

Interview: Jim MacFarlan (JM)

Interviewer: Ken Novakowski (KN)

Assisted by: Al Cornes, Larry Kuehn, and Lesley Harrington

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Note: This interview is presented in two genuine parts (Part 1/Part 2), recorded the same day. Part 2 continues separately, following on directly from Part 1.

[00:00:10] KN: OK, good afternoon, Jim.

[00:00:11] JM: Good afternoon, gentlemen, and

[00:00:14] JM: Lesley.

[00:00:18] KN: It's July 14, 2016, and we're interviewing Jim MacFarlan, who is a Past President of the BC Teachers' Federation, someone who has an excellent overall knowledge of the BCTF history; so the questions here are intended to talk a bit about some of the issues that were happening; and have been issues in the Federation over its entire history. And we have interviewing here, Ken Novakowski, Al Cornes and Larry Kuehn, and our technical assistance is provided by Lesley Harrington. So, good afternoon, Jim,

[00:00:58] KN: and

[00:00:59] KN: thank you for agreeing to do this interview.

[00:01:01] JM: It is

[00:01:04] JM: kind of like the Christmas Carol, The Ghosts of Christmas Past, isn't it?

[00:01:09] KN: No, it even goes further back than that.

[00:01:10] JM: I see OK...

[00:01:13] KN: So, we want to start by getting you to try to explain as best as you can, the evolution of the Federation from its inception up until the 1972 election. We have a lot of information about the Federation post-1972, but very little of that period leading up to it. And (could you) talk a bit about what the Federation's whole demeanor was, as an organization; its attitude towards government, its attitude towards dealing with curriculum, and issues of the resources for teachers; its attitude towards bargaining; its attitude towards anything to do with political action, in terms of Federation's approach. So, if you could give us that kind of a picture, that would be great.

[00:02:02] JM: Well, I think, you have to begin by saying, that the words “BC Teachers’ Federation” were much grander in nomenclature, than it was de-facto. Because, in fact, the genesis of the Federation was here, in Vancouver, and in the urban areas. It was only much later, than the Federation had either a membership of significance, or presence anywhere in the province. I mean,

[00:02:33] JM: it only was here, that it was convened, beginning with secondary teachers in Vancouver and in Victoria and in the Lower Mainland. When we think of Federation, and what it assumes now, we have people scattered from Fort St. John, to Kitimat, to Sooke, to Fernie—but not true in those days; it was much more centralized and tiny organization. It had grand visions of organizing teachers, but it wasn’t the case; the population was obviously smaller. And the demands, however were pretty grand, for the time, and when you look at the aims of the society—to better the lot of teachers, benefit the children, etc.—they’re not that different than they are now, but it was a difficult situation. It had... we had no money, no compulsory membership, and so the organization depended on volunteer work, volunteer officials, and, eventually hired a full-time Executive Director, or General Secretary; who was Harry Charlesworth; and a full-time office secretary. And it went on from there, but it was not an easy beginning. People, I guess, because, we live a hundred years later, literally, we look at it as being...

[00:04:18] JM: it is hard to imagine, what it started like. I mean, it is even difficult for me to imagine, when I talk of much later period, when John Sutherland was the President in 1939–1940;

[00:04:31] JM: that he had no time off. He taught full-time at McGee, 7 blocks of reading and English. After school, Friday he and Stan Evans would jump into a vehicle and drive to Trail, which was a 12–14 hour drive. Over gravel. Go to the convention, the teachers’ conventions, as they were in those days, on the Saturday, and drive home all-day Sunday, to go to work Monday morning. For which he got no time off. And it is hard to appreciate the work that those people, men and women, had put-in in those days, in the 1920s and 1930s. When I look back, when we were doing the 75th anniversary, I looked at the names of some of the people; I realize, for example, that teachers that taught me at Britannia high-school, one of them was one of the secretaries of the local; and she never struck me as being a trade-unionist; or having been involved in a professional organization. In fact, she taught Greek for one year and Latin for 46 years. She taught for 47 years! And yet, she was an activist in the Federation for 10 or 15 years

[00:06:02] JM: at the beginning of that time. And they were all dedicated; a very small number, we’re not talking about 10% of the membership, we’re talking about a very small number of people. And they battled a government that was... There was huge numbers of school districts, teachers had no power whatsoever, they had no bargaining authority, no bargaining power.

[00:06:29] JM: Trustees had the power to hire, and fire you at whim; many school districts had 3, 4, 5 teachers. And that wonderful—there is a wonderful painting, I can’t remember the name

of it, you've probably all seen it—the school-board sitting down, talking to the new teacher, and it's terrifying. It's a bunch of old crocks interviewing this new teacher. It's one of those things—and it happened, of course. No one represented you, you had no rights whatsoever; and there were issues. The issues were some kind of attempt to get pay increases that were commensurate with what other people were earning. But the salary scales of the day, as you know, were different for men and women, they were different for Grades 1 to 7; or 1 to 8, than they were for secondary. There was discrimination rural and urban—rural teachers were paid less, urban teachers were paid more; women were paid less, elementary teachers were paid less, so there were levels of discrimination, which made it very difficult. The local associations were, generally speaking, although not entirely, run by secondary males.

[00:08:07] JM: There were some women involved. Not many. And not many of them were secondary teachers; they were, generally, males and many of them were administrators. And I should digress a bit, and say, that, that characteristic, when I joined the Federation much, much later—so now we're talking about the 42nd or 44th year of the... No, I joined Federation's Executive in 1970;

[00:08:39] JM: so the Federation's 53 years old! There were 11 of us on the Executive; there were two classroom teachers. Frances Worledge and I. There was one woman; there were 9 administrators. Every major committee in the Federation was run by an administrator; 5 of them were Vancouver administrators. So, the organization from its naissance, was run by men, by administrators, and understandably, they had time off to do stuff; in the sense that teachers didn't. They were male, they were administrative, and they were, generally, secondary. So, the organization had a long period of evolution (on what) it had neglected, that's why as late as the 1960s, we still had people teaching with the old EC certificates, which was Normal School. That's all you needed! Go to Normal School for a year, get cranked out.

[00:09:57] JM: And to get eventually, to that lofty level, it was, at one point as I recall—Al will know better than I, cos you did some history on this—17 years, to the maximum, at the lengthiest salary scale. At one point we got it reduced to 14; we thought it was a glorious victory, to have them down to 14 years. So, it took you 5 years university, and 17 years to get maximum salary. So, the struggles were for salary; the pension issue came up sporadically during that period of time; but the organization was really in no position to look at pensions, because it didn't have the kind of understanding, or knowledge, or staff to do that kind of stuff. It had one staff-member, remember? It wasn't until they hired a second staff-member after Charlie Ovans became the General Secretary, they hired Stan Evans, and then eventually added Allan Spragg, which gave a lot of clout to the area of dealing with salaries and pensions and bargaining. The other thing, I think, in those days it is important to realize, is that it was not a militant organization.

[00:11:22] JM: There were militant people in the early days. Remember that in the second or third year of the Federation the Winnipeg General Strike transformed the labour movement across Canada into something it hadn't been before, and it had an impact. Didn't shake up

everybody, but it shook up a lot of people. Vancouver itself had had a history of labour militancy, which had culminated in 1905 with a one-day general strike over the execution of—or the murder, I should say, of, Frank Rogers, who was the fishermen's leader, who was murdered by CPR cops on the waterfront. And there was a tradition of militancy in Vancouver, which certainly, affected the way, the Vancouver secondary teachers convened themselves into an organization. I don't know what else, Ken, to say about those early years, other than the fact that it was a constant struggle. It was, I hate to use the word, humble supplicants, but to some degree the organization, we were humble supplicants to government. We went there, somewhat like (pretends to take a hat off): more, please, sir. It would only be fair if you did this. Even the year that I entered the bargaining team in Burnaby, the year before that, the guys had gone in, literally, with a napkin, with their demands written on it. A restaurant napkin.

