric. I'm going to check back.

Peter Campbell Munro [00:30:07] Well, of course, the socialist in those days would be Gower because he was accused of being a socialist by some of these Goldwater type they were having in Canada. Maybe you remember a few years back.

Interviewer [00:30:21] Yeah, but that wasn't exactly that. He was pretty progressive. Lots of those around.

Interviewer [00:30:30] We have now all of the old records of the BC Electric have been turned over to the university.

Interviewer [00:30:35] Is that so?

Interviewer [00:30:37] So we're going to be able to check some of these things possibly.

Interviewer [00:30:40] I don't let you put this on record. [laughter]

Interviewer [00:30:44] This may not be on record. [laughter]

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:30:45] You know Jack Harrington well, do you?

Interviewer [00:30:47] Well, I've interviewed him two afternoons.

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:30:51] Is that so?

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:30:55] Is his mind still as clear as it was? God, he was a great historian, that fellow, you know, in the early days.

Interviewer [00:31:01] Still pretty good.

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:31:01] He is.

Peter Campbell Munro [00:31:02] He must be about—

Interviewer [00:31:06] Oh, he's in his eighties.

Peter Campbell Munro [00:31:09] Must be about 85 or 86, I guess.

Interviewer [00:31:11] Next thing I want to bring up is the Workers' Unity League, Paul.

Interviewer [00:31:14] Yeah, that's what I was just going to suggest.

Interviewer [00:31:16] Yeah, go ahead.

Interviewer [00:31:17] But, I was just going to say, were you members of the Workers' Unity League?

Peter Campbell Munro [00:31:21] No.

Interviewer [00:31:24] You didn't hold a dual membership or anything?

Peter Campbell Munro [00:31:28] No.

Interviewer [00:31:28] Now, did the Workers' Unity League try to organize in the areas where there already was unions?

Peter Campbell Munro [00:31:34] Not to my knowledge. Do you know this Charlie?

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:31:39] No. Never. I don't think they'd do that.

Peter Campbell Munro [00:31:42] No, they went out to organize the unorganized.

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:31:46] There might have been some poaching, but it wasn't policy of the organization to poach other unions. It was to organize the unorganized. That was their main function.

Interviewer [00:31:58] Was the Street Railwaymen very hostile to the Workers' Unity League?

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:32:04] No, no. There was just one time that I ever saw any sign of hostility and that was when the longshoremen, they hadn't been organized since 1923 I think it was. The union was broken then and they weren't organized until the Workers' Unity League organized them. They'd been a company union for several years. I think this was the 1935 strike. That was the only official collection that we'd asked to pick up and were barred, we weren't allowed to take it up. I know I raised the question at the Congress convention [in] Detroit, that must have been 1935, I think, or 1936, I was down there.

Peter Campbell Munro [00:32:59] 1935.

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:33:00] Yeah. But I don't think there was any hostility, and I think that the reason that the officers even took the position they did at that time, to refuse that, to take a collection up for the longshoremen, was that there was pressure brought to bear on them from the outside, probably the Council of the Congress.

Interviewer [00:33:19] I was going to ask you a little bit more about that particular strike. It became much long drawn out affair.

Peter Campbell Munro [00:33:25] You mean the BC Electric strike?

Interviewer [00:33:28] No, the longshoremen's strike of 1935.

Peter Campbell Munro [00:33:28] Oh yeah, yeah, yeah.

Interviewer [00:33:30] Eventually the Council came to support it, the Vancouver Trades and Labor Council. There seems to be some dispute over that at first.

Peter Campbell Munro [00:33:39] Yeah, well, I just couldn't say how far they went in support of that.

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:33:45] Well, they had speakers from the longshoremen up at the Council meetings.

Interviewer [00:33:48] They had?

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:33:48] Yeah.

Peter Campbell Munro [00:33:55] How many fellows took part in that black fray.

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:33:57] How much support they gave to it, I couldn't say.

