

Interview: Jim MacFarlan (JM)

Interviewer: Ken Novakowski (KN)

Assisted by: Al Cornes and Lesley Harrington

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Note: This interview is presented in two parts (Part 1/Part 2), recorded as discrete interviews on the same day. Part 2 continues separately.

[00:00:10] KN: Good morning, Jim, thank you for coming.

[00:00:14] JM: Morning, Ken!

[00:00:15] KN: And,

[00:00:16] KN: we are here to do an interview with Jim MacFarlan, who was the president of the BC Teachers' Federation in 1973 to 1975. The date today is July 14th, 2016, and we're at the BCTF building, the interview is being conducted by Ken Novakowski and Al Cornes, with technical assistance from Lesley Harrington. Jim, we want to start out by asking you some questions about your background. Where and when you were born, where you were raised, tell us something about your family. Were they politically oriented, union people or were they progressively minded? Let's talk about that for a few minutes

[00:00:59] JM: Sure, I was born 80 years ago tomorrow, actually, in the Grace Hospital, because my grandmother was a Christian. My mother wasn't but the Grace Hospital was the best maternity hospital in Vancouver at the time. And my background, I guess, quickly, I think I am the 11th generation born in Canada; my people came here on one side in 1632 to Port Royal in Nova Scotia. And succeeding generations came to Halifax, to other parts of Nova Scotia, and, ultimately, also to Canada from England. My labour history, I guess, depends on my grandparents, both of my maternal and paternal grandfathers. My paternal grandfather was a worker, who worked for the Outside Civic Workers in Vancouver; became the secretary of the Outside Civic Workers' Union in the post-WWI period. And, as a matter of fact, carried out a very successful strike. They were having trouble with the city negotiating, and the Granville Bridge was, at the time, the port of entry, of course to Shaughnessy and to the West Side. So, Grandpa thought, we'll have a quick strike, so he told the bridge attendant to open the bridge: it was a swing-bridge back then, Granville Bridge. Open the bridge, leave it open, don't let anybody on, and don't close it till I tell you.

[00:02:36] JM: So, of course this is rush hour. The whole city was tied-up; all the rich could not get home to the West Side of the city. The strike lasted three hours, they got what they wanted,

and grandfather led the strike. He was not a socialist, he was a good trade-unionist. But he was not a socialist. My other grandfather was trained to be a lawyer, in Nova Scotia, gave that up and became a worker on the boats. Became a carpenter, and, as a matter of fact, sailed the ship that Jack London was on, from San Francisco to Vancouver, when he wrote *The Sea Wolf*. Anyway, my grandfather became involved in the Carpenters' Union, and ended-up having life-time membership in the Carpenter's Union. And, my mother said, we used to have these men, when she was a young woman—young girl, I guess, she was about

[00:03:28] JM: 12

[00:04:00] JM: or 13. There would be these men come on Sundays, one had come to the front door, a little while later one had come to the back door, and one had come to the front door, and she said, that was the Block Committee of the political organization. I guess, the Socialist Party. So, later on, I was going through my grandfather's books, and I found this list of 5 names, and I showed my mother and asked if she knew them. And she said, oh, those were the names of the Socialist Block Committee—they were organized that way, because it was illegal. And each area of South Vancouver had a block, where there were Socialist Party members. And, fortunately, my friend, well, Ron Tinsky, who used to work here, found at McLeod's book store a sign-up form from the Socialist Party from 1908 or 1909; a blank one. So, I have that framed as part of my history of my family. So, my parents and my grandparents were trade-unionists, my father was an active member of the IWA from the beginning, he signed-up almost a 1000 members in the union.

[00:04:33] JM: I will conclude this quickly: he was working in Powell River, in 1933, and CCF ran a candidate for the first time in the 1933 election. And my father organized, he was cooking there, and knew all the guys. And so, he urged them to vote CCF. And the next day, when the election took place, the CCF was elected. I think it was Bert Hargrave, I can't remember exactly. He was elected. The next morning, my mother and my younger sister had just arrived, they haven't even unpacked, and—a knock on the door, the company guy, and two provincial police: "You're fired, and you will be on the boat tomorrow morning", and they ran him out of town. So, he came to town, they didn't know what to do, they were unemployed, so they went to see Laura Jamieson, from the CCF. And she said, well, go join the Unemployed Organization. So, my mother did—went into this room, and there were 40 men or 50 men, and they're all smoking. They all looked at her, the only woman in the room, and said, can we help you?

[00:05:48] JM: And she said, "I'm here to join the unemployed", and they were almost all communists, and they said, "How did you find out about this?" And she said, "I was told by Laura Jamieson". They all broke into great laughter, because of course, at that time, the socialists and communists were at odds; the CCF and the Communist Party were at odds over things.

[00:06:09] JM: Anyways,

[00:06:10] JM: two weeks later she joined the Party, and remained in it till 1968; I grew up as “red diaper baby”; and she stayed in the party until 1968. So, that’s my political background.

[00:06:22] KN: OK, What do you remember about your public school experience?

[00:06:27] JM: Wonderful teachers! The 4 or 5 women, and the 2 men, who taught me in the first 6 years, were astonishing people. And I kept contact with one of them, until she died about 10 years ago, she lived in Duncan. And we’d corresponded over those 60 years after that! An amazing woman, wonderful person. And I remember, that was the positive side of it, it was a school, that is now called the Grandview Elementary; it was called Woodland School at the time. It was, essentially, a white WASP school, there were two Italians, one Ukrainian, three Chinese, no First Nations, and no Black people. It was a WASP working class school. I had some political involvement. I guess, the first diagram that I drew, the first picture—I was illustrating something in Grade 1—and it was the middle of the war, it was Stalingrad, 1942, and I drew this battleship. Which obviously, had to be a Soviet battleship, with the big red flag, half the size of the ship, flying behind it; and two Nazi bombers were coming down. One of them was dropping flames. And I put this in my Grade 1 illustration. And

[00:07:48] JM: teacher looked at that, and she said, “My, that is very interesting. Very interesting”. I guess, she thought, whoa, where did this guy come from? And I guess, the other political thing, was the principal... the Province (newspaper) had been on strike, it was a long protracted strike, it lasted 2 or 3 years. And they had buttons printed out, by the Daily Province, and all the trade-unionists’ kids wore them and I had mine on. The principal said, you have to take that off. So, I said, why? He said, “Well, because it is a political move, you can’t wear that”. So, he made me take it off, and I thought he was a bit of a bastard for doing that, which he was. Anyway, those were the kind of memories that were... There was racism towards the Asian kids in the school, and there were only a few on them. But, overall it was a good school to go to. I went to junior secondary after that, but it was unfortunately rigidly structured on IQ tests. Kids were put in classes depending on IQ, 100-and up, 95-and-up; or 95-and-down;

[00:09:07] JM: everybody was placed in those kinds of classes, they were solely dependent on IQ. And it was a rigid school, there were monitors, discipline was strong, there was an upstairs and downstairs (spaces) and kids were strapped regularly. And it was an interesting school. Templeton is now a combined junior and senior high, but it was built at the same time as was Point Grey. But there’s interesting class issue involved here: if you go and look at the two schools, you will find that Point Grey has a lovely auditorium with gargoyles out front, with flaming red inside them; lamps outside, and a lovely looking building. Templeton is a piece of garbage. They were built the same year, same way, one had a deluxe auditorium, one had a fancy cafeteria and one was a piece of garbage in terms of construction. And it was the way that the Vancouver School Board did things. It was a class issue, obviously. Anyways, high-school was good. The teachers were very good, I went back and did my practicum at my old high-school; my old teachers were my sponsor-teachers, which was kind of fun.

[00:10:28] KN: Did you go to university right after high-school?

[00:10:30] KN: And

[00:10:31] KN: what about your university years? Want to talk about those for a minute? And, how did you decide to become a teacher?

[00:10:36] JM: Well, I was going to be geologist, but I'm really a city guy, you know? I loved the summers—I worked every summer through high-school and part of the university at a logging camp; with my father, he was the cook. And I made a lot of money—you work 7 days a week, guys have to eat every day, bank-rolled, nice out there, you have great food. Wonderful. And I liked the summers there, and then I got into geology, and the summers were OK for a couple of years there. And then I thought, jeez, do I really want to be North of Prince George, for 8 or 9 months a year; do I really want to be living on snow-shoes blazing trees in the middle of winter? Do I really want to be sitting in an office in Calgary, looking at charts of underground seismic activity? And, I thought, uh, I am just not for this.

[00:11:29] JM: I

[00:11:30] JM: am a city person, and I am political person, and... geology isn't it. My mother had always said—I wanted to be a lawyer, but they weren't letting communists into the Law Faculty with any ease, and they had to, in fact, run one of them out. A guy, named Gordon Martin was in Hyde after he did his degree, he was denied entry. And those who were in, were private. So, I thought, OK, my mother wanted me to be a teacher, and it seemed like a pretty good option; so I switched my majors to History and Geography and became a teacher.

[00:12:04] KN: And were you active politically on

[00:12:07] KN: campus?

[00:12:09] JM: I was the President of the Campus Communist Party Club for 4 or 5 years. And it was interesting; it was vigorous time, sometimes brutal, sometimes funny. And when we were invited to speak at the Model Parliament, we had a couple of us elected to the Model Parliament. We were going to speak at the University of Washington; the American Government refused us to let us in. So, the whole Model Parliament said, they wouldn't go, if their communists weren't allowed to go—the big battle! And, we finally were given 48 hours exemption from the McCarthy act, and we were allowed to speak. We were the first communists to speak at the University of Washington since the McCarthy period, because the State Legislature passed a bill, saying that the funding would be cut-off for a university, if the communists were allowed to speak there, or be on campus. So, we got there and spoke, and people came up to us and said, "You're not really one". I remember one young woman tap me on the arm, and said, "You aren't really a communist, are you?"