[00:13:10] JM: Said, "This is what we need; and hope you can be fair about it, and we can talk about it". And there was a lot of debate and eventually, it did go to arbitration, but it wasn't as equals at any level at all. There was the government, and the pyramid of power structure, which existed and exists: with government bureaucracy and the hierarchy of the Ministry; and the hierarchy of the administration of the school level; and the district level; and then, there were teachers. And that gulf persisted, and persists. But in those days, to bridge that gulf there was no union. And there was no way that teachers could defend themselves. Even as late as the 1960s, when you were put on that one year of probation, there was no need to give a reason to dismiss you. Gone! At the end of the year, they didn't have to give a reason. You're just—if they didn't like the colour of your eyes, they didn't like the way you parted your hair, you know—gone! And so, teachers lived in fear of that job loss for a long period of the time. The depression, of course, added immeasurably to that—

[00:14:44] JM: teachers' salaries were abysmal, there were no jobs, there were no jobs outside of teaching; the boards were going bankrupt; school board of Burnaby went into bankruptcy, as did a lot of them. They had official trustees appointed to take over the running of the district. They couldn't afford to pay teachers. We had examples from all over the province with boards being unable to pay even the miserable salaries that were there. They simply didn't have the ability to do that. And you have to give credit to Charlesworth, who was a very conservative guy, and in later years, to Ovans, and Evans, that they did a commendable job, with what was available, to knit together the organization, and keep it functioning. Politically, ideologically. And I talked to John Sutherland about it; he was here (points to one side); and Harry Charlesworth was three million light-years away; but he was still in the family—in the sense that he represented us. Did we do it well, did we do it militantly? U-

[00:16:04] JM: uh (shakes his head).

[00:16:05] JM: But it held the organization as it existed, together. And those people, who came after, they weren't militants; lots of them were quiet, unassuming people, who got thrust into the job. They came for a year, they taught full-time, they disappeared. They've never been heard from again, in lots of cases. And there was no consistency, except staff.

[00:16:31] JM: And it was limited to one person, or two, and eventually, three or four. I don't know, Ken what else?

[00:16:38] KN: Can you talk a bit about how things began to change in the 1960s in terms of dealing with government, and teachers becoming a little critical of government, and in fact, the three stages of political action, beginning then?

[00:16:54] JM: Well, I think, you have to see the Federation; and we tend to—because, we are “we”, and we tend to see us, as “us”. And we don't always see us as part of the bigger “we”. The Federation in the 1960s was a product of the 1960s. It wasn't accidental, that we started a program on the Status of Women, and a program on racism; it wasn't accidental that the International Program flourished; it wasn't accidental that we started raising demands for teachers' rights, because that was part of the emerging social milieu across North America. And counter to that, there was lots of opposition, going the other way. But teachers were affected by that, and it wasn't that there was a way, or some sort of revolutionary guiding force, but a little bit different. If you go back to the other major union force in the province, the IWA. The IWA was built initially by a handful of Communists, of whom were the six leaders and maybe a dozen others associated with it. They decided, after the Campbell River strike in 1935, to build an industrial union. Period. And they did.

[00:18:38] JM: They began to recruit, in particularly, among the Finnish and Swede-Finn workers, and other immigrant workers. And then, other needs and demands of the war came along, and there was a huge up-surge of the need for timber and they were able to use that. But it was different: there was a conscious, organized group of people with a political agenda that was very clear: it was to organize a militant, class-conscious trade-union. Every bunk-house that I worked at; every logging bunk-house that I went to when I was a kid from 1950 on had over the doorway: “This is a 100% union bunk-house”. There was political consciousness; even after the check-off; even after the union won the check-off after the Rand formula in 1946, the union shop-stewards went around with the membership books, and people got stamped as being a union member. Even after the check-off they had to pay their dues. They still had their dues books: it was political conscious raising. That was different than the way it emerged in the Federation. The Federation was much more a product of the outside forces, than it was... yeah, there were a number of us that came from various sources.

[00:20:07] JM: You guys, the three of you—different sources. Blakey, Onstad, Truls, people like that, came from different diverse backgrounds. But we were products of outside forces that brought us together, rather. And we formed a group of people, the Left, whatever you want to call that initial caucus, that comradeship, that group of people organized around the Socialist Education Movement in the early 1970s and around Teacher Viewpoint. But those early people didn't have that. Guys, Like Sutherland, he relied on his relationship with the left of the CCF, particularly people from Vancouver Island, and the Lower Mainland, North Vancouver and the Rural Teachers' Association, which Charlie was a major part of; they were internal. And there were individual left-wing CCF'ers and Communists, but they weren't the kind of organization,

that took part in the Fishermen's Union, the IWA and the Mine Workers' Union, where it was a very clear, much different, much better-organized core leadership of people. And, fortunately, the left at the Federation—well, unfortunately, I guess, we were confronted with a government, that instead of being unpleasant, but relatively benignly unpleasant—the Liberal-Tory coalition government, particularly going into the 1950s (it) had lots of money.

[00:22:03] JM: And so there was money, teachers were being hired; there wasn't the vicious, vitriolic attack on teachers that characterized the later period of the Bennett regime.

[00:22:15] JM: And

[00:22:16] JM: so, the teachers were... I don't believe in the Maoist theory, that the greater the oppression, the greater the rebellion—I reject that. If that was the case, we should all be hoping for the worst poverty in the world, where everybody will rise-up in a revolution. But, nevertheless, when you're attacked, severely, continually, and kicked again, and again, and again; as teachers were, collectively, you begin to respond. And we did that, and so, the transition of the Federation in the early 1960s on, was brought about by internal organization—coming together of people from diverse backgrounds. They didn't all come out of the NDP, they didn't all come out of the Communist Party, they didn't all come out of the independent left;

[00:23:08] JM: they didn't come out of the women's movement only. They came out of all those, and they coalesced around certain common issues. Sometime, quite diversely, as antagonistic issues were what brought them together, and they fought over it. Well, the women's movement was the case-in-point, that caused the left to...and I relate a personal example. Linda Shuto was over

[00:23:34] JM: one night, she and Norm were over for dinner, and she and I got into an argument about the women's movement at my house. And we argued till 2 o'clock in the morning, going out the house, down the street, and across the street to her car, yelling at each other about where it was going, where socialism and the women's movement were going. But, nevertheless, it was a collective coming together of diverse elements that created that. The unfortunate thing about those earlier people, was that they did not have that. And when they did, the war came along and changed the characteristics of things a lot, and there was severe repression. There was red-baiting. Teachers were fired. Or not hired. You know, I almost had got fired, and my comrade from UBC, Archie McGoogan was the leader of the Communist Party club there; couldn't get a job here. So, he went back to Toronto and got hired, cos he would never had got hired here. Other people were fired, McCarthyism was a real issue. People were fired from the library board, people were fired from... people think McCarthyism only occurred down there. Bullshit. McCarthyism was real and alive here, and it kept the left quite subdued.

[00:25:00] JM: Quite subdued. We had trouble getting people together in a semi-public way in that period of the early 1960s. And we used things that were now, you think, oh my god, how can anyone be opposed to it? Betty Griffin got together with a well-known NDP guy, Cliff Geer,

and they organized a group to petition the Federation to put a motion to the AGM to ban the bomb.

