

Interview: Jim Cairnie (JC)

Interviewer: Ken Novakowski (KN)

Assisted by: Al Cornes and Lesley Harrington

Date: July 13, 2016

Location: Vancouver, BC

[00:00:12] KN: Okay,

[00:00:13] KN: good morning. We are here today on July 13, 2016 at BCTF building to interview Jim Cairnie, who was the president of the BCTF from 1963-64. Good morning Jim.

[00:00:31] JC: Good morning Ken.

[00:00:33] KN: We are

[00:00:36] KN: going to start with some questions just to get some background on your life before being in the BCTF, and wanted to know where and when you were born.

[00:00:48] JC: I was born on the ninth of May, 1926, in our rather pretty village on the River Tyne, which is in Scotland; and the name of the village is Haddington and it's about 30-35 km due east of Edinburgh.

[00:01:14] KN: And where were you raised?

[00:01:16] JC: My parents emigrated from Scotland and settled in Victoria; and I was raised in Victoria, went to both elementary and secondary school there.

[00:01:30] KN: Can you tell us anything about your family and was there a union background, or some politics in your family, or anything like that?

[00:01:42] KN: What did your father and mother do?

[00:02:49] JC: My father was a Scot and lived in Haddington with his parents. At school leaving age, which was about 14 or 15 in those days, he left school, took an apprenticeship in a local knitting factory. It was called the Kill Spindy Knitwear, very large factory for the location. And he became a machinist who looked after all of the commercial sized foreign machines and whatever machinery was involved in producing fine sweaters and other woolen goods. My mother left school at approximately the same age and was a domestic. At the point she married my father, she was a maid in the local hotel in Haddington. They were both Roman Catholics. My mother a life-long catholic. My father was, my term was "liberal catholic," and it was always a mystery to me as a child as to why it was only my mother who only took me to church on Sundays and not my father. My dad initially worked as a laborer when he arrived in Victoria,

because there was no need for a machinist of his character in Victoria, but eventually he became a seaman working in the engine room of the

[00:03:56] JC: vessel or vessels that supplied the lighthouses along the coast of British Columbia. The philosopher he most admired was Robby Burns, "A Man's a Man for A' That". And he was basically a laborer supporter, politically, although not particularly active. My mother, on the other hand, was an absolutely non-political person. Both of them believed strongly in the value of an education and supported me in my school work whenever, wherever they could.

[00:04:52] KN: What do you remember about your school experience in Victoria, your elementary and high school experience? And when you're talking about that, was there a particular teacher who had an impression on you?

[00:05:11] JC: The school I intended was a small, boys' catholic school with a rather grand name of Saint Louis College. The college actually had a history in Victoria, the first version of the school dates back to the 1850's or 60's, but the building I attended in was a rather modern one and the school was owned by the Catholic Diocese and staffed by Christian Brothers' of Ireland. Grade 3 to Grade 12. The curriculum was strictly old-fashioned—no art, no drama, no industrial education—core subjects: English, mathematics, history, geography, science, Latin. The program was basically academic, designed to provide access to junior matriculation, Grade 12, on what would be a college acceptable program. The brothers were very sports minded, they taught with a rather firm hand, standards expected were high, discipline was applied sometimes physically—where it appeared necessary. And I frankly liked school, not so much the academics, but school let me play sports—football, basketball, soccer, baseball. And I enjoyed the competition, the comradery, the pleasures of being exhausted by physical energy, and winning a game. So, school life for me, despite the discipline nature of it, was a relatively easy experience.

[00:08:11] JC: It wasn't until I was out of school and became a teacher myself that I realized teaching at the school, standards that were expected were actually very high. I didn't know it at the time, of course.

[00:08:39] KN: Can you tell us any at all about your university experience?

[00:08:45] JC: Well, after I wrote the government matriculation test of the day, I joined the Canadian Army, this was 1944. Many of my friends, particularly from the previous year, had already enlisted and I spent two years in the army and when I was discharged I applied to Victoria College. Victoria College was affiliated UBC and offered the first

[00:09:36] JC: two

[00:09:37] JC: years of arts and science. The college was situated in an interesting building, Craigdarroch Castle, which is on Joan Crescent in Victoria. It was the mansion owned by a famous coal Barron on the island. Normally, there were about 250 students in attendance, but by 1946 with the return of the veterans the school flooded with many men and women who

wanted an education and the population when I was there was something like 500 crowded into very relatively small building for the number of people. I fortunately met a woman registrar when I went to the college to apply who most helpful. I appreciate her to this day because I was somewhat reluctant about the fact that I was two years out of high school and wondered if I could cope with things like mathematics, chemistry, and physics. But, she was most encouraging and, as it turned out, I encountered in first year three of the most excellent teachers I encountered throughout my university career—Bob Wallace in math, Roger Bishop in English, and Bill Gaddes in psychology. I remember them fondly. The other person that I encountered was a young girl. I boarded a school bus that was going to basketball game,

[00:11:48] JC: and one of the few seats that was available to me was beside the young girl. As it turned out, she knew me or recognized because I was in the same math class she was in; and she also knew me from the fact that I rode the same public bus to the college often and it was the same bus that she used. So, a conversation ensued on the trip, on the bus, and that young lady eventually, three years later, became my wife, Marian.

