

Interview: Pat Clarke (PC)

Interviewer: Ken Novakowski (KN) and Wayne Axford (WA)

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[00:00:09] KN: This is an interview with Pat Clarke, who was the BCTF president from 1984 to 1986. Interviews are being done by Ken Novakowski and Wayne Axford; technical support has been provided by Lesley Harrington, today's date is April 27th, 2015. So, we have a number of questions, Pat, thank you very much for being here.

[00:00:35] PC: Thanks for asking me.

[00:00:37] KN: And, we had a look at these questions before, so we're just going to go through them, and have you comment as we go through them. The first question is, when and where were you born, and where were you raised?

[00:00:50] PC: (laughs) I was actually born in Vancouver, there aren't that many of us; I was born in Vancouver in late... in 1949; my parents were born in Vancouver, and my great-great-great grandfather was here in 1888. So, I have roots in Vancouver.

[00:01:12] KN: What part of it did you grow up in?

[00:01:13] PC: I grew up on the West Side, it's actually part of UBC there, the West side of Blanchard Street. I grew up on the West Side, I went to the University Hill Secondary School, for the last part of my education. I started school in Vancouver College Catholic Boy School, and I was there in the 1950s. So, that was my K to 12 education in Vancouver.

[00:01:39] KN: Tell us a bit about your family.

[00:01:42] PC: Yeah, my family was not particularly political; my dad was a small business-man, we had a grocery store—two grocery stores on Granville Street; small independent grocery stores, a lot of work. My mom was a registered nurse, but did not nurse until my dad died. My dad died when I was quite young, I was about 14 when he died.

[00:02:06] PC: He was in the grocery business at a hard time, because people were starting to go more and more to the big supermarkets, Safeway, for example, and Woodward's.

[00:02:16] PC: And his business was difficult. There was a lot of work; but as far as their politics went, I was not, what you could call a "red-diaper-baby", by a long-shot. And, it wasn't because they weren't conservative, they were quite conservative, my dad, as a matter of fact was an interesting case. He always voted Liberal, but his reasons for voting Liberal now, just seem, sort of archaic; he voted Liberal, because it was the Catholic party.

[00:02:42] PC: And, you would never hear that anymore. I don't think people would be voting for a particular party for that kind of reason. And, I never really understood why he was so committed to it; he wasn't a committed Liberal, but he always voted Liberal. But his reason was, it was because they were the party, that traditionally, in Canada, had received the support of the Catholic vote, and he kept to that. And, it had something to do with his—which I also never understood—his connection to his Irish roots, which, even though, he was a third-generation Canadian, he still had this interest in his Irish lineage. Which I also never really understood; he was actually, a bit of a fainéant, he didn't like the British, didn't like all things British, didn't like people who spoke with British accents, he hated Toronto, and all things Toronto, hated the Toronto Maple Leafs, which I didn't understand, until later, it was because Toronto was of the Orange Order. And, that was his reasoning, for why he hated all things Ontario, or had no use for them. We never went to Victoria,

[00:03:59] PC: and the reason why we never visited Victoria, was because, if they wanted to be a little bit of the Old England, that's fine,

[00:04:03] PC: we're

[00:04:20] PC: not going! And, as I said, I never understood this, I never understood where that came from, but, boy he was married to that Irish lineage, even though he'd never been there; remember, he was a third-generation Canadian. My mother was apolitical... she was one of those people, you don't even see so much anymore, who just voted for the local candidate, and it didn't really matter, which party they were. If she liked them, she voted for them. So, that's my political lineage, as I said; no red-diaper background (

[00:04:37] PC: laughs).

[00:04:38] KN: Did you work in your dad's stores?

[00:04:39] PC: All the time. Constantly. For \$2 a day. Delivering fliers around—his store was on 41st and Granville, so, delivering fliers and groceries for my dad, for very little money. The only side-benefit I got was that I could drink all the Coke, and Pepsi, and whatever that I wanted. Made myself sick a couple of times, drinking too much of it. But, yeah, that was, sort of, my childhood growing up; I went to Vancouver College, which was the Catholic boys' school, which is still going, and is still quite prominent. The reason I went, is because, he had gone there. He would have been one of the early, early, students at the Vancouver College. I think, it was started in the early 1920s, mid-1920s,

[00:05:26] PC: which is when he would have been going there. My mom pulled me out of Vancouver College, because she thought it was... she thought I was getting a good Catholic education, but not a very good general education. So, eventually, when my dad died, she pulled me out of it and put me into a public school.

[00:05:41] KN: Let's talk a bit about some of your experiences in elementary and high-school.

[00:05:48] PC: Well, the way the question was worded—what do you most remember? Well, apart from the first part of my education being Catholic, and the kind of effect that has on a person, which, remarkably enough, even though you leave that behind, it has an effect on you, you know, it does affect your worldview, and the way you think, and, sort of, generally, perceive things. And, I'd say that, that is even true to this day, although, I left being a Catholic a long time ago. That system is very effective, in terms of developing a particular perspective, or a way of seeing, and I will still say, that some of my ethical issues, ethical convictions, probably still come from then. And, that's not in a negative sense, you know. The school was Jesuitical, and all that that entails, so it did have an effect on me, as, I think it does on a lot of people, whether they continue to be a practising Catholic or not. Vancouver College had the infamous connection to Mount Cashel,

[00:07:02] PC: and some of the Leigh Brothers, as they were called, that were at Mount Cashel, were also at Vancouver College. And that whole scenario, to some degree, developed at Vancouver College. And, one of my memories is that, yes, I was fondled by the brothers at Vancouver College, couple of times, and the abuse was... There was a lot of physical, corporal punishment at that school, it was believed to be the way that discipline was meted out—and I was one of the “good kids”, and I can't count the number of times that I got strapped, and the number of times that I was held in the principal's office, beaten across the buttocks for, you know, fairly minor indiscretions, and also, being treated physically by a couple of the brothers in a way, which would be, at best, untoward. Which says something about the place, because I would have been a high-risk kid to do that with. My family was well-known,

[00:08:05] PC: for everything, my father had a business two blocks away from the school, my grandfather was one of the founders of the school, and these guys were taking me into a side-room and fondling me. I can't imagine what had been happening with the more vulnerable kids, than I was. What they were doing with me was fairly low-level, you know, it was just sort of, just hand-holding, and rubbing legs, and suggestive talk. Interestingly, when I told my parents, they didn't want to make anything of it, and it was left at that. As I said, I was, for them, I was a high-risk kid to be doing that with, but it was something that was going on at that place, and laterally, at Mount Cashel as well. So, unfortunately, that's one of my more vivid memories of my early education. And, of course, the difference from going to that school, and the public school, which was University Hill, it was much more rigorous. University Hill was a funny school, because it was mostly the university professors' kids, and it was a totally different element, and learning situation, than Vancouver College was, and that was noticeable right away.

[00:09:25] PC: So, I had a harder time there. As a matter of fact, the reason my mother took me out of Vancouver College, was because it used to rank kids in your class, and when time came for the report card, I was ranked fifth out of forty five kids. My mother looked at it, and she said: “No way— (laughs)—you're not that smart!” So, that was when she started the pulled for me going to a public school and getting out of the Catholic education system. So, sure enough, as soon as I got the University Hill, I found it much more difficult. I was not anywhere close to be ranked fifth in class. No, I was in a class with kids that had entirely different situations, than I

did. So, it was quite an adjustment. However, I did get to like it a lot, and I certainly had a happier time at secondary school, than I did at elementary school.

[00:10:15] KN: What about your university—what can you tell us about then?