Peter Campbell Munro [00:33:54] What do you call that little guy again that got the big bump in his head about the size of a turkey egg? Little Jimmy Thompson, not Thompson, no. Well, anyway, Jimmy, he was a veteran of the First World War, and he had a few medals. A whole slip-swing of them. And he says, "I don't give a damn." He says, "They won't dare," he says, "Hit a veteran of the—" you know. [laughter] And I says, "Don't forget," I says, "They don't give a damn, these guys, who they hit." Jimmy went down and

he was in the very front ranks when they cross the tracks there. Boy if he didn't get it. He had his little [unclear] on too you know, the blue hat you know, all his medals. That cop came along and he just fired him one with that lead baton that they used.

Interviewer [00:35:01] On the Workers' Unity League, we've been trying very hard to get a hold of someone in the organization, you know, that we can interview and find out.

Interviewer [00:35:15] Why don't you go down and see Tom McEwen?

Interviewer [00:35:19] I had an appointment with him. He had an emergency meeting of some sort. [coughing] He didn't show up. So I've been out of town last week. It was just then I was supposed to get— He's the only guy around that you know?

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:35:35] Only one that I can remember offhand.

Interviewer [00:35:41] Well, I'd better go see him.

Interviewer [00:35:42] On December, this is a point of interest, December 15, 1935, the Council finally endorsed the ILA strike, Longshoremen's strike. By that time, they had affiliated with the ILA.

Peter Campbell Munro [00:35:59] Yeah.

Interviewer [00:36:07] Now, the other thing is the ACCL, the All-Canadian Congress of Labor, and the Canadian Federation of Labor. Did you have any connections, or do you know anything about this? This is almost a blank wall, there is very little we can find out about them.

Peter Campbell Munro [00:36:33] When did the BC Federation of Labor come into effect?

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:36:38] The Canadian Federation of Labor, wasn't it?

Peter Campbell Munro [00:36:40] Yes, as the BC Federation, or the Canadian.

Interviewer [00:36:43] I was talking about the Canadian Federation, which was a dual organization of the TLC.

Peter Campbell Munro [00:36:47] Oh, yeah. Yes. And so was the—

Interviewer [00:36:52] It was started out as the All-Canadian Congress of Labor in 1927. In 1935, it broke up with a group Burford and Electrical Workers and the One Big Union.

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:37:06] It was based on the building trades unions mainly wasn't it, at the beginning?

Interviewer [00:37:12] Yeah, Amalgamated Building Workers.

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:37:15] Amalgamated Building, yes, uh-huh. I think they were genuine trade unionists. They were barking up the wrong tree though, I think, latterly myself. But the Canadian Federation of Labor had really turned into a strike-breaking organization. They went down to Estevan there to try to break the strike down there. In fact, there was a organizer in Vancouver here, and I'm not going to mention any names.

He's quite prominent in the labour movement today. He told us that he had been told to get down there and do that job. I remember he asked what I would do if I was going down. "Well," I said, "It's easy enough to answer that," I said, "You're a trade unionist, aren't you?" I said, "You wouldn't go down there and broke a strike." And he didn't. He went down there and he tried to help the strikers and he was expelled from the Federation. He came back here, he didn't do very much for a while, but I would say he's an international board member today. And I think he's quite right-wing. But at the same time, he had enough union principle, he wasn't going to go and help them break another strike.

Interviewer [00:38:32] When was that Estevan strike?

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:38:32] Hmm?

Interviewer [00:38:32] When was that Estevan strike?

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:38:35] Estevan? I couldn't remember the year, it was in the early thirties there sometime.

Interviewer [00:38:41] 1933 —

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:38:42] Round about that.

Interviewer [00:38:42] Yeah, that would be the ACCL at that time.

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:38:46] They had the members. No, the Workers' Unity League I think it was the—

Interviewer [00:38:51] Yeah, what I meant was that he must have been with the Canadian Congress of Labor.

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:38:54] No, he was with the Federation.

Interviewer [00:38:57] It wasn't formed, I don't think, until 1935.

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:39:00] It wasn't? Well, was it another, was it a second strike in Estevan?

Interviewer [00:39:06] No, that's what I was wondering because

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:39:07] There might have been, I'm pretty sure it was the Canadian Federation he was with and there might have been a second strike at Estevan down in there.

Interviewer [00:39:16] Bill, shut — [recording stops]

Interviewer [00:39:29] You didn't come into any conflict or very much contact with these other organizations?

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:39:46] No.

Interviewer [00:39:48] We're just about done.

Interviewer [00:39:49] Just one thing, you were with the Unemployed Council. These Unemployed Councils [coughing] this was in the early thirties?

