

Interview: Ray Worley (RW)

Interviewer: Larry Kuehn (LK)

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[00:00:10] RW: There's no time limit, as there used to be in AGMs speeches (laughs). Remember, it was Bob Taverner who said to me: "You know, Ray, Your speeches aren't really that long and boring, it's just that they seem that way" (laughs). And, so with that sort of reputation, an open-ended, no limit session has got its drawbacks. Yeah. Well, Larry—what would you like to grill me on first?

[00:00:42] LK: Why don't you just outline—you were President for two years, but you were in the centre of the organization, and the changes that took place over about a dozen years.

[00:00:54] RW: Yes.

[00:00:56] LK: So, sort of, outline those.

[00:00:57] RW: Sure.

[00:00:58] RW: I thought, before I get onto that—because there's no time limit, I thought I'd take a little bit of time first, to get people accustomed to what's obviously a non-Canadian accent, and explain a little bit of my background and how I came to be teaching in BC in the first place, and lead onto my involvement in the BCTF. I arrived here in BC in 1970, and that was right at the end of the time, where there'd been a large shortage (baby boom years) of teachers and other professionals; and British Columbia in particular, and Ontario were advertising widely for teachers, especially in the English speaking countries, and that's how I arrived here in BC. In 1970 I had seven years of teaching experience already in New Zealand, was born there and grew up there. And so, in that respect, I'm unique amongst the BCTF Presidents up to this point, being the only BCTF President born in New Zealand. There'd been a number of other activists from Australia I can think of—Jan and Terry Eastman, who were both on the BCTF Executive Committee; and Jan, of course went on to become President of the Canadian Teachers' Federation.

[00:02:22] RW: So, used to be able to go round staff rooms in BC, and you'd remember it from your time as President, and come across a lot of accents from Australia, especially, and one or two from New Zealand. I was struck by a number of features in my initial years of teaching in BC, which lead to later involvement in the Federation. I was struck first by the fact that it was one big teachers' union. I've come from a background of there being an elementary school teachers' union and a secondary teachers' union. And, I was impressed, and very much in favour, as soon as I started the experience here, of the idea that all teachers were in the same bargaining unit, although, it was not necessarily referred to it that way at that time. I was also very impressed by

the fact, even with the restrictive bargaining—and, in fact, it wasn't really bargaining in a proper sense, there was the system of local arbitrations, and so, in those three initial years I was aware that each year, depending on what the going rate was for wage settlements, representatives of the local teachers' sat down with the representatives of the board, and with the participation of an arbitrator often, came to an agreement of what would be a fair salary increase for teachers.

[00:04:06] RW: And that was so different to the experience I'd had where it was all under the control of the government. The government granted no increases for years on end, and then the pressure built, that granted an increase to teachers, which seemed largely due to the general public, because it was much larger than the annual increases that other groups were getting, but of course, it only just meant you kept up, so— that impressed me. The local impressed me as well—the fact that there was a strong sense of local identity. There was an induction ceremony, in which the Local Association of the BCTF participated, as well as School Board representatives. (laughs), Interesting to think, as I run through these features, how many of them were lost in the teaching realm. As a secondary school teacher, I was very impressed by the fact that external government examinations did not dominate the curriculum. The assessment of the teacher all-round in class—that was what happened, and there were no external examinations. Also, I think it was during the time that I was teaching in BC in those early years, that a certain premier, known popularly, as “Whacky” (laughs) “WACY Bennett” made the statement “no public money for private schools” —

[00:05:39] RW: and that was something that caught my ear, and it certainly was an attractive feature. My last memory from that year, and one of the strongest, is the 1971 one-day pension walk-out, when all of the teachers throughout the province walked out of the classroom for a day, and it wasn't in any way connected with their terms and conditions, it was because of conditions for retired teachers—for pensions—and they were showing their solidarity for retired colleagues, and that was the first time I'd ever been involved in any sort of job action. And, I remember, because at that stage I was writing articles back for the Teacher Association Magazine in New Zealand about what it was like teaching in British Columbia, and that was one of the highlights. One of the low-lights was arriving in 1970 and being in a school in October of 1970 for the October crisis, and you may remember at that time there was a teacher in Peace River North, I believe it was, who was fired for allegedly supporting the FLQ and there was a certain chill that came over what you discussed in Social Studies classes as a result of that.

[00:07:12] RW: I remember one savvy Grade 9 student saying to me “Now, does that mean, that if a student said something about what you said in class, Mr. Worley, that

[00:07:26] RW: you could be fired?” And I said: “Perhaps, Debbie, but, let's have a look at page 22...” (laughs). OK, so—I break-away to teach for a year in England, followed by a year in Germany and a briefly back in New Zealand and then back here again in the late 70s and that's when I really began to get involved directly in BCTF activities. I was on a local bargaining committee for a number of years, and then in 1981 I was elected as the Local Representative to the BCTF Rep Assembly and AGM. “GRs”, as we would call them back then—Geographical

Representatives. That was an eye-opener for me, because, in Vernon I had been regarded as a somewhat more left, than the opinions there. And, coming down to the coast, and meeting other teachers there, I very rapidly realized that Vernon had a reputation for being, um, very conservative. And, so I had this strange dual identity of being “Ray the Red” in Vernon and “Ray the Raving Reactionary”, because I came from Vernon, when I got down to the BCTF meetings. But that was my first initial involvement with the BCTF and the Annual General Meetings followed, and I can remember the referendum that was held in 1982 on whether or not to allow teachers—whether we should lobby for the right to choose strike as dispute resolution—

[00:09:29] RW: and, of course, following that—and that actually, didn’t pass at that time... Then, I remember, and I’ll just mention it, because, it was central to your presidency, that was Operation Solidarity, and the three day walk-out in 1983, and after teachers had rejected in that academic exercise, the idea of walking off the job and taking strike action as a way of making their point in resolving a collective agreement, when the crunch came and the issues were put before us in 1983, we, actually, walked off the job on mass—and I needn’t say more about that, because you were very much more at the centre of it then, than I was at that time. So, that really brings me to one of the topics that I see you had down on your questions, was my involvement in the Bargaining and Professional Rights Task Force. That, to some extent I think, flowed out of, perhaps a couple of speeches that I’d made at the Rep Assembly. I can remember in the aftermath of Operation Solidarity there were some voices of criticism from certain elements about what had happened, and the size of the vote to go out on the strike, and voices being sounded that this shouldn’t happen again,

[00:11:19] RW: and I can remember being annoyed enough by this to get up and say “Hey—we’re all teachers, we... That’s

[00:11:28] RW: past history, let’s look ahead!” Whether that influenced it (or not)—but that was a very interesting task force. It was composed of nine members, still remember vividly the composition of it: three were appointed from the Bargaining Committee, and that included Jim MacFarlan, Past President of the Federation, then, a member of the Burnaby Administrators’ local, Don Crowe, from Central Okanagan, Kelowna, and Norm Prince from Vancouver Island North. And those three represented the Bargaining dimension—the Bargaining Committee. And then, Pauline Galinski from Powell River, initially, Mike Lombardi from Coquitlam—very briefly, but then he obtained a position on staff, and he was replaced by David Mitchell from Vancouver Island North; and M.G. Harris from Kamloops made up the other one of those tree representatives. The other three people were selected by the Executive from the membership at large, and one was Mike Gregory from Vancouver Secondary, the other was Shirley Bonfield, who was the President of... I think, at the time she was President—definitely from Alberni; and I was the GR from Vernon. So, the nine of us formed that Task Force in the aftermath of the referendum in 1982, the Operation Solidarity activity in 1983. And that during that time David Yorke, the staff lawyer has been busily gathering all the materials for a court challenge to the restrictions on teacher bargaining in British Columbia.