[00:13:28] JM: Not a real one?" So, I happened to have my party card in my wallet, and I said, "There it is." She said, "Oh my god! You really are" (everyone laughs). I said, "You betcha". She

looked—this is 1956—she looked terror-stricken, and if I had gone “Boo” at her, she would have had a heart-attack right on the spot. It was terror. The other thing, of course, is the Hungarian events of 1956: they brought the chaperoned students over, one guy named Arpad Fustos, whose name I remember, because he wrote an article in UBC, saying, we should hang comrade MacFarlan from a lamp-post, the way we hung comrades in Budapest. And I have that clipping. I didn’t know where Arpad Fustos is, but we never went out at night on campus after that, alone. Because, we thought, they might just do it. But it was good, you know, we had speakers, and I was also President of the Social Problems Club, which was a broadly-based club, dealing with racism and peace, and war and women’s issues, and god knows what else. There was an agenda at the time,

[00:14:50] JM: we worked closely with the Students’ Christian Movement, because they were, sort of, a production centre of young radical socialists, most of them went into the CCF originally, then into NDP. So, I enjoyed those years, I learned how to public speak, and how to defend myself, and how to defend the Party, and the movement, and I learned some pretty good stuff there. I didn’t learn much about education, in the education year. We had a table full of us in 5th-year Education, in which we would bet, who could miss the most classes. And, I won. I only went to 37 out of 135 lectures. And I came first. Most of the guys went to fewer than 75 or a 100; we skipped almost all the classes, they were almost all irrelevant; they were taught by people who knew nothing about practical classroom stuff; they’d been out of a classroom for a 100 years, and they didn’t know anything when they were there.

[00:16:09] KN: And you passed the course?

[00:16:13] JM: Oh, yeah. Of course, you know—I mean, you’d have to be... it’d be pretty difficult to fail. As a matter of fact, there was a guy, whom we voted “Most likely not to succeed”, this guy, he was just awful—his pedagogy, his ideas about education; he was just like, somewhere back hundred years ago. And slow, and ponderous, and I lost track of him until I was President. And I happened to go to this district—no, it was at the trustees’ convention—he came up to me and said, “Jim MacFarlan!”, I said, “Yes”, he says, “ I am So-and-so “. I said, “How are you doing?” He says, “I am the superintendent in such and such district”. And I could not believe it, I was speechless. This is the guy we voted the least likely to succeed in anything education; and he’s the district superintendent. But, I guess he did the right things.

[00:16:54] KN: So, where and when did you first

[00:17:36] KN: start teaching, Jim? Can you tell us a bit about your early years of teaching?

[00:17:41] JM: I started teaching in 1959, I did my two practicums in Vancouver, and the third one in Surrey. And I had a couple of job offers in Surrey, and Burnaby; had been offered to go to New Westminster. It was a strange experience—I was interviewed by the superintendent, he was a militaristic sort of guy, and the secretary was terrified of him; and he said: “I will tell you this: we only need one Social Studies teacher, and we had 200 applicants. Do you live in New Westminster?” I said, “No.” He said, “Well, are you prepared to move here?” And I said, “No”.

"Are you prepared to put your roots down? We want a man, who is prepared to put his roots down in this community". I said, "No, I am pretty much well-rooted where I am". So, we had a short interview and I left. I thought, OK, do I want to teach there? Like, never. Not with this guy. So, about three weeks later I got this honeyed voice on the phone,

[00:18:48] JM: the secretary from Mr. So-and-so; she said, "He would like a second interview", and I guess I was a pretty cocky kid at the time, 23, 22 (

[00:18:57] JM: years old);

[00:18:58] JM: I said, "Why don't you give a message for me?". And she said, "Yes" and I said, "Well, if it was the last district in the world, and I was unemployed, I wouldn't work there". Anyway, I went to teach in Burnaby, I got a job at Park junior secondary, but they appointed me to the wrong school first, they appointed to as an art teacher. Now, I can't draw a straight line with a ruler. I have zero artistic talent, negative; on the scale of 1-10, I am -12. So, they appointed me to this Moscrop Secondary, I had 14 blocks of Grade 7 art; 2 blocks twice a week. So, I went to see the superintendent, and I said, "It's impossible". Meantime, he had a complaint from a guy, who... his name started with Mac as well, and they'd appointed him to MacPherson Park; he was an art teacher, and a sculptor, a very fine artists, actually, and he was a full-time Social Studies teacher. So, they laughed, and said, I guess, we made a mistake, moving the little "tickies" on the board. So, I went to MacPherson,

[00:20:07] JM: the principal was a guy named Tom Chalmers, he'd been a President of the Federation, a fine man, good Scottish man, who really believed that the staff should have a large say in how the schools functions; keep the administrative side of it down, and he let the staff, sort of, do their thing. I worked with Tom on the 75th anniversary, and I was here as an Assistant Executive Director; he came and served on the committee, he was a good guy, strong union guy. And I loved Tom, he was a fine man. And we got along fine, he let me do my thing, after my second year, he appointed me as the department head; where I remained for the 12 years I was there. Along with some other jobs at the district level, doing the same thing. So, it was a good school, we had wonderful band, wonderful track, tremendous staff, great co-operation and it was a great place to teach. Probably the best years teaching I ever had, were there. The only thing about it was that the... negative side of it was that... there were several things that were negative.

[00:21:31] JM: One was, that the kids were, obviously, structured still in the old system. And I remember very well, the most bitter memory I have I think of that year, was, I had three blocks of Grade 10 Social Studies. I taught the first two classes; the third class came in and they were listed as 10M. Meaning, modified. I didn't pay any attention to that. I had the outline of what I was going to teach on the board; introduced myself and said, this is what we're going to do; we're going to have some fun, we're going to talk about current affairs, blah, blah, blah. Girl in the second row put her hand up and said, "Sir!" I said, "Yes?" she said, "We can't do that". I said, "Why is that?" She said, "That's the same thing you taught the other two classes". I said, "Yeah.

Same thing, Socials 10". She said, "No, no, we're mods, we're stupid". I said, "You're mods?" She said, "Yeah." I said, "Well, you and the guy over here, and the girl over here, and the guy over here, you all look the same as the last class to me,

[00:22:38] JM: I can't see any different; so, as far as I am concerned, you're Socials 10. That's the way it is. So, don't let the M worry you, that's what we are going to do". But I thought, at the time, whether it was brand on the forehead, or a tattoo on the arm, those kids were stigmatized. Had been for life, for years, stamped on the forehead, saying, you're dumb. You're stupid, you're the "Modifieds". And, unfortunately, that was the pervasive attitude by, not only the system, not only a systemic problem, but it was the problem perpetuated by our own members. And, I will conclude on that by saying, that years later, when I was vice-principaling; a young woman came to me and said, "Mr. MacFarlan, can I talk to you?", and I said, "Yeah". And she said, "I had 95% in Math 11A".

[00:23:41] JM: And

[00:23:42] JM: I said, "Oh, fantastic!" And she said, "But I only got a C". And I said, "Well, it is a mistake, it is easy to fix, I will talk to the department head and your teacher". Well, I did: they don't give anything above a C for Math 11A. I said, "No, no. You get 95%, you get an A. No doubt about it". So, I went to the department head, who was a very good guy, progressive guy, active in the Federation; and he said, "No, it's not Math 11; we can't cheapen our standards, by giving her an A; it's not Math 11". And I thought, wait a minute; there is something that doesn't compute here—sorry about that. She's on the transcript as Math 11, she got 95%, so she gets an A. So, we had this huge argument with the Math department, and like many secondary teachers at the time, the higher-up you go, the more they get into their subject matter, and it became so important to protect the integrity of their subject. So, anyway, I went to the principal, a guy named Denny Shields, who was an old coal-miner from Cumberland, and cut his spurs over there as the donkey-boy in the mines before the war.

[00:25:05] JM: Good union guy, so we went to the staff meeting. I said, here is the problem. Went to the department head meeting the next day, and he said, "What are you doing? This school is run on behalf of kids, it is not run for elites, this girl got 95%, you are going to give her an A".

[00:25:27] JM: And

[00:26:06] JM: they said, "No, we're not". And he said, "OK—I just made the new policy! There is a kind of juxtaposition when it comes to the rights of teachers and the rights of students; and sometimes, they collide. And in this case, I am the arbitrator. And I am arbitrating in favour of the kids. So, that's the new policy, so the session—let's leave!" And I think, that that's an example, that we haven't been entirely able to—at least at that point in time, that was a long time ago, and I hope, things have changed, we have not been able to entirely—convince our own membership of the pedagogy required in the contemporary world. Many secondary teachers, particularly not so much elementary. Secondary teachers, especially specialists, and

the narrower the specialty, perhaps the more serious it becomes. They become obsessed, to some degree, with the importance of their subject, and forget about the importance of the people they're teaching. So, that's a generalization; it certainly, does not apply to everybody; but I've run into it many times,

[00:26:46] JM: in a variety of ways.

[00:26:50] KN: Can you tell us, Jim about how you got involved in your local, and, subsequently in the Federation?

[00:26:55] JM: Well, because of my trade-union background, I belonged to the IWA, I belonged to Club, Cabaret and Construction Service Employees' Union, and I'd belonged to couple of other unions in the summers, and I was obviously, at that point, a committed socialist, a member of the Communist Party. But it was imperative, I guess, to me, that I should take a part in my trade-union. So, at the end of the first year, I met with Betty Griffin, who was also a communist at the time, and active in Burnaby. And I said, what should I do? And Betty said, well, the only thing that matters in Burnaby right now—the Executive doesn't do much—the Bargaining Committee is about the only thing that really happens. And it's pretty weak, so why don't you run for the Bargaining Committee. So, I ran for the Bargaining Committee. Years later a guy came to me and said, you know, when the election came and I was sitting there and a guy on your staff, a good Christian, who later went onto work at Trinity Western University. And he was quite the reactionary guy. And he, apparently went to cross the floor before a meeting started, to tell somebody, that they'd better know that there was a communist running for the Bargaining Committee,

[00:28:39] JM: so I said, "What did you do?" He said, "I spoke up", and I said, "Great, what's his name, I sure as hell want to vote for him (everybody laughs)". So, anyway, we decided at the time, Betty and I met, and decided that the brief that teachers used to submit to bargaining would be...we'd look at the teachers' salaries in Alberta, and the ones here and there, and how long it takes—it takes 17 years to get the maximum, and the cost of living, we're not keeping up with it; yada, yada. But we never compared it to wages of other workers. So, Betty and I met and decided that we had three or four other people on the Committee, that were OK, they'd come along and they were pretty progressive people. And so, I thought OK, let's try and develop a brief. We had a chair of the Committee, he was a good guy; and said, let's see if we can try to convince the Committee to start looking at salaries in comparison to other workers. So, we raised it and the people said, "Well, where would we get that?"