[00:25:36] JM: Christ, you thought we were calling for a revolution tomorrow, in the streets. Took four or five attempts to get it on the floor. Because people were scared, didn't want to be political. Now, part of that was the red-baiting that had taken place, and anything associated with the left was trouble. And, part of it was the professionalism lead by Charlie Ovans; and accepted by the staff that it wasn't where we were going. We were going to have shirts and ties, and we're going to have degrees, and we're all going to be called professional teachers; and we're going to look like lawyers, and we're going to be paid like lawyers, and we're going to act like lawyers, and we're going to control our own certification, and we're going to live happily ever after as professionals. And the membership bought that. They bought that... And it took a long time to undo that damage. It was enormous damage. And we lived for a long, long, long time under that.

[00:26:42] KN: I have a question, and I should have probably asked this morning, when we talked about your presidency, but an important one, I think. And it'd be nice to have on record; and that was, simply, why during the years that Barrett was in office, Premier Barrett, and why, when we got in one of the most progressive labour codes in North America, he gave the public sector workers the right to form a union and strike, why did the government not extend the full bargaining rights to teachers, including our right to strike; what was the problem there?

[00:27:30] JM: Well, I guess you have to ask us. Did we ask for it? Did we demand it? How seriously, in 1973 would the teachers in BC have been prepared to go under the Labour Code?

[00:27:57] KN: You're saying, that we just were not... that teachers were not there? (JM nods). They did not want that right.

[00:28:07] LK: Bill King, who was the labour minister in the NDP government claimed that they had actually made the offer, and the Federation's office actually said, they did not want that.

[00:28:23] JM: Don't forget, that as late as 1991, I got sent out as Assistant Executive Director to patrol the East Kootenays, on behalf of the Executive, cos we didn't have enough Executive members to do it; to sell labour affiliation. And part of the left was still shitting on the idea. Saying, "No!" I remember a leading article in the Women's Journal, by one of the leading feminists, saying, the labour movement is controlled by men, it is controlled by international unions, controlled by private sector unions. None of which were true! They were all wrong. Shirley Carr was the president of the CLC. The control of the labour movement was shifting toward the public sector. International unions were playing a smaller role. And yet, we didn't have the understanding in the Federation, going... to get back to your question; we didn't understand what the role of a union was. Lots of people were still comfortable—I know in my local of Burnaby, lots of people were comfortable with arbitration. Yeah, you don't get much, yeah, you get a little bit, you get the cost of living. Which is OK, if you're at Category 5 Max, and you get 2%, yeah, it is not much, it's few hundred bucks,

[00:30:05] JM: but if you're at starting scale, on Category 4, it's not much at all. And so, there was in fact, within the Federation, still that dichotomy between class distinction, almost, and between "them" and "us". And there wasn't a unanimity that we become an organized, militant union under the Labour Code. I don't think it would have sold. If we'd put that to go to the membership; I don't know what you think, Larry or Al; I think, if we'd put that to the membership in 1972, I don't think it would have sold.

[00:30:39] KN: In fact, we did put it to membership in 1982, and it didn't sell in a member vote, so I think, you're...

[00:30:45] JM: That was affiliation.

[00:30:46] KN: No, no, no,

[00:30:48] KN: that was the right to strike.

[00:30:49] JM: Oh – right!

[00:30:50] KN: The membership

[00:30:54] KN: turned that down,

[00:30:56] KN: so you're' probably right. I just wondered whether or not there was more to that, but...

[00:31:01] JM: No, I don't think so. I think, you know it's been a long path,

[00:31:14] JM: and I have to say, and I say this with respect to the work they did, there was obstinacy, obfuscation, opposition on the part of senior staff, to doing that. We did not have a progressive staff entirely. Larry, Al were there, you guys, were there, we know where things were at. I mean, we had a whole division of the Federation, threatening to travel across the province and oppose the resolution of the Executive Committee. Literally. They were going to go and thump the thumb against what the Federation Executive were recommending! And that's the argument I told somebody had with one of the senior staff-members, said, "If you don't like it you can bloody well work across the street! I am in the Learning Conditions Committee and this is what we're ordered to do; we've been ordered to do this by the Executive Committee, and you work for them!" And, there was opposition. The General Secretary of the day, till 1972, didn't agree with that move toward labour, and that's why he packed his boots in. Buzza didn't agree with it. Bob never agreed with affiliation and going under the Labour Code, and becoming a militant trade-union. Nor did the senior staff in the bargaining division.

[00:32:49] JM: Reluctantly dragged, kicking and screaming to that position. And, at best, a lot of the staff in the other divisions got dragged, saying, "Oh, well, it is the Executive Committee, and where they're going"... but there was never any enthusiastic applause (claps) to do it. We never had, when we were trying to sell the strike, or the affiliation stuff in 1991, we had lots of staff

refused to go and take the position to the membership—we didn't have enough people to go to 70 locals. There were staff refusing to go—they were too busy. Too many other things. So, you know—we're partly to blame; we're not wholly to blame, but partly.

[00:33:41] KN: Al has a question.

[00:34:06] AC: Jim, one of the issues that feed into your description of the evolution of our history deals with the issue of professionalism, which is also tied into the Code of Ethics; which is also tied into compulsory membership, which was granted in 1947. So I wonder if you could just comment on the evolution of that strand, because that strand got us to the need to give teachers greater education—teacher education, certification and all that. There was compulsory membership, but also there was a control issue from not a trade-union side, but from professional ethics side; and how all of that contributed to the issues around professionalism.

[00:34:32] JM: The issue of compulsory membership was one that, interestingly, the left, meaning Sutherland and Co, fought against, initially. John's position was resolutely opposed to it, initially, because we didn't have enough people. He said, they want to give compulsory membership, but we don't have the support of the members. We don't have that; so, their position of the left was to oppose it, initially—because it was something that he believed that the model should be the one used by the civic unions. You worked every day with a membership book, you pound the pavement; pound the pavement; you pound the pavement; you sign-up people into the union. And when you got them, then you say, we have enough people, we want check-off, or compulsory membership, or whatever the hell it happened to be. But, Sutherland told me, that they battled this out and people couldn't understand, how could they, the Communist left, the NDP left, could be opposed to a compulsory membership? And there were big battles in the left, saying, that they're just going to give us compulsory membership. Now, the other thing, that you will not find in the archives, and I searched them, and I assume, you guys have, as everybody else has—

[00:35:59] JM: there's no record of it, that there was the quid pro-quo. And I believe, and I have no proof of it, except what I'm told, there was a quid pro-quo between the government and the Federation, that we all know about: you get compulsory membership, you give up the right to strike, or the demand for it. That was the deal. Charlie negotiated that. I am absolutely convinced, and will believe it till my dying day; John Sutherland told me, and I believe everything John told me, because he knew those guys inside, outside, backwards and sideways. And so, what we got, was compulsory membership, but we got arbitration. Now, they may not have happened at exactly the same time, but the quip pro-quo that the government gave us, was, it gave us the right to have the compulsory membership, which benefitted the Federation, substantially, financially, benefitted the bureaucrats in the Federation, as well, and benefitted the Federation overall by strengthening us in numbers. But we lost the right to become a union. And that's... And I searched the Records, John told me about that, I searched it for days,

[00:37:12] JM: when I had my time here, there was nothing. Nothing, zero, nada. Nor would there be. It was never decided by the Executive, it was never moved by the membership; it was something that was done. Where was it done? I don't know. Probably in an office in the Douglas building, maybe over coffee in the Parliament building. But there was a deal somewhere, struck, that said,

[00:37:37] JM: you play ball in our court, we play ball in your court. It didn't just happen out of the grace or the goodness of the government's heart, that all of a sudden they gave us compulsory membership.

[00:37:52] KN: Jim, can you tell us a bit about the Rural Teachers' Association; what was it and what impact, if any had it had on the Federation?