[00:12:38] KN: So, when you graduated, did you just do the two years at college and then did you go to UBC after that?

[00:12:46] JC: Yes, directly. I found myself interested in mathematics in my first year and my second, and thought that I might pursue a life in mathematics as a career and enrolled in the appropriate program at UBC. I met in the first two years at UVic three people who influenced my life, three other students: two vets and a young lad of 18. One of the vets, a very nice fellow, was looking for a quiet life and he thought that teaching offered one. He was taking a program in

[00:13:56] JC: history,

[00:13:58] JC: but he was looking forward to being employed as a teacher. The second, was a young boy, just out high school, very bright—happened to be the son of a secondary school principal—and he hoped to follow in his father's footsteps. And as it happened, they and my company carried on all kinds of conversations about the pros and cons of being a public-school teacher, and of course the young fellow had access to information from his dad and was a source of all kinds of information with respect to

[00:14:49] JC: holidays, salary.

[00:14:57] KN: So,

[00:15:06] KN: these are the people that influenced you to become a teacher?

[00:15:09] JC: Yes, because by the time I finished third year mathematics I realized that I wasn't ever going to write a thesis, an original document on mathematics, and the prospect of spending something like three or five more years after the BA to obtain a doctorate in order to become a university teacher or obtain some other job in mathematics just seemed very

unrealistic to me. So, I turned to the notion of not a university teacher, but a high school teacher. When I completed my BA, I took the one year teacher training program at UBC and started applying for a

[00:16:11] JC: job.

[00:16:17] KN: Where did finally get a job and start your teaching career?

[00:16:23] JC: By the time I had graduated, Marian and I had married at the end of third year. We both were inclined to stay on the island, if at all possible.

[00:17:05] KN: She was also a teacher?

[00:17:47] JC: No, Marian took her first year at Victoria College because she was not old enough to get into the nursing school, the Jubilee Hospital, in those days operated the school of nursing. Applicants had to be 19. At the time, she was a high school graduate at age 18. So, filled in that sort of gap year by going to UVic for a year, so, she continued onto nursing. As I said, the two of us were inclined to continue living on the island, and I applied to three school districts: Cowichan, which in those days was just Duncan; Lack Cowichan; and Lady Smith. The conventional wisdom of the day was to not apply to Victoria. It was better, we were told, to go into the boonies and teach for a year or two, get some experience and then try to get into a city. The first letter I received was from Lake Cowichan, which was in those days was school district 65, and

[00:18:29] JC: now, of course, it's part of the Cowichan School District. There was a relatively large 600 student high school, a relatively large elementary school in the village itself, and primary schools at a couple of camps—camp 6 and camp 3—each on the edge of the lake. I arrived at Lake Cowichan August of 1951, got my class assignments, met the principal and vice principal, eventually the staff. Spent five years there, thoroughly enjoyed myself there and enjoyed the school and the community. Marian and I had a great time. We remember that period of our lives very, very fondly.

[00:19:18] KN: Where did you go from there?

[00:20:08] JC: I went to Victoria to S J Willis, and interestingly perhaps to you, I was recruited by a BCTF president. I had become involved while in Lake Cowichan with the local in the organizing of a regional conference, South Vancouver Island Teachers'. And I had briefly met Bernard Gillie at the one I was directly involved with and we had a nice chat about Federation affairs. And in the summer following my fifth year,

[00:20:58] JC: July probably, I got a telephone call from him to the effect that there was an opening in his school and he wondered if I would be interested in applying. I was a bit uncertain about it at the moment, but I was prepared to talk about it. And Bernard drove up to the lake one Saturday and he interviewed me, he interviewed Marian as well, in our house over tea and cookies in the afternoon. And when he left he handed me one of Victoria's application forms

and he said, "Put it in and we'll see what happens." And Bernard was one of those very influential principals in Victoria. Bernard had very strong views about education, which I respected by the way and often shared with him, and he often had strong views on the importance of the Federation. And about two weeks after I put in the application form, I got a letter from the school district offering me the job. Marian and me talked it over, decided to go, so we moved to Victoria. I taught at S J Willis for five or six years and then moved to the Oak Bay Senior High school, and in that period, I also happened to be elected president.

[00:23:05] KN: President of?