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:39:58] Yes.

Interviewer [00:39:59] What happened in the late thirties? Were there any connections between your union or the Council and the unemployed after the 1935 Trek?

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:40:11] Not that I can remember.

Peter Campbell Munro [00:40:13] No.

Interviewer [00:40:18] What about the Post Office and Art Gallery sitdowns?

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:40:26] Well individually we supported the boys down there but the organization didn't do anything about it.

Interviewer [00:40:33] You didn't take up a collection?

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:40:34] Oh, yes, we did that. I think every payday we took up a collection for them.

Peter Campbell Munro [00:40:41] Oh yeah, we kept on collecting all the time.

Interviewer [00:40:45] What other unions do you think in Vancouver did this? Or in BC took the same, I mean, helped out in some way? Took up collections?

Peter Campbell Munro [00:40:59] Other organizations, you mean?

Interviewer [00:41:01] Other trade unions.

Peter Campbell Munro [00:41:04] Well I don't know, there must have been other trade unions.

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:41:10] Mostly the left-wing trade unions, I think, Pete. I don't know if, I couldn't say if there's many of the AFL.

Interviewer [00:41:15] Probably the Longshoremen?

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:41:17] Longshoremen, yes.

Interviewer [00:41:26] Other than taking up collections, you didn't have any other connection with the sit-downers?

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:41:31] No, not through the union.

Peter Campbell Munro [00:41:33] No, but there's individuals, there's plenty of individuals in the Street Railwaymen's Union that took a very active part.

Interviewer [00:41:40] Doing what?

Peter Campbell Munro [00:41:41] Well, during all the time they were, of course, the unemployed as you know were striking all the time, you know, and they were having meetings all the time on the street and they were getting knocked down all the time by police, you know, it was a continuous thing.

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:41:59] And some of us went down there every night to the Post Office and the boys were there helping to organize concerts, got talent in from the outside. Of course we weren't the only ones doing this, preachers was even doing that, look at Reverend Matheson.

Peter Campbell Munro [00:42:12] Oh, sure.

Peter Campbell Munro [00:42:13] He had one of the biggest United Churches in town here, and there was hardly a night before he was down there.

[00:42:19] It wasn't Matheson.

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:42:21] [unclear] Matheson, yeah.

Peter Campbell Munro [00:42:22] Yeah, but what about this guy that had the Church of the Open Door on Gore Avenue there? You know, he wrote a book, The Untouchables. Have you ever seen that book?

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:42:37] No, I never did, Pete.

Peter Campbell Munro [00:42:39] My daughter is the office girl right now.

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:42:43] Is that so. Well, Matheson got his reward, though, for doing that. He was kicked out of his church, and he had to go out to Burnaby there, and instead of having one big church look after, he had three little churches to look after you, and half the salary.

Peter Campbell Munro [00:42:56] Well, that was the Reverend Mr. Roddan of the First United Church. At Gore Avenue and Hastings, The Church of the Open Door. He fed thousands of the unemployed there, thousands. He went all around the country and getting people to go out with automobiles or carts or anything else to the farms and bring in carrots and turnips and cabbages and then he had a bunch of volunteer women cooking it for the unemployed every day. So he did a good job. He wrote that book, it's a very interesting book, The Canadian Untouchables.

Interviewer [00:43:34] I've never seen that.

Peter Campbell Munro [00:43:35] Oh, it's out of print now, and that's why I told my daughter to be very careful, you can't get it anymore.

Interviewer [00:43:40] How big a book is it?

Peter Campbell Munro [00:43:41] Oh, it's quite a book. About that thick.

Interviewer [00:43:47] So full-sized. Full-sized.

Peter Campbell Munro [00:43:52] Yeah. Quite a few pictures there, you know. He talks about people there that were doctors and lawyers and professional people of all kinds right on the bum for a handout.

Interviewer [00:44:04] Is he still around?

Peter Campbell Munro [00:44:06] No, he died a few years back.

Interviewer [00:44:14] There's one other point, a very specific point here, that I wanted to ask about the expulsions. Oh, there's three other points, I think. But yeah, about expulsions. When you were thrown out, let's just start in May of 1940. In June, according to the Council meetings, the Street Railwaymen endorsed the action of the President of the Council, which was Jamieson at that time, throwing you out. This seemed a little incongruous. Did the Street Railwaymen not back you up on this?