[00:29:46] JM: The BCTF probably doesn't have that", so Betty says, "Well, there is a group in Vancouver who does labour research, called the Trade-Union Research Bureau". Oh, people said, oh trade-union. Oh. Pretty nervous about that. And somebody says, a guy, a very conservative guy, "Well, I don't know about the trade-union research bureau, I think somebody should call the BCTF and ask them". So, I said, "Well, I will call Mr. Ovans; he should know, he'd know everything about it". And I knew something about it that nobody else did. So, I called

Charlie, and said to Mr. Ovans who I am—he didn't know me. I said, there is this group called the Trade-Union Research Bureau, he said "Oh yes", he said, "They do good work". But, he said, "They have a pretty serious Left-wing bias". I said, "Oh, really?" He said, "They're headed by a guy named—I can't remember his name exactly, but a Scandinavian name—the work is competent, but they have a bias". So I went back and told the Committee, the work was competent, and Mr. Ovans said, they do good work.

[00:31:13] JM: So, we hired them. They produced this wonderful set of statistics, comparing electricians, and labourers, and miners and god knows who else. So I ran into the head of Trade-Union Research Bureau, Emil Bjarnason, and I said to him, "By the way, Emil, I was talking to Charlie Ovans". And he said, "Oh, my old friend Charlie!" I said, "You know him?" And he said, "Oh, hell, every Friday night he came over, and we drank beer together, and our wives talked about their kids, and we had dinner together". And, he said, "After the war, when Alma needed a job, we hired her at the Trade Union Research Bureau". I said, "He doesn't remember that." He said, "Selective memory loss". So, I thought at the time, how leopards change their spots. Anyway... So, I got active in the Federation, I served on the Bargaining Committee for two years as a member, and I served two years as chair. Presented a couple of arbitrations, learned how to prepare an arbitration case, for which we got nothing; nice case—no result. But, we did something nobody had done before; we produced quite a voluminous document of defending our case and produced it for everybody in the district;

[00:32:42] JM: so every teacher got one of those documents. A brief. And up till then the teachers had gone in with, literally, a napkin with the demands on it, saying, we want 6%, or 2%, or whatever it was. So, it was an important change, I think, that we managed to change the direction of the Committee. And I think in terms of that genesis, that bargaining committee with Betty and me, and a few other people, attracted a lot of other progressive people in the district, which later on brought people like Gary Onstad, and Linda Shuto and other people, into that milieu. Similarly, in Vancouver, Al Blakey got onto the bargaining committee and became active in the local there; and the nexus of the developing left was between VESTA and Burnaby. And, I think, that I never served on the Executive other than that. I was appointed by the BCTF as the bargaining co-ordinator for the Metro in 1964–65, but I only served a year, because I ran for the Vancouver School Board in 1966, and had to drop out of the Federation stuff for a couple of years.

[00:34:10] KN: So, when did you, after you served on the School Board, got active again in the Federation obviously? What did you do then?

[00:34:18] JM: Well, when I ran for the school board, it was a huge change, obviously from being an activist in the Federation, to being on the other side of the table. And it is kind of like going from the arctic to the tropics, where you're dealing with friends around you and colleagues; to an incredibly hostile environment. There were 8 people on the board, they were all from Non-partisan Association. One of them said, "I don't think that any teacher should ever serve at any school board, now, or any time in the future". And he never spoke to me for two years. Ever,

except one day, to say, “Will you pass the salt?” at a dinner meeting. Literally, that is all he said to me in two years. So, when I went back to Federation I had to, sort of, find my way again. And I ran as a GR, geographic rep at the time; and then in 1970, I ran as a Member at Large. And by that time we were developing

[00:35:28] JM: a...

[00:35:29] KN: You were elected?

[00:35:30] JM: Yeah. We developed a more extensive caucus of people, it was beginning to form ties to other districts on the Lower Mainland: Richmond, West Vancouver. The guy from West Vancouver was a Conservative, who ran for the Conservative party at one point in his life—a good guy, he just passed away a couple of years ago. And a really, a good man.

[00:36:01] JM: Maple Ridge, some people on the Island, people in the Interior, Don Walmsley. So, the network started to broaden, with limited penetration into the North, and the Interior, it was gradually happening there, but it was largely based initially on the

[00:36:26] JM: Lower Mainland; and on the Southern Vancouver Island. And that is the genesis of the developing of the left.

[00:36:41] KN: So, was it, after the period of time you were elected Member at Large, a couple of years later you ran as the First Vice-President?

[00:36:52] JM: Well I ran for the First Vice-President, but, I think, contextually, you have to see that my election, Blakey’s election, Onstad’s election, Walmsley’s election, were part of... They were personal—you got elected, of course, but they were much more than that, they were significant nodal points in the development of the Federation. Because now, a collection of people—wasn’t one... I mean, in the old days, John Sutherland was a wonderful President, elected in 1939; he had a small coterie of people around him

[00:37:44] JM: from the CCF and the rural teachers. John Prior was elected, and this room is named after him, and he was part of the left; but he didn’t have a big support network; he didn’t have that thing. And he was in at the beginning of the McCarthy and the red-baiting period.

[00:38:10] JM: So, the significance of my election, and Blakey’s and other people, was that they were transformative, generally speaking with period of growth of a movement within the Federation. Rather than—you know, if I hadn’t got elected, somebody would have been; and if they hadn’t got elected, somebody would have been; and so, those things were transformative only in the sense that they were part of a movement, rather, than... Sure, it was nice getting elected personally, it was ego-building and flattering. But in a sense, if nobody else had been there, it wouldn’t have mattered a damn any more, and I would have got some things done. I would have got things done on the Vancouver School Board that were pretty fundamental. I managed to build a coalition of four small-l liberals, and we got 4 or 5 really significant changes done in Vancouver education. But, that wouldn’t have lasted, had it not been for the

developments that took place after that. So, I think you have to look at the history of the Federation, and I realized it is my Marxist background poking through. I see history as that analogy of quantitative change, leading to qualitative change, as Marx said. And in that change, the qualitative change, there are significant nodal points.

[00:39:45] JM: And, one of those was there in 1971. People to this day dismiss it as, it was a one-day strike and it was for retired people, it really wasn't on behalf of us, it was on behalf of our retired colleagues, and so on. We should never diminish that strike. It was absolutely one of those enormous changes in the Federation. And there were a couple that preceded that.

[00:40:19] JM: In 1966 the Federation invited Raymond La Liberté, the General Secretary of the CEQ (Corporation des Enseignants du Québec) to come and speak. And they're by far the most radical teacher-union in the country, and La Liberté, inspired us in the left. And it was a really significant point, turning point, where we have been groping for how to move the Federation; we were a collection of people, we knew what we wanted to do, but it was difficult to find the venue. And he inspired us, and when we went—and I have to go back... I know this may not fit our questions, but we go back to from before I was elected to the 1967 convention, which, the AGM was held that year, in Penticton. And on the night that the political issues were going to be discussed—remember, that political issues were not on the agenda of the Federation in the first decade, that I taught. It was Nada. Federation did not talk about (politics). We could not get the resolution for nuclear disarmament for 5 years. It got shot down every year. We couldn't get a resolution through on world peace, we couldn't get through a resolution on anything social.

[00:41:53] JM: Charlie, and I have to say it, (he) was instrumental, in saying, that his view of professionalism excluded involvement in social issues. Lawyers didn't do that, doctors didn't do that, dentists didn't do that, teachers didn't do that. And if we were educated like lawyers, and dentists, and doctors; and dressed like them, and looked like them—we'd all get paid like them. Which was complete, absolute... unbelievably wrong estimate of how things are going to unfold and should unfold. But it guided the Federation away from involvement in social issues, for two decades. And so, it was a very difficult struggle, to get social issues on the agenda. And so, in 1967 the convention was gigantic—the AGM that year, was from here, to here (points up). It was a caucus we held—the convention was at the Peach Hall—we met across the street the night before, 40 or 50 people, hammered out a resolution to call for a levy of 3 bucks. And it was moved by Ray Wonderlich; an NDP guy from Victoria; and there were SoCreds at the meeting, progressive ones, there were NDPers, there were Communists, there were independent people, progressives around the province;

[00:43:23] JM: and it was a good caucus. And we presented it on the floor, and there was huge debate on whether we should; you know, people said, "Oh my god, it's terrible to table this thing—it is just outrageous, it's political, it's just... oh, terrible". As a matter of fact, the vote came, and the chair, who was Bob Buzza, ruled the motion was defeated. And, I challenged the chair, and the vote was taken, counted, and they tallied up the vote wrong. I tallied up the vote, other people tallied up the vote, we thought it was carried; we got up and challenged the count.

And, by god, they re-did the count, and said, oh, it carried (whistles)! And so the levy was in place. Now, the battle over it was insignificant: the fact that it was a political resolution... Just like the apple campaign meant nothing—the SoCreds got re-elected, but the important thing was, that it was nodal point in the growth of the Federation. No question about it.

[00:44:43] JM: Followed by the next significant place, which was the 1971 strike. They were giant changes, they were transformational changes in the history of the organization. And facilitating that was a broadening caucus of progressive people. No one can take credit for it, there is no individual—there's a dozen, two dozen, three dozen people. Some of them around still, some of them dead, some of them abandoned ship; some of them disappeared. But they all played a significant role in that evolution. Those changes wouldn't have taken place. Even the 1971 strike, there was opposition to it. We weren't going to call it strike, it was just one of those things you didn't do. I got posted to Kamloops for example; as a member of the Executive—I was just elected. It was my first year, I guess, 1971. And I was shipped-off to Kamloops, to rally the troops there. But it was a significant change. So, anyway, that is what happened up to my election as Vice-President.

