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Transcribed by: Ron Johnson

Ron Johnson [00:03:06] Hi, everyone. My name is Ron Johnson. And among other things, I'm a former staffer at the BC Federation of Labour. And with me today is Colin Gabelmann, who was also a staffer at the BC Federation of Labour in the 1970s. You may know us in other capacities. Colin, of course, was the MLA from North Vancouver-Seymour from 1972 to 1975 during the Barrett government and then MLA from North Island from 1979 through until 1996. He served in the Harcourt government as the Attorney General. For my part, in addition to working at the BC Federation of Labour. I also worked as editor of 'On the Level', the newspaper of the BC Provincial Council of Carpenters, and then after that on various NDP and union advertising campaigns here in BC and across the country. Colin and I are in a very unique position to share with you the untold story of an important piece of BC labour history, namely the difficult relationship in the early years between the BC Federation of Labour and the leadership of the NDP caucus in Victoria. And I really want to underline that the issue was with the caucus in Victoria. It was never with the party as an organization. It was a complicated relationship. It's not well understood and some of it is misunderstood. And so, what we're going to do today is try to clear that up and get the perspective of the BC Federation of Labour down about that period of labour history in British Columbia. The best place to begin is the beginning. And so, Colin, let's kick this off with a discussion about the CCF (Co-operative Commonwealth Federation). You were a member actually of the CCF. Why was it that the CCF decided that it needed to create a new party together with unions in Canada?

Colin Gabelmann [00:05:10] Well, I joined the CCYM (Co-operative Commonwealth Youth Movement), which was the youth movement, when I was 14, in 1958. 1958 was significant because that was a year Diefenbaker had a massive majority and virtually wiped out the CCF. We were down to eight seats after that election and there was a lot of feeling that in the end, if the CCF was going to be more successful than it had been to date, it needed to broaden its base. It was seen primarily as a farmer organization with a strong element of Christian leadership, progressive Christian leadership, which we used to have in the old days more than we have now. But it didn't really do well in the in urban Canada – as well as it needed to do. It didn't do well with working people. It did well with trade unionist leadership, but not so much with the full membership. And so that was that was seen as a problem and it needed to broaden its base. So, a number of people, David Lewis, Stanley Knowles, among others, decided to approach the Canadian Labour Congress to talk about a merger. This was to be along the lines of the British Labour Party and the Swedish social democratic movement, where in fact there was a close symbiotic relationship between the labour movement and the party. And so, what the idea was – and it was I think well executed – the idea was it wouldn't just make labour just an appendage to the CCF. It would create a new party with a new name, which would be a joint venture by CFFers and trade unionists to present to Canadians, and in particular to working class Canadians, a different vision that would inspire them to support this new party politically. It got off to a good start in the convention in 1961, and I'll leave it at that for the moment.

Ron Johnson [00:07:33] In 1961, the NDP was founded at a convention in Ottawa. What I think is interesting is the dynamic in British Columbia around that time. Even before the party was founded, Social Credit moved to shut it down by banning union contributions to political parties. And that was, I think, in February or March of 1961 before the convention even happened. So, it was a tough time and gives us somewhat of an indication of how hard Social Credit fought against the NDP, and against unions. The convention was in

Ottawa in 1961. This is an interesting aside that actually the convention was in midsummer, and W.A.C. Bennett called a legislative session for the exact time that the NDP was having its founding convention so that CCF MLAs could not participate in the founding of the NDP. Bob Strachan at the time asked W.A.C. if he could move the session so that the CCF MLAs could participate and of course Bennett would not. That was the session where they nationalized BC Electric and took one of the CCF's main planks as part of Social Credit.

Colin Gabelmann [00:08:58] And created BC Ferries in that same period – two of the main issues that the CCF had been campaigning for. What we need to remember and is often overlooked is that W.A.C. Bennett decided to brand the (new) party before it was even formed by making it seem as if it was off limits to the ordinary voting public. And he was very effective in that branding campaign. He demonized labour and made the public feel that all of the economic problems that they might be feeling at any given time were all totally the responsibility of working people through their unions. And that branding process lasted through the 60s, ending up late in the 60s with the Mediation Commission, which we might talk about a bit during this program. But it was very effective and it has never been commented on publicly in a way that fully explains the disastrous effect it had for many, many years on the ideas on the CCF and the CLC, and through the new party.

Ron Johnson [00:10:11] Let's go to October 1961, the founding of the BC section of the new party, which had by that time become the New Democratic Party. Was the convention in Vancouver? I wasn't at it. I don't think you were at it either. But when I look at newspaper reports from the time, it seems that it wasn't necessarily welcomed by all CCFers in BC. Do you have a comment on whether or not the BC CCF really thought this was a good idea to create the NDP?

Colin Gabelmann [00:10:45] There was a lot of ambivalence and there was a lot of negative attitude toward the decision to effect the merger. I was in the Okanagan at the time. I was still, when it happened, I was still in grade 11. But being in the Okanagan, I was really aware of a lot of the view of CCFers because we had a hard time electing members back then. And some significant leadership elements were in favour of the merger. Many, many were not. And I think that was true throughout the province. Later, when I got around the province I really began to realize that there was, during the 60s, there was a continuing reluctance to really properly embrace the decision. And many people yearning for the good old days when the CCF was able to be pure and perfect and all its policy statements and never get elected.

Ron Johnson [00:11:49] Why – okay, I guess you've talked a bit about some of that – but why do you think the CCF didn't want this – or I shouldn't say the CCF – some people in the CCF, why would they not want to embrace a merger, as you say, with unions? I mean, it was obviously an effort to broaden the base of the CCF.

Colin Gabelmann [00:12:11] One of the ironies of that, in my view, was that because a lot of the traditional CCFers thought joining labour would weaken the party position, move it to the middle. And of course, Bennett in the meantime was branding it as being even far more crazy left if labour did join. So, there was this feeling that the decision to create a new party which became the NDP was designed in part to weaken the position of the purists, the people who were so in love with the 1933 manifesto and the purity of having a perfect position and with not much concern about whether or not that was an electable position. So that those people were perhaps not a majority in the province. Perhaps that was close to a majority of people. But the party went along with the merger because what

do you do? The rest of the country was in favor of it. The new party was established nationally. And for the BC CCF to go separately in a different direction would not have been effective. And there was a majority for that view.

Ron Johnson [00:13:36] I think Dave Barrett's comment at the convention and reported to newspapers was, "what's done is done, let's move on." Which is not exactly a ringing endorsement, but recognizing the reality of the situation.