[00:13:36] RW: And so, all of that action lead to Federation's desire to have a detailed, comprehensive position on, not only the bargaining rights of teachers as they should be established in legislation, but also the professional rights of teachers. So we had assigned two staff contacts and resource people for that exercise—Mike Zlotnik from PD, Professional Development, and David Yorke, of course, who played a very central role the shaping of the Task Force; not so much perhaps in the shaping, but in providing the legal framework, providing the context he knew through his study of the legislation, that governed bargaining. He knew very well what the terms were, he was very familiar with what other unions had and we interviewed a whole range of other unions, including some from outside—teacher unions from outside BC—and drew up that report. So, that is the lead-up to what I would say was my heavy involvement in the BCTF, so, maybe there, I should pause (laughs) from the monologue and let you ask any questions. Any elaboration on that?

[00:15:18] LK: I think that you have very well described all of that—I am aware that I forgot some of the people you mentioned, and I am glad that we've gone that

[00:15:30] LK: far.

[00:15:33] LK: Do you want to go ahead and talk about one of those next phases?

[00:15:39] RW: Sure. I think, one of the questions you suggested was to very briefly outline what were the main recommendations, and I don't want to take a lot of time on this, but I'd identify, and because we're speaking particularly, I think, about the evolution of the bargaining dimension of the Federation I'd concentrate more on those. The first key recommendation was bargaining should be at the local level, and all of the reasons for local bargaining are very well known to generations of teachers, dealing directly with your employer on the issues that are particular to your local area, to your school district. That evidently made sense, and that was the first recommendation. Second was an interesting one, considering what had been defeated in the referendum of 1982. The recommendation was that teachers should be able to opt for job action, up to, and including a complete withdrawal of service or arbitration to resolve a contract dispute. And, the thinking behind that was that, as I said in the beginning, one of the features I was impressed with, when I first came to BC, was the long history of arbitration, which by and large on salary issues had been regarded as satisfactory by teachers,

[00:17:22] RW: and that teachers had not fallen behind the cost of living, that their increases were comparable to those in other activities, and in particular in years of the flourishing forestry industry. The IWA settlement played quite a bit into these arbitration results, so the choice mechanism was recommended, and also, that there be fixed timelines for bargaining, so that it didn't drag on and that it was finalized before the school board set its budget, and of course that was back in the days when school boards actually had the ability to raise some of their funding locally by increasing the mill rate—something that is, of course, long since gone. And, otherwise, all aspects were to be underneath the Labour Code. And, so that was our recommendation as far as bargaining went. On the professional side, the major thrust was that teachers should be

recognized for their professional status, or to put it better—their professional status should be recognized in legislation; and there were quite a lot of far-reaching recommendations there. One, stuck in my mind, because of my experience in Germany—it was the recommendation for the creation of staff committees and, I say, my experience in Germany made me particularly interested in that, because during the year I was there, the school principal retired, and it was necessary to choose a new principal for the school.

[00:19:20] RW: So, the first stage of short-listing happened with the school teaching staff, the janitorial staff and the students choosing representatives, which went and sat down with the local authority for schools in the area, and shortlisted the candidates for principal.

[00:20:25] LK: Wow!

[00:21:02] RW: The next stage in the process, and I wasn't really aware of this initial stage very much, but I came to learn about it when the second phase arrived—and that was the three short-listed candidates came to a meeting of the whole staff, all of the teachers in the school. I looked around, and, oh, I recognized the couple of people, who worked in the secretarial or janitorial capacity; thought, oh—they're there as well, and then there were some others, that I didn't recognize at all. They represented the parents. And, finally, there were one or two from the student ranks. And the three short-listed candidates made their pitch to the same broad group about, why they thought they would be suitable as a principal for the school, and following that discussion, the parents, the non-teaching staff and the student representatives left, and we sat around as staff, and discussed the merits, and the demerits of the perspective candidates. Eventually balloted and selected our first choice candidate for the new principal. That recommendation, along with the discussions by the other groups involved went forward to the equivalent of the school board, and low and behold, that was the candidate that was selected.

[00:21:40] RW: Good on both sides, because it gave the staff a stake in justifying their decision, and so, it meant they were inclined to be receptive, because they had had a role in it. It also gave the confidence to the incoming principal, that he or she had received strong support from the teachers they'd be working with. Now, the staff committees, that are envisaged in the Bargaining and Professional Rights Task Force didn't go nearly as far as that, but never the less I remember going to my own local group of administrators to discuss the recommendations from the Bargaining and Professional Rights Task Force, and the response of one of the principals—popular, but paternalistic in his job was: “oh, sounds very much like Russia to me. Isn't that where the communists have committees and control the workplaces”... So... (laughs), yes, that was quite interesting. So, that report was submitted to the 1985 Annual General Meeting, and for one reason or another, perhaps there wasn't a time limit on the speech to be given to introduce it. I was chosen from amongst the Task Force to present the report to the Annual General Meeting, and I spent a lot of time scratching my head trying to find a way of getting this, in some ways, quite academic material and making it somehow come alive,

[00:23:42] RW: and being back in Vernon, and sitting on the edge of a stretch of parkland, and it was starting to be spring, and so different birds were appearing, and the idea came to me, that I should talk initially about these birds that migrated from all over the province to the Annual General Meeting of the Federation, and how they were very different species. And, I mentioned Don Crowe, for example—and, of course, he knew what was coming, he told me afterwards, I said, well, we have from the Okanagan (and Don, who fully appreciated the background, Don had very little hair), and I said: “We have the lesser-tufted Crowe from...” and if had been really cruel—and only Larry will know the reference, for one or two others I would have referred to the Harvey’s Crows—of course, they are from the same local. Anyway, that speech, my main thrust in that speech, was to emphasize two key points. No matter where, and after I would point out, that there were different species of teachers, and having a bit of fun with species, from, you know, Surrey, whose favourite habitat was the picket line or fence, as opposed to the “peda” ...—what did I call it? Hum... “

[00:25:31] RW: Pedagogus Dinosauri from Prince George, who got up to propose shops for the polishing of apples for administrators”. Actually, all of this is a video that was shown afterwards. I said, you know, let’s cut through all this nonsense—a teacher is a teacher, is a teacher, no matter what level you teach at or where you teach, and the other reality is, that a teacher is an employee. Sure, we’re professionals, but we’re employed professionals. So, an employee is an employee, is an employee—and used that speech to try to convey to the people there, that there is no gap between being an employee and having full bargaining rights, and being a professional teacher. And, it was around that time, I don’t know exactly when the “Union of Professionals” became a description, but it was somewhere around that time, and I wouldn’t claim any... claim any of the copyright (laughs) on it at all. I certainly wouldn’t have been the first person to use it, but I think that that was why that speech, which was well enough received, certainly helped in the spreading the word about that, and there was an extensive process after that, when members of the Task Force went out to local associations, and I know I went to a number of them, and the video, that I mentioned of my introductory speech was shown in quite a few different places.