Peter Campbell Munro [00:45:00] Well, I think that's a little haywire, that thing. I don't remember if the Union had taken a vote on that, and endorsing their actions.

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:45:09] They must have endorsed them in some way, anyway, Pete, or the other delegates wouldn't have been attending the Council.

Interviewer [00:45:21] They had to do this, in other words, in order to get back into the Council.

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:45:25] Yes.

Peter Campbell Munro [00:45:28] I don't remember any meetings that dealt with that.

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:45:31] No, I don't remember any action on it myself, but that's the only thing that I can figure.

Peter Campbell Munro [00:45:35] I think it was already made up.

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:45:36] They must have endorsed the action. They withdrew, the delegates withdrew I think, but I think they were back at the next meeting again.

Interviewer [00:45:46] Because according to this, the Street Railwaymen did not vote against the AFL decision to exclude the Communists.

Peter Campbell Munro [00:45:55] No. [coughing].

Interviewer [00:46:00] Your local voted with the AFL decision.

Peter Campbell Munro [00:46:06] Yes. Well, I guess they pretty well have to as an organization, you know.

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:46:10] Of course, that was only the one time I was expelled. I was expelled once after that, too.

Interviewer [00:46:15] Yeah, that's as far as I've gone.

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:46:18] I was expelled in 1951 also. I was only out a short time. I was back again in 1941 or 1942 and went back to the Council. I was at the Congress before I was back in the Council again. But I was expelled from the Council again in 1951, in January. I had been over in the old country and someone raised in the Vancouver Labor Council when I was away, or the Vancouver Trades and Labor Council, that I was over at the World Federation meeting. I forget where it was meeting at that time, but I was supposed to be a delegate there. I was told that when I came back. Well I wasn't, my mother was still there, and she had an accident and I went home. I said, "I'd sure like to have been there, but I never got a chance." But that was one of the excuses they gave for having me expelled from the Council.

Interviewer [00:47:19] Someone mentioned this to me, I can't just remember who, but they said that particularly in the early period, the Council and BC workers were always very much opposed to red-baiting. Is this something that grew up in the thirties?

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:47:38] The red-baiting?

Interviewer [00:47:39] Red-baiting and— [coughing]

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:47:42] On the thirties, [coughing] we throw them red-baiting [coughing] because anybody that started it was soon isolated by the majority of the delegates at that Council. Even people like Jack Henderson down there, he's a Liberal, but even Jack used to get up and oppose them, you know, and we didn't have to oppose them much at all, there was other people there that had no connection with the left-wing movement at all who would oppose the red-baiters.

Peter Campbell Munro [00:48:11] To give you a picture of how the people of British Columbia felt in these days of Depression, I was a delegate, a trade union delegate to the Soviet Union, one of the first delegates to go there, 1934. I went to Scotland to see my father, he was so [unclear] then, and I was a week later coming back. Two delegates, another delegate was late too, so we came back. And the CPR, my wife and my family met me down below, they let them down below to meet me, and I came up there, and when I came up I couldn't understand what the heck was the matter. That was in January 1935, I come back. I couldn't get through the crowd, and there was thousands of people there, the CPR was full, it was full right down Cordova Street, streetcars couldn't go past, and they had an improvised platform there for me to get up and say a few words, which I did.

Interviewer [00:49:16] Inside the depot.

Peter Campbell Munro [00:49:17] Right inside the depot. There was the cops there, but I wouldn't dare to do it. There were thousands of people just, oh just raising heck you know. Then we had a meeting, I told them we're having a meeting as far as I knew on the Sunday, I was advised that in Calgary. So we had that big meeting down in Georgia Street, you know. And before, the meeting was at 8 o'clock, before 7 o'clock, there wasn't a soul more to get in there. They had an overflow meeting up in the Moose Hall. What was it that we collected that night at that meeting?

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:49:57] I don't remember.

Peter Campbell Munro [00:49:58] It was \$1,000 or something. \$1,180 during the Depression. There was four of us delegates spoke there. I was the last because I went to the Moose Hall to speak first up there. Then I came back to the hall, and I was the last to

speaking there. There was nobody heckled, except one asked a question or two. Everybody agreed with what we said. Well, that just shows you what the Hungry Thirties was. When Charlie said there wasn't much red-baiting, you can understand why there wasn't. They were scared to death to open their mouth or something.