Colin Gabelmann [00:13:48] "Let's move on" sums up, I think, the view of CCFers in that period. Yeah.

Ron Johnson [00:13:54] Now, 1961, Tom Berger was elected the first president of the BC NDP. That's a different approach to politics than perhaps the old approach of the CCF. He had a group around him. Walter Young, Professor Young from UBC. They wanted to create a very different approach to how the new party, the NDP, would campaign. Do you have a comment on what they were aiming to do?

Colin Gabelmann [00:14:25] Well, they were trying to present the new party, the New Democratic Party, as being modern, as being in touch with the everyday lives of people in a way that for before that had not happened effectively in my view, and in the view of Tom Berger and Walter Young and quite a number of other people, including a number of labour leaders. I think of Bob Smeal in that respect and many others. So, they wanted to broaden the appeal without weakening the values and vision. And that was a tricky objective. And there were some missteps along the way I have to say. I don't know whether we're into 1966 yet, but or even '63, trying to present Bob Strachan as something he wasn't. A little bit like presenting Gordon Campbell as a worker by putting him in a plaid shirt (in 1996). They put Bob Strachan in a three piece suit and tried to create an image of moderation that way. It didn't work because it was it was phony. And phoniness does not work in politics.

Ron Johnson [00:15:43] So the CCF joined with labour. We have the new party. The first election in BC was actually the federal election in 1972 (actually 1962), which the NDP did very well in. And interestingly from my reading, Bob Smeal, the president of the BC Federation of Labour, was very involved in taking Tommy Douglas around the province. And there was a lot of enthusiasm for that. But '63, as you point out, Bob Strachan was leader of the provincial party and the election did not work out. I think we lost a couple of seats in that election. So that takes us to '66, another election, as you mentioned. My sense of it is that the '66 election, Bob wanted to go back to the old CCF campaigning. He tried that. It didn't work either.

Colin Gabelmann [00:16:36] Yeah.

Ron Johnson [00:16:36] So you then get to a situation where we've got the new party, two elections. It hasn't really generated the kind of results that people wanted. What happened in 1967 that really sort of brought this issue to a head in the party?

Colin Gabelmann [00:16:53] Well, '67 was the famous convention that Tom Berger, who had been elected in '66 in Vancouver-Burrard, decided to challenge Bob Strachan for the leadership of the NDP. It was a strong campaign, but it failed. He lost to Strachan. A lot of people in the party, CCFers and new party people, are not very comfortable with the idea of challenging an incumbent wherever, whether it's in a riding, whether it's in the leadership position itself. And there was a bit of resentment against Tom for challenging

Bob Strachan. And so, Strachan won, although it was a Pyrrhic victory. He was damaged to the point where he then resigned and there was another convention and Tom Berger actually won in his own right in a difficult convention.

Ron Johnson [00:18:03] Tom Berger had a lot of union support, very strong support from the BC Federation of Labour. He was a labour lawyer and also a lawyer who focused a lot on indigenous rights at the time. So, he had union support for that challenge, which didn't sit well, as you pointed out, with a number of people in the party. One thing that I didn't mention in 1966 is an interesting side note. Ray Haynes was elected president of the of the BC NDP. We always think of Ray Haynes, who was at that time a staff rep for Retail-Wholesale (the union RWDSU) as being a union leader. But Ray actually was elected president of the BC NDP and then stepped down very quickly to take over the job as Secretary-Treasurer of the BC Federation of Labour

Colin Gabelmann [00:18:54] Yes, because the head of the Federation, the Secretary-Treasurer at the time, left back in '67. And Ray, whose first public notoriety in a good sense of that word was as president of the party, took over as Secretary-Treasurer of the BC Fed to begin a very, very important and interesting time in the labour movement, which we'll get to. So, there was a lot of activity, a lot of dynamism, a lot of movement. But the leadership of the labour movement was fully engaged in trying to play a role in this new party, without taking it over, without dominating it, with trying to work together with the old CCFers. It was a very tenuous and difficult connection or relationship. And I think it took some 'we'll get through this', but it took some years to resolve.

Ron Johnson [00:19:55] So during that time, during the 60s, you became a staffer for the NDP?

Colin Gabelmann [00:20:01] Well, I yes, I left UBC in '67. Clive Lytle was the secretary of the BC party, the chief operating officer of the party. Ernie Hall was earlier, but then he was elected and Clive Lytle took over, hired me, and later on, Michael Lewis. And the two of us became the staff organizers leading up to the preparation for the '69 election, which wasn't scheduled, of course, until 70 or 71. But because it was only three years after the last one. The '66 election was in September and the next one came in '69, suddenly because Bennett saw an opportunity to derail the efforts we were expending to broaden the base of the party and to try to be successful in the coming election. So, it happened more quickly. I had the opportunity and that election of traveling the entire province. Michael (Lewis) looked after the Lower Mainland and put me on the road. But it was fascinating to watch what was happening everywhere as the labour types and the CCF types tried to work together to support Tom. And for the most part they did. But there were issues as well.

Ron Johnson [00:21:36] Well, the 1969 election was a very difficult campaign. Tom Berger was elected with a lot of BC Federation of Labour and union support narrowly over Dave Barrett at the convention in May of 1969. And correct me if I'm wrong, but from my perspective, he walked out of that convention, Berger did, he was asked if he would nationalize BC Tel. It was kind of a touchstone policy for showing whether you were a socialist or not. And Tom said, 'yes, I would.' And from that moment on, he was labeled by Bennett as more extreme than Bob Strachan. And so, he went into that campaign already defined by Social Credit. And as you mentioned, that was part of their very successful strategy throughout the 60s. Now, that election was the election where the idea, I would say, the modernizers in the party was really to show 'we can govern' and their slogan was 'Ready to Govern'. And that was not a good slogan.

Colin Gabelmann [00:22:46] It was a terrible choice in retrospect. I loved it at the time because I felt we were ready to govern. I was as you mentioned, I was an organizer for the party. And it felt good. It felt good to have professional, competent leadership. And it felt good to say we're ready to govern. But it was the stupidest thing we ever could have said because that was not the way to get elected.

Ron Johnson [00:23:12] Well, of course, Tom Berger, as we know, went on to do all kinds of wonderful things, and he would have been a great premier, but he was not a good campaigner and he missed that election. He just misgauged, or the party did, misgauge the mood.