[00:27:23] RW: And... yes.

[00:27:25] LK: It’s an important change in the culture of the organization.

[00:27:29] RW: Yes. Yes. And then, it was approved by, about, I think 60% of the membership, although, the voting procedure was not—and this was a recommendation by the Task Force—it wasn’t actually by a referendum, the vote was taken at local association meetings, so it meant that not every teacher bothered to attend the meeting, no matter how well publicized it was and how significant it was, but 60% of those, who took an interest in the issue, supported it. Then, really, I think, to skip ahead, I was Local President in 1986, and then 1987 was a watershed year, and I think, maybe I’ll stop now (laughs), have a sip of water, and gather thoughts a little. Yeah. Now, that was probably a bit too long, and that’s part of the long-windedness that I warned you about at the beginning.

[00:28:45] RW: OK.

[00:28:52] RW: 1987. I think I triggered it, because in 1987 I ran for the Executive of the BCTF and was elected as a Member at Large. And it was an interesting campaign—I was the first person to be elected from the Vernon local to the Executive of the BCTF. Since, interestingly, the first woman President of the BCTF, Hilda Cryderman, who was President, I believe, of the Federation in the 1950s, or perhaps, early 1960s—you might remember, Larry, but not that you were there then, but, yes—so, that was a little milestone in itself, and I remember having a very enthusiastic delegation from Vernon, and we dreamed up a number of different practises for that Annual General Meeting, one of which actually caught on in successive years. I think, I was the first person to have—and I wish I had one of them here, but all that material is back in Vernon—to have a brochure, where I managed to persuade a list of people from various locals throughout the province to have their names included as endorsing my candidacy, and so that was very interesting, and one of the other aspects of my campaign was, that I was running as an independent. And at that time there was a strong group within the Federation, the Viewpoint Caucus, that you and others were much more intimately involved with, than I ever was,

[00:30:51] RW: and I had stood aside from becoming involved in the Viewpoint Caucus, although I had been at some of the meetings that they had held, and so it was difficult at that time, if you were not a member of Viewpoint to be elected to the BCTF Executive. One or two people had managed that in previous years—Mike Lombardi was one, and another was Colin Scott from Prince George, who'd become very well-known through being very able chairperson of Rep Assemblies and AGMs for a number of years, but that year I was the only non-Viewpoint candidate elected to the BCTF. And the shock of that, I think, triggered the government to launch Bills 19 and 20 (laughs) a couple of months later, and I still remember, it was Jim Bowman, who came back from Victoria, where they'd receive a briefing about the legislation, and said "It's Armageddon!" And the Bills 19 and 20 ripped up the Statutory Membership in the BCTF, made massive changes to the School Act, created the College of Teachers and was a massive challenge to the Federation. The government had the impression at the time, that teachers were very divided on issues to do with bargaining, and they could sense that there was a case coming up in the... potentially in the Supreme Court of Canada, but certainly, there were going to be legal challenges to the restrictions of bargaining for teachers, the sort of restrictions that we had examined and explained in the Task Force report.

[00:33:08] RW: And, they were also calculating wildly incorrectly that there were a great many teachers, who would not, given a choice, remain members of the Teachers' Federation, so all of this legislative bombshell came down in 1987. And after the initial shock, it was fortunate that we had people, like David Yorke, and others, who saw what had been handed to us. And what had been handed to teachers, was an option—an option either, at the local level, to become full-fledged unions, and have full bargaining rights, as other unions had, or to adopt a much tamer and restricted model, called the Association, and if teachers at the local level adopted to the Association model, then they would not have the right to strike, their right to bargain would be very much more limited, they would in many ways continue the restricted status of pre-

legislation, so the government obviously envisaged that a number of local associations would choose to unionize, a number would choose to be associations, only the membership in the College of Teachers was to be prescribed by legislation, no longer membership in the BCTF. So that the BCTF would be destroyed as a provincial organization, and only those teachers who chose, would become part of the BCTF.

[00:35:12] RW: I mentioned David Yorke and others, who realized if under the labour code and the other legislation we were now fully entitled to unionize, then it was over to us to form, first of all, unions, and/or so to conduct a membership drive. And that's exactly what happened at that time, after these bombshells in 1987. And, it was very, very satisfying that, when the dust settled, that the overwhelming majority of teachers in the province chose to remain in the BCTF, and every local association in the province voted to become a union. Sometimes, it was close, and sometimes it wasn't so close, but that produced the 75 locals, all being unionized. But of course, being the BCTF, and there wouldn't be the BCTF if there wasn't a considerable division and debate, this was a period of intense

[00:36:38] RW: separation. Unfortunately, at the special Annual General Meeting in 1987, and I can remember quite vividly, and in fact, by then, in the run-up to the 1987 Annual General Meeting, there had been a division developed, that was played out on the floor of the AGM between the Viewpoint, who took the perspective, that any association, that did not vote to become a union, would no longer be a part of the BCTF, because, if you had to be a union, you had to be a pure union. There were those who felt quite strongly, that "a teacher is a teacher, is a teacher", and if teachers were given the right to choose, their right to choose had to be respected, and that over time, the locals that voted to become associations initially would realize just how far behind they were falling and how restrictive their bargaining regime was, and it was far better to keep them within the Federation, than to banish them, and to create a block off to the side. And, so that lead to the formation of a group called Teachers For The United Federation, and the logo, which that group chose, and I became a part of it, was an umbrella, and the umbrella was to symbolize that we're all are under the same umbrella—we're all teachers.

[00:38:31] RW: I remember there were also battles at that time, about what to do with the administrators. That legislation removed principals and vice-principals from the bargaining unit, and actually gave them a new description. They were described no longer as principals and vice-principals, but as administrative officers. Now, the abbreviation for an administrative officer is AO, and so (laughs) AO is quite readily confused with another less complementary expression in English (laughs), and again, there was a sharp and keen debate on whether it should be possible still, for the administrative officers to remain in some associated category, part of the teachers' union, to show their solidarity with teachers. It was a much more academic question, than the question about associations in or out of the Federation, but again, the feeling was, that those, who still felt enough common course, with teachers, to still want to retain some level of association with the organization that represented them, they should have that ability. So that Annual General Meeting—the Special Annual General Meeting laid down the lines of division in

the Federation between the two caucuses: the Viewpoint and the Teachers For The United Federation, or TUF as it came to be called, persistent for many years afterwards,

[00:40:38] RW: and although, it was perhaps inevitable, that such a massive legislation would produce these very different and strongly held views of what was the correct course for the Federation. In my view it was unfortunate, that this creation of a two-party system, in essence, within the Federation, should be a result of that. I was involved, as I said, for all of that, as, both, a Local President, so involved in the sign-up and certification campaign; involved in the one-day study session, when teachers all walked off the job, studied the legislation, and later, the one-day strike in protest against the Bill 19. And, in 1988–89 we ended the first round of full-scale local bargaining, and, it was, to the credit of the Federation, that the staff, aided by so many volunteers were able to pull together not only the sign-up and certification campaign, which was a massive exercise in and of itself, but also, at the same time having achieved full union bargaining right to draw up a wish-list—a model, for how locals should go about negotiation all the terms and condition of their employment. So, the staff, generated with people like George North, who had experience from the Fishermen’s Union, I believe it was—

[00:42:41] RW: it’s correct, isn’t it?—

[00:42:42] RW: Yes...