[00:38:02] JM: Well, the RTA was best described as a "ginger group". Rural was a... interestingly, what we call rural North Vancouver was, where Charlie taught. It was part of the Rural Teachers' Association. You know... I mean, think about it. There was no Lions' Gate Bridge;

[00:38:29] JM: there was a decrepit Second Narrows Bridge and a couple of ferries that ran across the Inlet, to a small population. And the conditions among rural teachers were really, really bad. They were at the whim of... before the Cameron Report, and I forgot the number—you guys may know, how many districts there were? 1,100?

[00:38:48] LK: 610.

[00:38:50] JM: So,

[00:38:53] JM: that was 1930...

[00:38:55] LK: Up until 1945, I think,

[00:38:58] JM: So, we had 600 districts employing way fewer teachers than we have now. So, they were literally at the mercy of 600 school boards. No bargaining rights. You know, even, as a matter of fact, a strange thing—one of those people, who's now became an arch enemy of the Federation in later years there were two teachers in my second or third year on the Executive, and they were teaching in the Peace River at

[00:39:52] JM: Pouce

[00:39:53] JM: Coupe;

[00:39:54] JM: and the teacherage was a piece of shit, which they paid too much (for). And the pipelines into the school, the propane pipe froze every morning. They had to go with a blow-torch before school, and thaw, un-freeze the pipeline. They did their own janitorial stuff. And this was long after the RTA had disappeared, this was in the 1960s, for God's sake. You know, rural teachers' conditions were still appalling. We still had battles, probably, while you were President, Larry, of elementary teachers, whose teacherages were ridiculous.

[00:40:38] JM: They were being over-charged and they were not satisfactory. I went to Deas Lake; and the teachers were living in half the trailer, and the kids, who were all from First Nations' band, had their classroom in the other half the trailer. You know? The rural teachers' conditions were appalling. So, what? What do they do? They organized. And they started to demand things, and they produced: Charlie came out of the Rural Teachers' Association. That's why he joined the Communist Party: because it offered something more, than the Federation was offering at the time. And there were progressive people on the Island, around Cobble Hill, and in Vancouver, with John Sutherland; and the coming together of those people, they've formed a progressive caucus. I can't remember the name of the woman, who was involved—I've forgotten her name. It evades me. But, there were a group of them, got together and formed a progressive caucus, made of people coming out of the RTA and out of the big Vancouver and Victoria locals; and formed a progressive caucus, to try and affect the election. Which they did, they got John elected, and they got some other people elected as well.

[00:42:18] JM: They lost an election for President, I think, a guy from Cobble Hill... name gone—sorry—ran and lost. Can't remember his name. Anyway, doesn't matter. But that was a coalition of the Rural Teachers' Association, and the progressive teachers in the urban centres. And they did, they sparked the Federation into some activity. But their conditions, really, never got any better until school districts were amalgamated, and until we were then, able to form locals of those amalgamated districts that had some clout. And it was pretty hard to form teacher militancy, where you had, what would be now, one local, where there were maybe 8 or 10 locals. Even before the consolidation in later years, we had tiny locals scattered all over the hills' half acre, with no clout whatsoever, no bargaining power.

[00:43:39] JM: Barriere, for example, Larry, was an anathema to the teachers in Kamloops. Barriere had the worst salary scale in the province, and no clout and no bargaining power. It wasn't until they eventually became part of the Kamloops school district, that people in Barriere got a shake out of it.

[00:44:02] KN: Jim, you spoke earlier about the discrepancies between men and women in salary scales, and between elementary and secondary, rural and urban. Now, most of that changed in the 1950s, as far as I understand, but do you want to talk about that, what happened, and who did that, the struggle and all?

[00:44:23] JM: Well, there were very few women in the leadership of the Federation at that time, as you know, a handful. But there were some conditions, there was very, very severe teacher shortage. As the baby-boomers came into the school system, we were short of teachers. And the war, of course, put additional pressure. We were bringing people back, who had retired. My Social Studies teacher at Britannia had retired at 65 and they brought him back at 72 or 73

[00:45:02] JM: to teach. And so, there were pressures on boards to improve the salaries. And women in the industry were working full-time in the air-craft industry, and the shipyards, earning reasonable, if not equal—reasonable wages. And women in the elementary schools,

particularly, suffered the dual problem, because they were almost all one or two-year teachers. It was rare to have a degreed female teacher in the elementary schools, rare. So, they were all low certification level, frequently not much experience, because many of them—there was not provision for maternity leave—so, you taught for 2–3 years, got married, had a baby—gone! Bye-bye. Matter of fact, they didn’t even allow you—when I was on board in Vancouver in 1967, I moved a motion—there was a big debate, whether we let a particular woman, she wanted to keep teaching till her term. So, I moved that she keep teaching. And one of the trustees said: “It can’t be past the fifth month! Or the little children will begin to see the swelling”. This is trustee in 1967, talking about a female teacher, to which Betsey MacDonald on the board, who was a good person, said: “For Christ sake Connie, it’s not a watermelon growing there, it’s a baby, and the kids should see it”.

[00:46:41] JM: But that’s the way women were treated as late as the 1960s. Let alone during the period of time we’re talking about before that. So, it did begin to change, but there were external factors. The Federation had campaigned to have women’s wages raised to that of men’s, but don’t forget that the Federation was controlled by male secondary teachers. Should they have put a tremendous emphasis on demanding those salary scales be changed, between junior and senior secondary to equal them? Of course they should have. Did they? I don’t know; I don’t know whether they did; they were never successful initially. Wasn’t till much later that that got changed. I’ve still got salary scales at home, that show... and when all of you broke into the Federation, you know that there were huge discrepancies between districts: I mean it wasn’t hundreds of dollars; it was thousands and thousands of dollars difference at maximum. Even in the Lower Mainland. West Vancouver was notorious; had the worst salary scale in the Lower Mainland. The richest district in BC! And you know, we didn’t manage to eliminate all those things.

[00:48:06] JM: I don’t know why, I can’t tell you why; maybe we didn’t try hard enough; maybe we didn’t have the leadership to do it. Maybe we didn’t have the resources. There is a complacency that sets in, too. And women weren’t empowered. I mean, we shouldn’t underestimate what WIT, Women in Teaching, and the result of the Status of Women Program, what it did in terms of transforming the role of women in the Federation. It is another one of those nodal points in the Federation’s history. We were here (points with hand); now we’re here (points higher). Along with those other ones I talked about this morning—it was transformative, it was gigantic.

[00:48:54] LK: So, WIT was a caucus, basically,

[00:48:58] LK: within

[00:49:03] LK: the Federation; were they a caucus before the Status of Women Program?

[00:49:09] JM: WIT?

[00:49:12] JM: WIT was a large group of women, not affiliated with the Federation in the early 1970s, of which Linda was one; a number of others, who were involved. And they got together, casually at first, and then began to see the need to come together, and produced a militant movement, which helped to put pressure on the task-force we set-up to investigate whether we should be doing something else? And there was lots of opposition; the opposition on the floor of Annual General Meeting; there were cat-calls and boos, and I mean, literally, hysterical opposition. I don't know whether you were at that meeting, but it was ugly, ugly, ugly. Chauvinistic, nasty, sexist shit going on. And a lot of abuse to the women involved in it. Jeering at people; there

[00:50:14] JM: was ugly shit.

[00:50:15] KN: Jim, you talked earlier about the Federation's failure to affiliate with labour in the 1990s; and I wonder if you could talk briefly about the history of the BCTF's relationship with the organized labour since its inception. We know, in fact, that we were part of the Canadian Trades and Labour Congress between 1943 and 1956; so, what was going on, why did that happen, and maybe subsequently, the decision to not affiliate with the CLC and what was going on?