[00:10:18] PC: Well, I went from University Hill to UBC, so it wasn't a long walk (laughs). And, so, I didn't exactly get out and see the world, but that was, in part, because my mom had widowed by that time, she did not have a lot of money. I had to earn all my own money to go to university, she couldn't afford to pay for it, and I had to live at home. Fortunately, I lived very close to the university, so... I enrolled in political science and in history; to this day I am not exactly sure why I went into political science, but I did, and had some—I guess, in terms of my frame of reference, other than the comment I made about the Catholic impact on my ethical view of the world; certainly, my political and philosophical view of the world came from the courses that I took in political science; mainly, in political philosophy at UBC. Things I'd never thought of before, you know, and ways of looking at the world, that I'd never thought of before. I had a great teacher there, Martin Levine, who was there; in the first year I took a course in political philosophy.

[00:11:34] PC: Martin Levine went onto becoming a politician in Victoria, and I think he went to UVic for a while; I don't know, I kind of lost track as to what happened to him. But he was a brilliant lecturer, which is what we got—lectures, and he introduced us to all of the political philosophies of the world, and reading those, and thinking about those, had a great impact on me, and at the time, turned me into an anarchist. I believed they had a world-view, which I thought was the most appropriate—I'm not an anarchist anymore (laughs), but at the time, I thought I was. It seemed to me an interesting way to organizing communities... It wasn't the anarchism, and he didn't teach at anarchism as the (Peter) Kropotkin bomb throwing, it was more of a Paul Goodman approach to anarchism, which is more about

[00:12:29] PC: community development and community ownership of decision making, and that sort of approach to anarchist thought. But, that did have a big impact on me, and that's sort of what I took into teaching as well.

[00:12:45] KN: So, was it him, or what inspired you to become a teacher—did someone inspire you,

[00:12:56] KN: or did it just occur?

[00:13:31] PC: There was no one in particular, who inspired me to be a teacher. In fact, my mother, being, who she was (laughs)—because you had to have four years, because I had a BA, and I'm sitting there with a BA, thinking, what am I going to do—and I went to Europe for a year, took French, came back, and told my mom, well, I think I decided to go into teaching. And my mother, in all her inimitable style, said: "You're not doing that just so you can go to the university for another year, are you?" And, anyway, I enrolled in education at UBC, again, so I could walk over there. And, the reason I went into education, was, partly, because the idea of

being a teacher appealed to me as a lifestyle. It just seemed like a nice way to make a living, I was not entrepreneurial. My dad always said to me, don't ever go into business for yourself, its way too hard. He also said, work for the government. Maybe this was as close as I'd get—being a teacher. But I also came out of the four years of my BA, with a sort of a social conscience that I wanted to carry forward.

[00:14:07] PC: I wasn't entrepreneurial, I wasn't going to go into business, I wasn't scientific, I wasn't going to go in that direction. I had a notion, that I wanted to continue to try to change the world, even though, when I was in university, I wasn't particularly an activist; I was involved, but I wasn't you know, one of the activists, leaders. At that time at UBC there was Stan Persky, he was there, when I started off, Carey Linde, there were other people, who became very prominent activists after UBC, but I was never in that kind of a leadership group at the university, as far as social activism went, but I did participate. But that notion of social change, and social justice, I developed when I was doing my BA in political science and history, and that was when I decided that teaching may be the best thing for me to do to carry that on. So I actually went into teaching with, I guess, I have to say, a fairly radical consciousness about what the job was about. That was where the inspiration came from.

[00:14:40] KN: Where did you first teach—

[00:15:13] KN: tell us a little something about your early teaching experience?

[00:15:17] PC: I will tell you also, about when I went to do my first practicum, because I was going to be a social studies teacher—that was the obvious direction for me to go. I'd better be careful how I describe this... I went into a school in Vancouver for a week of observation, as we did in those days, and I sat in the back of this classroom, and watched this social studies teacher for a week; and I couldn't believe it. I thought there's no way I can do that for thirty five years. I'll die of boredom. Because he was doing notes on the board, the kids were copying, they were running a quiz on Friday, they were reading the text, questions on the board; next day—read the text, questions on the board, more notes on the board, write them down, test Friday. And I just sat there, thinking, oh my god! There has to be another way of doing this, or, if this is what the expectation is, I can't do it. We're at my first week, my first practicum, observation week, and I was this close to going through the door of the registrar's office and saying, forget it.

[00:16:22] PC: I was looking at social work, I started looking for other things and other syllabuses of what you can do with a BA; it was pretty bad... But for whatever reason, I stuck to it, maybe because I couldn't really think of anything else to do at that point. I looked at law school, but then I looked at the syllabus, and it wasn't very interesting either; I'm not sure if I would have gotten in, but anyway, unless I did, it didn't particularly appeal to me. So I ended up going through the one-year program for teaching certificate, and ending up in Kelowna, teaching mostly English, in my first year of teaching. Mostly English 8! Which, going back now, I can't believe I actually did that. Taught mostly English 8 in my first year of teaching, a couple of social studies 8; and mostly, Grade 8; and it was difficult—the classes were big. I was actually, teaching

in Rutland, which was, at that time, kind of an orchards community on the outskirts of Kelowna, and it was only just starting to be developed as a residential community, and it was kind a satellite, or a suburb of Kelowna, and it has always been a separate community, an orchard town,

[00:17:42] PC: and a lot of the kids I taught were orchard kids. A number of Japanese kids, from the families that have been interned in the interior. So, there was an interesting mix of kids that I had there, in the early, or sort of mid-1970s by that time.

[00:18:04] WA: So, tell us something about some of the experiences you may have had, some of the joys you may have had as their teacher.

[00:18:14] PC: One of the things about teaching then, and what was the biggest challenge, and what actually drove me into involvement in the BCTF actually, was, when I started, I had a lot of English, but I also had a few social studies classes, and my second year as well; was that teaching social studies was difficult, because the materials were appalling, they were just awful, and you were really on your own, in terms of, if you had any interest in trying to make your social studies classes more engaging than what I had seen for example, in the first week of my practicum. It was pretty difficult, you were really own your own if you wanted to do something other, than have the kids read text-books and answer questions. And that was when I stated to connect with other teachers. First of all, at that time there were a lot of us that were the same age, there was a huge influx of teachers into teaching in the mid-1970s; that was right after Dave Barrett had brought in the deal with the BCTF regarding class-size; and I was probably hired as a direct result of that. And me, and a lot of other people.

[00:19:29] PC: In Kelowna that year, Kelowna hired almost a hundred teachers. And, it's unbelievable! So, there were a hundred beginning teachers, in that school district. I guess, then, Kelowna would have had about 7 or 8 hundred teachers, and so—there we all were, and we're all the same age, roughly, all in the same circumstances, it was a really remarkable time. All kinds of searching around for the ways to become better teachers; and that got me into a local PSA, got me involved in organizing a professional day for social studies teachers, all coming out of the fact that we were fairly desperate to find ways of teaching, and helping one another out so, that was really what lead me into involvement in the Federation, and in the local—well, in the local initially.

[00:20:23] KN: So, you say, that took you into the local. How about your experiences in the local, when you first became involved, and your activity in the local over period of time?