Colin Gabelmann [00:23:28] Well, the branding had been effective against labour and he was associated with labour. W.A.C. Bennett had done a masterful job of that branding. Then the nationalization issue with BC Tel also further demonized Tom and the leadership and the party itself. And then unfortunately, Tom was in Prince George, where three active pulp mills were spewing pollution into the atmosphere and making life difficult for people lived in Prince George. But it wasn't difficult from a paycheck point of view. It was only difficult from a breathing point of view. So, what's more important? Paycheques. And so, Tom said, we are going to deal with this pollution issue. And, of course, that said to workers 'oh, oh, he's going to cut our paycheques.' And that further branded Tom, a very early environmentalist, a very early supporter of indigenous rights, a very early supporter of the view that labour had an important and valuable role to play in the governing. But the branding of it was bad, the branding was terrible, and he went down to a significant defeat.

Ron Johnson [00:24:46] Another side note from that campaign, he also campaigned for the creation of neighborhood pubs, which the NDP introduced in 1972. But Local 40 did not like that. And they dogged Tom Berger during that campaign saying 'you're going to kill bartender jobs if you introduce neighbourhood pubs.'

Colin Gabelmann [00:25:05] Nobody watching this video post 2024 is going to believe that neighborhood pubs were not always around and not always popular, not always successful. But Local 40 didn't want them because they saw this being the introduction of non-union bartenders, non-union servers, which to a certain extent they were right. But one has to move on. And sometimes the labour movement is slow at moving on. And I think Local 40 was slow in that respect.

Ron Johnson [00:25:34] So Tom Berger runs a strong campaign, a campaign we were all proud of. I was by then in the party, but with strong backing from BC Federation of Labour and unions, and it turns out to be a disaster. The NDP lost seats. We only elected one new MLA, Dennis Cocke in New Westminster. Berger lost his own seat in Vancouver-Burrard. And that was the end of Tom Berger's leadership in the party. What happened? Tell me about the convention in 1970 in Chilliwack when Dave Barrett became the leader.

Colin Gabelmann [00:26:11] Well, prior to that convention, a number of us I was leaving my job as the because we, the party, was broke. And so, I wasn't employed any longer. A number of us met at Dennis and Yvonne Cocke's to talk with Tom Berger to try to persuade him to stay on; that we could, we thought, remedy the situation and he was the perfect leader. Tom resolutely said, No, I'm leaving. I'm done with politics. In effect, he didn't use those words, but that's what the message was. And so, we were left with a situation where the obvious alternative was Dave Barrett in the party's mind. And everybody could see that Dave was the... Dave had come a strong second in the

leadership convention of '69. So, it was obvious that we were going to be facing Dave Barrett at the 1970 convention. And as it turned out, it was an acclamation, if my memory is correct. And he then embarked on a different strategy than Tom had. Tom was ready to govern. Dave was ready to be the strongest opposition leader that ever BC had. And that was his campaign. A different strategy, as it ultimately turned out, successfully. But was it successful because it was the right strategy or was it successful because 20 years was enough of W.A.C. Bennett ? And I think the latter part is not understood as well as the former.

Ron Johnson [00:27:51] Now, so Dave Barrett becomes leader in 1970. He immediately set out, of course, to make some changes in the public perception – the branding that Social Credit had been so successful at. And I think partly as a strategic move, but also because he really felt it. He decided that one of the first things he had to do was distance the NDP from the labour movement and from the BC Federation of Labour, which seems kind of odd given that the NDP was created to be a merger of unions and the CCF. Dave had a very different approach. So, one of the first things he did, I know, and he writes about it in his book and I brought this book along because if anybody wants to really hear it from Dave Barrett himself, this '*A Passionate Political Life*', Dave Barrett's autobiography, is actually a very interesting read. And he's really quite clear about what he set out to do at that time. So, one of the things they did was they moved the NDP office from 517 East Broadway – and maybe it's an arcane point, but it's part it's an important part of history...

Colin Gabelmann [00:29:02] Symbolic.

Ron Johnson [00:29:03] It's symbolic, yeah. They moved the office. 517 East Broadway, the headquarters of the NDP, was built by the CCF. And Fred Vulliamy was very involved at the time in raising the funds and building that building. And it became the headquarters of the NDP. The BC Federation of Labour moved in to support the party and help pay the rent. But Barrett did not like that. And his group decided that they had to move out. So, they moved out of their own building. And it's interesting and I want to correct this record because some versions of this have it that the BC Fed pushed the NDP out. That was absolutely not the case. I was on the executive when Bob Williams said 'the optics are terrible. They're always having strikes. They're always having the media here. We've got to get away from these people.' And so, they moved to 1881 East Hastings. So that was one. But Barrett was also not happy about affiliation either. He tried to change that in the party.

Colin Gabelmann [00:30:06] Yeah, that was one of the sticking points that labour never effectively countered. David Lewis, back in the formation of the party in '61, really believed in the UK model: the British Labour Party's relationship with labour where you had to have an intrinsic relationship but one that was a true merger. And one of the ways you could do that was to create membership based on affiliation by local unions. I spent a lot of time in the '70 to '72 period when I started working at the Fed, going around trying to persuade local unions to affiliate. At the same time, the leader of the party, quietly but more effective than I was and others were, was dissuading the party to go along that road. So, we had this internal quiet tension which never appeared in the media particularly, but between those of us trying to create more affiliates and those trying to have fewer. And that struggle continued through that '70, '71, '72 period until the election. It quieted down as an issue after that. But it's still never, ever been fully resolved.

Ron Johnson [00:31:36] Okay. So, we have the issue of affiliations. Also, I think it's important to understand the approach that Dave took in terms of who he thought your loyalty would be with, either the party - and these are Dave's words – 'the party or labour'.

And there's a very interesting item recounted in *'The Art of the Impossible'*, the book on the Barrett Government by Jeff Meggs and Rod Mickleburgh in which they recount how Bill King tells them that Barrett talked to him when he was seeking the nomination in Revelstoke. And he asked Bill King, and these are Bill King's words, "are you party or are you labour?" And Bill King said, "I'm party." That was the answer Dave Barrett wanted, which will have an impact when we talk about the Labour Code later. But so, there was this general effort on the part of Dave Barrett, again, partly strategically, but partly genuinely felt, I think, to change what the NDP was. And he did successfully rebrand the party during that period, moved the party away from the perception that it was a 'labour' party.