[00:50:55] JM: Well, we know why they joined. Because there was a huge up-surge in the labour movement as a result of the war; trade-union movement was growing by leaps and bounds, we decided to affiliate; and there was tremendous pressure to do that. The reasons why we left are perhaps more speculative; and based on opinion. In my opinion, the reason we left is because the professional side of the Federation, under its leadership of the day became anti-labour. Partly because of the fact, that—I don't know if it was as much anti-Communist, as it was anti-union. It didn't fit the model that was being proposed; when they talked about certified professional teachers; teacher certification withheld, etc.—that didn't fit the model of a union. It was: "We were going to be a professional organization. We're not going to be a union". And, you know, I hold him responsible, I am sorry if people don't like it—they name buildings after him, and plaques after him, rooms after him, but Charlie Ovans was primarily responsible, as the leader of the opposition to the unionization of the Federation. Period. Full stop. No doubt about it. Presidents came, presidents went;

[00:52:28] JM: Charlie went on for ever. 28 years of Charlie went on for ever. And he was inordinately opposed to unionization. Inordinately. He didn't believe in it; didn't believe in it for teachers. He had moved from being a Communist to something completely different. A much different creature. Why he did that? I have to tell you; not many people know this, but at the caucus of the left people, including left NDPers, left CCFers and Communists, when Charlie approached them and told he had been offered a job; he was acting as Assistant General Secretary—offered a job of General Secretary; they told him not to do it. And I asked John Sutherland, why did you do that? he said, because we didn't think Charlie was strong enough to continue politically, in the job. We thought, he wouldn't hold for them. And I said, "And?" And he said, "6 months later, he didn't. He moved to the professional model." Bingo. And so, don't forget, in addition to him, there was a tremendous attack in 1956 on the labour movement

because of the movement to affiliation, the tie into the labour movement and the NDP, which came,

[00:54:13] JM: and so there were good excuses to leave. As to why we didn't join later? When the resolution came up on the floor of the AGM, the right-wing moved to have it put to a membership vote. Remember there was that clause; that any move to affiliate with labour has to be put to referendum? That was added; that wasn't the motion that was put. We put a motion regarding affiliation. They moved on the floor of the convention to add that. Interestingly enough, when that vote in 1991 came; and I hold them responsible and I know it is prejudicial towards that organization, but Teacher Viewpoint was not in power in the Federation Executive at the time. And they resented the fact that affiliation might take place under the leadership of Teachers For A United Federation. And so, they opposed it. The very people, who sat with me in the caucus, for 25 years, 1960 on, some of the very people from that original caucus took a militant stand against affiliation. Saying, not ready. I argued with them. Said, why not? They said, "We're not ready. Not right now". And I said, "What you mean, is you're not ready, cos you guys aren't in control".

[00:56:03] JM: And just walked away. And so, we had a leading person in the women's movement do what I told you this morning—wrote an article, it was wrong. Wrong, wrong, wrong. Wrong on count A, wrong on count B; wrong on count C. Put an article in the women's magazine, distributed in the Federation, why we shouldn't affiliate. It was bullshit, it was wrong. But, ideologically, the ultra-left had decided, for whatever reason ultra-left does things, whatever infantile reasons caused them to repel them into making stupid decisions; had made that kind of stupid decision. And so, they pulled their troops together to oppose it, and combined with the right-wing, it went down. So, when you have that rather strange amalgam of the right-wing, combined with the ultra-left; even in the ultra-left you had two different positions; you had some of the their people, who were normally part of their collective, standing up, saying, "I'm for affiliation; I've always been for affiliation". And I won't name names, but you, guys, know who I am talking about, saying that they supported it; there was a split among their ranks. Cos they knew that it was not based on principle, it was the most unprincipled demagoguery, that I was disgusted with those people.

[00:57:44] JM: Really shocked, almost as shocked as I was in 1987, when people jumped to the mic and said, "If you don't certify under the Labour Code, you should be kicked out of the Federation". Hand on heart (puts hand on heart), one of my colleagues, one of my comrades, hand-on-heart, saying, :In my heart of hearts, I believe that you have a local, that doesn't agree to certify under the Labour Code, they should not be in the Federation". That's ultra-left infantile nonsense. Anyway, rant number 3 finished.

[00:58:30] KN: Great. Also, can you comment a bit about the emergence of the International Solidarity Program? We had it as one of the major programs within the Federation since way back. Can you talk a bit about how you saw it emerging in the Federation; was there an appetite for solidarity with teacher organizations in South America, Africa and other places?

[00:58:45] JM: Teachers—

[00:59:01] JM: what I was talking about this morning; there is among teachers, two characteristics, that... three, I guess... One is, they're relatively well-educated; two, they believe, generally speaking, in fairness, and three, they have humanitarian altruistic characteristic that's there. Not all of them, but it's there. And so, they give generously to things, and I think, if you examined how Federation members are in their private lives—I have no evidence to back this up, but I'd be willing to bet you, that teachers on average donate significantly to international charitable causes, whether it is Oxfam, or UNICEF, or Médecins Sans Frontières; or whatever it is. And so, it was quite understandable that the international programs were supported, and people had always believed in those. I mean, Project Overseas was... people believed in it. And I guess, because there is a humanitarian side, it is there, and as it emerged, and as it became a rich and more developed program. And as Larry became more heavily involved in it, it carried people on. But there had always been that side to it, of

[01:00:43] JM: believing in the needs of... It's funny, you know, we were more inclined to believe in the needs of fellow teachers in wherever and wherever, than we were to do anything about fellow workers in here, and there, and there (points). We weren't particularly good, in those days,

[01:01:08] JM: at

[01:01:11] JM: supporting bank workers trying to organize. Jean Rands would not have had a hell of a lot of support among teachers, except among the left, going out and organizing bank workers; or the attempt to organize Eaton's. Or whatever. Hmmm... so-so. But when it came to support teachers internationally, who needed help, it was different. And I can't explain that, except that there is a... that we don't necessarily see the depth of privation among our own, as much as we do among Third World people. It's good, we do that. We had a great deal of difficulty in, when I spoke in 1974, on my President's speech; or 1975—I can't remember which; and laced it with a lot of statistics, it was a long rambling thing; like, I think I talked for an hour.

[01:02:29] JM: A lot of it was statistics regarding poverty among First Nations people. And we were making an attempt to reach out to—matter of fact, I met with Bill Wilson a number of times, Joe, Wilson's father, who was a big stick at the time; but there wasn't much enthusiasm and excitement to do that. And yet, the living conditions and teaching conditions for Aboriginal people on and off the reserve were unspeakable. Unspeakable. In public schools. And our own members.

[01:03:19] JM: I will tell you one example. I went into the school; I made a tour of school district of Stikine. We flew into Telegraph Creek. Went into the school; a bunch of the windows were broken. The water pipes were frozen, and this was in May, I was there.

[01:03:45] JM: The water pipes had frozen, there was a creek down below, two hundred feet below, water could have been pumped-up easily; the water pipes had frozen in February. They

had no running water in the school for five months. The principal and the teachers there put up with it. Without a word. I watched a child leave the school and go across the field to the toilet, the outhouse. He came back, he went to the three-litre or four-litre jug of water, took the spigot out of it and picked up a plastic glass, didn't wash his hands—there was nowhere to wash—poured himself a glass of water, drank and put the cup back. I went into the classroom half the kids were covered in scabies and impetigo. Half of them! Not exaggerating. The superintendent hadn't been there since the fall. He was in Fort Nelson, the dumbass had sat it out. Our staff—our teachers did nothing. Not many of them, three or four; they just sat and watched this. These native kids were dirty, they were filthy. The conditions in the school; the floor was filthy. I am not talking about dirt, like a few pieces of paper;

[01:05:09] JM: you could have scraped the dirt off with a fingernail. So I phoned Eileen Dailly and told her, and I said, "If we don't have a water truck in here by Friday"—this was Monday or Tuesday—"If we don't have a water truck in here in three days, with a set of PVC pipes and a hose and a pump, then the BCTF is going to fly in a CTV crew and expose this school as Mississippi North". She said, "Oh, I can't believe it"; and I said, "Well, you're going to see it on national television". "Oh my god, what am I going to do, oh, oh, dear (throws arms up); I didn't know anything about it". Hopeless. So, I said, "Phone the fucking superintendent, tell him to get a truck with a 1,000 gallons of water, down the Toltan Canyon, with three plumbers, they drop a hose down into the creek below; it's nice fresh water, you put a pump on it; and pump it up to the school. It's not rocket science, any moron could do that". But, I couldn't believe that three or four of our own members let this happen. Ok, it is only four members,

[01:06:32] JM: we have forty thousand members, and the other 39,996 were fine, maybe. But, not true! We let the federal government—we let the federal government—parachute 232 children in the mid-1960s; parachute them in. Not from residential schools; parachuted them in from up-coast schools of the BC coast, into white families in Burnaby, and Surrey and New Westminster and Delta and so on.