[00:20:36] PC: My initial involvement was around professional development, and my interest in that. I was going to say earlier, what drove me into, and started to shape my teaching, was the notion of teaching as a subversive activity. I was very much influenced by that book (laughs). But, really, what "Teaching as a Subversive Activity" was about, is it was about critical thinking and critical inquiry in teaching; although that term wasn't really used at the time. But the idea of teaching as a subversive activity is what kept me interested in it; and it is what lead me to

becoming involved with other teachers, that had the same point of reference for teaching. And that was what got me into local professional development, trying to get people to come to the district, and have workshops and materials organized, and have a critical inquiry approach to learning history, and human geography. So, I became, very early on—I think I'd only been in the district for three years—the Professional Development Chair for the district. And, again, it happened because there wasn't exactly a competition for the job;

[00:21:51] PC: if you wanted to do it, you could do it. So, I did. Kelowna at the time, Central Okanagan, some of the bigger locals had just taken on full-time presidency; and that was at about the time I became the Professional Development Chair, that the first full-time President of a local was in place that year. Things were starting to change as far as the local political scene for teachers was. Up until that time things were pretty staid. I mean, our contracts were usually settled by binding arbitration. There wasn't a lot of activism in teacher politics, or in the school board or teacher politics; if there were, then a fight would erupt, you know, over the boards not agreeing to what we were proposing, and it almost always—my recollection was—it would almost always end up in binding arbitration. I didn't find that particularly interesting, I though, professional development was a lot more interesting, and it fitted in better with my notion of teaching as a subversive activity, than, say, collective bargaining did... Although I'd say now it does, but at the time, I didn't see it as much, but... So, that was what got me into the local, and at the local Executive table. I did professional development for a couple of years;

[00:23:17] PC: the local President, Rolli Cacchioni was elected the full-time President, and he came to see me in November, at the beginning of his term in the school I was teaching, and he said: "Pat, I can't stand this job. I just can't stand sitting in an office by myself. I want to be in a school." So, he said: "Will you do this next year?"—run for President. So, I hummed and hawed about it, as I wasn't really too sure about it myself, so I had decided I'd try it, so the next year, I was elected, without opposition, to be the full-time President in Kelowna, and I was only the second or third one, that had done that. But things were really different in other districts, because there were not a lot full-time presidents at that time. So, I became full-time President in Kelowna in 1979, I think, that's what it was—1979 to 1981, when I was the full-time President of COTA (Central Okanagan Teachers' Association). And, again, there was no history to that job,

[00:24:25] PC: the job was loosely defined, there was no particularly effective bargaining scheme. It was mostly, a job that involved an awful lot of personnel issues, and that was when I started to get my first notions about the fact, that our contract was pretty

[00:24:47] PC: pathetic, that we had very little opportunity to do anything. We were, for example, trying to establish some learning conditions, parameters—impossible—the Kelowna school board would not listen to us, they believed that it was entirely their jurisdiction to determine the size and make-up of classes, there was a constant fight they were putting up. For example, the big fight was the size of kindergarten classes. And, they were quite happy to put 30 kids in a kindergarten class, if that's what was necessary. It was preposterous. And, we had absolutely, no way of doing anything about that. Other than making it a big public issue.

[00:25:35] KN: Do you have a highlight, as your experience as President?

[00:25:39] PC: Yeah, as a local president, probably the kindergarten teachers, and the impossibility of their situation, and what they were trying to teach—I'm not exaggerating, they had kindergarten classes that had 30 kids in them. And, that was when we actually started to get some public traction around that, because, even parents were recognizing, that that was an impossibly big class for kids of that age. So, one of the more memorable experiences I've had, and it's getting to a long time ago now, is that we did have some—although we didn't get any agreement with the school board, all we did, really, was just shame them into not making kindergarten classes that big. There was nothing on paper—if they wanted they could make them that big. But they didn't mainly, because basically, we shamed them into not doing it. The other thing, that is most memorable from that, is the personnel practice issues. And, believe it, or not, this was the mid-to-late 1970s, maternity leave was a relatively new thing.

[00:26:45] PC: And, the Kelowna school district, I guess, even by the standards of the day, was probably a fairly conservative one, was reluctant to put down in writing anything, with regard to maternity leave, and at that time they didn't have to. So, they didn't. And, one memorable experience was one of the pregnant member wanted to go on her maternity leave—or EI maternity leave, before her confinement, as it was called at the time, and they wouldn't let her. And, they said, if you need some leave, take sick leave; and we had to make the case, and the Federation had to help with it, that she's not sick. She's pregnant! And she should be able to take maternity leave, when she needs and wants to take it. And, once again, this was somewhat, shaming. This was the BCTF, and I am trying to remember some of the details here—the board, in fact, couldn't prevent her from taking her unemployment insurance leave when she wanted to, even though the Kelowna school board has been trying to prevent her from doing it, and telling her she should just be taking sick leave.

[00:28:04] PC: And, so that whole notion, of “she's pregnant, she's not sick”; was a new idea for them. So, that was notable as well, that that was the stage we were at with the personnel practises—again, totally arbitrary. Totally arbitrary. Nothing written down. And they wouldn't write it down.

[00:28:26] KN: How about getting it to act because of the BCTF? As a Local President you would have some

[00:28:34] KN: layer of

[00:28:36] KN: duties,

[00:28:37] KN: those

[00:28:42] KN: of a

[00:28:45] KN: GR (

[00:28:54] KN: Geographic Representative)?

[00:29:04] PC: I was a GR. Because I was full-time, it was logical that I'd be their geographic rep to the BCTF, which I was, and that was how I first got involved in Federation and Federation activities. I kept applying for the Federation committees, I never got on them; maybe I wasn't well enough known, maybe I didn't know the right people; I think, Pat Brady was the President at the time, and

[00:29:14] PC: I actually complained, and asked him, I said, you know, how come I apply for all these committees, I never get on any of them? And, I think, finally, I did get on one, and it had something to do with... it wasn't a standing committee, it was an ad hoc committee, and I can't even remember what it was about. But, anyway, I got onto this ad hoc committee, and that was one of the first involvements of that sort, that I had with the Federation, while I was the GR. That was the time, when the Federation had a very distinct political division. There was Teachers' Viewpoint, and there was another group, that didn't have a name, but at the time it was mostly, kind of controlled by the Principals and Vice-principals Association, and that was, sort of, the opposition at the time. And Viewpoint was formed to counteract what had been this long-standing hold that the principals and vice-principals had on the control of the BCTF. So I came into Federation politics at that time. And, I was in Viewpoint,

[00:30:30] PC: I was active in Viewpoint, and it was through Viewpoint that I was encouraged—Viewpoint ran a slate, and, I think, for purely geographic reasons they needed people from the Interior, as well as from the Lower Mainland; they thought there should be someone on the slate, who wasn't from the Lower Mainland, and I was the one that had been there—and so, I ran for the Viewpoint slate in 1979, I guess, it was.

[00:31:02] WA: As a Member At Large?

[00:31:03] PC: As a Member At Large, yes. So, that was how I got elected. Elsie and I got elected—we were actually, at that election were the first to win. Elsie first, and me, second; although Elsie didn't run as Viewpoint. She was an independent, which says something about Elsie, actually, that she, without being on the slate, got elected onto the Executive. That was difficult; and she wasn't on the other slate either. So, it says something about her persuasiveness and effectiveness that she pulled that off. And, I got elected at the same time, the same year. The following year, and I can't remember the exact reasons why, but Viewpoint got almost wiped out. I wasn't going up for re-election, because I was going into my second year; and the next year, Steve Norman was the Vice-President, and he had to run, and he got defeated, and Doug Smart was elected as the Vice-President, to Larry. So, Larry was with Doug Smart, and the other Viewpoint people, that were running that year, also got defeated.

[00:32:24] PC: And, the reason I was mentioning that, was because when the following year elections came, I was one of the remaining Viewpoint survivors; so I ran for the 1-st Vice-President, even though, at the time I really wasn't ready for it. I've only been on the Executive

for two years. But, because of the nature of the Federation's politics at the time, I was kind of pushed into it,

[00:32:50] PC: as I said, somewhat reluctantly... But, I won. I was surprised, actually, and so, that was when we had to move from Kelowna, down to Vancouver, and I became a Table Officer. That was going to be Larry's third year of being President, which was a precedent. Up until that time, the full-time Presidents of the BCTF had been two years. So, Larry took the third year, and yet the understanding was, that Larry would not carry on longer, than that, and that I would run for President the following year, which, again, I was kind of reluctant to do. Again, I just happen to be there, you know, and a lot of it was strictly a factor in the nature of Federation's politics at that time. So, the following year I found myself as President. Narrowly—Doug Smart ran against me, and I only won by fifteen votes—my own local's. Had my own local voted against me, I wouldn't have won.