[00:23:07] JC: I guess the first stage was I became almost immediately involved in the Greater Victoria Teacher Association, that was year one. And if I back track for you a little, my first experience with the Federation was year one in Lake Cowichan. In my initial week in the school, two teachers—two science men—befriended me, assumed the role of mentors to help me with things that I didn't know about—like looking after a school register, running the mimeograph machine, supervision duties—all the kind of minutia of it—also, later helping me with coping various routines within the school. The first meeting of the local was late in September and those two approached me and suggested that I run for office—that it was the thing to do, that everyone in the local was involved—and they put me up as a member of the public relations committee, assured me that it would be absolutely no work and lots of interactions with other staff members. So, I became a member of the committee, found it interesting, found the Federation local meetings interesting,

[00:25:14] JC: and I may have asked a question or two. In my second year, my two friends came along and told me that they wanted me to become the secretary and I became the secretary, and the following year I became the treasurer, and the year after that I became the vice president, and the next year the president. All of those motivated by the fact that I enjoyed

[00:25:48] JC: being involved. I thought I was doing something useful and I felt good about it, so I continued. When I moved to Victoria, Bernard urged me to become involved and he knew that they wanted someone to work on a local conference committee. So, the same pattern emerged in Victoria. The following year I became a member of the Executive Committee, and the following year a secretary, and then vice president and then president. And, again, in those circumstances in Victoria I enjoyed the experience, I enjoyed the company of colleagues who were interested in being active in the Federation. I liked, again, the comradery of that situation; and, again, I felt like I was doing something useful. And if you want to move on from that you can, as result of being of Victoria was a district council in itself, I became a representative on the Executive Committee of the Federation; and in that period, I also became a member of the Teacher Education Committee. One of my interests from early days, going back to my year in teacher education, was in improving the quality of the university education provided to teachers.

[00:28:06] JC: Reflecting on my own experiences in that one year program, I found the program less than satisfactory and had to believe there were better ways to educate young people and turn them into good teachers—and I still believe that by the way.

[00:28:45] KN: So, this was your first entrée into the BCTF, when you became a member of the BCTF Executive by virtue of your position in Victoria.

[00:28:54] JC: Yes.

[00:28:55] KN: And what did you do on the BCTF Executive?

[00:29:01] JC: Listened and talked. Wes Janzen was one of the presidents in that period. Wes was a man admired very much, respected very much, had a great sense of humour, realized that under many critical situations one would could often find an optimistic point of view with respect to outcome—one could find some humour in the occasion, some hope. He was very optimistic, as you know. A supporter of the NDP, CCF, very much a socialist, very supportive of teachers, personally and collectively, and internationally. He was one of the early presidents to promote an interest in international affairs and the Federation involvement in overseas assignments. I learned a lot, I think unconsciously, I learned a lot from being associated with Wes. Another president on the Exec that I respected was Reginald Cox, quite different personality from Wes, very calm—eventually became the district super intendent—very calm, orderly, steady person who dealt with difficult situations very calmly. And as it turned out, again, I must have asked some questions or argued some positions capably when I was on the Executive Committee, because at some point I was asked by a couple of members to run for the position of secretary-treasurer. Now non-existent, but at the time it was the base of the table officers group.

[00:32:11] JC: And I did that, and somewhat to my surprise pleasant as it was, I was elected at the end of the General Meeting. And the following year, again, I was approached by members of the Executive Committee, I think even one of the staff members suggested to me that I might run for vice president. And after some considerable thought I did that, with no great expectations by the way, because we had had two members from the island, Harold Parrot and Harold Palsson, recently run through the order of elected officers to become president. And it appeared certain that a third member rising to the presidency coming from the island was highly unlikely. And again, it was somewhat to my surprise that I was elected second vice president and then the repeat next year to first, and then on to president.

[00:33:56] KN: So, you were elected president at the 1963 AGM?

[00:34:01] JC: Yes.

[00:34:02] KN: When you were 36 years old, soon to be 37?

[00:34:07] JC: Yes. You've done the math.

[00:34:16] KN: So, can you just talk a bit about what the political, economic, social climate in British Columbia was like at the time you became president? Who was in government? What was happening? Were things prosperous? What was going on?

[00:34:44] JC: 1963, the premier was William Andrew Cecil Bennet. The government was Social Credit majority. Mr. Bennet had been in power from about 1952

[00:35:09] JC: as a result of a rather confused election in that particular period that could have possibly seen the CCF actually become the government, but that turned out to not be the case, and Bennet assumed power and was to maintain it for 20 years. Bennet was a business man, very successful, from the Okanagan. His government was a blend, a mix, an informal coalition of liberals and conservatives. Strongly pro-free enterprise, bound by traditional values with respect to family particularly. Shortly after he became premier, he became the finance minister, as well. It was a period of prosperity, a period of extensive building and major construction in area of highways. His government was responsible for opening up the hinterland, in that respect. The era was generally a prosperous one. The premier was Canadian in his attitude, but a very strong British Columbian. He had a number of conflicts with federal government over: the Columbia River Treaty; the Constitution; the position of the West, generally, and British Columbia, particularly, in the overall government of the country and felt that British Columbia was under represented in terms of its MP's.

[00:38:03] JC: In terms of education, it was a government that was not particularly friendly. Civilly frosty or frosty civility was perhaps the approach he had opted with respect to education and those associated with it. To go to the social or educational aspect of the period, we were into the boomer generation. The boomer generation was in the school system. The boomers started in 1946. By 1951-1952 when I started teaching, the first of the boomers were in elementary school and that phase was to continue for

[00:39:18] JC: 18 years.

[00:39:22] KN: Yes.