[01:07:12] JM: We never said a word. Teachers got them in their classroom—where did you come from? . Where did you come from? Upper Nass. Where did you come from? They've never been out of their bloody villages before? The Federation said dick. Nothing. Didn't know about it? How would we know about it? How would we know about it? 230 kids arrive in three school districts, and they're all brown-skinned and they hardly speak English, and we didn't know about it? Our administrators, who are our members didn't know about it?

[01:07:49] JM: Crap!

[01:07:52] JM: We bought in to the racism that was there. We did it. You know? Anyway.

[01:07:57] KN: Do you

[01:08:03] KN: have

[01:08:06] KN: time for a couple more?

[01:08:07] JM: Sure.

[01:08:09] KN: You had said earlier Jim that the administrators had basically controlled the Federation, by being on the Executive, and probably through the presidencies and all

[01:08:23] KN: that.

[01:08:25] KN: When did that change and why did that change?

[01:08:28] KN: Because, by the time they were removed from the Federation, they gave incentive to that change, so when and why did that happen?

[01:08:34] JM: When Frances and I were on the Executive, then we formed the initial caucus; not View-point, but the initial progressive caucus. We decided to start running lots of people, all over the place, in North Van, and New Westminster, and Burnaby, and god knows where, and they weren't all lefties, they were... There was guy in North Vancouver, as I mentioned, was a Tory candidate. Bill Carney, who was on the Executive, was a Conservative. Maple Ridge;

[01:09:11] JM: he was good guy.

[01:09:14] JM: But they were classroom teachers, and so it was part of that up-surge; that North American up-surge of movement, after movement, after movement; the war and peace, and women and blacks, and First Nations, and whatever. And there was that upsurge of teacher militancy as well. And teachers realized, that —and we proselytized, a lot. I mean, I must have made... I don't know, I've got a file drawer this long (shows) with speeches, maybe 200. I must have spoken in those four years, two or three hundred times; to schools, all over the Vancouver area, all over the Lower Mainland, almost every local in the province, except a couple I didn't get invited into. Onstad did the same thing: social responsibility, social responsibility, social responsibility. Blakey did the same thing. We pounded the tub. Shuto did the same thing. Status of Women travelled all over the province, beat the drum. And it got teachers involved, got women involved, and it got male teachers involved, classroom teachers, and we just pushed hard. So, by the time 1987 came there only a couple of administrators left on the Executive, eh?

[01:10:55] KN: There was one.

[01:11:11] JM: So, we've gone from 9:2 to 10:1. And the unfortunate side of that is, I guess, it's the way the left looks at—and rightly so—at corporate executives. We personalize it, that every single person working in a corporation at a management level is a son of a bitch. So, check-mark 82%. But, we did that with administrators too, there were good administrators. Good people, who worked hard to keep their schools... The guy I worked for, and I knew bugger about being a vice-principal. They've gone through seven vice-principals in nine years, and so, they phoned me one night and said, "Do you want to be a vice-principal?", and I said, "No, not really". He said, "Well, it is a school like yours"; I said, "There isn't any, I like this one", and he said, "Well, it is

very much like it"; so I said, "What you mean is, that you've gone through six vice-principals, and you need the seventh one, because the staff is up in arms, because they've had shitloads of new administrators a year". "

[01:12:39] JM: Yeah, something like that". So, I got the job, the principal got a heart attack over the 1976—they had a protest, we all walked out, and he had a heart attack over it. Anyway, the new guy, who was a coal-miner; said to me, "What do you want to do?" Well, don't we have it in constitution? Let the staff draw up the time-table, tell me what to do; or I will draft out a time time-line, you tell me how many blocks each department should get; and whether they should all be the same; or whether we should still favour senior teachers, and whether we should still favour

[01:13:21] JM: specialists, against other people, let them decide. He said, "Ok, well, go ahead and do that". So, there were guys like that, who said, yeah, go ahead, do it. There weren't many; most of them were control freaks. Not all, and the ones, who actually taught, had to go and get their hands dirty in the classroom, they were often better. And lots have volunteered to go and teach, to relieve teachers, who didn't get any prep-time. I knew lots of vice-principals and lots of principals, who said, "I take two afternoons a week and go, and teach; cos I like it; and my teachers don't get prep-time; so I go teach". And there were guys like that and women like that. But they were a minority, and people started to resent them. And they got a shit-load of money. Way more, than a classroom teachers did. And people began to see that discrepancy. You got your Master's teacher, who got their Master's degree, and 14 years, and the vice-principal still making 10,000 more than you.

[01:14:34] JM: There was something wrong with that. For not working as hard. OK, as a vice-principal, I work hard, you bet. Did I pack it home every night? U-oh. Did I mark every night? U-oh. Did I work on weekends preparing? O-uh. Except at time-table time, when it was not a pleasant time. But vice-principals by a large, was a stressful job during the day, but you didn't take it home with your family and kids, didn't kick your dog over it; and people resented it. And they demanded that; there was part of that up-surge of things, that... and it was a favour they did to us, I said this morning, they did us a huge favour, saying, "You guys are now administrators and you now wear a yellow hat and a green jacket. If we need you at the negotiating table, we'll call you". Once they did that, the membership just said... "You're going to do that?" And when the word got out among staff, said that even in their own districts, the principals were arriving at the bargaining table, on the other side of the table. When we told people that, they were outraged.

[01:16:02] JM: Lots of stories went out saying "I even remember telling people, to friends, that said, " Did you know that principals appeared at the bargaining table?" Oh my god! "At the bargaining table? You betcha!"

[01:16:20] JM: They even changed the title.

[01:16:25] JM: The original title in the act wasn't Principal, it was Principal Teacher. That's what they were, you weren't a principal of a collecting doggie do-do, you were a principal teacher, you weren't the principal of anything else; you were the principal teacher. And in the act they changed it to the Administrator. They removed the word.

[01:16:48] KN: Administrator Officer.

[01:16:50] JM: Yeah, so you got your yellow Century 21 jacket and your yellow hardhat. And you looked different.

[01:17:02] KN: The Federation, as you know struggled with the issue of class-size and composition and other working and learning conditions for a long time. Could you just do a bit of a trace-back to when working and learning conditions started to become a big issue with teachers, and how the Federation responded to that, and when did this change take place and how did the Federation deal with it?

[01:17:34] JM: Well, it is hard to put a time-line, but I think you'd have to say that the beginning of the really major development of that was the demand for the over 40 class-size campaign. That was really a huge step towards saying, there is a level—I mean it is intolerable—that we can work up to, we can't work above that. That is intolerable; and from that, we progressed to

[01:18:04] JM: say, OK,

[01:18:05] JM: if we need to control more than class-size, we need to start controlling other things related to learning conditions and working conditions. And the demand for a learning conditions contract, which was not particularly well-thought out in the nascence of it,

[01:18:29] JM: it was

[01:18:30] JM: urged, you know? The Vancouver teachers decided they needed a learning conditions contract, and they stormed the Vancouver school board.