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:50:39] Red-baiting developed with the Cold War.

Peter Campbell Munro [00:50:41] That's when it really started. Yeah.

Interviewer [00:50:45] Didn't you get some in the—well, you know—at the time of the expulsions in the late thirties?

Peter Campbell Munro [00:50:54] Well, yes, there was quite a bit of red-baiting in the Congress, and then the Trades and Labor Council too, around that time, but that was a way after the Hungry Thirties.

Interviewer [00:51:10] I get the impression from the minutes that, from about 1935 on, it grows more and more into two camps within the Council.

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:51:22] Yes.

Interviewer [00:51:23] The Council officially becomes more conservative, more dictatorial, and less representative of the opinions of the rank and file. Would you say this is true?

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:51:39] I think it's true. I think that—

Interviewer [00:51:41] Could you explain why you think this happened too?

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:51:45] Well, the only reason I can see was the roadmen had been in control of the labor movement so long that they were afraid that they were going to lose that control over the membership.

Peter Campbell Munro [00:51:55] You understand what the roadmen is?

Interviewer [00:51:58] No.

Peter Campbell Munro [00:51:58] You better explain that.

[00:51:58] Yes, I'll give you.

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:52:00] There's the international board members in the country there, they controlled the Congress, and there are still controlling the Congress more or less today, too. They controlled the locals with an iron hand, and I remember one time Teddy Morrison, and Teddy Morrison's a good friend of mine. He had been expelled from his union in the time of the OBU, took it over and he came back again and he was a good international man after he came back. I remember I wrote an article to the Daily Clarion, I think it was, on the roadmen prior to a convention and Teddy was a delegate or a member of the executive of the Council too, so he tried to get the Council to have me expelled and even the executive didn't go for that. He wrote to my union and the union didn't do anything about it, and he took it up with our international. That just to show that the international, they give their own memberships the benefit the doubt on anything. They didn't take any action, but he did contact the local officers of the union, what it was all

about. So that was just interesting to see. Teddy was a roadman then, and he was determined to hold on, and he wasn't going to have the roadmen blaggarded by anybody if he could help it.

Interviewer [00:53:40] Well, did the roadmen increase in power in the thirties to cause this, or—

Peter Campbell Munro [00:53:45] No, they were represented in the reactionary AFL, and you see, and of course, our unions in Canada, so many of them affiliated, mostly, with the AFL. Naturally, they're in Canada, you see, off and on. Of course, at conventions, labor conventions, of course they're there quite prominently and doing their best of course to support the reactionary elements.

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:54:19] They're there all the time, Pete. All these internationals, they've got the roadmen in the country, you see, they carry out policy of the particular international.

Interviewer [00:54:26] I just wondered why it was worse in the late thirties than previous to that.

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:54:32] Well, previous to that, there hadn't been the same opposition to them. It was plain sailing with them and they could give a little bit semblance of democracy. When their policies were being attacked, and they couldn't change their policies, they had to attack us.

Interviewer [00:54:50] I just wondered if the fact that they represented the employed, fairly well-off employed in a sense.

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:55:01] Well, that has something to do with it too, of course.

Interviewer [00:55:03] That they were—

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:55:04] Because the Trades Council did not take a position in support of the unemployed, without doubt. They didn't take that. They were more concerned with the people that was in the job. I'll give you an instance there, when there were delegates to the Trades Council. For a while, Bengough to keep his seat as a delegate to the Trades Council, had to pay the per capita tax of nearly all the members that was in the Machinists' Union. They weren't working. He continued as a delegate when he didn't have the membership, but he paid the per capita tax for a certain number.

Interviewer [00:55:42] What sort of support do you think Bengough had? Would he have won an election within, you know, a membership election? Bengough had won a membership election?

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:55:57] In his union?

Interviewer [00:55:58] Well, no, I mean, of all as—

Peter Campbell Munro [00:56:02] The Trades and Labor Council and the Carpenters.

Interviewer [00:56:03] As secretary. Do you think if you sent around a referendum to all of the local unions that he would have had much support?