[00:39:24] JC: By '63 the schools of the province were virtually full of boomer children and the boomers of course had a wide effect upon schools. They contributed to massive construction of schools, massive expenses to everything that was associated with school equipment, supplies from toilet paper to table saws or crayons to sewing machines. They were demanding, the children, their parents were demanding. They were optimistic, the parents that is, about the education of their children. One of the effects for teachers, particularly, was that teaching jobs were readily available. It was easy to find a position. One of the problems the Federation faced at the time was trying to restrict the number temporary certificated teachers, particularly in rural schools. Turnover in rural schools, particularly in small communities, was very high. So, there was employment. Compared to today's situation, for example, the contrast is just stark in terms of a new teacher today finding a new permanent employment compared to the situation in my day and throughout the sixties. The Minister of Education of the day was Leslie Peterson

who was young, very smart lawyer, new to politics, ambitious. I think in retrospect because of his own education and the fact that he kept his own kids in the public-school system he may have had personally been inclined to understand the point of view of teachers and of the Federation in private,

[00:42:26] JC: but in his role as the Minister he was a companion and a loyalist to the Bennet brand. He was civil—in my experience—always, but difficult. In one instance with him, in which we were presenting resolutions passed at the Annual General Meeting, we passed all kinds of resolutions and affairs that the Federation doesn't deal with these days at the AGM—curriculum resolutions for example. And one of the resolutions the AGM adopted was that religious instruction should be eliminated from the schools. You may be too young to know about religious instruction, but in my day one was required to open the home room period at the beginning of the day with a reading of scripture from the Bible and the recitation of the Lord's Prayer. And teachers of various religions and those of none, many disliked the whole process. They felt it simply belong in the public-school system. It created difficulties for children who were not Christian. The alternative for them was to leave the room, which was a bit of a spectacle for themselves and embarrassing.

[00:44:37] JC: And so, a resolution came to the AGM about elimination of the process. It wasn't universally supported, in that there were many teachers who felt, that because of their own faith, that the religious exercise was a moral building and helpful, but the majority of teachers supported. The vast majority of the delegates at the AGM supported the motion. We subsequently presented it amidst a group of resolutions to the minister. As I remember it was Charlie Ovans and Allan Spragge, and, I think, Isobel Cull were present at that meeting sitting around the table, along from the Minister's office. And when we put that one on the table, Les Peterson looked at me directly, as sternly as he could and he said, "As long as I am Minister of Education that will not happen, end of discussion." He was a very forceful character, but he was wrong of course. It wasn't until 1971,

[00:46:36] JC: I think that I'm right, that the motion eventually became fact.

[00:46:43] KN: It was actually later than that.

[00:46:51] KN: A regulation was created, so a little later than that, but certainly not in the act until much later that schools were secular.

[00:47:12] JC: One of the things my wife always smiled about over that particular resolution was that the local edition of the Vancouver Sun carried a small headline of some sort that said, "Out with God, In with Sex,"

[00:47:33] JC: as the story of the meeting and the sex part had to do with the introduction with of the program called Effective Living, which replaced an older program called Health in the School System. So, there were, you know, part of the business of doing significant and great things sometimes is accommodated by things that are mildly amusing.

[00:48:13] KN: So, when you were elected president of the BCTF, were you full-time and what was the BCTF was like at that time? How many staff did you have working for the BCTF when you were president?

[00:48:28] JC: The answer to the first question is yes, I was full-time. And a bit of background to that, I believe that Bill Allester, who proceeded me, was the first one to have time off. I think Bill's time off may have been 50% rather than 100%. The Federation at that time, did not provide any living accommodation for a president. My home was in Victoria, my family lived in Victoria. I was lived off and on in the Doric Hotel, on Howe Street, when I was in the office in Vancouver. I travelled back and forth on the weekends, when I wasn't somewhere else in the province, to visit my family. The role of the president was effected significantly by the decision to make the office a full-time one in that the primary motivation for offering the president full-time on the job was to display to the public, to teachers, to administrators, to the media generally, that the key spokesperson for the Teacher's Federation was in fact a practicing professional teacher or administrator—a principal or vice principal—that that individual had direct contact with youngsters, with teachers, with a community, and had a commitment to return to that community as a teacher.

[00:50:59] JC: And therefore, spoke from the heart, idealistically of what really concerned teachers. That picture was to be presented by the president through meetings of teachers, and schools, and local associations, and district council gatherings, and regional conferences, in representations to governments, politically elected or appointed ministers, or deputy ministers, or staff—to everyone. It was this notion that the heart of the Federation, the heart of the union, was the president and the president was a practicing teacher. And so, much of my year was devoted to travelling and spreading the gospel of the Federation with respect to what it offered in terms of programs, its economic welfare program, its professional development program, its communication program, a lot of assistance was available, what its aims were with respect to salaries, and income security, pensions—particularly pensions at that period. One of its aims were with respect to curriculum and in-service education, one of the things I'm quite proud to be associated with is the development of the PSAs in that period. We also had a scholarship program that we funded, providing a couple of grants

[00:53:34] JC: to graduating students of teaching universities.