[00:34:07] KN: OK, So, that was

[00:34:11] KN: in 1984, wasn't it?

[00:34:12] PC: 1983 as Vice-President,

[00:34:13] PC: and 1984—President.

[00:34:14] PC: So, 1983–84 was, of course the Solidarity year.

[00:34:22] KN: Want to say anything about that?

[00:34:23] KN: Because, you were full-time...

[00:34:42] PC: Yes. The Solidarity strike was one of those events you'll never forget, for sure. And it even didn't matter if you were any kind of—even a Local President, for example, I don't know what you were doing, Ken, at that time...

[00:35:02] KN: I was on staff.

[00:35:21] PC: You were on staff! (laughs)—so, yeah, you remember it pretty well! I remember it now as being a three-day constant running, from one local to the other, putting out fires, trying to keep the spirits up. I mean, the whole thing was a near-run thing. What was it, Nelson that said, it was the Spanish Armada—I mean, we damn near lost, we had a thin vote, we had, what—like, 60%, a lot of opposition to it, and the stiffest opposition was within the Federation. And Larry was so busy in Solidarity meetings, because that was so intense, just keeping that large, kind of, coalition together, and the amount of organization, and sort of behind doors strategizing, that that took; Larry was in that a lot of time. Meaning that, anything that had to be done outside of that, within the Federation, I was doing. You know,

[00:35:41] PC: going to locals, and trying to generate support and put out fires. I went to Vancouver, who, for example was, particularly resistant—Vancouver teachers, elementary and

secondary, weren't keen on the solidarity strike, and I think, the vote in Vancouver was 50/50. It was really close, and before the vote was going to be held, they had a huge meeting at Charles Tupper, the gym, the auditorium, they had TV monitors in the hallways, it was probably the biggest meeting that Vancouver teachers ever had, it was secondary and elementary together, in this meeting. There were 3000 teachers there—I think, if that's the number. Whatever the number of the Vancouver membership was at the time, they were all there. And I went into this meeting. Susan Davis was the President of the Vancouver elementary at the time, and I went into this meeting at the Tupper gym, which was just packed to the rafters, so I said to Susan, what do you think, I should say? I was just making small talk. And, she said, well, you have to persuade them to go on strike. Most of them don't want to go (

[00:36:55] PC: laughs). That was what has been happening in a lot of locals. And Abbotsford just was not going to go on strike. They had a President there, John Shewan, and he was opposed to the strike, he wasn't going to take the members out; a ginger group had formed in Abbotsford to take the members that did want to go out on the picket lines. I was up in Abbotsford to try to encourage them, because they really were in tough, they were being abused, they were having stuff thrown at them on the picket lines. It was Ralph Sunby, who was sent up there, full-time, to reinforce and help these Abbotsford teachers, who had the guts to actually defy their local and go out and have a picket line in Abbotsford. Delta had a parent movement on the first day of the strike, a huge rally of parents outside the meeting that the Delta teachers had at the Sungod Arena on the first day of the strike.

[00:38:07] PC: The Delta teachers are all inside the Sungod Arena, and there's about 200 parents on the outside yelling, pounding on the doors to get into the meeting, insisting that this was an illegal strike; what are these teachers doing; they all had picket signs, they were pounding on the door. I don't recall the police ever, actually, having come. The President at the time in Delta was Cal Moore. And Cal Moore was not

[00:38:35] PC: a guy, who was a conciliator, Cal was quite prepared to tell the parents to "go to hell" (laughs). And I am trying to remember the details of the time, and, think, eventually, the parents went away, is what happened, because it became clear that the teachers were going to see the strike. I can't remember the details of how that ended, but I do remember this very large parent demonstration outside. That was the kind of thing... And then, the same afternoon I was in New Westminster, where the teachers, likewise, we having huge divisions, they were starting to form with teachers, who couldn't see any end to this, and "now, we got in, how are we going to get out?", so there was sort of, a feeling, that it all could really fall apart, really easily. And, that weekend was the Remembrance Day weekend, so it was a holiday. I went over to Victoria, just as part of the holiday, also, with a mind though, that if something was to happen on the Island, I would be there. And, sure enough, it did. Saanich had a big meeting on the Sunday,

[00:39:51] PC: and their school board wanted—and a lot of other school boards were starting to ask for injunctions. They wanted an injunction—for us to go back to work, right? And, they were

going to have a vote in Saanich on whether or not they were going to continue with the strike, and whether or not, if the Saanich school board got an injunction, would they obey it. And, the meeting was on those grounds,

[00:40:20] PC: that what would be the status of an injunction, if one came. I remember Elsie making an impassioned speech at that time to ignore the injunction... But, of course, we had been advised by the lawyers at the time, that if we advised a violation of a court order, then we were in contempt of court. So we, the whole Executive was being very careful about what we said about the injunctions if they were going to come. I remember I was quite nervous about it, about being asked that question—what would your recommendations be. We came down to saying, that it is a matter of individual conscious, what you do with an injunction. We had a long Executive discussion, on whether or not we were prepared to go to jail...

[00:41:14] PC: And I didn't want to go to jail. I really didn't (laughs). I never had to face a moral dilemma quite like that. I don't think my Catholic ethic came into play at all, or my Jesuitical ethic. But I remember really, and we all did, that, if that question came, what would you do? Were you prepared to go to jail? Because in those days, that was still done, right? I mean, now, the courts just use fines, and they sort of, use heavy sanctions against unions for violation of court orders, but in those days, union leaders went to jail. George North, who was on our Federation staff, who you knew, Ken—he had been in jail for advocating for violating injunctions. So, it wasn't an impossibility. That's what we had to think about.

[00:42:13] KN: So, the next year you became President.

[00:42:15] PC: The next year I was President, yes.

[00:42:17] KN: What were some of the issues you had to deal with as President?

[00:42:21] PC: You know, when I retired, you gave a little speech at the RA about me retiring, which you probably don't remember. But you made an interesting comment about those two years, which I sort of agreed with, and you called it, and I am trying to remember the term you used—an interim, or interregnum. Do you remember? You used a term, which was kind of “two years between times”. There had been the Solidarity strike, and then there was the certification, unionization, right? And that seemed like it was the last two years of the old regime. So, it was an odd time, it was... but there were a lot of things going on, that were difficult. It was the height of the restraint years of the Bennett regime, it was the Curtis directive, and our hands were completely tied. We couldn't do anything—we couldn't bargain; bargaining was all effectively embargoed, we could talk, you know, we could have talk-shops; we had no control over personnel practices, we had no control over class-size and learning conditions—anything like that. None of that stuff was in contracts, and from the look of it, it never was going to be in contract.

[00:43:38] PC: We couldn't do anything, except publically agitate—just be constantly in the public media, talking and talking, and talking about the injustices that the Bennett regime was

inflicting on us, and other organized workers in the province. I was on TV a lot, you know, as Larry had been, but that was the time when the BCTF was really seen to be at the centre of a political opposition. Or The political opposition. So, that was really the nature of those two years in a nutshell. You know, frustrating. Really frustrating, because it was, mostly, all we could do, was talk, and if individual locals—I tried to remember some of them—you know, got into situations; Kitimat is one, for example, when I was President, got into essentially, a personnel practices dispute with their board. It had to do with their Local President not being allowed to take his presidential time, and the school board was going to fire him, if he didn't obey their orders, to return to his classroom. We hired Harry Rankin and put on a demonstration in Kitimat, we had every Local President fly up to Kitimat, and we had a demonstration outside the doors of the school board office with Harry Rankin and with Steve Cardwell, who went on to become the superintendent of the Vancouver school district.