[00:46:01] JM: Adam Robertson was President, and he asked me when I was elected—Frances Worledge had been the First Vice-President the year before, she was the first vice-president ever to take time off, and she took half-time—and he said to me, would you be prepared to take full-time? And so, I said, I would, why? And he said, I want you to chair the Learning Conditions Committee; and that's our priority for the year. And the senior staff-person appointed to work with me initially, was Alan Spragge; and then it was Jimmy Cairnie. So, Jim and I formed a very close bond, because he became a wonderful guy to work with, in terms of those issues. Anyway, that's what the first year was, it was largely, a campaign on class-size and learning conditions. And, you know, there was another war going on over here (points to the front) and that's the struggle for learning conditions contracts; which were waged in the variety of districts: Powell River, Vancouver, Burnaby... Banging out the pre-conditions for the learning and working conditions contract. They were carried on more separately from this more general battle for learning conditions and class-size stuff.

[00:47:33] JM: So, it wasn't just that it was centrally directed—certainly the edges of it came from the locals and the Federation, as a combined issue.

[00:47:47] JM: It wasn't simply, that the Learning Conditions Committee was pushing it, with Adam promoting it, and me carrying it. It was using the resources of the locals.

[00:48:01] KN: Jim, before you get further into your time as Vice-President... Can you go back to the 1971, March 19th, the day of protest on pensions? Can you talk a little more, what happened to get such a very strong positive vote, to get teachers to, actually, make a decision to walk off the job for a day?

[00:48:31] JM: I think we pulled-out the violins (pretends to play a violin) and said, there are hundreds of elderly people. Colleagues, that taught you. People in Kamloops. And Cranbrook,

and Fernie, and Vancouver, who taught you, and they can't survive on their pensions. Pull on the heart-strings. And people believed it, and it was true! Pensions were abysmal, people couldn't survive on them; they were atrocious. And we went to the public and said here's Mary Smith, a 27-year teacher in whatever district: local newspaper put out a notice from a local, saying she taught in this district for 27 years; her pension is \$147 a month. And people responded to that. Members responded, and the public did. They said, "Oh my God, that is an outrage. People, the wonderful people—oh, Mary taught me and Jack taught me"; and—we didn't use their names, necessarily, but people knew that there were senior teachers, that you lived with, and so there was a lot of that. And, people accepted it. It was, really, overwhelmingly, altruism. It was one of the most altruistic events in our recent history, where people just said, wow, you know? We marched for the day,

[00:50:22] JM: not everybody wanted to—it was a big division, it was a sharp debate in the representative Assembly and Annual General Meeting. Not everyone was willing to say, let's do it, but when it came to the vote to do it, it was huge. And that's how it was. It wasn't nearly as political, as the debate at the Annual General Meeting to levy the day's pay to attack the government; it was a different level of politicization. It was a much more personal one, it didn't reach that level of political action that had happened in 1972.

[00:51:06] KN: So, did the government fix the pensions?

[00:51:09] JM: Not initially, but yeah. We won eventually. It did, but it didn't happen overnight. But some say, that the increase in pensions was, no doubt, what we had campaigned for. We ended-up getting a significant increase for those people. They never got restored what they lost, but it did two things: it did good things in the long run for the retired people, and it did good things for the Federation. Because it taught the organization. You can say, well, the most significant thing was that a lot of fine elderly people got more money in the long run, which they did, but it was instrumental in changing the culture of the organization. When I did an interview a number of years ago, for this guy, named Whitherspoon, and you've read that, Ken; I mentioned that at my second or third Annual General Meeting in the early 1960s the older male teachers from the Vancouver Secondary got up and said, "The pension issue we're going to have to strike for!"—and they almost booed them off the floor. People yelled at them. "

[00:52:31] JM: Sit down, be quiet, no strike, bloody unions!" and blah, blah, blah. I mean, it was bizarre. Bizarre. And yet, 10 years later, we're striking. So, there is an evolution, you know, that takes place. And sometimes it is slow, but these points (are) where the pressure builds up for the change. And when that happens, it is sometimes explosive.

[00:53:11] KN: So, on that note, let's move into 1972 AGM then. And, the levy—getting the levy on the

[00:53:20] KN: floor.

[00:53:30] KN: Also, at the same time, you might want to comment on what prompted that kind of anger, for the teachers to actually pass the motion, to pass the levy and what was happening politically? My understanding is, that you agreed to support Adam Robertson for the second term?

[00:53:41] JM: Well, the Federation was under assault: withdrawal of our compulsory membership; an attack on everything that was, and it was a combination of a series of events, that had gone... Attacking education—it wasn't just the Federation. For example, during the 1960s, later part of the 1960s, in order to pay for the Two River policy, there was a huge diversion of money from the Teachers' Pension Fund—

[00:54:19] JM: normally, up until that time, the Teachers' Pension Fund, a large portion of it had been put into the school board debentures. It was primary source of funding for school board debentures. The government took that money en masse, and backed-off letting school boards borrow it and used it for the construction of the beefing up the building of the Columbia and then, the Peace. And school boards had to turn to the Toronto and the New York market, where the rates were higher. It cost tax-payers in BC a shitload of money. The government was reckless in terms of the tax-payers' money,

[00:55:12] JM: in order to support the Two River policy. And it slowed school construction down a tremendous amount—and then it attacked teachers. It attacked salaries, it attacked bargaining rights, it attacked our membership. And it was a combination of things that brought about that feeling of, you know, wasn't just what the Federation did. Part of it is, that when the other guys are really bad,

[00:55:40] JM: and start kicking you hard enough, people who aren't really part of the left, part of the progressive section, begin to say, ouch! That's not very nice. Teachers have a high ethical standard of integrity, and fairness, and altruism, and all those good things, that part comes with the job. And when other people abridge those rights, those philosophical things, by tramping on them, people say, "Ow, that's wrong!. It's just wrong". And so, we had a SoCred at the coalition, at that meeting in Penticton.

[00:56:32] JM: Because it was wrong.

[00:56:36] JM: Wrong—

[00:56:37] JM: and teachers feel that, they feel that wrong-ness, if you want. Their sense of fairness is abridged. And so, by 1972, when we came to the levy, so many things had happened—it wasn't one thing. It was a decade of assault. The Ministry of Education under Donald Brothers was a joke; he was a standing joke for years. He was an embarrassment, he disliked teachers, it was a blitzkrieg against the Federation, and against education. Wasn't just against

[00:57:24] JM: teachers.

[00:57:36] JM: My own son went to school in Vancouver East, Lord Nelson school was built to house about 450–500 kids. There were 1,100 kids in the school! They had 7 portables, they used the gym, they used the lunch-room, they used the janitor's room. The place was bursting,

[00:57:49] JM: because

[00:58:02] JM: they wouldn't build the annex that had been promised. I was a trustee, and I helped organize the parents to march to the Legislature. And they weren't all NDPers; they were just parents, who were pissed off. And they had a petition, with hundreds and hundreds of names in the community,

[00:58:16] JM: marched to the Legislature, sat in the Women's Gallery at the end of the Legislature, took this bloody great petition, which they glued together, and dropped over the edge of the Legislature. Over the edge of the balcony! Not far enough for the guys down below to grab it; but far enough to let it dangle. Well, then it went nuts. It just went goofy

[00:58:42] JM: and the gavel has been pounded by the Speaker, and house erupted, and the commissioners came running over. And I remember this woman, I could hear her, cuz I was sitting on the side in the Gallery, and she was a Yugoslav woman and this old commissioner came and said "Stop that, pull out" and she said, "Get. Your. Hand. Off. Me. Now!" And she was bigger than him. And he just kind of backed-off, and he thought, OK. That wasn't the NDP that organized that—it was parents, they were angry. And so, Bennett's undoing in 1972, and the coalition we were able to build within the Federation, and the coalition that scooped him out of office, was a coalition much broader than within the Federation, and without—much broader, than anybody had ever seen before. And it was doctors, it was teachers and it was nurses—and within the Federation, it was virtually, everybody except the hard-core Right. And, unfortunately, a lot of administrators. But the levy was a huge decision. It was a day's pay! Nobody had ever done that. Ever! And so, we took that money and agreed to—met with the NDP, and the Liberals—support the candidate with the best chance in beating the government. And pumped-out massive amounts of money.

[01:00:18] JM: 28 organizers for the NDP got paid out of Federation money—hundreds of thousands of dollars got spent. And, then two SoCreds from Victoria, sought an injunction, and the interim injunction was granted. And I got the call from the lawyer saying, you got to stop; the judgement will be handed down within the hour; and then you won't be allowed to distribute any more of that money. It's not been put down yet, but we know it is going to happen. It is not illegal yet, but in an hour from now... Federation is enjoined from spending any more money. And I remember what happened—I phoned Betty Griffin, the President of Burnaby. And I said, "Betty, what are you doing"? She was the President, and she said, oh, this and that, and I said, "You got any money in the bank for the election?" She said, "Yeah, we got \$14,000 or so". And I said, "Well, go take it out in cash". She said, "What?" I said, "Go and take the money out in cash, right now, this minute; go up to Eileen Dailey's office and turn it over as the Federation's contribution to the campaign".

[01:01:45] JM: I said, “Not in cheque—money, cash. \$100 bills, \$10 bills, whatever they got—take it all, and do it in the next 30 minutes. Like, right. Now”. “

[01:01:56] JM: Why?”

[01:01:57] JM: I said, “Don’t even ask—just go, run and do it”. So, she ran, she phoned me back later and asked, “Why?” I said, “You did what?” She said, “I took all this money out”; and I said, “Good thing you did it, because there is now an injunction, preventing you from doing it!” (laughs). So, anyway, we ended-up paying all that money back, because the injunction ordered us to, but the result of it was that the NDP got a shitload of money, and the election. And it changed the nature of the Federation.

[01:02:27] KN: So, after the injunction, another development occurred, called the Teachers For Political Action Committee. Would you like to talk about that; and talk about what the dynamic was, and what was involved—what happened?

