

[00:01:06.12] - Frank Shepherd

By 1968, it was clear that Rae was going to retire, and we had a pretty strong campaign in New Westminster at that time who would take Rae's place.

[00:01:30.15] - Margaret Andrusiak

Norma and Rae Eddie were extremely popular with everyone, and when he decided not to run anymore, people were a bit disappointed. But we knew he'd worked so many years for the IWA union and for the NDP that we were very grateful for all those years that he had put in for all of us.

[00:01:59.10] - Music

[Music] If it isn't love, there are no seasons like the summer or the spring, so help me there are not. No, if it isn't love, there are no reasons for the songs I sing. I never seen the like, the beauty, beauty, beauty, beauty in those eyes. Mercy, oh.

[00:02:18.29] - Wyman Trineer

We look back actually at 1952, actually, at what was New Westminster like then as opposed to now. And looking at the electorate, actually. The IWA, for example, actually is roughly 50 percent of their membership was concentrated right here in New Westminster. The public transportation system that we hear so much about was entirely different as far as workers were concerned. You had a 10-minute bus service in the rush hours in the morning, actually. Workers were flocking onto those busses to and from work, so the structure actually with the city was different. There was more lunch buckets, if you like.

[00:02:59.26] - Frank Shepherd

New Westminster was not a CCF city. All of the positions on school board and council and even the federal member were Liberals or Conservative, and then later the federal member became a Social Crediter, George Hahn.

[00:03:17.19] - Wyman Trineer

Rae, really, to the best of my knowledge, was not, was not a CCF member at that time, but was signed into membership and nominated, or drafted if you like, and run.

[00:03:32.23] - Margaret Andrusiak

I think most of the membership of the IWA at that time lived in New Westminster, so they were brought in when Rae Eddie ran as a great force to help him in the election.

[00:03:44.19] - Wyman Trineer

Our optimism sort of grew because when I talked earlier here about the transportation system, you could get onto a bus actually and everybody was wearing Elect Rae Eddie buttons and had decals Elect Rae Eddie on their lunch boxes and what have you. And really there was enough of them around, I think, really to elect him.

[00:04:04.02] - Margaret Andrusiak

And at that time the IWA was a very powerful force. They had become a powerful force in this city by going through a long six-week strike, at which I remember seeing women, one particular Mrs. Kipp, Tommy Kipp's wife, crying because she said she didn't know how she was going to feed her children. So we set up a soup kitchen on Columbia Street where we served much more than soup. The farmers brought in food. The merchants on Columbia Street were very supportive. I remember going with my little girls, who are now 50 and 51, at that time they were 2 and 3, walking up and down Columbia Street collecting money from the merchants.

[00:04:49.08] - Frank Shepherd

We had a small group of really dedicated, hardworking people. We would put out a flyer and distribute it throughout the city. Linda Baker, Rae's daughter will remember the times that she was in my car going up and down the hills of Sapperton distributing literature. And Peter Rebecca, was a doctor in Westminster now, with his father who was an active member at the time, doing the same thing. So that's how we tended to run our campaigns.

[00:05:25.25] - Wyman Trineer

I guess Rae Eddie was, that evening, was the most surprised man in New Westminster actually that he had defeated Boss Johnson. And you know, we should have formed the government. The CCF should have formed the government. It was really a tie number of seats, if my memory serves me right. Tom Uphill, who had always posed as a labour candidate and the labour MLA over the years, he held the balance of power. He threw his hat in with the Socreds and therefore they formed the government. If the CCF had formed the government then, we'd have maybe been the government for the next 20-25 years because things were changing.

[00:07:00.07] - Reporter

Mr. Eddie, what do you feel are the most significant points in the legislative committee recommendations?

[00:07:06.03] - Rae Eddie

Well, as you would notice, it's rather a lengthy report because of the fact that not too many, in fact only one of the recommendations made by the BC Federation of Labour convention last year were acted upon. So for that reason, I think the most important parts of our present report are the proposed changes and amendments to the Workmen's Compensation Act.

[00:07:29.28] - Wyman Trineer

What was happening then, you went in and you appealed to a review committee that was made up of the Chief Legal Officer, the Chief Claims Officer, and the Chief Medical Officer who had made the decision. The Chief Claims Officer, his department had made the decision which you were appealing. And this was a real issue with Rae. And as I say, today there is a changed system.