[00:42:43] RW: And, Sharon Yandle—she had a union, Hospital Employees. They were on staff at the Federation at that time, and along with the legal staff, people like David Yorke and others, they had enough knowledge of what should be in a full collective agreement, to generate the Collective Bargaining Handbook—a massive binder that had ideal clauses for a whole range of topics, governing teachers’ employment. And that became the handbook—it achieved an almost religious status (laughs) amongst those of us who were bargaining, at the time who sat down at the bargaining table to negotiate the first collective agreement. And it fell to me to be negotiator in Vernon for our first collective agreement. And that was a very interesting exercise—I had not participated directly in bargaining up to that point. I can remember the meeting, which gave us some training and some indication as to how you should conduct yourself as a negotiator. The school board hired a labour lawyer from Vancouver, who came to negotiate on their behalf. He was actually an asset to us in the long run, because he revealed in the course of the negotiations, and he made board members and other uneasy, that he was really ignorant of the conditions in schools, that he knew labour law, but he did not know about schools and we did, and we were able to relate what we were saying at the table.

[00:44:51] RW: We also began a tactic, which I think, teachers took to very rarely in those first few round of bargaining. We learned some of the tricks of the trade, of getting under the skin of your employer, in order to get the agreement you want at the end. Vernon at the time had a reputation, or prided itself on its reputation as a Lighthouse School District, and to be fair, the Superintendent of Schools at the time, who had been the principal of the very first school that I taught at in Vernon, he was much better than many superintendents, and the same was true of

others at the district level, and they rather prided themselves on the way that they dealt with teachers. Now, he was paternalistic, yes, but in the better, rather than the worse sense of it—but, nevertheless, teachers had their place, and (laughs) they were to be looked after, treated well, but, ultimately, the power structure was there, and what we were doing in collective bargaining, was challenging that power structure. So, as we got towards the end of 1988, and it was one of the darkest periods of my time, actually, in the involvement with the Federation affairs, although it wasn't directly at the BCTF level, I was still a member of the BCTF executive—but I can remember, when we broke from negotiations, at the end of 1988, December sometime, after I don't know how many long, and protracted, non-productive sessions, taking the Christmas break and thinking, I can't see we are ever going to get through this log-jam, how we are ever going to get past this...

[00:47:07] RW: We came back with a determination that we were going to ramp things up a bit, so one of the first activities, or one of the first, seemingly minor, but actually, as I say, got under the skin of our administration particularly, was the slogan we developed: "School District 22—from Lighthouse to Outhouse" (laughs) and this was a way of a... you know.. And the people from the board level squirmed. And we felt, well, you deserve to squirm—we're taking all this garbage from this labour lawyer, who's bringing up all sorts of ridiculous stuff, his attitudes towards toleration of gay teachers was quite atrocious, and had board members squirming, and so—that was one of the slogans that we developed. We also started to talk about job action, and that, too, for a Lighthouse District, for their teachers to get antsy to the point where they were talking taking job action, that had its impact as well. We also, at that stage began to look at the agreements, the early agreements that came in, and the first 4 or 5, half-a-dozen or so, from other places in the province: Coquitlam was one, I think, Vancouver Island may have been off the mark at that point, quite rapidly;

[00:49:05] RW: certainly Fort Nelson was one—a number of them came in early, and we pointed to provisions that have been negotiated there, and said, well, if it's good enough there, why not here? And that actually became a slogan that was used constantly throughout the three rounds of bargaining. And, Carol Whitwell, and I still arm-wrestle over, which of us at the Vernon bargaining table decided to use that first. But that was—and it was, I still remember it was one of my most vivid and rewarding experience in the Federation, as things drew to a conclusion, and we had managed to achieve a great deal, but there were still final sticking points around, especially, issues, like class-size, that we call to put the word out around the staff rooms, that there was going to be a strike vote, and that they were to come to the General Meeting and decide on whether or not to go on strike. And suddenly, over the course, of just a few days, bargaining raced ahead. It was evident that the administration put the labour lawyer on a very short reign, gave him his marching orders; the last thing they wanted was to have the teachers in the Lighthouse District go on strike,

[00:50:51] RW: and the result was that the bargaining team went to the packed General Meeting, where a strike vote was to be taken, and said: "We have an agreement!",

[00:51:04] RW: and we read out all of the terms of the agreement, and there's euphoria in the room, and I remember a previous bargainer, who had been involved in the pre-full-scale bargaining, but in a lot of arbitrations and so on, coming up to me afterwards, and saying: "I never thought you guys would get all, I never thought it would be possible"—to get all of this stuff", so that was something that has stuck with me, as I said, I think, I was about as low as I'd ever been (laughs), and then—about as high as I'd ever been through that experience, and all of that was made possible by the constant presence of the BC Teachers' Federation's staff, and other locals, and coming down and being regenerated and having one's enthusiasm picked up again by meeting other bargainers, other teachers, who were going through the same experience, and the same sorts of issues, and it was that sense of unity, of being part of a group, that was so powerful. That was a highlight, and in 1989, I was elected the First Vice-President of the Federation,

[00:52:44] RW: and served for three years as First Vice-President, when Ken Novakowski was the President. And, I don't want to dwell very much on the events of those years, because I know that you'll be interviewing Ken, and Ken, an amazing man to work with, has an encyclopedic memory of this period, and naturally, of course he remembers very vividly his time as President. Now... give me an opportunity, and I keep going. Is there anything from then that I've glossed over, or...?

[00:53:28] LK: I think you really captured the emotion of that period as well, as the events...

[00:53:34] RW: OK, sure—yes,

[00:53:40] RW: it was an emotional time, that's true, and the years when Ken was President, the division within the Federation continued, and that, I think, certainly later, in some of the later events, during my presidency, had a serious impact on the ability of the Federation to function effectively as a union. We went into the second round of local bargaining, and by that stage it is fair to say, that our overall success across the first round of bargaining had shocked, alarmed, and disturbed the school boards. And we were in a sense, guilty of speaking out of both sides of our mouth, I felt. We emphasized that it was local bargaining, that this was all local, but the school boards knew very well that we were all reading from the same textbook—the Collective Bargaining Handbook, that had been developed by the Federation. School boards also knew that, from their experience in the first round, and the second round of bargaining, that the Federation had become quite adept at seeing, oh, negotiations are moving along well here, but they're stuck there, and we should encourage this local to get moving, get an agreement and serve as a lighthouse for other districts, and build a momentum, so that the slogan "Why Not Here?", when you could point to 50 other associations that had received an agreement.