[00:45:21] PC: Harry Rankin walking through these phalanges of teachers—the members of the Kitimat, as well as all the Local Presidents we flew-in to, going to a school board meeting, and Harry Rankin advising them on what might happen, if they actually did fire this guy. And, they backed off. It actually worked. And, again, that was just strictly, the teacher intimidation that did it, and the fact that their own school district was falling apart on this issue, because they were being so stupid. But it was that kind of thing, that was really, all we were left to do. There were no formal mechanisms for addressing anything.

[00:46:02] KN: During your presidency, the Federation launched the Charter challenge, which was an attempt to try and change what you were talking about, in terms of rights. Do you remember that?

[00:46:13] PC: Yes, I do. It was the idea of David Yorke, who was the Federation's lawyer at the time, and was for quite some time after that. And David came to us one day, Elsie and me, and said: "You know...,—and I guess he'd been talking to some other lawyers, and said,—you know...

[00:46:31] KN: Elsie was your Vice-President?

[00:46:32] PC: Yes. He said: "I think we might break ground", because the Charter was relatively new ground at the time, and an unplowed field, really. And there was a lot of doubt at the time, when I think about, how much (of it) would have actually applied to labour relations and labour practices. So there was whole cloud of doubt on how effective a labour-initiated claim on the Charter would go, but David had spoken to the other lawyers around town, and there seemed to be some idea, that it should be some labour-related challenges under the Charter, and teachers were a logical place for this to start, because—and I used to always make a point of it, and the Executive would make a point of it—that it was interesting, that at the time, the registered nurses—nurses—were unionized. And nurses had full scope of bargaining. Social workers had the full scope of bargaining. The comparable groups to us, all had full scope of bargaining. We didn't. And it made no legal, logical sense—why you would say to a group like teachers that you can't, but they can.

[00:47:44] PC: And, that really, in a nutshell, was really the nub of what encouraged us to initiate the Charter challenge. And, so, it started in that year, my last year, that was my second year of being Federation President, and Federation took on a law firm, and I think, it has long been amalgamated into another—McAlpine and Co, and it was interesting that David suggested McAlpine. McAlpine was a Liberal, an active federal Liberal, and I remember, David said something to the effect at the time, well, it may not be a bad idea to, sort of, have him, as the guy, because there might be some side-doors, and back-room alleyways, or whatever (laughs), that might, you know, give us some notion—not to affect the case, but, give us some notion, on which way we should be going with this. So, we got McAlpine and Company, and they started doing some of the really heavy lifting in that last year, that I was President. We had a meeting with Jack Heinrich, who was the minister of education. Almost the whole time I was President, he was the minister. He'll never go down as being one of the more memorable—that was the reason, why those two years, as you've mentioned, we kind of interim years, because the minister of education was almost like in a grand-stand.

[00:49:10] PC: He deferred always to the minister of finance, to the premier; he seemed to have very little, kind of, influence, into what was actually going on in that portfolio. But we had regular meetings with him, and we went in to see Heinrich one day, into one of those regular meetings, I think, Elsie and me, and, I think, Jim Bowman, which was the usual crew that went in to see him, and we told him, that we were launching this challenge under the Charter. And he laughed—he laughed—ha, ha, ha, his head off, he said, you haven't got a hope—he was a lawyer!—you haven't got a prayer; forget about it, it's just ridiculous! And, we sat there, we told him why we were doing it, we used the analogy, the nurses and social workers, you know, why them, not us, but he just laughed, and laughed, and laughed. He said, no way, haven't got a hope. Um, so... you know, we left that meeting, but low and behold, I think that two years later, when they finally came around to giving the Federation the option, you know, the choice, one of which was effectively, union rights, that I think, and I have no way of knowing this, but I think, it's because,

[00:50:23] PC: their lawyers were telling them, you know, they do have a hope... You know, they just might win this. And that was why that happened. I have no way of knowing that for sure, but it was such a remarkable reversal from where they had been. If Heinrich was a reflection of that, you know, that the teachers are pathetic, that we have no hope of winning that case; to actually, giving us the choice and the opportunity

[00:50:47] PC: to go for a traditional union organization, I think, something happened. I think, something happened.

[00:50:59] KN: And was there... there was a Task-force on Bargaining and Professional Rights. Remember that?

[00:51:06] PC: I do. And I am trying to remember what the context, or the place of that was.

[00:51:10] KN: was it related to the Charter challenge?

[00:51:12] KN: It seemed to me they were working on that.

[00:51:22] PC: Yeah, they were. You know, I just can't remember whether or not that was ever a recommendation from them; my recollection was that it was David Yorke and his consultations with other legal minds that we would do this. I don't recall that coming out of the task force, but I might be wrong about that, actually.

[00:51:32] WA: What about in your first year as President, you had a lot of issues trying to deal with principals and vice-principals, and their satisfaction with the organization. Want to talk about that?

[00:51:45] PC: Yeah. Well, that actually goes back to my earlier comment to us being at that time, that presidency, that time of the end of the old regime; because the principals and vice-principals were still active in the Federation, but had lost their influence, because the Viewpoint really had established itself as the, what do the Liberals call themselves—the official governing party (laughs). But Viewpoint had the representatives from the principals and vice-principals, they didn't have a name, but opposition, they didn't have very much success getting their candidates elected at the AGMs, some, but not nearly to the effect that they used to. The major dispute was with the principals and vice-principals, particularly at that time, was their management rights versus their responsibilities as members of the BC Teachers' Federation and acting in the interest of teachers as a collective. And, whether or not their management rights took priority—and, duties, I should say—took priority over their responsibilities as teachers. That was the way I put it to them. They invited me, right at the beginning of my presidency, so it was in 1984; they had a meeting in Penticton, their annual meeting.

[00:53:05] PC: It was a PSA day, right, that was why I was up there. So, they invited me to this meeting, they were all there, it was a big meeting, principals always went to this in force, and, because it was such a topic of the day, I was the key note for their PSA, their annual meeting. So, I gave a speech to them. Which is one of the speeches that I actually, still remember quite well, what I actually said to them. The way I did it, was, I addressed them as a story, and I created this principal in a not-too-distant future, who was sitting in his leaking office, there is a hole in the roof; and the drips were coming into a bucket beside his desk; and what he was trying to figure out was whether or not he was going to get the roof fixed, or if he was going to hire a German teacher. This was because the school-based budgeting was a big thing then, and it was more and more talk about school-based budgeting, it gradually went away, but at the time it was a big discussion. And, it connected directly to principals as managers.

[00:54:14] PC: So, I carried on this little, what do you want to call it, a prediction of a future that awaited, if principals really did decide that they were more managers and administrators, than they were teachers, or teacher leaders. And the way I was describing it to them, was, that, this is the kind of issue that you will be facing, and, I forget exactly how I put it, but I said, there will be a bargaining table, and you will be on the other side of it. These teachers that you'd like to think as being a part of your team, you won't be part of their team. You'll be on the other side of the

table. And I made another comment about that—and the main part of your job will just be public relations. And, when you're not on the other side of the bargaining table, you'll just be doing public relations. And, I forgot exactly how I put it, but that was what I meant. Right? And, I must say, when I look back at that speech; I actually saw it when I was packing my stuff when I retired—I found this speech, and I read it,

[00:55:16] PC: and thought, holy mackerel, I actually, nailed it, or what I said would happen to them did happen to them! And, at the time, when I was finished the speech, one of the principals, who was one of the more active and effective pro-BCTF voices, came up to me, so I asked him—and I knew him from Kelowna, because he was a Kelowna principal—I asked him, so how you think, how did it go? And, he said: Well, I think it is the 30–30–30 law—30% agree with you. The other 30% think you're an asshole (laughs). And the other 30% have no idea what you're talking about!" Anyway, that's the way that played out. The Principals' and Vice-Principals' Association were increasingly convinced at the time, that they were managers and administrators, and that was where their responsibilities lay, and they had to be able to operate outside of the BCTF, in representation of those management issues. So, they had no obligation to bring to us—and the big issue was that if they went to meet with the government, they went by themselves, and our requirement was, no you didn't, and there had to be a representative of the BCTF—a staff person, a Table Officer, or somebody with the broader interest of the Federation had to be there.