Colin Gabelmann [00:33:01] I'll never forget sitting in Bill King's house with he and Audrey and trying to persuade him to be our candidate in the by-election that was created when Ran Harding ran federally in that period between '69 and '72. And I was an early supporter of Bill King's strongly. I really felt that he was the strongest possible candidate coming out of Revelstoke-Slocan in those days. And his work as an engineer and on a C.P.R. railway, his work in his local union was strong and effective, and he would be the ideal candidate. As it turned out, he probably was the ideal candidate to win that by-election. And then subsequently in the general. But from another point of view, what he basically did was to support Dave and this campaign to separate organized labour from the CCF influence in the NDP. And that became in many ways very symbolic. Bill was a symbol of the problem because the labour movement wasn't united and trade unionists weren't united on that issue unfortunately. The leadership at the Fed was clear and forthright and focused, but often they were ahead of the membership. And this was a classic example of how that could happen.

Ron Johnson [00:34:47] So I want to just talk about the context of the labour movement going into the 1972 campaign. We've talked about the politics in the party, but in the public, of course, this was a time throughout the '60s where the labour movement was very active in trying to organize the unorganized. The 'hot' declaration was developed to be a vehicle for assisting in the successful winning of organization campaigns, strikes and so on. But the Socreds were on a different page. So, we had in British Columbia at the time ex-parte injunctions constantly impacting the right of workers to be on strike. You had the Mediation Commission, which the BC Fed organized to boycott. So, there was a lot of talk at the time about labour chaos in the province, which also played in that period. And I don't know if you have any comment about any of that, but it was informational picketing, I guess, (that) was very important to the BC Federation of Labour going into the 1972 campaign.

Colin Gabelmann [00:36:05] That was a good illustration of the branding that W.A.C. Bennett was determined to do, to paint the NDP as being a part of an irresponsible labour movement. And how do you make labour look irresponsible? You create institutions and you bring in laws that labour has no choice but to oppose, that make organizing more difficult, make prosecuting a strike or getting a collective agreement even more difficult. So how does labour react to that? They react by going on strike. They react by publicly opposing the government and making it look like they were the bad guys, when in fact the bad guys were the government for setting it up to force labour into that position. But that was never properly or effectively portrayed to the public. The public thought that was labour was bad. And of course, by extension, that makes the NDP bad. So that led to Dave Barrett trying to take the NDP away from labour as best he could. And it was one of the reasons, not the main reason in my view, but one of the reasons why Dave was successful in '72.

Ron Johnson [00:37:26] So, you have you have this absurd situation where we see Bennett during that time, saying the NDP is organizing these strikes to make the Socreds look bad, which of course was, as you've described, the exact opposite. They were provoking conflict to make the NDP look bad.

Colin Gabelmann [00:37:43] Absolutely right.

Ron Johnson [00:37:44] Now, I want to get to the '72 election campaign. Dave – of course, we've talked about changing rebranding the NDP to deal with this problem from the 1960s – today you would call that inoculation, that you're getting rid of an issue that is a problem – he did that in other issues, too. I know in '69, W.A.C. called Berger 'a godless Marxist'. And one of the things Dave did, I think very successfully, he recruited some social gospel Christians – I don't mean extremists – but Hartley Dent and..

Colin Gabelmann [00:38:26] Peter Ralston.

Ron Johnson [00:38:26] ...and Peter Ralston. He created a policy about freedom of religion that the NDP could adhere to. He also did something that I discovered recently. He went to Washington State, met with Democrat legislators and the governor, and he brought them to Victoria to talk about cross-border pollution. So, what he was doing was creating this sense of responsible Dave, you know, dealing with issues. And these were genuine issues. Yeah. So, going into the 1972 campaign, the dynamic for the NDP because of the work of Dave Barrett, was very different than it was in 1969. And then we had the situation where, of course, the party was not allowed to introduce Dave as the next premier. Do you have a you have a memory on that?

Colin Gabelmann [00:39:18] I do. Yes. Dave needs to be given credit for it. And often those of us who weren't his greatest fans don't give him enough credit for his astute leadership in positioning the party to be able to win that election. And we need to acknowledge that. We need to give him the credit that is his due. A lot of us then and still now in my view and for me anyway, don't think he had to go quite so far in separating himself from the labour movement internally in the party. He needed to create this image publicly that everything was going to be peaceful if he got elected and war would continue if Bennett was re-elected. So, he needs to be given his due for that. But the test then would be what would happen during the government days. And frankly, in my view, he failed the test of maintaining the purpose and spirit of the merger that had occurred 10 or 11 years earlier. So, we might want to get into some of that with some of the things that did happen.

Ron Johnson [00:40:49] Well, I think it's almost laughable now, but I know one of the things that happened, Ray Haynes recounted that Dave asked him to stage a fake fight with the BC Fed so that the public would think that there was hostility between the BC Fed and the NDP leadership. Well, in fact, in some ways there really was hostility when that kind of suggestion was made.

Colin Gabelmann [00:41:19] But labour wanted to keep the hostility, to call it that, or the difference of opinion, which how I would prefer to characterize it, wanted to keep that quiet and keep it inside the party. Dave wanted it to be on the shirt sleeve so that everybody would know that labour wasn't playing the role that was designed for it to play in the party. And so, the fake fight people, a lot of people still think that that was not true. It was one of those things that was true. And Dave admitted it later that he wanted to create the

separation. Ray Haynes being the kind of guy he was refused to participate in that. The word integrity and Ray Haynes are synonymous.

Ron Johnson [00:42:11] So, yes, actually, you're right, There are newspaper stories where Dave says, well, he misinterpreted what I said, but he never said that he didn't say it. So, that did indeed happen. I just want to talk about the policy going into the 1972 government. The policy of the NDP was to support informational picketing rights.

Colin Gabelmann [00:42:33] Yep.

Ron Johnson [00:42:34] ...for working people.

Colin Gabelmann [00:42:35] The party policy was yes.

Ron Johnson [00:42:37] The party policy, and I have the quote actually from the 1972 election platform which says "guarantee the right of workers to picket peacefully and to make information relating to labour management disputes available to the public." So that was a pretty firm commitment from the party that labour expected would be part of a new Labour Code.

Colin Gabelmann [00:42:55] Right.

Ron Johnson [00:42:55] So we have the election. Finally, the NDP wins. You are elected in North Vancouver-Seymour.

Colin Gabelmann [00:43:02] Yes.

Ron Johnson [00:43:03] To the surprise of probably everyone.

Colin Gabelmann [00:43:04] Everybody, including myself.