[00:07:59.25] - Rae Eddie

Well, labour for many, many years fought and finally got a Ministry of Labour separate and apart from other portfolios. We believe that these are two of the heaviest portfolios in government. We believe that the Ministry of Labour requires a full-time minister because there are many, many parts of that administration which are not satisfactory. I think that more attention must be paid to this field because we are approaching a new year of negotiations. Most of our workers in the province are approaching negotiations for new agreements this year. In fact, the great majority of our workers in the primary industry are coming up to that point, and I gather from reports from wages and contracts conferences and what have you throughout the province that the demands of labour are going to be comparatively heavy this year. They are asking more take-home pay, they are asking shorter hours to, of course, relieve the unemployment insurance—unemployment situation in the province. And they're also going for fringe benefits. Likewise, the employers are showing evidence that they will resist to the last ditch any attempts to apply any increased costs of labour to their industry. And for that reason, I foresee a troublesome period ahead in the next few months of this year in the way of contract negotiations.

[00:09:37.22] - Wyman Trineer

Rae Eddie was certainly a strong voice in the union as well as he was in the politics. But equality as far as the forest industry and the plywood plants and the sawmills, actually there was two sets of rates. There was rates for women and there was rates for men.

[00:10:00.00] - Wyman Trineer

In 1957, we almost had a strike over that. In 1959, that was the issue, was parity.

[00:10:10.09] - Reporter

What's going to happen, do you feel, if we're not ready to meet automation?

[00:10:15.01] - Rae Eddie

I think that automation is probably one of the greatest assets society has ever known and will be the means of salvation for a lot of people who have been confined all their lives to a life of drudgery to earn a living.

[00:10:29.00] - Reporter

What would you do about it if you were in charge?

[00:10:31.22] - Rae Eddie

Well, I think one of the most important things is that we must step up our vocational and technical training, not only to take care of the displaced workers, but also to take care of those young people who are coming through high school and who are not, by reason of their own peculiarities, suited to higher education as we understand it, university and that level.

[00:10:52.00] - Margaret Andrusiak

People thought with automation perhaps people would lose jobs, but on the other hand it would save a great deal of the drudgery that we had at that time. Save a lot of man-hours. Then people were worrying also about jobs. Just the same as when the Industrial Revolution happened, people were worrying about jobs then.

[00:11:15.04] - Wyman Trineer

The fruits actually of automation should flow to everybody. Workers should get their share, fair share of the increased productivity. The company their fair share. The consumer should be getting their fair share. Put people to work and they'll pay for the programs.

[00:11:33.17] - Frank Shepherd

After Rae Eddie decided to resign from politics, we had four candidates running to take his place: Dennis Cocke, Joe Francis, Rick Peskleuits, and Wyman Trineer. So Dennis won the nomination in 1969, just prior to the provincial election.

[00:11:57.29] - Reporter

Now, getting back to your own constituency, it's New Westminster. Are there any particular problems there that you feel are worth fighting an election for?

[00:12:06.04] - Dennis Cocke

New Westminster is probably one of the most ideal places to fight an election against the Social Credit government because most of the problems that are people problems are focused in that town. Pollution— we have all three. Healthcare, we've got the Royal Columbian Hospital and Woodlands, just to name two that are obvious. Our educational system, we were one of the 7 out of 9 referendums that were defeated. We have real problems in that city.

[00:12:35.11] - Reporter

You have a strong organization backing you when, if an election is called?

[00:12:40.05] - Dennis Cocke

Excellent. We have in New Westminster about 400 members now, and we're growing every day. Very hardworking, a lot of them youthful, ready to go.

[00:12:50.07] - Reporter

So you're ready to fight an election if one's called?

[00:12:52.11] - Dennis Cocke

Tomorrow.

[00:12:54.06] - Frank Shepherd

When Dennis went to the legislature, he turned out to be one of the best MLAs on the opposition side. He was the health critic, and in those days we were having real problems.

[00:13:07.06] - Dennis Cocke

Well, I said that the government obviously doesn't like old people.

[00:13:10.14] - Reporter

But there has been money released for the Pearson Hospital. It was released, I believe, yesterday up in Kelowna.

[00:13:16.03] - Dennis Cocke

That's ludicrous because when this government is under fire, they give a few paltry dollars.

[00:13:21.21] - Margaret Andrusiak

If you're an idealist, by this time you might have become just slightly disillusioned because you're always hoping when you're working in organizations and in political jobs, you hope that the world is going to be a better place, and in many ways it is a better place. But we still have terrible poverty.

[00:13:43.22] - Dennis Cocke

But the capriciousness of this move is the fact that it was taken now. If Wall and Redekop wanted low-density housing, they should have ascertained that in the first place. And then, having ascertained it, however, earlier this year, they certainly should have done something in the early part of the summer and not in the late part of the summer when the children are going to be in school. And I feel that a school like John Robson that has been equipped for this particular type of family, the single-person family, should have been thought of in this move. I think that it's It was just a very bad scene all around.