[00:56:43] PC: They would not agree to that. And that was where the dichotomy was the most pronounced, and the most obvious. In that two years they were—I don't think we're as close to thinking, they were on their way out, but there was no resolution in sight then. I have no personal animosity towards them, but they were a hard group to deal with, and I didn't find them to be particularly square shooters, they would sometimes, I thought, say one thing, and do another.

[00:57:15] KN: They sort of set themselves up for being taken out of the Federation.

[00:57:20] PC: I think that's what they were doing. I don't know how conscious it was, but they kept developing and setting the table for that eventuality, it seemed to us. But, what the thinking in the Federation, particularly, in the Federation leadership was, pretty much, good riddance, right? But at that stage—and that is kind of what I mean, as the end of the old regime—that would have been unthinkable, not that many years before, that principals would not be in the BCTF. It was then, and those days, where it was getting to the point, where we thought, well, maybe we'd be just as well-off without them.

[00:57:58] KN: One of the things that stand out during your presidency was the fantastic speeches that you used to give to the Representative Assembly and other Federation bodies. You just spoke of one that you, obviously, gave to the principals, when you went to speak to them. Do you want to talk a bit about what motivated you? Your speeches were really, really good, in fact...

[00:58:22] PC: That was all I could do (laughs). And, Elsie was the same in a lot of ways. Elsie was a very effective stomp-speaker in the same way, but it was because, at the time teachers really needed to be engaged. They weren't—and I know you have another question you were going to ask me, what I remember as being the most important, you know, piece of me, being President, as far as having a consciousness, that is, say, collective, teachers weren't really there in those years. And shortly after, but in particular at that time. We'd have the Solidarity strike, there was a lot of division about that, and how people felt about it, good, bad or indifferent, and I always looked at the speeches, that I gave, and it was partly because I just liked doing it, and I just found it fun to do, but, when I was talking to teachers, that was always in the back of my mind, if not the fore-front of my mind, was that I had to find a way for them to start thinking collectively and seeing themselves, not just as a Federation of teachers, or an Association, but as a union.

[00:59:49] PC: So, part of the motivation for me, talking the way I did to them, was to draw them into that way of thinking. I remember, and going back now, I wish I had done it less, than I did. I used to use an analogy of the Second World War, and I think I overdid that a bit (laughs), in one of the speeches I was making analogies to D-day, and when I looked back at that speech, I thought, that was a bit over-the-top, and I shouldn't have done that. Or, Stalingrad, that I was using; this is the end of the beginning—what did Churchill say?—this isn't the end, this is the end of the beginning. This is not even the beginning of the end (laughs). But, as far as the speeches went, I liked doing it, I was motivated by my daughter, who was 4 years old at the time, and some of this stuff, I didn't want to get too hokey about it, but I was actually a little concerned about things, because of what I knew about schools. And she wasn't even in the schools yet, but because I knew what was happening, and what the general lay of the land was for teachers, I was actually, kind of concerned, about what lay ahead for her.

[01:01:04] PC: So, I wasn't hesitant to draw the fact that I was a parent of a young child into it, but I didn't do in that way, but I did it by talking about the books that I was reading with her at the time, and how there were lessons for life in these books, lessons for us, teachers, in the Three Little Pigs, for example. You know, and their houses getting blown down. So, yeah, that was my speeches.

[01:01:40] KN: So, what do you see as the greatest challenge for your presidency and how did you deal with it? Was it the administrators?

[01:01:49] PC: They were certainly, in the top three. The other was that point we were at, where teachers were just starting to see themselves as union. They weren't. You know, another thing that happened, right near the end of when I was President, there was a strike vote. For the right to strike, and teachers voted; they wanted the right to strike. And that was last few months of 1986—last few months of my term in 1986. Seems to me, had there'd been one earlier, in 1981 or 1982, which was defeated, they did not want the right to strike, which pretty well says what they thought of themselves as being a union.

[01:02:30] PC: Well, four years later; five years later, they voted significantly, I think it was over 60% to go for the right to strike. That was how much the consciousness of teachers had changed towards who they were, as a group. And, actually, when that vote came in, that was when I remember Elsie and I talking about it. You know, they actually see themselves as a union, whether they like the word anymore, or are more likely to use that word, that's what they

[01:03:01] PC: see themselves as now. And, interestingly, in the little thumbnail history of the Federation, that is in the Members' Guide, which I just happened to look at for this event, it's not mentioned in there, you know, and I think, it actually, deserves a mention, because it was a significant turning point in the Federation's history, that teachers in 1986 actually voted for the right to strike.

[01:03:27] PC: And, that it happened right at the end of when I was President, I thought, for me it was kind of significant, because that's how far we had taken them in those four years, in terms of their collective consciousness.

[01:03:41] KN: That is pretty significant.

[01:03:42] PC: Yeah. So, as far as my two years as President were concerned, if there was anything about that, that was the most important—and it is not anything I did by myself—you know, you can take the beginning of that to the Terrace strike, and that was in 1979 or 1980, 1981; you know, Al Blakey, he can talk about that, but some of the events in Kitimat as well, and that's where you start to see the different kind of mindset starting to take hold. Maybe it was because there was a younger generation of teachers, us, who had had that different experience at university, like I had had, you know, when I came out wanting to teach as a subversive activity. I don't know how many teachers in the earlier generation would have had that kind of point of view of teaching, but, I think, a fair number of us actually, did. Maybe that was part of the reason why it started to shift around. But I can remember going to a lot of meetings in those two years, where teachers did not see themselves as a union.

[01:04:47] PC: So, that was this key change that happened in those four, five years, the last two of which was, when I was President. The other thing that was of note in those two years, were the personnel issues. We call them the "personnel issues". That was also with Robert Noyes, in the last few months when I was President, almost dominated. And, it wasn't just Robert Noyes, there were others, that really trapped the Federation, and there were some very difficult issues around that, not the least of which was, the members realized, that, even though Noyes pleaded guilty, he was still entitled by defence, provided by the Federation. There was a whole lot of members that could not believe that. They said, what is this, this guy is a confessed child-molester, and we're providing him legal defence. And I had some really difficult telephone conversations about that one. And the only way of explaining was, well, your membership has an insurance policy—

[01:06:02] PC: if there is something that arises from the course of your teaching, you're entitled to defence, until it is seen through the courts. And as soon as Noyes was finished, we washed

our hands of it, and at the same time we were saying, we were not taking any position on it one way or the other. But, under the Constitution of the Federation he's entitled to this. It was a hard pill for a lot of teachers to swallow, a lot of members, and the Executive as well. The other important case we had was also the Shewan case, which was the boudoir photo of John Shewan, who, ironically, was the President in Abbotsford, who wanted the teachers in Abbotsford to stay in school and not go onto the Solidarity strike. Two years later he is dismissed by the Abbotsford school board for taking a boudoir photo of his wife and sending it into a magazine. And, the reason why that became important to Federation though, was, and the Executive of the day had had anxious, traumatic discussions about this, because the whole thing was just so tawdry,

[01:07:18] PC: it was unbelievable, but the issue was, this was their private lives, and, even as teachers, are they not entitled to a private life? And, the courts said, in effect, that, no they weren't, and as teachers, there is a community presence that they have to acknowledge, and therefore the school board was within its rights and jurisdiction to issue some kind of punishment to them for having done this. And we had to tussle with this discussion about whether or not it was a tawdry, as I said, case, but there was this issue about teachers and private lives. And where our public life began, and where the boundaries were. So, that was another difficult one (laughs). And it's still out there. I think it is still used in school law classes, as one of the more interesting cases.