Ron Johnson [00:43:06] Including yourself. So, you're becoming part of the NDP sweep in 1972. The government did all kinds of fabulous things, and they are recounted in that book *'The Art of the Impossible'*. So, we won't have time today to go over all of those. But there's many things that you and I are very proud of that the government did during that period. I want to talk, though, about the Labour Code, because that's the part that is misunderstood.

Colin Gabelmann [00:43:33] You know, what we're doing today is not talking about the party being good or bad, the government being good or bad. What we're talking about today is the failure in those early days to effect the merger that was designed leading into the '61 convention. And that's really what I think we're trying to convey to people today is what you and I in particular, (and) many, many, many others felt was a failure on the part of the social democratic labour movement to effect a merger, to create a more effective force. That doesn't speak to the good things, as you say, the good things that that caucus and that government accomplished. The list – and Rod Mickelburgh and Jeff Meggs sum it up really nicely in their book – the list of accomplishments of the '72-'75 government was so long that most people have forgotten most of the issues. We didn't have ambulances in BC that were publicly controlled before. We didn't have protection of farmland land. We didn't have a proper public auto insurance. The list is endless. And I, as somebody who was part of that government at the time, I wasn't part of the government I was part of the caucus – a big difference. It was one of the proudest times in my life to be part of that time.

But the determination inside cabinet to continue the war, the quote, “war” with labour was there. And as a result, they decided not to follow party policy. The party was clear and the party reiterated that policy at conventions. Labour needed to be able to have informational picketing. They needed to be able to have the ‘Hot’ declaration if they were going to effectively prosecute labour disputes, not to dominate the employer, but rather to try to create some balance. And so, the Labour Code was where that needed to happen. And rather than following party policy, the government, through Bill King went out and hired some academics, including an American guy who taught at the Harvard to come in and effect a new Labour Code. So, they brought in some great ideas, some fabulous ideas. And 90% of the Labour Code was good, in my view, and I support that. As one of the MLAs voting on it, section by section, I was very supportive of most of what was in that Labour Code because it was a refreshing change from the old anti-labour legislation that we were dealing with. The Mediation Commission, which was set up to give the employers carte blanche. So, it was good, but it did not follow the party policy in respect of giving labour a stronger and more effective voice at the bargaining table. And when that was taken away, some of us in the legislature voted against it. Three of us did. The Socreds voted with the government. So, there's just three of us who said, wait a minute, now, this isn't party policy. This isn't effectively balancing labour on management's power, this is wrong. And they did it nonetheless, and the rest is history. I feel we rectified that in '91, but we'll come to that.

Ron Johnson [00:47:27] The two that voted with you were...

Colin Gabelmann [00:47:32] Rosemary Brown, who was the MLA for Vancouver-Burrard, one of the 2 MLAs for Burrard, and Harold Steves, who was a Richmond farmer, but the MLA from Richmond. And so, it was Harold and Rosemary and me, all coming from different perspectives. Harold coming from his old CCF farmer background, a very strong environmentalist, the guy who's probably responsible for there being a land reserve in British Columbia. He was the original promoter of it back in the 60s. An active farmer together with his father and his wife in Richmond. So, the three of us, he from that perspective, Rosemary, from a women's rights perspective and a perspective that the party was more important than the government in the sense of if you have to choose between the party and the elected government, you choose the party. That was essentially Rosemary's position and her supporters were very much on that page. So, the three of us did our thing and we voted to support the party and the government and the Socreds in the House voted to oppose the party.

Ron Johnson [00:48:50] Now, the substitute for informational picketing was something called ‘first contract legislation’ or whatever...

Colin Gabelmann [00:49:02] Section 70 of the bill, as I remember it.

Ron Johnson [00:49:04] You remember it well. Where did that come from? That was out of the blue. I know I was working at the BC Fed at the time and people looked around and said, ‘Well, who thought of that? Where did that come from?’ It was offered as an alternative to informational picketing, but not accepted by the BC Federation of Labour.

Colin Gabelmann [00:49:24] Yeah, not accepted. People would say, ‘why didn't they accept it? You know, you get your first contract.’ But the problem is if it's not properly negotiated at the table, it's not solid and long and enduring. The only way to effect an enduring contract, a relationship between labour workers and their boss, is to have them hammered out themselves. That's why mediation works better than arbitration. So, you

don't go to an arbitration solution if you want to have an effective relationship with your employer. Labour wanted to have an effective relationship with their employers. And having that section of the bill which enabled the imposition of a first collective agreement, bypassed the bargaining process and bypassed the building of a relationship between labour and the employers. And the public didn't understand that. Most of the caucus didn't understand that. Ray Haynes and the Federation of Labour Leadership did understand that, and were keen to demonstrate that that was the wrong thing to do. So that was one of the sections that I voted against as well.

Ron Johnson [00:50:44] It's interesting. This is always held out as being this wonderful thing. Yet, you know, in all these years I've never seen a list of all the union contracts, first contracts, that came as a result of this section. It was an academic idea that people talked about being a great idea, but it really, as you say, didn't serve the needs.

Colin Gabelmann [00:51:05] It didn't serve the purpose of collective bargaining at all. And it served a political purpose. It looked like a win for labour when in fact, it was not. But Bill King and Dave Barrett were very effective at portraying this as a balance, 'see, and the Fed doesn't have to have 'Hot' declarations. The Fed doesn't have to have informational picketing because they've got this' because it was usually used in this first contract situation more often than not. But certainly, for that situation, 'see, labour doesn't need to do that anymore. Therefore, there'll be peace in the in the wood's, peace in the in the bargaining atmosphere'. It didn't work out. We know that through the rest of the '70s and through the through the '80s.

Ron Johnson [00:52:02] One of the things that I think is a knock on the BC Fed, and I'm very sensitive to it, having been a staffer at the Fed at the time, was that the Fed was just doing this on their own. That really the rest of the labour movement didn't support the Fed. It was just Ray Haynes and George Johnston...

Colin Gabelmann [00:52:17] Yeah.

Ron Johnson [00:52:17] ...and those silly officers down at 517 East Broadway. I came across a quote recently from Joe Morris, who was the president of the Canadian Labour Congress at the time and from the IWA, absolutely supporting the BC Federation of Labour position with respect to the Labour Code. So just for the record, the Fed had a lot of union support for its position on those issues that you and Rosemary and Harold voted against.

Colin Gabelmann [00:52:47] Yeah, the rank and file who were active in their unions understood it. And there were a few, and Bill King's a perfect example, there were a few active trade unionists who didn't agree. They weren't alone. That's fair to say. But overwhelmingly the labour movement in this province understood the issue and did not like those provisions of the of the Labour Code. I know that from personal experience because I got a massive amount of support from trade unionists when I ran later in North Island. Across the spectrum and in the labour movement. And rank and filers as well as leaders.