[00:56:04] RW: So, we said: "No, no, no, no, that's not in any way provincial, it's all local, but they were astute enough, and it was obvious that there was a very strong provincial co-ordination of what was happening.

[00:56:25] LK: And the communication system—

[00:56:27] LK: you were very active at that.

[00:57:27] RW: Yes. That's true, so that meant that there was a push-back developing in the second round of negotiations during Ken's term as President. We were also dealing increasingly with the College of Teachers. Now, initially the BCTF had been very successful in electing approved candidates for the 15 positions that were up for election from amongst the teaching population, so all of the people elected to the College Counsel, were initially endorsed by the BCTF, but all organizations develop a life of their own, and inevitably the College of Teachers started to move in that direction. So, I remember some of the meetings, at which Ken and I sat as President and First Vice-President with our equivalents at the College of Teachers, who were also teachers, and people that we knew from the Annual General Meetings and all of the issues. We, as teachers, had fought together the legislation and fought our way through it, some quite sharp divisions opened up between the BC Teachers' Federation and the College of Teachers at that time, and that worsened over the years, as the later Presidents will be able to speak to that issue. I think another issue, that interestingly had occupied attention during that time, was the issue around on whether or not to affiliate with Labour.

[00:58:27] RW: Should the BC Teachers' Federation become a part of—the obvious choice was the BC Federation of Labour, because that was the overall group for unions within the province, and, again, that was a divisive issue, and it was under Ken's presidency where the Executive had taken an initiative to bring us to that point, but it would not pass at the Annual General Meeting, and nothing came of it. We were also at that time, strengthening very much the local organization of the Federation, so the full-time release for all Presidents no matter how small the local, was a feature that developed in that time. I became President in 1992. And it was a sharply contested election, I won by 19 votes, out of how many?—

[00:59:36] RW: 600

[00:59:37] RW: or whatever (laughs) it was, and hence, my nickname, Landslide Worley, which had a certain currency for a short time. I mentioned that the division within the Federation between Viewpoint and Teachers for United Federation continued to sharpen, and the feature of that election, was what is referred to as a 6/5 Executives. So, there was 6, who were on the side for the Teachers for United Federation, and 5 who were on side for Viewpoint. And that was to continue that division on the Executive for the two years, that I was President. So I was President of a 6/5 Executive, and there were sharp divisions and disagreements at that time. The major event outside of British Columbia, and outside of Canada that we were involved with at that time, was after the collapse after the Soviet Union in 1989-90 and the freeing up of the Eastern Block. A group of teacher organizations that have been represented by a group whose title escapes me—do you remember

[01:01:19] RW: the pre-cursor to the EI, before the merger?...

[01:01:23] LK: It was WCOTP —was one,

[01:01:27] LK: and the other one was ...One of them was associated with the American Federation of Teachers, and there was the third one that was the Communist Block.

[01:01:42] LK: There was a World Teachers Federation...

[01:01:44] RW: Yes, and it is my recollection that the EI brought together all of those groups?

[01:01:53] LK: Just the

[01:01:54] LK: two of them...

[01:02:56] RW: and, subsequently, the third... I remember that as being significant, as that meeting was held in Stockholm, and not one that I felt as President that I could take the time away from BC to attend, but we did have representatives there at that meeting... I think the Executive Director and perhaps, Ken, I'm not sure, attended that meeting, and described how dramatic that was, the curtain divider... The third round of local bargaining was happening during my two years as President, and the locals were finding it much more difficult to make headway, and in effect, I think we had gained so much during those first two rounds, that it was getting increasingly difficult to get boards to yield any further. I know there was, supposedly, a statement by some representative of a school board: "You know, for every 100 dollars that we have, 95 of those dollars are determined by the teachers' contract provisions". And our response was: "Hell, how did we miss those 5 dollars?" (laughs). So that sort of attitude characterized the bargaining in the third round, with, in hindsight, far less realization just different it was, how the climate had changed, how the attitudes of boards had changed over that period of time,

[01:03:58] RW: and it was during

[01:04:00] RW: that third round of bargaining that we started to hear constantly rumour of talk about that the government might be leaning towards provincial bargaining, and one of the key events of that time as President, when I was President, were the strikes that occurred late in the 1992-93 school year, in the spring of 1993, when, both Vancouver and Surrey were on strike, and the government brought in the legislation, that forced them back to work, and interestingly, a phrase that I heard used just a few months ago here in BC last year, when the teachers were bargaining and on strike, was "The system is broken!" Only then, in 1993 it was "Local bargaining—the system is broken". Was interesting to hear "provincial bargaining—the system is broken", coming from the government again, under the same circumstances. But that was gathering steam during 1993, and I think, perhaps, in hindsight, had the Federation adjusted more to the shift in reality over that round of bargaining, it is possible that the temperature would have cooled, that there wouldn't have been the same pressure for provincial bargaining, but at the same time it is hard to see how long the realm of the local bargaining could last, when I remember, the Finance Minister at the time, Glen Clark exclaiming, that, well, "teachers and school boards negotiate these agreements, but we as the government have to pay for them",

[01:06:25] RW: and by that stage, the school boards existed, or their money came directly from the provincial government, they had no ability, then, any longer, to raise local taxation. So in a sense, you can understand the frustration of a central government having to shell out money for agreements that it had no voice in negotiating. In a sense it was an understandable attitude, and for whatever reason the government of the day decided that it couldn't continue any longer and so they began to talk about how could the system be changed. And that occupied a great deal of time during my presidency, when it became evident that this was a part of the government's agenda and the increasing issue was how you deflect attention from that. Now, looking back I realize, that there were other issues of significance as well. One of the most significant issues for classroom teachers at that point, was the introduction of The Year 2000 initiative. And I had a strange sense of déjà vu recently, when I see that the ministry has announced some other great revamping of education, that is supposed to happen, and I can't remember what the initiative is called.

[01:08:14] RW: Does it have a grand title?

[01:08:16] LK: BC Education Plan.

[01:08:18] RW: (laughs) BC Education Plan!

[01:08:20] RW: Very! Not as catchy as Year 2000, though. But that was to be the blueprint for the Education of the 21st Century. Launched with a great deal of fanfare, supported by a great deal of enthusiasm by certain members of the Ministry of Education, who pushed it, and, to my shame, I only have just the peripheral memories of this major and now long-gone initiative, and it would require someone who was much closer to what was happening, because pre-occupations to what was happening within the bargaining regime, tended to overwhelm a focus on these other issues. Part of it was... it was a mix—accurately said, it was good in parts. Basically, the primary program component of The Year 2000 was welcomed enthusiastically by the primary teachers, because essentially, they had had a large say in designing these practises. In fact it was... it encapsulated a lot of what they had been saying about a successful practise—like not having all the children lock step, to have some flexibility when children moved from one grade to another in the early primary grades, with a greater emphasis on the discovery learning. So, for teachers at the primary school level, and those primary grades of elementary there was a great deal of sense of enthusiasm, and being endorsed and recognized for what they were doing, and having helped to shape the program.