[00:53:47] KN: How big was the staff roughly? How many people did you have on staff around that time?

[00:53:55] JC: Senior staff was Charlies Ovans, Stan Evans, Allan Spragge, Des Grady, Ken Richardson. We had a second level that was Barbra McFarland who was the sub-editor of the magazine, Joan Bekius who was the supervisor of non-admin staff. And I'm really guessing at this point, I would say probably fewer than 30 staff members.

[00:54:40] KN: All together?

[00:54:42] JC: Yes.

[00:54:45] KN: All together? Okay.

[00:54:49] KN: So, when you were president the Federation went through a major change in its governance structures.

[00:54:58] JC: Oh, I know it well.

[00:55:00] KN: And so, that's what we want to ask you about now, the Executive changed in its composition—Representative Assembly, district councils. So, maybe we could start with the Executive,

[00:55:13] KN: tell us what the Executive was like before the change and after the change.

[00:56:37] JC: The Executive before the change was made up of the table officers, five of us elected at the Annual General Meeting in exactly the same way as we handle that business now, the balance of the Executive consisted of representatives from the district council and, in my day, the representatives of the district council were 24 in number. The district councils were areas of the province, such as Prince George, the Okanagan, the East Kootenay, the West Kootenay, the big cities—Vancouver, Victoria were councils themselves—there was a Southern Vancouver Island council and a Northern Vancouver Island council. Each council picked their representative or representatives to the Executive Committee, so there was 24 of those. While I was president there was a very aggressive lower mainland local, North Vancouver that was arguing strongly and logically for representation on the Executive Committee which would have pushed that number to 30. One of things that I became aware of within the first year I spent on the Executive was that had to change that what we were looking was population growth with respect to teachers and that system just was too large, too awkward, too inefficient.

[00:58:01] JC: It's easy to recognize the individual council members came to the Executive Committee with the perspective and background always of looking after their council. So, their interests were of a local nature or a district nature. Of the concerns about problems that existed there, difficulties with respect to class sizes in particular schools, difficulty with dealing with an obstreperous school board or a superintendent, problems about high school playing fields, lack of grounds, lack of equipment in the school particularly for the gymnasium, or the home economics classes, or the industrial arts. Compelling

[00:59:11] JC: of course, to the local representative who had to deal with his colleagues and hear their complaints and not be able to be satisfied in the way in which things were handled. So, there was a multitude of minutia and we tended to handle that by having the district council members write a report before they came to the Executive Committee, put down in writing what concerns you wish to pursue in terms of progress for the Federation. Proposals you want to put, put them in writing, give them to us. For reasons that bewildered me personally, district councils were not disposed to do that, they much preferred to present their ideas, their

recommendations, their complaints orally at the Executive Meeting Council. I became involved with a Committee that was stuck on reorganization and it really did not take us very long to decide that the Executive Committee had to smaller for one, that it had have as its focus the objectives of the Federation as a whole, that it had to had policies that represented the interests of all teachers and the organization as a whole,

[01:01:22] JC: and that it was small enough to carry on an effective, efficient meeting that would look to the principals involved in forming policy and promoting it—in every field, economic welfare, professional development, effective learning and teachings, and new operations that we introduced, communications. And, it didn't take us very to realize that 12, as in 12 apostles, was the maximum number,

[01:02:12] JC: and in fact something like 9 might be more efficient. And, we reached those conclusions in part by looking at what was effective in the world of business, corporations. And so, we set on the table officers that particular combo seemed to have work effectively and recognized the fact one might start on the lower step of the secretary-treasurers job and move up and in the process become knowledgeable enough and competent enough, and skillful enough, and artful enough to be a president. So, there, that was relatively easy decision.

[01:03:14] KN: So, you settled on the number 11?

[01:03:17] JC: Yes.

[01:03:18] KN: At that time, and that's same size of the Executive that we have today.

[01:03:21] JC: Yes. I smile at that.

[01:03:24] KN: Right. So, what about the Representative Assembly?

[01:03:29] KN: Go ahead.

[01:04:04] JC: The second issue then was how do we provide a representation of the membership between Annual General Meetings, what sort of link can we establish that will replace the District Council members on the Executive Committee and allow the district councils and locals within them to have some form of representation other than or in addition to the Annual General Meeting. And the first notion we had within the Committee at that time was that the presidents should met, the presidents should be a body—could be a body—that would meet two or three times a year before or after the Annual General Meeting.

[01:04:39] KN: To clarify, are we talking about the presidents of locals or the presidents of district councils?

[01:04:44] JC: No, the presidents of the local associations. I had in mind a number, and it slipped, somehow the number 44 hangs in my distant memory and that may have come about because the idea of the presidents—the president of Vancouver being equal, to be given the

same kind of weight as the president from Burns Lake. It didn't quite sit well. That there had to be something broader, more inclusive, or more acceptance recognition of the fact that there were large clumps of teachers in one local and very small clumps in another and of course all the ones in between. So we came up with the notion of a representative assembly and I think initially we determined within a grouping of, my recollection was, 44 areas within the province.