Ron Johnson [00:53:35] The 1973 party convention at the Hotel Vancouver voted to instruct the government to amend the Labour Code to bring it into line with party policy. I think that's an important chapter in this whole story because, again, some people have tried to portray this as just the BC Fed outside, with no support from the party, who stood with the government. But in fact, at that convention, by a secret ballot, the party voted to

instruct the government to change the Labour Code. The vote passed and Dave Barrett said, 'not happening.'

Colin Gabelmann [00:54:17] Dave just thumbed his nose at it.

Ron Johnson [00:54:21] So, the party stood, I think the point is, when the chips were down, the party stood with the BC Fed.

Colin Gabelmann [00:54:27] Very, very much so. Well, the party stood with the BC Fed. But remember, the BC Fed was standing with the hundreds of thousands of workers in this province who were organized. So, it wasn't just half a dozen leaders at 517 East Broadway. It was the working class organized labour force throughout the province who were active in their unions. The party stood with them. The reason the party would take that position is because so many of those people were in the active in party. And so, their argument on the NDP convention floor was overpowering and overwhelming, and the party supported them and by implication, supported the leadership of the Fed in this. And then in this retaliatory move, as it was seen by the cabinet, there were a number of cabinet members, too, who privately were with us. I'm not going to talk about that in any detail because it's not fair. Almost nobody is still alive. And I think that to do that would be unfair. But Cabinet was not solid on the issue. And some of the cabinet, many of the caucus believed that the party should be in charge of the party and not a small number of cabinet members. So, that has always been a tension in the movement and probably will always will be.

Ron Johnson [00:56:11] I think it probably still is today.

Colin Gabelmann [00:56:13] Probably still is. Yeah, exactly.

Ron Johnson [00:56:16] The government, as we said, did all kinds of good things during that period from 1972 to 1975. I want to jump to the final year of government. Another issue came up unfortunately, in my view – I was still working at the Fed at the time – between the government and the labour movement over the termination of four strikes in 1975. And let's see if I can remember.

Colin Gabelmann [00:56:51] Was the spring/summer of '75.

Ron Johnson [00:56:55] The forest industry was shut down. And it was a difficult situation. They were not making progress. You had the IWA and you had the pulp workers who weren't always on the same page on every issue. But so, you had a difficult strike there. You had BC Rail workers, you know, on strike, and you had food workers in supermarkets, meat cutters, bakery workers on strike. And then you have Teamsters threatening a strike of gas supplies for Vancouver Island. So, it was a pretty tense situation in the province in that fall.

Colin Gabelmann [00:57:37] Yeah, that was for me, the lowest point of our term in government. I just want to give a bit of context to it. The previous year there had been a firefighters strike in Richmond. And there was a danger that if a fire broke out that the fire department would not respond. The legislature was called to deal with it. Every single one of us, including the three of us who voted against provisions in the Labour Code, supported the back to work legislation to put firefighters back to work in Richmond. And that's important because people often say, 'you're just against back to work legislation.' Not necessarily. The government has the right in certain circumstances to do it. Then later

in '75 a situation developed. The most difficult of those disputes was the Teamster dispute in Nanaimo. Because in that case, it was threatening life and limb. The seniors who were in long term care facilities we're facing a situation where during that winter where the possibility of freezing to death was there if the Teamsters weren't providing heating in the facilities. And I personally would have voted in favour, as I did with the firefighters in Richmond. I personally would have voted in favour of a bill to send the Teamsters back to work. But what happened, instead of just doing that, is that Dave and Bill and the majority of Cabinet decided that here was an opportunity to demonstrate tough leadership. And that would give them the slogan of 'Strong Leadership. Let's keep It That Way', which became the '75 election slogan. And the way to really demonstrate that was to send everybody back to work who was out on strike, whether it was forest workers or food workers or the other disputes. And it was wrong in principle. Those negotiations were under way there. There was no breakdown in negotiations. It was just a normal kind of back and forth bargaining that was (prolonged) because the effectiveness for labour was diminished by the Labour Code. And they were weren't able to effectively prosecute their strike. They had to go on strike in order to put themselves in a position with their employers that would give them some more equality at the bargaining table. So, the irony is that they were on strike, in my view, partly because of the Labour Code and partly because they weren't in a strong enough position. So, the only weapon labour has when they're not in a balance situation is to withdraw labour. So, they did. Dave and Bill and the rest of them, to what I think is their everlasting shame, decided to manipulate that situation by sending everybody back to work. So, you know, Rosemary and Harold and I once again were the only three in the legislature who stood up against it. I think that was the single biggest miscarriage of justice that that happened in the 72-75 government of which I have been proud and which I was proud to run again to support, except for that kind of activity. Deciding for purely political reasons, to send everybody back to work to show how strong they were. Well, you saw how strong they were in the results of the '75 election.

Ron Johnson [01:01:47] It is interesting. The one additional piece of context. So, you have that happening in BC. Nationally, you have Pierre Elliott Trudeau, who introduced wage controls, which he said he would not introduce, and Barrett introduced in BC for a short period, price controls, you know, to try and "make it fair". And that was kind of a spin, let's face it, to try and add a sense of 'we're making things fair in British Columbia, whereas Pierre Elliott Trudeau has double crossed workers.' So, you have this election campaign then that suddenly comes out of the blue. In 1975, we could have gone on well into 1976. But the decision was made and a number of people say it was Dave's decision alone to make that call. Also, you had, let's face it, on the Social Credit side, you had Bill Bennett, who was a bland, bland personality. And I'm sure Dave thought I'm going to just motor past this guy in the campaign in December of 1975.

Colin Gabelmann [01:03:02] Despite the fact that the elected Liberals in the legislature and all but one of the elected Conservatives in the legislature had crossed to floor, to join Bill Bennett and the opposition, presenting for us what was going to be a two way race, effectively. Scott Wallace (Conservative Oak Bay), to his credit, didn't join that group. And Gordon Gibson kept his distance. We should have known with this it was going to be a very, very tough campaign. And that as bland as Bill Bennett was, it was not going to be a piece of cake at all. And the decision was to go for the election because they thought they could win on the slogan of 'Strong Leadership. Let's Keep It That Way'. Well, it didn't work.