[01:07:52] KN: Can

[01:08:27] KN: you describe what may have been your most satisfying accomplishment during your time of presidency?

[01:08:35] PC: Well, it was probably that, and it was only certain number of years later, that I realized it, because those two years, as we've said, were sort of caught between the two really significant events, the Solidarity years and the eventual unionization of teachers. So, for years, I'd be kind of hard-pressed to say, what was significant. I've kind of elaborated on what was significant at the time—

[01:09:04] PC: that we were kind of making real progress on changing the consciousness of teachers and their thinking about who they were as a collective. But, that's something I can't take a lot of personal credit for. I mean, that was a lot of us, and you were one of them, just constantly, you know, helping teachers to think about who they were. But if we weren't able to do that in those two years, those two years wouldn't have gone the way they've done. It was a near-run thing. There could have been a number of events that could have easily turned them around. My recollection was talking to a lot of them at that time, they were very nervous people about how they were being treated by school boards, and what their rights were and what could happen to them. They were scared—a lot of them.

[01:10:06] KN: So, Pat you continued to be involved with the BCTF after your presidency. Do you want to talk about that, like your various roles subsequent to that with the BCTF?

[01:10:18] PC: What was interesting, actually, after I was finished as President in 1986, I wanted to go back to Kelowna. And Vivian, my wife as well, she had a leave from Kelowna, she taught German and English there. And so, this was 1986, we had, in the Federation, the Unemployed Teachers' Action Centre, which actually ended when I was President, we actually stopped it. But, that is indicative of the times—it was one of the worst times for teacher employment. There've been others since, but that was probably the first one, where teachers had actually been laid off, or just not hired. So, there we were, the two of us, heading back to Kelowna to take up our teaching jobs again. The director, who was in charge of placement, I don't think he liked me,

[01:11:16] PC: I don't know why (laughs), but I don't think he did, so I suspect it had something to do with the fact, that I've been, you know, an activist, although I'd never done anything that outrageous, I thought. Anyway, he said, well, Pat, we haven't really got anything here for you. I mean, they had to place us, they had to place both of us. But, "We haven't really got anything, and Vivian, I don't know what we're going to do with her; German, you know it's not a...", you know, he went on and on how difficult it was going to be to get the two of us placed. And, so eventually he ended up saying, you know, you might have to go on the sub-list for a while. They would have had to pay us, as continuing teachers, but we wouldn't have a job—we wouldn't have regular jobs, so we'd be floating around the district, which was ridiculous. You know, the same sort of thing actually happened to Larry at one point too. So, the two of us started talking, I said, I'd better start looking for a job here. Elmer Froese, who was the superintendent in Burnaby, who was one of the superintendents, whom I actually got a long with—Elmer was in a different kind of realm, than a lot of other superintendents;

[01:12:24] PC: he was more of a thinker, I always kind of liked him. He'd said at the time: "If you needed a job, come and talk to me."

[01:12:34] PC: We'll

[01:12:35] PC: see if we can do anything in Burnaby". In the meantime, one of the upshots of experience that I had, even going back to being a Local President, was that I was getting pretty disillusioned with the state of education in BC, I sort of needed a break, I was thinking. The Bill Bennett regime was nasty, I didn't see it at that time, and Bill was still the Premier, although he had just resigned. He resigned that summer, I think, at the end of Expo 1986. I recall it. I remember, and this is a bit of a sidebar, but I remember thinking at that time, one of the reasons Bennett resigned was because we did actually had some success in creating an opposition, that made his chances of an election look kind of doubtful. And, I think, the BCTF in particular, had a lot to do with that. Others, and Solidarity generally, but the Federation kind of carried on the agitation after Solidarity ended; maybe more than other unions did. And, I think, Bennett's decision not to run again had something to do with the fact that he realized, that he was going to have some difficulty winning. And it had to do with the state of education, among other things.

[01:14:01] PC: But the other part of that was, the state of education had disillusioned me enough, that I wasn't sure I just wanted to go back into it after I was finished being President. So, I looked at a few other jobs, outside of education. One of which was at CUSO—still around, but it was an NGO, had an education orientation among other things, but it had been more generalized. So, the short version is, they offered me a job here in Vancouver, as their BC co-ordinator for CUSO. I would have been better off financially to go back to teaching, but I decided this would be interesting, so I took this job with CUSO, which was a permanent job, and it was based here, in Vancouver, so I fit all of that. They've been interested in the community development focus, and they figured I'd be a good person to do that, because of the connections and the people that I knew here, and I did that for three years. I realized I had to get out of it, because it wasn't going anywhere, and it was an NGO, and it is always tenuous, working for NGOs;

[01:15:14] PC: so the prospects weren't terrific. And I enjoyed the tree years that I did it, and it did give me a break, which I sort of, felt that I needed at the time. So, that was why I did that. But then, Elmer Froese came back into the picture, because—and, actually, you were in this, Ken as well—the Federation got a contract from CIDA to develop the Global Education Project. This was right up my alley, one of the things that would have been helpful, is if I had been an employee of a school district, so that I could be seconded from a school district. So, I went to Elmer, and asked him if he would hire me to Burnaby, and he said, sure! And, I explained that I would immediately be seconded, so he didn't have to worry about placing me. So, he said, sure, we'll very well hire you in Burnaby, realizing though, that I would become a Burnaby teacher, and would, at some point, want to go and teach in Burnaby. So, then, we started the Global Education Project here, which, you know, I reflected on all the jobs, that I did, and that was actually, one of the best jobs I had!

[01:16:20] PC: It was interesting, it was timely, it was varied in what it did; there were things that we did over there—it ran for six years—that go back to my interest in teaching as a subversive activity. That was the job I had, where I was actually, kind of doing that. Right? That was the closest that I got to any kind of organizational job that did that. So, that was one positive memory that I've got since I was President, was doing that job, and you had something to do with that, you were the President at the time. Then that ended, ironically, it was a Mulroney government initiative; and when the liberals were elected, they stopped all of that. So, Chrétien, Martin, as soon as they got it, they just cut it. And, so then I had to go and talk to Elmer (laughs), and that was when I ended up in Alpha teaching for a year, and as that year progressed, there were some jobs that started to open up in the Federation, so I applied for one of those, and got it, in professional development.

[01:17:35] PC: And, that was a term, four years; that ended, and I went back to Burnaby again, to Burnaby North for a year, and then, the directorship of PD came up, and I got that. I applied for that and got it. So, that was the course of what happened after I did the presidency.

[01:18:01] KN: Is there anything you can say about your years in Professional Development, once you were on staff, and as Director. Can you speak to what happened at that period of time you were in Professional Development?

[01:18:11] PC: Yes, it was dynamic. There was a lot of change happening within professional development, partly because of changes in teacher education. The Federation always had been for a long time, kind of, a lead player in where teachers went for professional development, and that was changing. The universities were taking more and more of that on; they wanted to do the whole growth of the post-degree studies at the universities. For example, the PB+ Program that SFU started to offer, and others, the Continuing Ed courses, that were around as well, although, not as well subscribed. It was probably the PB+ program that started the change in the professional development. A lot of teachers that were in need of, or wanting professional development, or professional growth—there became a number of different terms for it—were starting to find other places, primarily the universities. I would say, now in retrospect; and it started to change the way we had to think about how we were doing professional development here,

[01:19:35] PC: and from the time I was there, I'm still not too sure that we ever really go to it. We had, for example, the Program for Quality Teaching, which was a really good program, but what we needed for that, was the enlistment of school boards on that, to try to support it, that was the original conception of it. And, we could never really get it, you know, the school boards would never sign onto that. A few did, but generally, they didn't. And, you know, as a model for professional growth, for practicing teachers, it's a brilliant model. But one of the big frustrations that I had, and the others, that were working on it, was, that we could never get any real buy-in. And, the Federation, understandably, gradually, kind of lost interest in it, because we couldn't really market it, so to speak. But what it indicated to me, was the way professional development should be going, with this, sort of, collegial notion of teachers working with teachers, you know, in mutual support, using their own professional experience in order to enhance one another's teaching. It's probably, for experienced teachers, in particular, the way to go.