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:56:14] He had quite strong support.

Peter Campbell Munro [00:56:18] He always got elected.

Interviewer [00:56:22] And that didn't always, often no one ran against him.

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:56:28] No, there's nobody running against him really.

Interviewer [00:56:30] But that's often an indication of strength of support more than anything else.

Interviewer [00:56:35] It can also be representative that you removed all the opposition. Well, the only other point, oh, there's two other things I want to ask, one is, you were in the Vancouver Trades and Labor Council. I just wondered, in what sense was there a British Columbia labour movement? Was there much connection between say Vancouver and the rest of the province, or was it very much a Vancouver labour movement?

Peter Campbell Munro [00:57:09] Well, Vancouver and New Westminster, of course. That was at that time. Vancouver and New Westminster Trades and Labor Council.

Interviewer [00:57:16] Did you have much connections with Victoria, Prince Rupert, the interior at all?

Peter Campbell Munro [00:57:23] Well, I can't say myself that we had any great connections up there. Do you, Charlie?

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:57:31] Well, no, I don't think so. Bengough was a vice president of the Congress for several years before he was elected the president, and I guess through the Congress representative, he kept in touch with these different places. But it was mainly a Greater Vancouver trade union movement in the main.

Interviewer [00:57:58] I get that opinion also regarding the CCF. It was quite localized, and particularly in the early years, to Vancouver. The other specific question I wanted to ask was during the late 1920s, between about, say, 1925 to 1929, the so-called prosperous years, I also get the impression there was quite a bit of unemployment around. Were they that prosperous, in and around Vancouver?

Peter Campbell Munro [00:58:31] There were not. There was terrible unemployment.

Interviewer [00:58:35] All through the late twenties?

Peter Campbell Munro [00:58:36] Yes, and after the First World War, let's say in 1920, 1921 there was, well, there were so many unemployed, even veterans, they didn't have any place to put them in Vancouver, they put them out to the exhibition grounds. I don't know whether you heard about that or not, but that's what happened. So there was plenty of unemployment during the years.

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:59:01] Up to about 1923, I think.

Peter Campbell Munro [00:59:03] Yeah.

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:59:04] Between 1923 and 1929 there wasn't so much, I don't think, Pete. There might have been some, but I don't recall that. I know up until 1923, there was quite a strong unemployed movement here. In fact, that's one time that the trade union movement did take a part. That's when the Committee of 25 was let there in the trade unions to work with the unemployed. [coughing]

Interviewer [00:59:31] I just wondered whether any of these unemployed organizations stayed working during the late twenties?

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:59:40] They may have, but I don't know. We'd just be guessing on that part to say they were.

Interviewer [00:59:50] Because we have no way to check this, there were no records being kept.

Charles McGregor Stewart [00:59:53] No.

Peter Campbell Munro [00:59:56] I don't know if any of the unemployed organizations that was carried over to the—you mean the Hungry Thirties?

Charles McGregor Stewart [01:00:02] Well, I mean really between the Depression, the big Depression in 1922, 1921-1923, and 1929 when the thirties began. That period of four or five or six years in there, I have the feeling that the unemployment was much higher than is normally thought.

Charles McGregor Stewart [01:00:23] It could have been, but I don't know if any—.

Peter Campbell Munro [01:00:25] Well, I know that from 1924 to 1926, almost 1927, we had a dairy business at the time. I was trying to get off the BC Electric because I had a gastric ulcer and I was trying to get off. However I wasn't able to get off. Anyway, I sold my house and bought this dairy, nine cows, up on Robson. Why I'm saying there was a lot of unemployed is because, we went around selling our milk, we had a wagon, you know, and there was an awful lot of people out of a job around that district anyway, up Kingsway, that couldn't pay for their milk, you know, and all that sort of stuff. That was in these years, 1924-1927. So I don't know about the rest, but I know that in that district there was a lot of unemployed people.

Interviewer [01:01:31] That's about all the questions I had, and I'll no doubt think of a few others later.

Peter Campbell Munro [01:01:36] I don't know whether we give you a very good picture of what's been happening all these years or not. It's too bad we didn't keep a diary all these years, you know.

Charles McGregor Stewart [01:01:46] It's quite hard, you've got to use your own memory, you know, for so far back.