[01:18:40] KN: Can you tell us about what the working conditions contract was?

[01:18:45] JM: They came to the Vancouver school board, Frances and Blakey, with 200 teachers and stormed in on the board meeting. I was a trustee. The room fills up with angry teachers, demanding a contract covering all their conditions of work, like other workers have. And these old toads on the board; I thought these two women, who lived in Shaughnessy across the street from each other, looked at each other—I thought they were going to die. “

[01:19:21] JM: What is going on here?” one said. The other said, “Who are these people?” I said, “They're teachers. Vancouver teachers”. “What are they doing here?” Frances said, “We're here to press our demands for a contract covering our conditions of employment.” You know how Frances was, she said it like a knife (makes a cutting gesture with hand). And she knew these two, and they were flabbergasted, and it was perfect timing because there was an election

coming in a couple of weeks. So we had a big public meeting at Templeton, and the trustees were there and we got to say whether we were for or against this. And, fortunately, I got to speak early; we drew lots; and I got second choice, or third spot, or whatever it was. There were about 7 trustees there and I said, well, I am definitely for it; you should know, I am a teacher, but I am supporting it wholeheartedly (throws arms in the air). The audience of course, full of teachers, and the place was packed with mostly teachers. The rest of them started to speak, and... well, I'm... uh... and there was an election coming up, and they were rubbing their faces, and Fred Raul had been on the board for 25 years, was rubbing his chin, saying "Hmmm... hmmm... What are the conditions that would be imposed on us?".

[01:20:59] JM: Like, they're starting to hedge their bets cos they're scared that there is going to be an election coming up, and they're going to get their ass kicked. Because Team was on the rise at that time; and there were people who were running for the Team, were saying, well, that seemed like a good idea to us. Mainly, to get elected. And then, in Burnaby, because we had a good base, we called the General Meeting, and said, "We wanted a contract covering everything. Just name it; from the way the bulletin boards are put up, to the way you get paid, to, you name it—everything. Everything, everything—there is nothing that isn't going to be covered." People said, "Well, what would it cover?" Everything. That was the answer. Everything. Everything to do with teaching; everything to do with your teaching, from the minute you're hired, till the day you leave. Everything in the school, everything out of the school, all your duties, all your lunch hour, everything. Particularly a duty-free lunch hour. "A duty-free lunch hour? No!" Absolutely, the number 1 demand—duty-free lunch hour for everybody. Holy shit! We had a 1,000 teachers, 1,080 or something, it was, we got letters from 30 or 40 people saying, sorry, can't be there, I'm sick or I've got a team in Saanich, I can't be there. Sorry. A

[01:22:24] JM: 1,000 people showed up to the meeting, and about 30 out of 1,100 unaccounted for. Literally. So, they all marched on the board lawn. So, the secretary treasurer called the people in; the negotiating team said, "What exactly do you want?" "Everything, a contract covering everything." Gary was chairing it, and he said, "this, that and the other thing". So, they said, "As you know, the board is not inclined to so grant that. But I'll tell you what I will do. If you were to draw the terms of it, in words that my colleagues on the board can understand, I will have them at the Admiral Hotel tomorrow at 12 o'clock with their pens in their hot little hands".

[01:23:32] JM: OK.

[01:23:42] JM: So, years later I said to him, "How did you do that?" He said, "Well, one of the trustees, as you know was a rather nice New Democratic minded lady". And I phoned her and said, "On this demand; this demand by the teachers for a learning conditions contract... it's difficult for us, how would you feel if other trustees were supporting it?" "Well, if people were going to support it, I guess, I agree to it". One in the pocket. Phones the next one and says, "I've been talking to some of your colleagues, and I have some agreement, that, they're dubious

about it, but there is agreement, that they'd agree to this learning conditions contract. How would you feel?" "Well, I don't know, but I guess, I am not going to be the lone person out." In the pocket! And, three. Then he phones Bill Daly, who's the hard-nosed SoCred, whose son Roy became a negotiator.

[01:24:49] JM: Says, "Bill, we have a hell of a problem here. You are not all as staunch as you are. Your colleagues, they're are vacillating". "What do you mean, they're vacillating?" "Well, I am afraid we've got a substantial; majority on the board that says they're willing to grant the working and learning conditions contract. I wonder how you feel". "Well, I am sure as hell will not be caught as the odd man out, and be the only one standing out there, my you know what, showing." So, he said, "Well, can we say then we will be unanimous?" "Well, I guess". Click (pretends to put something in the pocket). They arrived the next day, they had their pens in their hot little hands and they signed it. Which is the power of bureaucrats.

[01:25:37] KN: There was no negotiations, it was just what we had put down in the contract?

[01:25:41] JM: Well, the negotiation took place then, but that was just an agreement to negotiate.

[01:25:56] KN: OK, good, got it.

[01:26:11] JM: But it was a significant change. So, Vancouver got it, Burnaby got it, and then there were the demonstrations that took place in Trail, and Powell River particularly, against the funding formula. Where government had imposed the referendum on funding for capital, and the teachers were militant as hell there. And fought it tooth and nail. And so, there was that up-swelling of it. And then Coquitlam got on board, and Kamloops, Larry?

[01:26:27] JM: Came later?

[01:26:28] LK: It never got

[01:26:30] LK: it.

[01:26:31] JM: Can't remember where else it happened.

[01:26:33] LK: There was six in total, but

[01:26:35] LK: what where they?

[01:26:38] KN: North Van, did North Van get one?

[01:26:39] JM: Yes.

[01:26:43] JM: And that's when Adam wanted me to be the chair of the Learning Conditions Committee; cos there was an up-swelling of the learning conditions stuff. So, it was a coalition. You can't say, Tuesday, the 4th it didn't happen; Wednesday, the 5th it didn't happen; it is not compartmentalized like that, it is just happens for a convergence of things to produce those

results. And that was a convergence. The Vancouver one was a coalition; the Burnaby one was not much of a coalition, it was the left. We controlled the Executive—bingo. Vancouver, it was Blakey and Worledge. If Frances hadn't been on board—wouldn't happen. And Blakey had won her over. Frances was hard-nosed conservative, she battled Al day and night, the first three years (shows two thumbs coming together), and that coming together of the centre and left was fundamental of achieving all kinds of stuff,

[01:28:03] JM: cos

[01:28:05] JM: in the Federation, the left never really had, at any given moment, at the Annual General Meeting, never really had more than 30% of the votes. Never. And the right never had more than 20 or 30%. And that other 25, 40, 45% was up for grabs. And when we played it smart and had good policy, they were won over. And when the policy was stupid, or way ahead of people, we lost. And when the right-wing did outrageous things, they got their ass cleaned. When they ran people, who were doing dumb things, like saying outrageous stuff; they lost. You had to be, to some degree in-tune with the times, and sometimes we were and sometime we weren't. Most of the time we were.

[01:29:14] KN: OK, Larry or Al, do you have any questions?

[01:29:18] LK: Can you talk a bit about the Socialist Education Movement, SEM?

[01:29:28] JM: We thought that it was time, in the early 1970s that we brought people together, who shared socialist philosophy of divergence. Remember in the 1970s there was the old left, the new left, the medium left, the hard left, the soft left, the in-between left, the what was left of the left; and it was all this amorphous, everything from the waffle to the ex-trots.

[01:30:10] KN: It wasn't

[01:30:12] KN: just teachers.

[01:30:14] JM: No, there were people from the colleges,

[01:30:16] JM: not many, but certainly, several people, who were instructors from colleges and stuff, and there were some non-teachers. There were people from Surrey, who were aides of some kind or another, as well.