Ron Johnson [01:04:07] Another aside, I've got many of them: Joyce Scotton told me that she and Cliff Scotton – who was by then the Provincial Secretary and campaign manager for the party coming into 1975, in what was thought to be the 1976 election – they were in

the office of Allan Blakeney (Premier) in Regina, and I got a call from the secretary who got Allan to come out. And he came back and he says, "I think you'd better go back to British Columbia because the Premier's just called..."

Colin Gabelmann [01:04:38] Just called an election. While his campaign manager is preparing for the next year's election.

Ron Johnson [01:04:44] Exactly. So, it was a bit of a surprise all around in 1975. You got a lot of labour support in North Vancouver-Seymour. I worked on that campaign. It was a marvelous campaign. It put the BC Fed in a terrible position though. What do you do? Of course, the media wants to know, are you going to support the NDP? They just legislated these workers back to work. From the Fed's perspective, it was a disastrous situation to be in.

Colin Gabelmann [01:05:17] Well, it was entirely difficult. And there were a number of labour leaders who refused to work (for the NDP), Art Gruntman, for example, from the from the paper makers.

Ron Johnson [01:05:28] CPU.

Colin Gabelmann [01:05:29] The CPU refused to do anything. He said he stayed out of it and so did a lot of other people. They sat on their hands. Many of them in the Lower Mainland, came to North Van Seymour, and many of them went to Vancouver-Burrard and others went to Richmond to give some support to the three of us who had stood up for labour and stood up for equality in the labour management relationship.

Ron Johnson [01:06:02] Well, I think the point we're making is that from the BC Fed perspective, they were trying to play ball and it wasn't really happening to the extent that they expected that it would. So, it created a really tough dynamic for the leadership of the Fed.

Colin Gabelmann [01:06:22] It really did. And it confirmed the fact that we still have not effected of the merger of 1961.

Ron Johnson [01:06:28] So the 1975 election a disappointment. Just to set the record straight again, the NDP actually lost about half a percentage of vote. Only half a percentage, you might say, in that in that election from basically from 40% to 39.5% or thereabouts. But the opposition was united, as you said. And so Social Credit swept into office. Dave lost his own seat in Coquitlam by just a handful of votes.

Colin Gabelmann [01:06:59] That's right.

Ron Johnson [01:07:02] He decided to stay on. He was convinced to stay on.

Colin Gabelmann [01:07:05] Yes, I think he was ambivalent about whether or not he should stay on. But on the other hand, he was easily persuaded to stay on because many, many people said, who else?

Ron Johnson [01:07:21] And in that situation...

Colin Gabelmann [01:07:24] ...it was probably the right decision. And I think when we look at the '79 election results where we came very, very close to winning, five seats

difference and a handful of votes. So, it was probably the right decision from the party's point of view, and the party supported him staying on.

Ron Johnson [01:07:46] So he stayed on. He won a by-election in Vancouver East. We then had from 1975 until 1979 a period for rebuilding in the party. You came back to the BC Federation of Labour for a time as Political Action Director or Political Education Director.

Colin Gabelmann [01:08:06] I came back as Political Education Director. I had been Legislative Director prior to the '72 election and then Political Education.

Ron Johnson [01:08:13] And the leadership of the BC Fed, interesting point, was re-elected. George Johnston (President) and Len Guy (Secretary-Treasurer), by that time, were re-elected as the leadership of the Federation. But there was an effort then to sort this out and to bring the NDP and the labour movement together. And that came from the BC Fed. That was partly your job and from others in the party who were very keen on that. The 1979 election, as you say, was a much different election. And the NDP reached historic heights. The slogan at that time was 'Compare The Records. You're Better Off With The NDP.' So, it really was in some ways the repeat of the '75 election, that never really happened in '75 because in '75 the party ran on strong leadership. But the issue really became socialism or free enterprise (in 1975).

Colin Gabelmann [01:09:13] Yeah.

Ron Johnson [01:09:14] And so with the work of yourself, the Federation and many others in all camps, it was a tremendous result in 1979 – except for the issue of 'Five Free Shares,' which kind of clouded up that election.

Colin Gabelmann [01:09:29] And, the de-nationalization of some public enterprises. And every British Columbian was given five free shares in a phony transaction. But and they all became worthless and people would throw them in the air and watch them disappear because that's how much they were worth.

Ron Johnson [01:09:54] But it was Bill Bennett's idea of the people's capitalism.

Colin Gabelmann [01:09:59] People's capitalism.

Ron Johnson [01:09:59] And they still campaigned against the socialists in those days. And Dave was proud to call himself a socialist, which I always admired.

Colin Gabelmann [01:10:07] Yeah, Dave was a different leader in '79 than he was in '75. I guess my eyes saw him differently in '79 because he was different. He'd been chastened by the '75 results. It's a little patronizing for me to say it, but he learned something. And he was a better leader in '79 than he was in '75. And I was very happy to have him. He actually came to my nominating convention, believe it or not. People say that the relationship, and not to be personal, this isn't a personal thing here today, but he actually came to the nomination convention at North Island where I was running. And I have to say, he was very supportive of me running, which surprised a lot of people, including people in the labour movement who thought we had an intractable, impossible relationship. We didn't. We had a workable relationship and one that enabled him to want me to be in the caucus, which surprised a lot of people.

Ron Johnson [01:11:35] Yeah, it was a very different time. Interesting. I was a federal candidate in Vancouver Center during those years, and he came to my nomination as well and was very, very supportive. And I think we all we all could see that this issue was beginning to be behind us.

Colin Gabelmann [01:11:51] Yes, that's right.

Ron Johnson [01:11:52] And we had a tremendous result (in 1979). 46% of the vote, my goodness. The highest ever for the NDP. We just narrowly lost. It was a squeaker.

Colin Gabelmann [01:12:03] It was. A few hundred properly placed votes would have made the difference – a little bit like the Biden/Trump election last time in 2020. We're doing this before the 2024 election, so we don't know what's going to happen. But that American election was decided by a small handful of votes. So was a '79 election in BC a very small margin. Dave ran a good campaign. 'Compare The Records' was a very good slogan, because people did begin to compare the records between a party that brought in auto insurance, brought in ambulance care, brought in the ALR agricultural land preservation. And the records were clear. And that enabled us to get a very, very strong, strong result. Not quite enough, but very strong.

Ron Johnson [01:12:58] It launched you on your career as the MLA for North Island. So, there were some success there. From '79 to '83, Dave's last campaign as leader, again, another pretty united campaign that the party fought hard to win.