[01:10:29] RW: There was much less of that at the elementary level, and resistance, if not just a shrug at the secondary level, where the ideas were much more fuzzy about ideas of blending the boundaries of different subjects, where English would flow into Social Studies, the sciences would be more inter-related. A lot of it was hard to get your head around. I think there's a different mentality amongst the secondary school teachers, being one myself, I can say they're more tight-bound conservatives, more cantankerous, and less likely to get swept away by fads, and of course, by that stage, given the demographics, they'd seen fads come and go before. The

fact that this was not as well thought out as it could have been, was encapsulated for me, when I went to conference largely attended by the administrators, and the ministry staff; they had brought in a speaker from the States somewhere to address issues in The Year 2000, how this was a grand and glorious plan, and an experiment that would transform education, and he said: “Remember, even if it is not totally successful, the bigger the screw-up, the better the story!” I thought, my God! You’re taking your inspiration from someone, who says this?

[01:12:22] RW: I made quite a bit of a hay, I admit, in coming back and speaking to teachers, and saying, of course, the audience was mainly composed of administrators, who have a great deal more experience in screwing-up (laughs) than anyone else in the system—not charitable, but there you are. There were other things rumbling, as well, during the years that I was President. One of them stemmed from the division created by Bills 19 and 20. The Bill 19, specifically, I referred to in relation to the Special AGM. That was the position of administrators. Now, the door had been kept open a little for administrators, and at the time when they were excluded from the Federation and, for many of them, they had been lobbying for this anyway. There was behind the scenes lobbying from the Principals and Vice-Principals Association, most people were quite convinced and were some of the players for that separation to happen. At the time they said, well, we’ve been kicked out of the Federation, and we’ve been paying money into Federation for all of these years, and we want some compensation for that—and I think it was Elsie McMurphy, the President at the time, said: “Not one penny of teachers’ money for principals pockets” or words to that effect,

[01:14:03] RW: but the principals and vice-principals didn’t go away, and they were grinding away with claims and legal challenges, and eventually it went to litigation, after my time as President, but I can remember a number of sessions sitting down with the President of the time of the Principals and Vice-Principals Association, and trying to ramp down their demands, and attempt to come, unsuccessfully, to an agreement with them, but that was something that hit the Federation hard in subsequent years, when they were awarded several million dollars, I think 4 million dollars, and that was a shadow behind us at that time that I was President. We were worried about the salary Indemnity Plan, because there had been a change to the financial institutions, and that required private insurance companies to have a certain level of funds available to cover potential liabilities. Now, that was really a legislation that was aimed at commercial insurance companies, but because of its sweeping nature, it was ruled to be applied to the BCTF Salary Indemnity Plan—something funded by the contributions of teachers, and for teachers, and in no way a commercial operation. And, in order to comply with that, it would cost every teacher in the Province, I think it was two hundred dollars extra, a year, which was a massive

[01:16:03] RW: bite. And, we did manage to persuade the then-government, the NDP government of the day, that this was unjust, and I remember, to my great satisfaction immediately, for the 1993 Annual General Meeting, when I finally received word, that they had passed an order in Counsel, which exempted, specifically, the BCTF Salary Indemnity Plan from that provision of the Financial Institutions Act. So, it was with great relief that I was able to

announce that to the AGM in 1993. It's interesting to note, looking back over those years, that we were also then successful in securing some additional funding from the government of the day, because of their recognition of the pressures caused by mainstreaming. And, there was a 60 million dollar grant secured at that time during my presidency that provided some assistance, yet not nearly as much as we would've liked. We had a very successful task force on violence that studied the issue, and made recommendations, which were later adopted by the government and by school boards. Interestingly, some things never go away—the Fraser Institute, during that time was busy working with a rump group of teachers, that had been a very tiny minority of teachers in 1987, who had not wished to sign on to become members of the BCTF. And they had formed a group called Teachers for Association, and they struggled on, for a decade or so, before that organization fell apart.

[01:18:13] RW: But—who, but the Fraser Institute (laughs) would sponsor a conference with Teachers for Association? 1994 was the introduction of provincial bargaining, and that was a bombshell in its way, the counterpart, the equivalent of the legislation of the 1987, and it had been telegraphed for quite some time, and it was announced 10 days before our Annual General Meeting. I took the step of disinviting the Minister of Education of the day, Art Charbonneau, to come and talk to the Annual General Meeting. I don't know what has happened since, but up until that point in time, even, I believe, under the SoCreds—even, though, Larry would know—certainly, under the NDP government, it had been the practice for the Minister of Education to be invited to the Annual General Meeting... Was there?

[01:18:50] LK: That

[01:19:27] LK: was in the 1980s and it varied... I think we disinvited Brian Smith. I don't think we ever invited Vander Zalm.

[01:19:33] RW: (laughs)

[01:19:39] RW: What about Tony Brummet? Did he?

[01:19:41] LK: No.

[01:19:42] RW: No. OK. He introduced the 1987 legislation. Anyway, that in itself was a divisive issue within the Federation. It was split almost 50/50 between those, who thought, damn it, no way we should have truck or trade with this government, that has just destroyed our local bargaining, and the other half who said: "We want him here, so we can tell him to his face just how bad this is", and you can argue any of those two points of view, and certainly, I've heard them argued long and hard, but it was our decision at the time, and we, with my Executive colleagues agreed, that it would be worse off having the public spectacle of teachers raging and roaring at the minister played on the headlines of the television news now—but whether it would...—history will judge, if that would have made any difference to the government's legislation either way, to be frank about that... That produced the most intense period of my presidency—the last few months from the time of the Annual General Meeting and through

until I stepped down as President in 1994. The government announced the legislation, but also said, the legislation has not been finalized for provincial bargaining;

[01:21:35] RW: we're going to introduce it, we want to sit down and consult with the stakeholders, as to what shape the legislation should take. And that produced a very sharp division between, and largely along, Viewpoint and Teachers For United Federation's lines; between those, who said: "This is going to happen; we've got to get in there, and do as much damage control as we can and attempt to shape it as best we can, so that it has the fewest negative impacts on teachers and bargaining " and those, who said: "Absolutely, no way we should do nothing whatsoever to do [with the consults], we should go on a campaign of total rejection of it, and not play any part whatsoever in being complicit, and designing it". And those two very strong points of view that were argued out at the 1994 Annual General Meeting and then subsequently at the two Special Representative Assemblies that were held in the months of March and April of 1994. And in one particularly tense meeting, a group who felt that there should be no discussion whatsoever with the government on this issue, brought forward at the beginning of the meeting suggested agenda with resolutions and motions, which they wanted adopted at the beginning of the meeting to replace, in total, the recommendations from the Executive—from the majority of the Executive, that were to be placed before the Representative Assembly.