[01:30:41] JM: CUPE members.

[01:30:42] JM: And so, we had some meetings, we brought in some people to speak, we had some discussions and stuff, and that lasted for year and a half, two years...

[01:31:01] JM: And it became quite large, and I guess, we had 40 to 50 (

[01:31:16] JM: members)

[01:31:17] JM: in it. As I remember, one large meeting, it had about 50; we had some speakers come, and we had seminars and various things going on, and it was an attempt early to, followed by the setting-up of the Socialist Organizing Committee. It was an attempt to begin to link together progressive trends in education and other things that were taking place in Ottawa, Toronto, Winnipeg, to a smaller degree in Edmonton, Regina. And we began discussions with those people. I met with the then—even though he ended up being a Liberal MLA, but was a good trade-unionist at the time, and had gone to jail—that was Charboneau. And I had a lot of meetings with him. And the other guy who was the key to the CEQ, internationally very well-connected; I suspect, connected overseas, whose name you may know, Larry, but I...

[01:32:48] KN: Ignatieff.

[01:32:54] JM: Yes. Yeah, yeah. Those guys had a better perspective in many ways, than we did, and they were better organized. When I met with Charboneau, he came here and spoke, and I went there and spoke to the CEQ, they had social programs, very much like ours. Women, international stuff—they did a lot of international stuff,

[01:33:34] JM: environmental stuff; they were beginning to make contact with the militant sections of the Aboriginal movement. Although it was a very complex thing, as far as I learned. I didn't abandon ship, but I found in the four years that I had something to do with them, I found the politics of First Nations here at the time, beyond. Beyond beyond. I met with a lot of different groups; Aboriginal groups, First Nations' women, Bill Wilson, non-status people, chiefs, none of whom were convergent, they were all off in some direction. And not all involved in education.

[01:34:32] JM: And

[01:34:33] JM: I don't know whether you had that experience—very difficult to bring the Federation's role into any sort of semblance of co-operation or assistance, because I didn't know whom we were talking to. We're talking to the chiefs, the assembly or the Metis Nation, or to the First Nations' Women, and they didn't necessarily talk to each other, either.

[01:35:04] LK: By the 1990s they had really come together on the education issues. Not on lots of other things, but on education, they had.

[01:35:13] JM: I found the most frustrating thing I did, was attempting to establish a firm contact and any kind of relationship on the First Nations' stuff. It was not rewarding, it was not helpful to the Federation, it was not helpful to the First Nations, it was... we'd arrange meetings, the meetings would produce nothing, and the people we'd talk to didn't have the authority to do anything, and they didn't represent anyone who did have the authority to do that; and I, at some point during the third year, I said, well, it's not going to happen while I'm around.

[01:36:03] LK: So, the Socialist Organizing Committee, was that just teachers?

[01:36:10] JM: No. It had a lot of teachers, it had academics,

[01:36:19] JM: trade-unionists,

[01:36:23] JM: fairly divergent; a lot of ex-CPP people, older group; MacKenzie-Papineau guy; a guy who'd run for civic office at the time of the Effie Jones campaigns for Mayor, Elgin Redell, Mike Zlotnik's step-father. It was an eclectic collection of Socialists, again, some would come from the NDP, the waffle, some would come out of the CP, some had just come out of the labour movement, but all pretty committed to the revolutionary socialist perspective. Although, I guess, divergent views on the issue of socialism, the Women's movement was huge. Huge. Probably the one thing that did the organization in, as much as the divergence on that issue... like, the newspaper, for example, we debated endlessly whether Left Word was a socialist-feminist newspaper, or a feminist-socialist newspaper, or a socialist newspaper, who supported feminism.

[01:37:56] JM: And all those nuances may

[01:38:02] JM: be beyond my subtlety, or my ability to even remember what they were. But there were vigorous debates on it. And there were divisions over a lot of other stuff. And eventually, a lot of the people got off to doing other stuff. And it gradually... couldn't keep the newspaper going, it was expensive. And again, it was an attempt. We've met with Panich and Swartz, from university of Ottawa, we've met with Gonick and the people in Winnipeg. We had a lot of contact, we've met several times with Jack Warnock, who's still writing his blog regularly, issues I am getting all the time, so there was that old network of people who'd come again. So, I guess a lot of them saw themselves as, sort of, early, pre-party formation, which eventually would lead to—although didn't, of course—and, along with the rest of the left, it went off into wherever left goes. Nowhere, usually, lately.

[01:39:47] KN: Al, you had a question.

[01:39:48] AC: Well, I have a different question, Jim, and there is no clear answer, but I wonder if you could comment on the role of the BCTF in the first two strikes:

[01:40:04] AC: 1919 strike, and 1921, New Westminster strike. About what those influences were, and what the BCTF's influence was.

[01:40:20] JM: Well, Al thinks I was there, for both of them, actually.

[01:40:23] KN: you weren'

[01:40:24] KN: t?

[01:40:26] JM: No... it was interesting, that those strikes took place, and what amazes me about them, is that they happened. But, again, contextually, when did they happen? When was the Winnipeg general strike?

[01:40:57] JM: There was an up-surge across the country in disgust from the war, people were.. Before the purges that were taking place in the 1920s of the left, and the incarcerations, that haven't quite taken place yet, the post-war incarcerations; the Vancouver strike, which we had the woman, who was at it—or the New Westminster strike, I should say, was at the Federation convention, in 1992, she had been the secretary of the local. And we found her, she was still alive and well. Matter of fact, she was very articulate about what their battle was. And I am amazed, that A) It happened, and B) That it happened in New Westminster. The only thing I can think of, is that New Westminster, unlike the New Westminster I applied for a job there and was told to better put my roots there, because they wanted a young man, who would come and live there, New Westminster in 1920–25 was a working class industrial city, dependent on the huge number of workers working in the lumber industry. Fraser Mills were just up the road,

[01:42:37] JM: there were breweries, there were saw-mills, and there was a pulp-mill. There were fish canneries, there was a Snob Hill in the Queen's Park area, and the Lumberman's Row, the one that, what's her name lived in, who became the CTF President?

[01:43:02] JM: Kitty and Steve lived in the house along Lumberman's Row, where the millionaire lumbermen lived looking over the Fraser. But other than that, and the Queens Park area, New Westminster primarily was solid blue-collar, working class district. And the teachers, I guess, reflected that. I guess, what is even more surprising, is that it never happened again. For 50 years. You know?

[01:43:35] JM: Two

[01:43:36] JM: strikes, 50 years apart till the next one. I guess, there were a lot of reasons for that, but on the other hand, there was a general strike in Vancouver in 1903. And there wasn't another one for 50 years.

[01:44:00] JM: So... and by the way, while we're on the topic of general strikes, you guys from the labour historical thing, don't forget to do something to put on your list of historical places to visit. Roger's grave,

[01:44:23] JM: for which George North raised the funds for all of us, who coughed in money to put the plaque on, and we had an unveiling with the Labour Memorial Committee, and a red flag over the grave and speeches from Jack Nichol, and George, and whoever, at Mountain View Cemetery, on the 75th anniversary of Roger's murder.

[01:44:56] JM: So, there wasn't one labour martyr in BC; there were two. And many more, but two, we know were murdered.

[01:45:08] KN: OK, thank you very much, Jim for taking your time this afternoon,

[01:45:14] KN: we

[01:45:15] KN: really appreciate it. Thank you.

[01:45:16] JM: You're very welcome.

[01:45:17] JM: Do I get to come back in a 100 years to do another one?

[01:45:20] KN: In 80 years!

[01:45:21] JM: 80 years. Oh, shit! Well, I am only getting wound up, in 20 years from now I will think of more stuff.