[01:20:49] PC: But, school boards wouldn't buy in, so, no time for them there; no money for them—professional development funds were scant; and probably, generally couldn't afford something that extensive, teachers couldn't get time to do it, and the general crush of the demands on teachers and their time in teaching. So, it was a good idea, either before its time, or out of step with the times. But, I went into my retirement, thinking, if anything, that was too bad. And, I think, to this day, I can still say, it is still too bad that teachers do not have the opportunity to engage professionally the way that program would have encouraged and allowed them to. That's not a big positive to take away; but it is kind of, a sign of changing times.

[01:21:43] KN: So, is there anything else you'd like to say about your experience with the BCTF, either as President or staff, or subsequently?

[01:21:56] PC: yeah. I always said, I said it when I was talking at the retirement gathering, when I just retired, that you made the comment about the two-year presidency being the “end of the old regime”, or some other term you used. I remember talking, about the Solidarity strike in the Empire stadium, when all the other unions were coming into the stadium in groups, with their banners and we were one of the first ones in, so we were watching all the others come in... And, a group started to come in, and, as I recall, they didn’t have a banner, but they were all in uniform. And, I was sitting beside Larry, and Larry said: “It’s the police! And, if the police are on board with this, it’s going to be great! And, it’s going to be one hell of a general

[01:22:59] PC: strike!”

[01:23:00] PC: And then they got closer, and closer, and we realized they were bus drivers. Which is good—and I thought, this was kind, emblematic, in a way of the BCTF. You know, we’re always hopeful, there’s always this, sort of, driving optimism, that there is a Valhalla out there, and that we will get to it. We’ll get to it... um, I think... (laughs). But, even one of the things about the strike in 2014 that I found most encouraging, was the amount of public support that was actually behind that strike, while the public support, for us, in the 1980s was unthinkable. You know, you contrast that with the Solidarity strike,

[01:23:52] PC: with the Delta parents, screaming their heads outside the Sungod Arena, and not being that atypical of what the feeling was about teachers, and against teachers at the time. I knew, when I was on open line shows, I recall, we would sometimes actually, avoid them. Arnie Myers was the PR guy at the time, and he would select which ones we would go on, and there were some we just wouldn’t go on. Arnie had a great line, he’d say: “Don’t get into a fight with a skunk, you just end up smelling like one yourself”. And, he wouldn’t let us get into fights with skunks. There were a number of them Pat Burns, and others that come to mind; that Gordie, the guy in Victoria, who’s a nasty piece of work, same thing. And Arnie used to say, don’t talk to them, and the reason was, because there was an element out there, at the time, that was almost violently anti-teacher. You know, our daughter was just going to preschool at the time, and this was right when I first started as President,

[01:24:52] PC: and I got a phone-call, and the guy was saying, “Watch out for your daughter”. And, I thought, oh—I wasn’t that worried about that, but I thought, oh, this isn’t good... So, I told Arnie, and he told the police. The police came and watched her for a few days, came to the school she was going to. And we had an unlisted phone number, which we still have to this day. But, the reason I mentioned that, because it was kind of indicative though, of the tone of the times—there was that element out there that was vehemently and violently anti-teacher. I am sure there was some of that this year—I am sure there must have been some of that around—but I didn’t get the same sense, I got more of a sense of support for teachers and for public education, than I ever got while I was President. Although, as I said, there’d been a turn-around, and I think, Bill Bennett left partly because of the evaporating support he got, because of the way he was dealing with it. So, I think, you know, positively thinking, the teachers had made

some gains in terms of the consciousness around public education, that had taken a long time to arrive.

[01:26:12] PC: I was going to say something else, but I forgot now what it was... (laughs)

[01:26:15] KN: Well, if you think of it, you're welcome to share it with us.

[01:26:18] PC: I'll mail it in!

[01:26:22] KN: Pat, you talked a bit about the strike of 2014. Do you want to talk about the current state of education? How do you see the public education—any thoughts about that?

[01:26:33] PC: Yes, interesting, when you get...,—well, you stayed quite engaged, but I, you know, as I said at that time I retired, I was going to till my garden, had I have, sort of, done that, other than working at SFU. So, my observations now are largely from the media. Public media, and a few people I still talk to about it, but they're all retired teachers, so they all have the same perspective, that I do pretty much. I know a few practicing teachers, and that worries me, because, as practicing teachers they are... the several that I know are... hmmm... beaten-up, pretty much. Their job is difficult, in a lot of ways, I don't see a lot of difference between them and me, when I was at the point of my career, where they are. The strike, the 2014 strike,—one of the things that I found most notable, and again, going from what I was mostly just reading in the media, talking to some teachers; was so reminiscent of what we were going through in 1985—

[01:27:49] PC: 86, that I was astonished that it was almost exactly the same. And, if I wanted to be negative about it, I could have gone and said, you know, we've gotten nowhere!—in terms of working conditions, class composition, all of those issues. That's what it looked like. But, on the other hand I can sort of, sense, that there is a different spirit of teachers around, too. So, the Valhalla is maybe there, for that reason. There's more collective consciousness with teachers, that there is, maybe the growing awareness among the public of the importance of public education; I'm not sure about that—the growth of private schools worries me; that there may even be an agenda around that; again, I am not sure, but it kind of looks like it. I live in a part of the city, where there are a lot of private schools; and when I look at what they're doing, the expansions they have, the new facilities they're building, St. George's looks like a well-endowed college. You know, that's what that place looks like. Lord Byng, down the street, doesn't look like that at all.

[01:28:59] PC: You know, it looks like its scraping by. And, there's something wrong there, and it worries me. It worries me about the prominence that the private schools are getting. But at the same time, there is an ongoing recognition of the importance of public education. So, that's where I am at this point in terms of my retirement. According to the actuaries, I have about 20 years left (laughs). Actuarially speaking. Not geologically speaking.

[01:29:31] KN: And do you have any message at all for the young teachers, who are just starting out in their careers as teachers, based on everything you just said?

[01:29:39] PC: Yeah, up until fairly recently, I had classes at UBC, social studies teachers—this is kind of beside the point, but the universities are pumping out a lot of social studies teachers. And, these students were good—they're good, I said to them you're better, than I was. Partly, because it took me so long to get to this notion of teaching as a subversive activity, and most of them seem to already be there, right? They know that their job is to instill the critical-mindedness into their students, they knew that, while I kind of felt my way to that, over quite a while. That's what I am seeing to be the most significant difference between them and me, and that's one of the reasons why I may be optimistic, because the new teachers and the beginning teachers have this new kind of consciousness about the art of teaching, than maybe we did, when we were starting out. I came to it, but it took longer. Took longer to get good at it.

[01:30:43] PC: So, that would be my message to them, that's what I would hope—and many of them to, see their job as—what are you teaching here? Full-mindedness. Critical-mindedness. Fair-mindedness. That's what you're teaching. That's what you're trying to bring about, and it's that critical-mindedness, full-mindedness and fair-mindedness, that propels public education, and social justice. So, I'm optimistic, and that would be my message to them; that's your job now. But I will also tell, that “mob” of social studies, that class—there are like 30 of them! But do you know how many jobs there are for social studies teachers? In BC, next year—maybe three, you know, maybe ten, at the best. I don't know what is going to happen. That's the other side of it, I don't know what happens to them. I know, a lot of them go to Asia, but I don't know what happens to them, there are so many of them, and so few jobs.

[01:31:50] KN: Alright—thank you very much, Pat.