[01:23:57] RW: And, that resulted in the very lengthy battle over the agenda and eventually, the majority of the delegates decided that the Executive's set of recommendations should form the agenda for the meeting. That triggered a walk-out—the first that had ever happened in my experience at the Federation—of some delegates of the Representative Assembly, who were in the minority position, and I remember that there was the unprecedented tactic—an attempt, where the Representative Assembly was adjourned for an hour, while I attempted, as President, to see, if some form of compromise or brokering of these two different positions could be reached, and found that, this was just not possible, to my deep regret, and that meeting had its aftermath, when a group of local associations took legal action against the Executive, and against the Federation of the day, for their decision to sit down and discuss the terms of the legislation with the government. And that resulted in this group of locals seeking an injunction to prevent the Executive, and subsequently, to prevent the majority, which had made the decision, both at the Annual General Meeting and the Representative Assembly from taking that course. That understandably, was a tense time, until legal decisions came down, that it was, of course, within the rights of the Federation, to take whatever action it thought was in the best interest of teachers, and the decision to take that action had been reached within the procedures and the Constitution of the Federation.

[01:26:41] RW: It was a very tense, and very bitter time, and it resulted in some comments that I made at the conclusion of the Representative Assembly, the last formal one, for which I was President, in late May of 1994, which I thought, captured, and captured very well, what my thoughts were at the time, and have remained. I said, in part: "How do we avoid a repetition of handing in voting cards and turning to the courts, when an argument has been defeated on the

floor of a meeting? Should we avoid controversial and contentious decisions, establish a veto, require a more substantial majority for decisions, dissolve the existing caucuses (that was a reference to Viewpoint and Teachers for a United Federation)?” And I concluded this way: “Colleagues, we are one big union. A union of forty thousand members, seventy six locals, twenty nine PSAs, a hundred and thirty staff and a myriad of committees, networks, programs and activities. We are a one big union with highly developed, intensely democratic procedures, policies and practises. We are, through our diversity and what we hold in common, a powerful force for public education in this province. We are a one big Union of Professionals, with a long and proud history of service to students and promotion of the welfare of teachers.

[01:28:53] RW: Colleagues, we are one big union, we’re one hell-of-a union, and I’ve been on it to play a small part in the history of our union, as your President for two years. Thank you for the opportunity to serve.” And those were the comments that I made in the aftermath of all of turmoil and division of those last few months when I was President, and, I think, this is a good time to take a break (laughs) at this point. I had thought I would, if it’s of interest, and the time permits, like to cover much more briefly my post-presidency, involvement in the Federation, because I didn’t ride off into the sunset exactly, in 1994, but I have gone overtime, as I feared, I would...

[01:29:14] LK: It’s really been great...

[01:29:36] RW: OK (laughs)—

[01:29:58] RW: so there is life after being President of the BCTF, and, of course, you’re Past President for a year, and so I was on the Executive for a year. During that time, at the end of my presidency we moved back to Vernon, as we continued to have our house during the time I was on the Federation Executive, and it was a relief in a way, not to have the feeling that I had for the five years in a row, because, always the elections were contested, so, as we approached the Annual General Meeting each year, Elizabeth and I would be thinking, well, are we going to be down in Vancouver for one more year, or will we have to pack up and move back to Vernon, because I was, of course, on leave from the Vernon school district, while I was President down here. And I assume, the same for you, Larry, were you on leave from Kamloops?

[01:31:10] LK: I was on leave for nine years.

[01:31:11] RW: laughs) Nine years!

[01:31:12] RW: I was on leave for those five years, and that is a dimension that affects those of us, who become Presidents from, as we used to say, beyond Hope in the province. You have to move lock, stock and barrel down here and, as I was saying, because the elections were contested every year, you wonder when you’ll be moving back. Though, 1994–95, after the provincial bargaining regime was set up, and there’s a whole long history of discussions that went on during 1994–95, as the Federation tried to figure out how to get itself together to come to a provincial negotiating table and I’ve glossed over the lengthy discussions that we had with

the government representatives in late 1994—or, rather in June of 1994 about the shape of the legislation, but that was happening then. So, it was necessary to negotiate at the provincial level. It was very obvious from the beginning, from the introduction of the provincial bargaining, that for the majority of school boards provincial bargaining was the answer, because they would be able to claw back a great deal of, to put it bluntly, management rights, which they felt they had lost through the three rounds of collective bargaining.

[01:33:06] RW: We had managed very successfully to transfer into the local collective agreements all of the provisions that had existed the School Act, but have been wiped out in the 1987—provisions, like sick leave, provisions like, what to do with a teacher, who was judged with unsatisfactory performance and number of reports that had been written, the review that had to take place; additional provisions which weren't in the School Act had been added, and especially the provisions around class size, and the provisions for class size for numbers of students who'd be mainstreamed—a limit on those in classes; librarians, other non-enrolling teachers, English as a Second Language—all of those in various ways had been incorporated in local agreements. All of those tied the hands of principals and superintendents, and school boards, from their perspective, they wanted those ninety five dollars back that I referred to earlier. And that's what provincial bargaining was all about, as far as they were concerned, or mainly, it also took the heat away from local trustees so that they weren't sitting across the table any longer from the likes of Ray Worley, telling them they were an "outhouse" district. So, there was that benefit—

[01:34:53] RW: many of the trustees felt ill-equipped to do that. So, that was the mindset of school boards, once provincial bargaining was introduced and that gave us a tremendous challenge, because the government had introduced this regime, it meant that any action taken would have to be on a provincial level, not local-by-local, and that of course had severe financial implications for the Federation, but an organizational challenge as well. So we went into the first round of provincial bargaining in 1995, late in 1995, and I became involved in that as a member of the first Provincial Bargaining Team. Later on in the process someone had to withdraw from the team, and we had a number...—there were six on the team, along with one of the table officers. And one of the members of that first Provincial Bargaining Team was the current president of the BCTF, Jim Iker, who'd been involved in bargaining for a long time in Burns Lake, the local he came from. And, eventually, what came out of that round of bargaining, was a rollover, and the rollover was very significant, because it took all of those provisions of the local agreements, and rolled them over into the provincial agreement.