[01:06:29] JC: Sorry, I got that wrong. There would be from the district council areas a group of 44 people selected, the council having a number of representatives

[01:06:55] JC: reflecting its size. The 44 of course has obviously changed. And the council was to be advisory to the Executive Committee, but at first it was only to be advisory, but what was added quickly was the notion that the council had to have some influence, control over finance—budgetary matters and fees. And as far as I know, as of today, the only thing that has changed with respect to the representative assembly is that the number of members has increased.

[01:08:04] KN: That is correct, and we moved away from geographically representatives to local representatives.

[01:08:21] KN: Those are the changes, really. And I think that's basically where we are today in terms of structure. What happened to the district councils?

[01:08:30] JC: They withered away. There were district councils for some time that met simply because they wanted to meet. I remember particularly that the North and the Kootenay councils, because of the nature of the people who were involved who kept them together simply because they wanted to meet and talk about local problems. There was a camaraderie of being associated, involved with the association with their particular area that interested them, but as a force in the organization they were gone.

[01:09:55] KN: So, what, Jim, do you see as your greatest challenge while you were president? What did you find you had the most difficulty dealing with?

[01:10:07] JC: The change.

[01:10:10] KN: The change? And just talk about that.

[01:11:35] JC: Right, we the idea was put to the membership, to the district councils and the locals, of this reorganization, there was both a significant number of teachers, of locals, and leaders, there was a very positive response in the sense that it made sense. The other response of course was a negative reaction based on a number of things. For one, the notion of the Executive Committee members—all of them, the officers and the members—being elected at the Annual General Meeting at large was something that members of small local, rural associations thought immediately meant that they would be cut out of membership of the Executive Committee. It was hard to visualize someone in Nelson that a member from Nelson might actually get elected in an Annual General Meeting in a province wide general election, given for example, that Vancouver Secondary and Vancouver Elementary had such a dominate

number of members and representatives at the AGM. That the big city locals, if they even had to combine to do it, could ensure for themselves that they had their representatives on the Executive Committee.

[01:12:19] JC: So, that was a major concern. I guess the second was, and related to it, was that an Executive Committee that consisted primarily of representatives of large urban areas even though some of the urban areas might be the larger ones of the province—Kelowna or Prince George—that the thrust of that body would be urban concerns and interests rather than rural ones. Those who supported the resolutions wanted to tinker with particularly the details of the representative assembly and the concerns were largely expressed those in the district councils who were the senior class, those who were experienced members who had a firm and sometimes long association as an activist in the organization may in fact be eased to the side lines in this new set up. That they wouldn't have quite the same influence as they exercised when they were a district council or a representative or a member of the district council. In my year as president chair of the AGM, the debate on the resolutions was, to me in the chair, was about 50/50 in terms of positive arguments and negatives ones. The ones that were negative were particularly passionate, it seemed to me in talking about their concerns about losing out, being considered not worth significant consideration

[01:15:09] JC: and a vote was called for. With reluctance, because I wasn't, as a chair, really satisfied with the overall reaction of the AGM. I had anticipated that the appeal of effectiveness and efficiency and the broad general approach to the big problems would have been a very acceptable one. Vote was called and the "yes" vote was marginal, a matter of single digits, something like that, very small, and as the chair I suggested to the membership simply was satisfactory. I was convinced that to adopt the new system with such a margin would just be divisive within the organization. That the half or nearly half, virtually half that had opposed was going to fight tooth and nail at the local and council level to make it difficult to—frankly bitch and complain—and I wasn't satisfied with that. So, I asked that the members consider tabling the resolution, referring it back to the Executive Committee for further consideration and that's what happened. So, I became as past president. The member who again travelled, not so much as I did as president of course, but I appeared at various—at the invitation of councils on some occasions, local associations, conferences—to talk about it

[01:17:38] JC: and secondarily, Isobel Cull was doing the same thing, but prior to the two of us doing that we reviewed the motions that had been passed at the Annual General Meeting and the ideals that had been proposed with respect to the representative assembly and we changed a number of things to give the representative assembly a little more influence. And, in the year that Isobel was president the revised proposal was put to the Annual General Meeting and it was passed with almost without debate. As I recall, there was no resolution to change anything and the actual adoption and first meetings of the new Executive Committee and the Representative Assembly all went rather smoothly and there were no repercussions that I am aware of in terms of any local associations complaining bitterly about the new set up. From the get go, it appeared to me and everybody I ever talk to about it, as it being a success.

[01:18:20] KN: That must have been very satisfying for you.

[01:19:03] JC: It was. Yes, if I have to tell you anything that I was pleased with and proud of in terms of being a part of, it was that change in the organizational structure of the organization and I have to think that change made the organization stronger.

[01:19:46] JC: It made it more effective. It certainly made it more efficient.

[01:19:56] KN: So, after you were president and past president, soon after that you came onto the BCTF staff. Would you care to talk about that and your work on staff in the BCTF?