[01:02:40] JM: So, we’re sitting at the Executive meeting, contemplating what to do; and Onstad said, “I am fed-up with gazing at my navel over what to do, so I am going down and I am going to book a hotel room, and anybody who wants to come with me from this Executive meeting, as soon as we are finished, I am going to go down there. If you want to join me”—and we knew where he was going to go—he said, “Then we are going to organize a group of teachers to continue this fight”. So, people looked around and said, Ooooh! So, the meeting adjourned, and that was the beginning of TPAC. Which was fairly broad—I participated, Broadley participated, most of the Executive did. We raised a \$100,000 and weren’t constrained by anybody on how to spend it, we could do whatever we wanted with it, and , we did. I think we supported 31 candidates, and 20 got elected, and I think, we gave money to Scott Wallace,

[01:03:56] JM: a

[01:03:58] JM: Tory; to two Liberals, and 28 NDPers. Or something like that, anyway it was close. But, it wasn’t; the money. People were proud of the fact that we raised \$100,000, and it was an alternate organization. We did a tally after the election, of all the locals we could get a hold of, how many people, by the estimate of the local, participated in the election. Kept this tally, and it was about 5,000. 5,000 teachers actively participated on the ground, in the election campaign, out of 30,000 members at the time.

[01:04:50] JM: I mean, you talk about nodal points in the history of the organization. No trade-union that I am aware of—none, before, nor since, has been able to mobilize 20% of its members. I do not know about now, in the last few years, but I doubt that any of them have mobilized 20% of their members, to actively campaign in an election for the defeat of the government. Not just donating money, but doing the hard shit, coming out, giving out leaflets, banging on doors, putting up signs, working in the campaign office, phoning people. And teachers were really good at it, because they are articulate, and the NDP really loved it, because they had all these people, who could speak pretty well, and they plugged into phone banks all

over the province. Introduced themselves as teachers, working on behalf of whoever it was. And it was, again you reach that plateau of involvement, which the election did, it was another one of those huge transitional points in Federation's history.

[01:06:21] KN: Jim, I have a memory, during the actual election campaign of 1972, you, as Vice-President coming on behalf of the Federation, or of TPAC, I am not sure. You came out to a meeting in the Ukrainian Hall, on the No. 2 Road in Richmond.

[01:06:50] KN: You want to talk about that, what happened?

[01:06:51] JM: Harold Steeves' nomination meeting!

[01:06:53] JM: Well, the NDP put out a very nice election leaflet. Big election leaflet, many pages. Voluminous document. The only thing is, the education issues—and we thought it was one of the key issues in the election—for whatever reason, typical of the NDP, who sometimes can't see an issue when it's put in front of them, because it may be frightening people. And teachers are pretty scary, as you know, they're pretty scary, awful, ugly people. And so, they didn't put anything in it—they had about this much in the program. And we were so pissed-off, that we went to Barrett, went to the meeting, and cornered him after the meeting. And said, it is Harold Steeves' nomination meeting—I cornered him and said, there is nothing in the bloody program! So, you know, Barrett is an interesting guy, he is a pragmatist, he's a guy who likes to make sure he's got his Is and Ts before he jumps over the edge. So, he said, "OK, OK, what do you want to do?" And we said, "You have to put out some material". He said, "Well, go write it". So, several people—I didn't get involved in the writing,

[01:08:20] JM: I don't know who did, I can't remember. Blakey and some other people wrote this leaflet up. And we needed to have a nice leaflet, so they got some people to do some graphics. And I got a friend of mine's kids, whose pictures appear on the leaflet—and they're teachers now, one of them in a counselor in Burnaby and the other one is counsellor in Vancouver—they appeared on the leaflet as the two children on this leaflet. And it was a really good leaflet. And TPAC paid for it, 150,000 of them. And the NDP distributed with their name on it. Now, Barrett did not want to do that. The NDP didn't want to do it. It was kind of like

[01:09:15] JM: Adrian Dix in the last election not wanting to attack Christy Clark. Or, kind like Thomas Mulcair saying, "I am ready for change, are you?" And smile my way through the election. I am sorry to be political in today's thing—it's Horgan saying, "We resiliently opposed to the 7% tax on liquefied natural gas. We're going to fight it". Christy Clark goes and negotiates it way to 3.5%, he comes into the house and says, "We're going to fight the 3.5%—it's ridiculous". When it comes to the vote, he votes for it and says, "In the interest of the bi-partisan policy on LNG, we're going to support it". "Social democracy has a way of shooting itself", said Tony Blair. And, I've never been a Social Democrat, I'm not. And there is that section of social democracy that has moved the party historically, continues to move it away from its left roots. And so, that's why the current move toward the Leap Manifesto, is a move in the

other direction. And that's what happened with Barrett—Barrett was a guy, whose parents were communists.

[01:10:35] JM: His mother was in the Communist Party in the Grandview Party Club, with my mother. His father, Sam, owned a fruit-stand on Pender Street. He was a good guy, who donated food to the unemployed, and the Communist Party and everything else. And Barrett grew up and went to a Jesuit College, and became a—he's a good guy, he's a good friend of mine. But, he refused to embrace radical Socialism, and embraced the kind of social democracy, that sometimes, it waffled away from what it should have been. And on that day, that's what happened. But, we corrected that. And it lead to another thing you can ask about later—about the Surrey teachers' strike. I think the leaflet played a prominent part in that.

[01:11:01] KN: OK,

[01:11:27] KN: can you just talk about any changes that the NDP might have made, with respect to the teacher grievances that the teachers of the province had tried to push into that election? Did they make any sort of changes that we wanted when they came to office?

[01:11:43] JM: I should go back. You asked me another question, and I didn't answer that, and I am sorry and I should go back. You asked me why I agreed to support Adam Robertson.

[01:11:52] KN: That's right, I did.

[01:11:58] JM: I could have been elected President. Frank Reimer was going to run, I was going to clean Frank Reimer's clock everybody knew that. He wasn't going to happen, we had a big vote. But Adam was part of the centre that had come out strongly against the SoCreds. He was not a SoCred, he was a liberal, a small-l liberal, who's a humanist, who's a democrat. And that coalition, which he was a part of, was important going into the election. To us on the left, when I discussed it with our close colleagues in the caucus, I said, look, we can get elected, Onstad and I can get elected, and the Left will control the Executive, but the centre won't be there. It will be somewhere, not necessarily with us. But if Adam's there, it will be there. So, I went to him and said, "Would you run again?" Nobody has ever done it before, except Killeen, I said, "I'll step down and I will nominate you". And he said, "Well, if Reimer will do it and you'll do it, I will think about it". So he came to me the next day and said, "OK I'll do it if Reimer will do it".

[01:13:29] JM: So, then he came to me that afternoon and said, "Reimer won't do it. But I'll do it anyway". So, I said, "OK. So I nominated him".

[01:13:37] JM: Reimer

[01:13:39] JM: ran against him, lost, ran against me, lost, ran against Onstad, lost. Disappeared from the world. And, he was a nice guy, but he was a conservative guy, who was—nothing personal, I didn't dislike Frank, it was just he was a guy from a different time. And Adam was important in that coalition. That's why I did it. And the changes? Well, it gave us back our compulsory membership, and Eileen took it upon herself to abolish the strap, which I

congratulated her on, and reminded her, that I hade moved a motion to get it abolished in Vancouver School Board 5 years before. And had succeeded in doing that. But it was a courageous thing to do, principals were adamantly opposed to that, superintendents were opposed to it; she did it anyway. She did set-up, as you were aware of, a task-force which she invited a whole lot of progressive people to

[01:14:57] JM: come and advise her on changes to be made. And the unfortunate thing—and she was a good person of good heart, I had no problems with Eileen’s direction,

[01:15:15] JM: but she was frightened of the left. When I was President, I phoned her one day and said, “Can I take you to dinner, can we have a dinner?” Oh, OK let’s do it such and such a night. So, just meet me out in front, so I met her out in front and said, “Well I’ve got my car and I said, I booked a table at the Empress”. She said, “Oh, I’d rather go somewhere else, let’s go somewhere else. I know a nice place”. So, I said, OK, so I followed her. And this is not a joke: we went to Hernando’s Hide-away (interviewers laugh) on the Esquimalt Highway. It is called Hernando’s Hide-away. And there was exactly one other couple in Hernando’s, and they were sitting, kissing in the corner booth. We went to the exact opposite corner booth. I thought, the food here must be really, really, really good (

[01:16:20] JM: everyone laughs).

[01:16:24] JM: Anyway—that’s why she fired you guys. Because she couldn’t deal with the left. And she made the fatal mistake of... let me describe the Education Ministry, and Bob William’s Ministry. Eileen Dailey kept everybody she inherited in their place, all the “Mandarins” were there. They were all SoCred hack appointments, Tory and Liberal hack appointments; some of them been there since the 1900s, so help me god. One old guy, we often said, and I won’t mention name, it really doesn’t matter, but he sat there double-crossing his legs and he wrote the minutes before the meetings. Cos the outcome is always fore-told. She kept them all! And they were all bad; they were pedagogically awful, they were awful, awful, awful. Anti-teacher; awful. Kept them all. Bob Williams, on the other hand, called in the deputy-minister. First day in office, and he told me this. The guy came in and said, Mr. Williams—So-and-so. He said, “Don’t sit down, it will be a short meeting, I have terminated your appointment, you go through your appeal procedure and do whatever you were going to do, but you’re fired”. “

[01:17:54] JM: But” ... “

[01:18:37] JM: There is not buts, you’re outta here; Clean your desk out, I am appointing a new deputy-minister. And the reason is, deputy-ministers are political appointments, you’re a political appointment, you got appointed that way, I am appointing my own. Thank you, and good day”. And I says, “You did that?” And he said, “It took three minutes. And I did what I wanted after that”. Eileen didn’t do that, and she kept them all. And she couldn’t do what she wanted, because they had this mesh of reactionary, old guys—literally, guys—all of them that ran the establishment over on Douglas Street. And she couldn’t move without—it was the most stultifying atmosphere in that building, you’ve ever seen. It was like something out of the 1900s.