Colin Gabelmann [01:13:20] There are dissenters on the on the question of united. I can remember some, not many, some labour leaders wanting a different response from Dave on the question of the terrible set of bills that Bill Bennett brought in in '83 (after the provincial election) that were really anti-labour and anti-working class legislation. And so (with) Solidarity there was there was even a threat of a general strike in British Columbia. It was so, so desperate. And the NDP was put in a difficult position. And of course, Jack Munro went to Kelowna to talk privately to Bill Bennett to see if he could settle the dispute that way. And the steam went out of Solidarity. The steam ran out of the move for a general strike, which wouldn't have proven very much because it wouldn't have been adhered to completely anyway. But it was a difficult, difficult time and it played right into the hands of Bill Bennett who was able then to say, "See, told you. We've always told you. These godless socialists are at it again. The labour movement is leading them around by the nose..."

Ron Johnson [01:14:44] That was Dave's last campaign.

Colin Gabelmann [01:14:46] Dave was dispirited after that. He was dispirited for a while. Hard to kill Dave Barrett's spirit. He was a joyful man and a delight to be with socially. I played many a poker game well into the night with Dave and enjoyed his company. But his spirit was broken in that campaign and he realized it was time for him to go. The party was a little bit adrift. And so, we had in many ways a repeat of the '69 situation and that leadership campaign that led later into the '84 leadership campaign. And that led to the '86 election.

Ron Johnson [01:15:34] Well, it's interesting because in some ways, the forces, if you could call them that, of the Berger people – people still called us in those days, you and I, Berger people, and the Cockes (Dennis and Yvonne) were a big part of that – and many, many others rallied around David Vickers as the potential successor in 1984. The Barrett people, if you want to call them that, rallied behind Bill King.

Colin Gabelmann [01:16:05] That's right.

Ron Johnson [01:16:06] And up the middle came Bob Skelly, who defeated Vickers on the last ballot in that convention.

Colin Gabelmann [01:16:19] Vickers won a plurality in the last vote, and King slipped behind Skelly. And the Barrett forces couldn't decide whether King could beat Vickers.

Ron Johnson [01:16:32] But so Skelly ultimately won the election.

Colin Gabelmann [01:16:35] However it went. Skelly won the convention over Vickers. This really does bring up the Berger-Barrett battle. I think of it as the three B's. All of those of us who are active in the party in the '60s and '70s and then into the '80s were labeled. Either you're 'Berger' or you're 'Barrett'. And a little bit that was the labour/CCF digression and it was an illustration of the failure to effect the merger that was designed in '61. So that battle continued and the Barrett forces, to shorthand a very complex situation, were successful with electing Bob Skelly who led us into the '86 election.

Ron Johnson [01:17:36] Right. So, they succeeded in not having the Berger person, Vickers, be chosen (as leader). And I have to say, I had mixed feelings about that because Dave Vickers, was a tremendous candidate, but he didn't have any political experience. He had Operation Solidarity, Solidarity Coalition experience.

Colin Gabelmann [01:17:56] Well, some of us used to say that Barrett will get us elected, and Berger will keep us selected. I felt the same way about Vickers versus Skelly. But it turned out that Skelly wasn't the person to lead us either. He neither could have kept us elected, but couldn't get us elected in the first place, unfortunately. Bob was a decent guy, a good guy, a guy I used to sit beside in the legislature and got along with really, really very well. But he started the '86 campaign by freezing during the press conference and his famous, "Can we start over again?" And the reporters laughed. And once the media laugh at you, you're finished. And then Vander Zalm of course, comes in and does his magic. And so, we have a terrible result in '86.

Ron Johnson [01:19:09] So, the Berger-Barrett, labour-Barrett division in the party kind of has played itself out. And from my perspective, correct me if I'm wrong, that was kind of the last hurrah on that division. Harcourt then was the unanimous choice to become leader, and he had a different kind of relationship with labour. Municipally he had had a lot of support from unions. He didn't have that visceral, dynamic worry about labour that I think we saw with Dave Barrett.

Colin Gabelmann [01:19:48] I think there's no question if you're wanting to mark the end of the Berger-Barrett division, if you want to mark the beginning of the effective merger of Labour and the and the CCF, I date it back to the 1987 legislation that Vander Zalm brought in on the Labour Code; when they brought in legislation which was the most right-wing anti-labour legislation ever almost anywhere in North America except for some of the southern US states. It was outrageous and everybody united against it because it was so bad. And even a number of middle of the roaders (agreed). I was a labour critic at the time and so I was leading the parliamentary debate against it. Labour was leading the fight in the community and political people in the middle were also saying this is wrong, this is bad. So, what it did in many ways was to help bring the CCF and the NDPers, labour and the CCFers, together in a way because they saw the common purpose in defeating that

1987 labour legislation. That was very much enabled by Harcourt's approach. Harcourt, who was not anti-labour, didn't see a need to be anti-labour, was very chummy with business, but he was also very chummy with labour. Harcourt was chummy with everybody. And that was one of his strengths. He didn't make enemies very easily. He chose not to. And that was his nature anyway. He was the perfect person to help put everything together, which he did. And the way in which he and the government of the day, put together the Labour Code changes in the '91-95/96 government is evidence of that. I don't know whether we want to talk much about it, but Moe Sihota was Labour Minister. He chose not to go out and get experts to design a policy. He chose to find a way to effect party policy. And he set up a commission with a neutral and a labour person and a management person. The three member commission were asked to prepare a new Labour Code, which they did with four exceptions. There were four issues where they couldn't agree. So, what would have happened in the old days is the Labour Minister would say, okay, we're all going this way. That's not what happened. They came to caucus. The full caucus had a discussion over these four issues. And one of the reasons we got anti-scab legislation in that Labour Code is because the caucus was involved and that was one of the four issues. So that was a real illustration of the fact that the labour war was over in the party. The merger was effective. And you didn't hear about Barrett-Berger forces anymore in the party. And we haven't since. It's been an effective, unified organization ever since. And labour has played a significant role and continues to play a significant role in the party. And I think it's that's one of the strengths of the party and enabled us to win the '96 election and then again in 2017 when we were narrowly elected in 2017. And then resoundingly elected in 2020. It was there was no dissension. Everybody was on board for a for a common path between the CCFers, the new party people and the whole history was put to bed.

Ron Johnson [01:24:22] And that's a perfect note to end this discussion on today. I think, Colin, it shows that although it took a little while we got there. And the dream of the of the founders of the NDP ultimately was realized. And it did work.

Colin Gabelmann [01:24:39] It has worked and it is working.