[01:20:14] JC: Okay. The first thing that happened to me after I became past president or president was that John Church approached me and asked me if I was willing to be a curriculum consultant for the Department of Education. John was the curriculum guy in the PD department, highly regarded, particularly by the local associations, both as a committee chairman before he became a staff member and as a staff member, as a guy who was really interested, committed to improving the curriculum offered in the schools of the province. He was a marvellous speaker, great with questions. The Federation as part of the, I guess associated with the earlier Report and the, I say, revolution in the revision of the curricula. The government had taken on two practicing teachers as curriculum consultants on one year appointments, one for elementary curriculum, and one for secondary. And John had been the secondary one, and the job was to meet with curriculum revision committees—physics, chemistry, mathematics, history, English—and act as their secretary. Do the logistical work, research, contacts, so one, operating out of the ministry in Victoria. John had done the job and he approached me as past president to see if I would be willing.

[01:22:27] JC: I thought it was a grand idea and I said yes almost immediately. I would be living in Victoria with my family, travelling but John made it sound like marvelous experience and as it turned out it was. So, I did that one year as a curriculum consultant. And I would say the man I worked with, John Meredith, was a friend of teaching, he was a friend of the Federation, he was an absolute superb person to work with. It was a very satisfying year for me. So, I did that. I also became a member of the retired teacher association of course and they put me up to being a member of the BCTF Pension Committee. Actually, to continue being a member of the Pension Committee. So, I was Pension Committee member, that was my association for years and I spent a period also representing the Federation on the Teachers' Pension Board of the day. Teacher Qualification Service approached me and asked if I would serve of the chairman of the board and the offer came both from trustee side of the table, which amazed me, and the teacher side.

[01:24:23] JC: So, I chaired the board for nine years. And one day I got a telephone call from Elsie McMurphy and she wondered if I would represent the Federation on a government commission that was appointed to elect the members of the BC College of Teachers, and I hummed and hawed over the phone and wanted to know more about it. And the commission was to consist of a judge, a representative of the BCSTA and a representative of the Teachers' Federation. And I agreed to do it. So I was involved with unanimous decision on the part of the

three of us to run the election in the manner in which we did it. And as you know the Teachers' Federation was not wildly enthusiastic about the BC College in the first place and the way it was to be constructed, but I think Elsie was satisfied—and I assumed the Executive was, only because I didn't receive any negative feedback—were satisfied with the way the election progress. The end result of course was that the elected officers included people like Jim Killeen and Bill Broadley,

[01:26:10] JC: and others—basically Federation supported members from the regional district. I'm thinking of the college, I was asked by the chair—the college met on occasion—they decided that they needed a staffer of some sort, not permanent, but a staffer who would find them a building, a meeting space and permanent officers that would be

[01:26:56] JC: an

[01:27:01] JC: executive secretary, support staff, that kind of thing. And they approached me and I agreed to do it. I became an educational consultant. So, I found them three leasing offices that seemed suitable. Jim, and another member, and I toured them and they decided on one, which was very nice. They redecorated, it was very pleasant. And then, they had to find an executive secretary or director and we did that. I did the job interviews, provided them with five interviewees, did the same thing for the treasurer. I handled the logistics with respect to the transfer of two staff members from the BC government that were looking after teacher certification records. Those two left the government employment and joined the college. And also, the logistical business of moving all of the records from the Ministry of Education to the college. I also did some consulting work with the Yukon teachers—nice experience, enjoyed it—with respect to teacher to education and certification. So kept with contact for something like 11 years that I actually involved in some work that was associated with teaching or Federation affairs.

[01:29:11] JC: And one of those slipped my mind, Al Cornes will recognize this, I spent some time in the Federation office counselling teachers on early retirement programs.

[01:29:20] AC: And did an excellent job.

[01:29:29] JC: Thank you. It was an interesting period for me, the ten years after I retired, because I worked part-time, and Marian and I travelled a lot, but the work kept me in touch with teachers and the Federation and gave me a sense of satisfaction in respect to what I was doing. It eased me, I think, out of the pressures of being a Federation staffer into a sort of more genteel period of employment, which I could pick and choose what I wanted to do. So, it was nice, I enjoyed it.

[01:30:20] KN: So Jim, if I could go back to have you talk a bit about your role on staff, when you were on staff. After you were president then you came onto the BCTF staff, what did you do when you were on the staff?

[01:30:37] JC: After president, after I had done the curriculum bit, the Deputy Minister of Education made a point of seeing me one day, Bill Reid, and he said, "Did you know there is a vice principal's job being offered in North Vancouver?" And I said, "No, I didn't." He said, "Would you be interested in applying?" I hesitated because I hadn't really thought about that very much, and he said, "Get back to me," left me and talked to Marian about it. I was a teacher in Victoria. Victoria was the prized school district in the province for those who wanted a nice pleasant environment. A lovely city in which to raise a family. Moving to North Vancouver was a big unknown, but we decided to do it. I put in the application, I told Bill that I would. And he said, "I will give you a recommendation." And I met the North Vancouver school board, and was hired, and we made the move. So, that got me over here. One of things that did while I came over here, I took an interest in computers—took a course in programming—