And, well, you saw them, you know them, Ken, you know them well—you saw who they were, you know who they were. They sat around, they made all the decisions, and they were very reactionary. It was an old-boys' network, and the superintendents were hand-picked, and they had an old-boys' network, where they black-listed people, literally. We found out about that, and I exposed that to Eileen.

[01:19:20] JM: One of our progressive teachers up the coast, called me and said, "I found a black-list!" I said, nah...why'd there be a black-list? Checked it out, here was a black-list. Superintendents had a black-list of people for various reasons: don't hire this person without calling me. So, I called Eileen, and there was black-list and everybody knew it. I mean, all the superintendents knew it, and the guys, the "Mandarins" in Victoria, knew it. But she kept them! Did she fire them all right away?

[01:19:55] JM: U-uh.

[01:19:58] JM: So, the NDP hand-cuffed itself in education. And the changes they made were the ones that we forced them to make.

[01:20:13] KN: So, I believe, you called for Eileen Dailey's resignation, did you not?

[01:20:17] JM: I did, because I thought there were wonderful people, working there, including yourself; who were doing great stuff, producing good documents, good research, a good team of people over there. Lots of hope that they could really begin to move education in a progressive direction. And she just fired them all. And so, I thought, bugger that. She may have been a progressive person, she served 10 years as a teacher, 10 years as a Trustee, 10 years as an MLA, but she's become a lousy minister. And, so I called for her resignation, which caused my colleague, Bill Broadley to have apoplexy, cos he was the Vice-President. I never consulted him and asked him, I just issued a press release calling for her resignation.

[01:21:19] KN: So one of the big things that happened during your presidency, which relates very much to the learning and working conditions, was the Surrey one day of protest on February 15th in 1974; when Surrey teachers in a very short period of time had made a decision, overwhelmingly, to walk off the job and go to Victoria and protest. Do you want to talk about that issue and what happened and ultimately, your role in reaching an agreement with the Premier at that time?

[01:21:56] JM: Well, the budget in 1974 did not have enough money for education—it was penny-ante amount of money for change. We were concerned about it. Surrey teachers, Lloyd Edwards, whom I had known from the university days, came with a wave of Caribbean students. He was a good guy, phoned me one day at the office and said, "What are you doing this afternoon?" And I said, "Well, it's the usual—moving paper from Box A to Box B, going out for coffee and doing nothing, like Presidents usually do". He laughed and he said, "Oh yeah... what are you seriously doing?" And I said, well, meetings, whatever. And he said, "Can you come out to a meeting?" And I said, "Well, what about?" He said, "We're going on strike tomorrow".

(everyone laughs). And I said, "You're what?" He said, "We're calling a one-day general strike". I was dumb-founded, I literally just said to him, "What the hell are you talking about?" And he said, "Well, we're holding a STARA meeting (which stands for Surrey Teachers' Association Representative Assembly, I think) and then we're having a General Meeting this afternoon,

[01:23:14] JM: and we booked busses, all the available busses on the Lower Mainland; and we're taking the early morning ferry and we're going to the legislature to have a big protest". I said, "Holy shit! You're serious", he said, "Yeah, you'd better come to the meeting". So, I went to the meeting, and they did—without elaborating, they had this huge meeting, and they voted to do it. So, they did it. So, I flew to Victoria to be at the rally, and Eileen spoke to the rally, and I spoke to the rally. And there were these wonderful pictures, that somebody from the BCTF, I guess it was John Hardy, who was taking them. I have this mouth open—it looks like something out of caricature, I guess I always looked like that, and I am bellowing into this bloody bull-horn. It looks like something out of the 1930s trade-union meeting, I am yelling and screaming out into this bull-horn. Anyway, the meeting was a success, the rally was wonderful; everything was great. Meeting breaks up and I was astonished, everybody was flabbergasted that it had happened. I mean, I said to Lloyd, "I don't know how the hell you guys did it?"

[01:24:39] JM: I said, "It was obviously, weeks of superb planning"—yeah, like the day before yesterday. They literally, did it in 2 days, it was done!

[01:24:51] JM: Bingo! Somebody ordered the busses, somebody told the school board, somebody did this, somebody did that, somebody went out to the schools, somebody put material out, it all happened. It was just this huge happening! They organized their staff to do it, their Executive to do it, and they did it! It was an amazing organization, like what you do when the fire-bell rings, when you got your command stations and do stuff—well, they did it! So, anyway, the meeting is over and I was with Ralph Sundby, who was on the Federation's Working and Learning Conditions Committee, and we're walking by the Legislature building. And hearing knock, knock, knock, knock; looking around seeing whose knocking; and its Mrs. Dailey. At her window (signals to come-in with a finger). So, Ralph and I hustle back into the Legislature building, went into Eileen's room and she said, "Hi, Jim", and she said, "Ralph, could you wasn't in my office, I'd like to speak to Jim—I'd like him to speak to Dave". So, its fine, I went in and sat down, and she calls Barrett, and Barrett comes in;

[01:25:59] JM: and I've known Barrett for years, and he... Takes his jacket off, loosens his tie and he throws it over the back of a chair, and he says, "What the fuck do you guys want?" So, I said, "More money for education". He said, "It is in the budget", I said, "Not enough" and Eileen said, "What do you mean?" And I said, "Well, we want a specific figure". He said, "Well, there is a specific figure in there!" And I said, "It's not enough". "What do you mean, it's not enough?" I said, "Well, we have specific demands". She said, "Well, what do you want?" And I just pull out my ear, we didn't have any numbers, we weren't ready for this, I wasn't going to meet the Premier, I didn't know what was going on. I said, "We want to reduce class-sizes all across the

province by three in September!” So he looked at me and said, “Eileen, how many teachers is that?” She said, “Well it will be around 3,000 or something”. “Can you produce that?”

[01:27:09] JM: he said to me, and I said, “I don’t know”. Eileen said, “No we can’t. Universities together can only produce 900 or 800”, or whatever the hell the number was, I can’t remember how many. So he said, “A-ha! Why don’t we make it one! You’re only producing enough for one”. I said, “Why don’t we make it

[01:27:40] JM: 2.5?”

[01:28:16] JM: He said “Why don’t we make it 1.5?” I said, “OK”. Cos I knew we didn’t have enough teachers to do more than 1.5 anyway, it wasn’t going to happen. But, I happened to have in my pocket, the leaflet we had produced after the Barrett meeting. I had brought it to the rally. So, I pulled it out and he said, “That’s it? Will you get those people off of our bloody lawn now?” I said, “No, not yet.” (pulls it out of his pocket). I said, “In here...” He says, “What is that?” I said, “That is the leaflet you guys put out.” And he said, “You wrote the fucking leaflet!” I said, “I know that—but you signed your name on it”. He said, “You paid for it”, and I said, “Yeah, but you issued it”. So, I said, “In here it says, a “planned annual reduction in class-size”. So, he said, “What does that mean”? And I said, “Well, how about 1.5, 2.5. 2.5?” He said, “How about 1.5, 1,1?” I said, “1.5, 1.5, 1.5?” He said, “It’s a deal!” He said, “How much will that cost us?” And Eileen said “Probably \$10M”.

[01:28:52] JM: It was \$50M, actually. So, that was, probably the most significant one-day strike in BC history, when the 1,500 teachers took a day off and we got \$50M out of the government. So, I said to him, “I have a little problem, I have to fly home and now and I have to be on CBC at 6 o’clock with Jack Wasserman.

[01:29:18] JM: I will say, if it is OK with you, that I had a very cordial meeting with the Premier and minister of education and I expect in the next few days that there will be some further announcements about education”. He said, “Good! Don’t say any numbers, Eileen get up at the house on Tuesday and tell them what we’re doing”. So, he said, “Now will you take your god-damned guys off our tulips?” I said, “Yeah, and thanks”, so I left. Got Ralph and Ralph said, you’re smiling like a bloody Cheshire Cat! I said, yeah well... Anyway. That’s what happened. So, it wasn’t planning and the conscientious thought and deliberation about it, u-uh. How did it happen? Spontaneously. It was an eruption, it was the build of quantitative and qualitative, as my old Marxist analyses says, and things got to the point where they burst and the result was, a new day. Now, they broke the agreement in the second year, but we still got the 5,000 teachers out of it.

[01:30:23] KN: Which was a very significant amount!

[01:30:26] JM: Oh, yeah!

[01:30:27] KN: And that made a big difference in learning conditions in our schools!

[01:30:30] JM: 30,000 teachers got 5,000 new ones! We had teachers coming out of our yin-tang, the next year. There were jobs—people were getting offered 4 or 5 job offers. Especially, up North, it was tough to fill some of those jobs. There were just tons of jobs available. And, it was great—

[01:31:00] JM: the Federation is indebted to Surrey for doing that. It was a magnificent display of what one local can—again, it was a transitional point, to show, what—when you take those in the line, 1966–1967, to 1969, to 1971, to 1972, to that, there is an unbroken line of nodal points in the history of the union,

[01:31:25] JM: that transformed the organization.

[01:31:36] KN: So, during your two years as President, what did you see as the biggest challenge that you had, as President?

[01:31:47] JM: I guess there were three or four—one was to try and find the way to consolidate the left. Because there was always an ebb after a surge. And there had been a surge, and then there is an ebb, and the ebb is one that people were tired, they said, gosh, we've elected the NDP government; the New Jerusalem was upon us!

[01:32:29] JM: And there is a tendency then to say, OK, we've done that; the unions got that far. But the agenda, which went back to 1959 when Blakey and I and a few others had met originally, and adopted an agenda of things we wanted to accomplish, we hadn't accomplished. We had set our agenda back then, 15 years before, we had set 5 things we wanted to do and we had not accomplished them. And so, as President, I wanted to go back over the things we had managed to do, and see how many of those remaining things were still there, consolidate the gains to the left, and then, of course, to deal with the Barrett's defeat. After the Barrett's defeat I was on the Executive, to try and find a way to deal with a new reactionary government. And I guess, the other thing was, the mistakes we made were important, I think. We wanted to move ahead, and there were lots of things on the agenda to move ahead, but we made a fundamental mistake, and that was that we didn't look over our shoulder, to make sure that the battalion, and the division, and the army, was there.