[00:14:13.09] - Music

<LYRICS> Can't you hear the children crying? When we're [unclear].</LYRICS>

[00:14:21.19] - Wyman Trineer

The Bennett government was becoming increasingly unpopular, and when the election was held in '72, I guess a lot of us couldn't really believe what was happening when we were seeing the returns coming in. Of course, we were — the NDP was elected, did become the government, and Dennis, of course, was appointed the Minister of Health.

[00:14:50.29] - Margaret Andrusiak

I remember that Dennis Cocke was the very best Health Minister we ever had, and I know my brothers who do not vote NDP, who are both doctors, stated that same fact that Dennis Cocke was the very best health minister they ever had.

[00:15:09.10] - Wyman Trineer

The programs that he introduced, I think, was sound, and his communication with the doctors and the hospital workers obviously was 200 percent.

[00:15:20.04] - Dennis Cocke

The medical center will be a provincial organization in scope. We're going to broaden it out so that there'll be regional representation on what we call a plenary board. The 10-member board, which we've presently announced, will be the core group, and then the plenary board, the major board, will be 8 or 9 more people that will be appointed from all over the province so that it will be representative of the needs of the whole province.

[00:15:46.23] - Reporter

How about the motel concept?

[00:15:48.18] - Dennis Cocke

Well, as I say, that's part of the study. There are new things that are being done in the delivery of healthcare. One of the things, of course, is that instead of having a person in a very expensive hospital bed when they're in for a diagnostic workup, why not have adjacent facilities such as the motel kind of facility that you can run for, say, \$15 a day as opposed to \$85 or \$90 a day as is often the case?

[00:16:13.09] - Frank Shepherd

And I know that he was greatly admired by all of the groups in the health system. And in particular, Dennis saved the Columbian Hospital.

[00:16:35.17] - Dennis Cocke

But over the years, the thing that held this hospital together has been a staff that has been absolutely superb, working with the kind of facilities that they have, always patient, always helping.

[00:17:20.13] - Wyman Trineer

Somebody asked actually, did you have more fun in the meetings then? Well, I guess debate is fun if you're on your toes, and it keeps everybody on their toes. It's not good enough to just move motions because it sounds good. To carry the motion and leave it with the executive, if you like, if you don't give the executive an idea about what is the reason for the motion.

[00:17:48.15] - Reporter

The general public in this day and age has become used to paying through the nose for everything, no matter how large or inconsequential. Now the provincial government has introduced legislation aimed at reversing that trend and bringing some relief in a small way. Today it introduced the Public Toilets Act, a bill designed to make every kind of prepaid coin-operated privy illegal. The Minister of Health, Dennis Cocke, says all the locks will have to come down.

[00:18:18.01] - Dennis Cocke

Going into a public place and finding it impossible to use the facilities, the toilets, without paying. Often times it's a great inconvenience, and it's also sexist in that it requires more of women than it does of men. So, you know, it's not — it's a serious bill. We feel that it's just another little bit of fairness creeping into our system. I just don't think that there's anybody at one time or another in the course of his life wasn't very resentful at finding himself in a very impossible position.

[00:19:09.12] - Frank Shepherd

After '75, we thought we were going to get back in, but didn't. In opposition, Dennis continued to be first-class critic as well as an important worker within the party. When Dennis decided to retire in 1986, Anita became the candidate. Anita's probably one of the hardest working members in the party in Westminster. After Anita won election in 1986, she soon became one of the best critics on the opposition side, especially regarding education. So that when the recent election brought in the NDP government, it was only natural that she should become Education Minister. It's also a tribute to Anita that she's not only Education Minister but also Deputy Premier. As Education Minister, I think Anita's already made a couple of important moves. One is the lunch program, particularly in elementary schools.

[00:20:28.03] - Reporter

Many children in BC go to school hungry. Their numbers are shockingly high.

[00:20:33.04] - Anita Hagen

All children will be eligible. They won't be required to participate or to pay and the non-paying children will not be identifiable.

[00:20:45.05] - Frank Shepherd

And I think that we won for so many years in New Westminster because of the type of candidates that we had. I think that the Vancouver office tend to have us written off. We were such a small, small group, and yet every election we would win.

[00:21:05.28] - Music

Gonna take a sentimental journey, gonna set my heart at ease. Gonna make a sentimental journey to renew old memories. Got my bag. Got my reservation, spent each dime I could afford. Like a child in wild anticipation, longed to hear that 'All Aboard'.