[01:32:14] JC: then I was employed as a vice principal at Argyle Secondary School. And in my second year—close to the end of it—a member of the Federation staff phoned to asked me if I knew there was appointment open at the Federation staff and I didn't. And he sent me a description of it. It was for the Professional Development Division and they were looking for someone particularly interested in teacher education, teacher development and computer technology. I thought to myself "that suits me." So I put in an application, was interviewed, hired, so I joined the PD staff. The director of the day was Bill Allester who was a bit of a role model for me as a president, mentor, marvelous fellow, a tremendous supporter of education at the local level—that is decisions being made in the school, school district level by teachers in the class room. Local government if you like. He was one staff member who was the most committed to the concept of local authority in the school system, local initiative, local development, local Pro-

[01:34:09] JC: D. He as a former principal, very confident in the skills of teachers and administrators to make decisions that were appropriate to the community in which they lived and worked. I was given an assignment by Bill, or a number of assignments, I was working on those into my first year and second, and Charlie Ovans came along to ask me if I would take over the Effective Teaching and Learning Conditions Program. We had a committee for some time, but they wished to expand it and expand the sort of area in which it was working and it give it a little more clout—particularly over things like class sizes, adequate resources, and teacher influence at the school level in the form of staff committees. And the group would be associated with the economic welfare department, and I agreed to do that. And as part of my work with Effective Teaching and Learning Conditions I also became involved with the whole load of work that was economic welfare—salary negotiations, arbitrations, the income security program—the salary indemnity fund. And I stayed there until I retired I guess.

[01:36:34] KN: And you retired in 1986?

[01:36:36] JC: Yes, April. Yes, end of April—had a very nice party down on the waterfront

[01:37:04] JC: and the members of the staff, innovative as they were, gave me a bright red bicycle and a helmet to go with it and good cheer and good wishes. And that's when I started cycling. I hadn't ridden a bike from, probably, about the age of 15 and cycling became one of my hobbies in retirement. Cycled with a couple of other staff members—Derek Holden, John Hardy—all over the lower mainland, into Washington, cycled in Europe—France, Germany, Austria—the Czech Republic, the Netherlands. So, that happy party turned into a very interesting or led me into a very interesting, and pleasant, and adventurous, and I'm happy. I'm grateful to the staff.

[01:38:24] KN: Can you say a bit, Jim, about your work with the salary indemnity plan? How you saw it change during the period of time that you worked on it.

[01:38:33] JC: Well, yes and if you were to ask me, you said I must have been very pleased and proud about the governance issue, the second thing that I was most satisfying to me as a staff member was dealing with the evolution. As the staff member who working with the income security committee, I was the one who did the research, the ground work—the dog work if you like—with respect to moving the Salary Indemnity Committee once a very small, but nice positive operation of the Federation that provided benefits that had run out of their sick leave, moving it from that small \$10 a day operation to the salary indemnity plan of the present, which is basically a replica of an insurance's short-term and long-term disability plan. Big financial operation, very significant benefit for members who find themselves ill and unable to work for either short or long periods of time. I think it's a great service that the organization provides. And I hope the Federation is still promoting it amidst its members as something that is really valuable and positive attribute provided by the union.

[01:40:41] KN: Jim, one thing that you had experience in so many and so many different ways, both as a president and a staff person, you've seen the education system change a lot over the years. What advice, if any, would you have for somebody who was entering the teaching profession at this time?

[01:41:14] JC: Some young man or woman out of UBC or Simon Fraser, Victoria, graduate of the education program, I don't think I would presume to offer them any advice on teaching. I think if I were to face them on the question I would say congratulations. You have a fine job, a grand job. You have a job and a vocation that may find very satisfying, very supportive, and a life in education teaching you will look back on with a great sense of satisfaction. Teaching is a good job, the salary is supportable, the health and welfare benefits are good, the pension is tremendous—one of the best in the country—your security on the job is virtually total, the Federation has your back in all respects—with your professional work, your involvement with the school system, your involvement with colleagues. The Federation will always offer assistance, guidance, support. On top of that, there is an element of teaching that is basically vocational. You are engaged in what is rather a moral operation.

[01:43:44] JC: You are opening the world of learning and personal development, and imagination, and growth to young people. You're contributing to them, you are contributing to their skills, to their attitude, to their behaviour. You are changing people. You are making them better. You are making them good citizens of the country. You are contributing to the sense of loyalty to their parents, to their employers, to their province, to their country. Everything that you do, every little direction, every challenge that you provide, every puzzle/problem that you assist them in solving, the confidence that you generate, the enthusiasm you generate, their ability to face and resolve difficulties, the ability to work with others—collegiately, collaboratively—all of those things combined, rolled up into a ball, you are changing people. You are making them better, you are making them more confident, more comfortable in their own skin. And it's a rather marvelous sense of satisfaction that you can find in seeing that in each individual student—the development, the change. And feel rather proud of the fact that you played a part in that. So, I wish you well.

[01:46:10] KN: Thank you. Thank you very much.