[01:34:13] JM: We did some really good things—we supported the Northeast Sector Project, which was a very wonderful project, started in Vancouver, about class discrimination, and such stuff. A wonderful thing, that Sam Fillipoff played a major part in. We did some tremendous stuff, that Mike Zlotnik pioneered, looking at the Olson Study for Class-size, based on social criteria, and we still have the maps, presumably, somewhere, showing the colouring for social discrimination, in wage and equality, and all kinds of the stuff, showing the difference between various areas of the province, based on the census extracted data. Wonderful stuff. We participated in the Day of protest, but unfortunately the membership didn't participate in the Day of Protest.

[01:34:48] KN: What Day of Protest?

[01:35:23] JM: The National Trade-union Day of Protest in 1976. And I wasn't President, but I was still on the Executive. And we agreed to support that, but it cost us. And, finally, we weren't clear enough on what our position was on the paper that George Smith wrote, along with John Church. Nothing particularly wrong with the Smith paper, but it wasn't where people were. From a Marxist point of view, it was an Ultra-left document.

[01:35:58] KN: Are you talking about the Triple-E?

[01:36:02] JM: Yes. It was way where people weren't. Memberships was here (points to a pot in front), we were here and the paper was here. And the combination of those things moved the membership. They had been moved enormously, from an old guy who got booed, only 15 years before, to a 5,000 people, to a strike of a whole local. The organization, we moved it along—now we, but the collective “we”—

[01:36:46] JM: of the whole left coalition had moved the organization enormously forward, but we haven't done enough to bring... And I have to say, and I had not been active in the Federation since I retired, but, I think the organization historically, then and now, along with most of the labour movement, suffers in its... We had a wonderful professional development section of the Federation. I am talking about when I was around in the Federation, on the Executive,

[01:37:40] JM: but the political education of the membership happened through bargaining, to some degree, or it didn't happen. It happened through the Status of Women program, yes; happened through the program of anti-racism, it happened through some of our international programs. But that political education, that should have moved our whole membership forward, never took place. Never took place. Never has taken place. And, you know, I walked the picket-line during the strike last year, at the elementary school in my neighbourhood, for days, to a couple of hours a day for the length of the strike. I can't say, that their level of understanding—typical of elementary school, people have been there 2–3 years, 10 or 15 years—their level of understanding of why they were doing what they were doing was all

[01:38:55] JM: heart,

[01:38:58] JM: but it was elemental intellectually. They did it because they felt it was right to do it, but there was no political consciousness at any cognizant intellectual level, of why the Federation was doing that. In fact, if anything, there was severe criticism of

[01:39:21] JM: the organization. And I am not critical of the leadership at the time; going back, it has been failure of the entire labour movement, the whole national labour movement suffers from it; it has never been able to mobilize. Unlike the French trade-unions or the Italian, or the sections of the British working class, the Canadian labour movement with some exceptions, has never been able to come to that level of political consciousness that we require. And the Federation has done wonderful stuff, in a variety of directions, but we haven't devoted our energy—and maybe we don't know how, maybe we can't, maybe the profession isn't suited to

do that, I don't know what the answer is, but we weren't able to do it. We weren't able to do it when I was President, and when I was on the Executive, and, as a matter of fact, not only we didn't do it properly, we did it improperly, sometimes. And so, we turned the Executive over to the right-wing and it took the left several years, to re-capture the control of the Executive Committee,

[01:40:46] JM: after those mistakes.

[01:40:57] KN: OK, let's move a little bit forward. During the 1980s, you were very active in the Federation's bargaining committee, in time when teachers were engaged in a struggle to gain full bargaining rights. What do you remember about that period and does anything stand out to you about that period of time?

[01:41:09] JM: Well, I guess, two things. One is personal, and one is political. The personal one was, my mentor, and for many of us, probably, including yours, Al, as well, in terms of driving us forward, was George North. No question about it. Because George had decades of trade-union experience and he knew more about collective bargaining and defending collective bargaining, than most of us will ever know, period. So, he was a guide, both, first, when he was teaching in Prince George, and when he came onto the Federation staff. His light was huge, it was like these lights (in the room). He was just a beacon in the bargaining stuff. He knew instinctively, when we were being assholes and doing things, that were stupid,

[01:42:21] JM: and when we were really doing good stuff. And he wasn't hesitant one bit to tell you so. You know, when the Bargaining Committee wasn't doing what it should have been doing, George would just shake his head, and talk to me afterwards, and he'd say, "Jesus Christ, what's wrong with those guys? They don't get it, you know?" I remember he grabbed Jim and I one day—Jim

[01:42:51] JM: Caldwell—

[01:42:52] JM: grabbed Jim and I after a meeting and said, "I should knock your guys' heads together". Jim said, "What about"? He said, "You didn't get this Committee on board, they don't know what they're doing!" I said, "OK (raises hands up)". He knew what we needed to do. And the second thing that struck me in this period of time, was that we did succeed in building a coalition around the Task-force in Building the Professional Rights. It managed to do what we were not able to do when we got too far in front of people. We managed to get, and I think, in that Whitherspoon article I mentioned, that although we managed to get along well, Pauline Galinsky, from Powell River, and I always butted heads. Pauline was a good, solid, Liberal Party, liberal. And we always liked each other, but we always fought on bargaining stuff.

[01:44:06] JM: We always had the same goal, she wanted good stuff for teachers, and so did I, but on the Bargaining and Professional Rights Task-force we got agreement from a sector of people, that... Yeah, we gave some stuff, the left didn't get its way; we gave up things; but we built a consensus in that document, that there was unity around in terms of the membership.

No doubt about it, it was accepted, widely accepted, as a document on which we could build. And I think it was a credit to the breadth of the Committee, and the fact that we involved a whole lot of other people. We went way outside the Committee; we went to labour, we went to fraternal unions of the public sector, brought them in, talked about bargaining. And I think that was the highlight of that period of time, personally, was that it managed to set the Federation in the right direction, in where it wanted to go in bargaining.

[01:45:29] KN: A number of years later, when we did get the legislation, granting us full bargaining rights, we also had the legislation that effectively, removed the administrators from the bargaining unit. You were an administrator at the time in Burnaby, and you chose to give up your administrative position and return to teaching, in order to remain in the BCTF. Can you talk about that, why did you do that? You had a fairly good income, to make that change.

[01:46:06] JM: Well, I guess, because—and I am not a spiritual person, but I really did not want my grandfather's ghost to descend on me (everyone laughs).

[01:46:35] AC: Which it would have!

[01:47:04] KN: Which it would have! Both of them! One, with the shovel from digging in the Vancouver water-works, and one with the carpenter's hammer. But I could not do that, no matter what the cost was, you can't be a prominent person in a union, and abandon it—you just can't do that. And, unfortunately, there were, I think 5 people, one of whom had already retired; although there were 5 of us who did that, there were just 4 who were still working. And of those 4, I think, only 3 actually, went back to teaching. You just can't do that, I mean, you just can't. I suppose it is the same, as being a Roman Catholic and being appointed the Bishop of Anglican Church, sort of thing. You can't do that, there is a line; there is a brick wall. And I didn't have any trouble, I didn't hesitate for a minute,

[01:47:34] KN: there was no question about it. There was more hesitation about taking an administrative job in the first place, than leaving it, no hesitation leaving it. I had a lot of hesitation in taking the administrative job, to which only you, Ken and Don Walmsley said, yeah, go ahead and do it—which all my other colleagues on the left said, "Holy shit, you sell-out son-of-a-bitch, you are going to do that? You are going to be an administrator? Jesus, it is terrible, you're doing this. Shocking, shocking dismay!" Some of them didn't speak to me for months afterwards, including the prominent people on the left that we both know. Because there is a faction in the Federation, that comes from the infantile left-wing view of the administration, that unions don't need administration;

[01:48:34] KN: teachers don't need administration, that all you need is workers organized and have power. And they'll just do things. It is a fiction, it is some sort of Ultra-left fiction that says, schools don't need a principal. The staff will just do it—hooray, one big happy family!

[01:48:58] KN: And

[01:49:00] KN: it permeates the whole culture of the organization; even through this building, there is anti-administration attitude on the part of teachers that are... And rightly so! I mean, the administrators played a terrible role in many schools. I remember this picture of one principal, strutting and I mean, literally, strutting—awful guy—strutting into the meeting, into the Burnaby Teachers' Association meeting. The Burnaby General Teachers' Meeting, not an association meeting, for everybody, because they had two separate locals. Walking in, followed by the 8 or 9 women on his staff. Buddy of mine said to me, "Father Goose, and the family". And he marched in, and these young women on the staff were terrified of this guy. And administrators deserved what they got, because they acted that way. Not all of them—my principals were great, I had four principals; three of them were wonderful, one was OK. I had five. But the four of them were great! Some principals were absolutely awful, they were anti-union, anti-labour, they were anti, anti, anti! And they deserved what they got in terms of attitudes of teachers towards them, because they were oppressive,

[01:50:42] KN: they were unfair, they played favourites, they were incompetent. They were the old-type, the before the all-new genre of "everybody gets a Master's degree before they get to be administrator"—in the old days, if you were a jock, or you were a counsellor, (shows thumbs up) or if you were

[01:51:08] KN: sponsoring three teams, you got to be a vice-principal. And you were always male, and that's how you get to be administrator. It was true of everywhere: in Prince George, the superintendent called his principals— his name was D.P Todd, and the guys around him were called Todd's Boys. He collected them, put them in his front pocket pulled them out once a week, counted them, put them all back!

[01:51:38] KN: And the administrators acquiesced to that, they deserved to be kicked out of the Federation. The government made a fatal mistake—talk about the fatal mistakes the left makes—they took the most reactionary section of the union, hived it off, and did us the most wonderful favour. Vander Zalm, everlasting (puts hands together as if in prayer), we owe him a great debt. They took them out of the union.

[01:52:09] KN: Jim, you went on to become the Assistant Executive Director of the Federation. And that went on in 10 years, could you talk about that period of time?

[01:52:22] JM: I did a miscellany of things. Most of them, out-of-sight-out-of-mind. I represented the Federation in the inter-provincial trade negotiations, as I prepared briefs, I did this and that and the other thing. Some of the other things I did were pretty mundane, I worked in consultation with Elsie every day. I worked on the negotiations, which was the least palatable job that I did in the 10 years, dealing with my colleagues either at the administrative level; or the support staff level. The negotiations were ugly. Was never pleasant. It was onerous, time-consuming and unpleasant. But, when you work for a union, and you represent the membership, unfortunately, there is a dichotomy. When you work for a union, you represent the members of the union. You don't represent the people, who work for the union, and not

everybody understood that. Not everybody understands it, not everybody understood it then—and you must do, you're obliged to do, to act in a fair and judicious way towards the people, who work for the union, but you act in the best interest of our employer. If you don't like the job,

[01:54:16] JM: do something else. Ralph Sundby, actually, said one day to a staff member, who was going to take a tour around the province, opposing a position of the Executive Committee, cos the staff didn't like the position of the Executive Committee—and Ralph said to him, "Why the hell don't you quit and run for the Executive? You work for us. We tell you what to do. And we're telling you, this is the political position of the Executive Committee; and I am on the Bargaining Committee, and I'm told what to do by the Executive. And you work for us,

[01:55:08] JM: and you're obliged to do what the Executive tells you—if you don't like it, you can quit". And it is a hard role to play, it is hard to do that, because you talk about professional independence, professional integrity, but when you work for the union, you represent the union. Period, full stop. Doesn't mean you have to be nasty and unpleasant, although everybody thinks you are, that part didn't bother me. You learn to live with that, you don't get embraced over that. Let's put it that way. I enjoyed working with the Executive and with Elsie at the time. It was a difficult time, because the Executive was not united. Obviously, the two political parties at the Executive were at each other's throats constantly. And

[01:56:24] JM: there was a clear lack of direction, on the part of the leadership, which was the dominant one. Teachers for United Federation, increasingly, that leadership, had very limited political direction to it. Its genesis, as you know, Ken, lay with you, and Elsie and a number of other people. But, when you guys went onto other things, there was very little of political understanding, on that Executive. Very profound. And so, it was a collection of good-hearted, good-minded, progressive people, who did not have a clear sense of direction and vision. They really didn't. And it was constantly a problem for Elsie, to try and find that there was a ship to be steered to some sort of direction. And, when I left, I did not leave with a good taste in my mouth.

[01:58:10] JM: The strike, and the attempt of the parties to blame each other, for the strike—that is the two parties in the Executive—and they found that they... Gee, maybe they should just blame somebody else. And so there was increasing—when they appointed this dude, whatever his name was, to come investigate the Federation, and write his "knowledgeable crap", about what went on—dreadful piece of crap—that was an attempt to avoid responsibility. His report was a piece of garbage. And, in fact, I'd been dismayed, when—and I will be frank about it—when the end of the strike took place, the day that the strike was over, where everybody was happy; it was done, the President of the days said, "This will never happen again".

[01:59:36] JM: Meaning,

[01:59:40] JM: that I wasn't to blame, somebody else was. And, since it wasn't the other people on the other side of the table; and since it wasn't the other people, on the other side of the

Executive, then it must have been the management. And the management was pretty slim—it was, like, two people—like, Elsie and I. And so, when I left, my feelings were pretty negative about the way things were terminated. And they’ve remained pretty negative about that period of time. Enough said.

[02:00:28] KN: Is there anything else you want to say about your experience in the Federation?

[02:00:33] JM: Yeah, there is a couple of things. One of them is, I think, the Federation, and I know it is a side-bar, but I think the Federation sometimes, because it doesn’t have that sense of clear political judgement, always, is subject to pressures, both internal and external, that caused it to do things that are not in the long-term-wise. Let me be less obscure. The Federation in 1965–66 was given the opportunity by the provincial government to deck the Canada Pension Plan, and the provincial Teachers’ Pension Plan. Our choice: integrate it, or deck it. The staff of the Federation at the time, including Spragge, Watson and all, said, integration, need to integrate it. It is too high a premium, to have a separate charge. And one of them I can’t remember which one, said, “Some teachers will retire over 90% of their salary! Imagine!” And I remember saying to him and I don’t mean to be rude or something and I said, “What the fuck’s the matter with that?” “Well, 70% is considered a good retirement amount, 80% would be wonderful—90%, people don’t need that”. Betty Griffin almost had apoplexy over this. Consulted John Stanton, a Vancouver lawyer, about it, and on the grounds that she believed, and Stanton believed, that the integration was unconstitutional,

[02:02:52] JM: that the Canada Pension Plan was in fact, a right, guaranteed by the government, as a right to everybody. No pension, a pension, two pensions, five pensions, whatever you had—you got the Canada Pension Plan, on top of that. And to do otherwise, it was going to go against the intent of the government ruling, and if so, de-facto was, against the intent of the constitution, which was to write equity. Stanton believed that. But, to fight it in court was hopeless, because the union itself had agreed to do it. So, we raised it, tried to get action on it, but the Federation had agreed to do it (consolidate), because that’s the way we were going in those days. It was the fatal mistake. It has costed the teachers’, not millions; over the 50 years of Canada Pension Plan, it has costed the teachers of BC, billions of dollars. Billions of dollars. The second mistake, which I think, we made, again, because we do things that we don’t understand. And we do this because we have bad advice, and we do this because we have this infantile belief that worker-control is always right, and that it is always the best thing.

[02:04:30] JM: And I go back to what Alan Spragge said: pensions are un-paid wages.

[02:04:38] JM: Not something you need to beg for—they owe it to you. They owe you your pensions, and all the things pertinent to that, benefits, they’re all there. They didn’t pay you at the time, they owe it to you. So, the Federation was given the opportunity in the 1990s to share the control of the pension plan. That was Valhalla for the workers! We’re going to share control! And we were told, that the economy was going to go up for ever, and there’d be pie in the sky when we all die. And, that it is nothing to be better, than having shared control. And it will never

descend, it is just going to be that way for ever. And because capitalism has done relatively well since then, pensions have maintained good things, and investments have been strong, and teachers' pensions have been paid out, with one exception. And it has cost teachers 10s if not 100s of millions of dollars. And, Al you can speak to it better than I, because you know more about it, than I do, cos you were involved in that area. There was a separate section of the pension act, set aside for the payment of benefits: medical, dental, extended health. Things like that, right?

[02:06:17] JM: And it was going dry. So, had the government been running the plan, and, in the political sense, we would have said to government, "You put some money into the god-damn thing. These teachers have been promised to have part of their medical and part of their dental, and part of their EHB, and part of their medical plan paid for, either in whole, or in part, for ever. You guaranteed it, Alan Spragge said so. It is guaranteed". But we couldn't point to the government to do that, because it means, pointing at us. Cos we're half the government now. We're half the plan. Plans now made jointly. Half the teachers, half the government appointments. Trustees, etc. So, any blame is not Christy Clark's problem.

[02:07:17] JM: So, what does it mean? It means, that a teacher who retired 20 years ago, on a Category 4 certificate, the old PC, or even Category 3; who used to get his or her medical, dental and the EHB paid for; single, now pays, with no dental—and this is an actual case—almost a \$150 a month. For EHB and MSP. The bigger half of what was paid before. That's a \$1,000 a year, and if this person is going to live for another 20 years, 15 years, this is going to cost this individual over their life, 20, 30, 40, 50 thousand dollars. Because we made a mistake. I talked to people before it was done, I wrote a paper; it is probably lost in the archives somewhere. Two papers: one was 6 pages long, and one was a short version, saying, "don't for Christ's sake do it!" Because you get control, you get shared control: governments never give control. Never, ever, fucking, ever, give control over things that deal with money—ever, never! Shared control is a myth. Absolute control—maybe. But even then, when it is not adequate, there is nobody to turn to. But, we didn't listen, we didn't do that,

[02:09:10] JM: we took the advice of professional staff, and pension advisers and whoever the hell else was on the thing. And went ahead with the shared pensions control. And so now, we get platitudes from the monthly pension bulletins, that comes out and we've

[02:09:31] JM: got the nicest and best pension bulletin in the world. You know that we've got an award for the best pension bulletin? I guess, it's really good. I'm proud of that. It's great to have it, and I am proud of that. The fact that bunch of old people are paying a shit-load of money they shouldn't be, really unfortunate. So, we make mistakes, we don't acknowledge our mistakes, always. Anyway, it is my diatribe for the day.

[02:10:02] KN: Can you finish your comments, by talking about what kind of advice you might give to somebody, who is just entering the profession at this time?

[02:10:08] JM: Yep.

[02:10:15] JM: Survive your first year. It's the rule number one. Do a hell of a job in the classroom, number one. Be the best Kindergarten teacher, the best Secondary English teacher, in the school. Better than the people who had been there 10 years, better than the people who had been there 20 years; bust your ass to be the best. And at the end of the first year, put your hand up to run as staff rep. And, you'll get elected. Run for your local association, run as the member of the committee doing whatever. But, get your act together first! If you're no good in the classroom, or you're a slacker, or you're kind of half-assed, you won't have the recognition of your sisters and brothers in the union. You've got to be good at what you do, if you're good at what you do, then you move into the position of the union. You'll have recognition as a professional person in your union, and you will have the credentials. You'll build on those credentials. You'll continue to be an excellent teacher, continue to be the best you can be—you may not be the best Math teacher in the world, but you'll be damn good. And you'll be recognized as that.

[02:11:51] JM: And then you become involved in the union, and you'll get recognition for that, because your colleagues recognize you. So, that's what I would say: work hard, be part of the union.

[02:11:58] KN: Great!

[02:12:06] KN: Well, thank you very much, Jim,

[02:12:08] KN: really appreciated—

[02:12:10] KN: thank you.

[02:12:11] JM: You're welcome!