[01:36:44] RW: And that, of course, was an enormous step forward if we were going to have provincial bargaining, because it meant that it fought and frustrated immensely the trustees, particularly the more hawkish trustees and administrators, who had hoped, that provincial bargaining would give them back their jurisdiction, and it didn't. But that was referred to as the Transitional Agreement, so, yes, it was there, but it was to be there just for a limited period of time, and it had provisions in it, which said, that within a certain length of time, after the conclusion of this agreement, the negotiations would have to start for a full, agreement, not just

a roll-over, agreement. And so, a second Provincial Bargaining Team was formed at that stage, and I was appointed as the chief negotiator for that team. And at that stage we were negotiating with an organization that has been set up by the provincial bargaining legislation, called BCPSEA, which was the... what on earth does BCPSEA stand for? (laughs). I don't remember now, it's just we use the acronym so much, but anyways, it was the representative of all the school boards in the province and it had hired some professional staff, people with a background in labour negotiations, and they had hired a negotiator for this second round of provincial bargaining, Ken Halliday, who had become a little notorious for having negotiated at some of the local bargaining tables;

[01:38:51] RW: and he was the chief negotiator, and we found that it was impossible to make progress in a meaningful way at the bargaining table, given our totally opposed and different agendas. The conference that the Federation had held to set the goals for that second round of bargaining, the meaningful round of bargaining—essentially the goals were two-fold: lose absolutely nothing from the local agreements, and make substantial gains. That was a very tall order, given the climate of the day, the government's unwillingness to continue the practise of teachers and school boards negotiate a certain level of services and "we have to pay for them all, with no voice in it", so that proved very difficult. And of course, there were high expectations amongst teachers, that all of the gains that had been made during the three round of local bargaining would be enhanced because they varied from district to district, of course, and it was natural that some districts looked at others' collective agreements, and said: "Why not here?" or "We'd like to have that in our collective agreement". We were at a stalemate at the table, because there was no way that we could convince the other side to give up their agenda of "Everything has to go".

[01:40:52] RW: Well, not everything has to go, but they wanted substantial sections of the current local agreements, which had all been continued, as part of the overall provincial deal, they wanted those gone, and obviously we didn't, and couldn't agree to that. And at that stage the parties were called in, the negotiating teams were called in by the Minister of Education of the day, Ramsay. Was it Paul Ramsay, I think?

[01:41:28] LK: Yes.

[01:41:29] RW: He was the Minister of Education, and he listened to both sides, and it was fairly obvious to him that there was no way that we were able to reach an agreement. The government made the decision then, and in a sense, the logical decision, that they were, so to speak, the organ grinders, and really, the trustees were the "monkeys", because, really, it was the government who held the purse strings, and they wanted an agreement, they wanted a negotiated agreement with teachers, they were hurting a little, being an NDP government at the ill will that had been created amongst teachers, who traditionally had quite heavily supported the NDP. In fact there was a member of the Executive of the Federation, who tore up publicly their membership card in the NDP as a result of the introduction of that legislation. She later mellowed a little and actually became a Minister in the NDP government in the last days of it,

but, still, there was a feeling amongst the government, that they wanted, to the extent possible, to mend fences, and that led them to bypass the trustees, and, in effect, create a separate table, where the BCTF representatives were sitting down directly negotiating with the government's representatives.

[01:43:18] RW: The end result of that process was the deal of 1998, and the deal of 1998 was a three year deal, it ran until 2001 and we achieved one of the overriding goals of the provincial bargaining—we preserved every single one of the provisions of the local agreements. We made advances in establishing for the first time ever, provincial ratios for non-enrolling teachers—that's for librarians, for special education—for those. We were successful. Not every district had it in their agreements at that stage, in establishing caps on students to be mainstreamed into classes, we were successful in negotiating some improvements for teachers-on-call, and we were, however, totally unsuccessful in getting the government to budge from its salary mandate, and the three year agreement had zero, zero and two, so that, in terms of money in the pockets of teachers, was significant. In fact, for two years there was to be no increase at all. Our assessment at the time was that we have totally achieved one of our major goals, which was, nothing from our local agreements gets lost, which was a part of it. We had made some, what we thought were significant gains, and they were; which were the provision of class size—for the first time on the provincial level, and these other measures that were significant.

[01:45:40] RW: Those were the two significant achievements I would claim from, but the salary was... to put it bluntly, it was the pits. But it was our assessment that we could get that deal, and it was the best deal that would be operating, that would be on offer, that we could—and some argue that we should have done, because of the low, or no, salary increase, we should have taken job action up to and including going on strike. So, yes, but would that resulted in ultimately a larger salary increase? Maybe, but that would had to be balanced against the salary you lose when you... when you go on strike. Also the pattern of “zero, zero and two” was a pattern that had already been set in bargaining with other unions—public service unions. So, our assessment was, this was the best deal that is was possible to get. And, we were also successful in writing into the agreement, a special provision for Superior Clauses, so we had established these class-size figures for the whole province, and they were an improvement for many Locals, but not for all. There were some that had already negotiated better ratios, or better numbers than we had in the provincial agreement. But, we negotiated a safety measure, which said, if any Local has conditions that are better than these, they hold onto them.

[01:47:41] RW: And that seemed to us, you know, to be quite a good deal. That was yet another one of the (laughs) contentious matters that I was in the middle of as chief negotiator. There was an enormous criticism, or, I should temper that,—there was loud criticism from, I think, to some extent, the result of a partisan division in the Federation, which continued, to, first of all, the process. This was a deal, that critics said, was a “back room deal”. This was a deal, where instead of sitting down with the employer directly over the table, the representatives of the BCTF had gone into a room with the government and come out with this “back-room, under-the-table, wicked” deal. But it was the first criticism, that, you know, no matter what's in it—no

matter how good or bad it is—you did it the wrong way! We felt, for the reasons I've described, that if we were to get any sort of deal, we weren't going to get it at the table with the trustees, and the government were the ones, who were prepared to pay for it, so we should talk to them.

[01:49:06] RW: And of course, the second major criticism of the deal was, "Where's the money?" Zero, zero and two—that's not good enough. And so, on both grounds there was

[01:49:22] RW: considerable (laughs) voiced opposition to the deal. And, I think though, what was significant of the deal was that, at the end of the day, we put it to our membership vote, of course. The details of this deal were put to every Local, every teacher had an opportunity to vote, and certainly they'd heard the arguments for and against the deal, and I was at a number of Locals—I was at my own Local, where a teacher that I knew well, a colleague that I taught with, a friend of mine, listened to all of my rationale and reasoning, and said: "yeah, I see that, Ray"—he was a secondary teacher, and some of the provisions didn't seem that significant as far as he was concerned; he was a colleague of mine, he said: "yeah, but I can't vote for it, I can't vote for zero, zero and two". So, I lost that vote. At the end, 73% of the membership voted in favour of that deal, and I heard someone say: "oh, they voted in favour of the deal, because they were afraid, if the negotiating team went on any longer, they would come back with something worse". And I thought (laughs)—yeah, right!

[01:50:50] RW: And I contrast that with somewhere like, Saskatchewan, recently—ah, well, within the last few years, where the membership wholeheartedly turned down a deal that had been negotiated; wasn't good enough for the membership, and they sent it back to the table, and that was certainly... an option with that deal. Now, of course I'm obviously, defending my part in the history of it, but there is an interesting footnote to that: after I had been the chief negotiator, and had been involved in that second round, and in that agreement, and, by the way, that agreement ended up having to be legislated, and it was legislated, because, technically, the trustees had to agree to it. Now, understandably, it gave them nothing. Not only that, but, like some teachers, they were offended by the process: we hadn't sat down and talked to them—we'd negotiated directly with the government. And so, the response of the trustees, when they held their ratification vote, was, you know, overwhelmingly "No, we won't agree to this!" That's why the government had legislated that agreement. Now, it's been interesting to be in discussions recently and last year during the strike, and all the coverage of it, there was frequent reference to the legislated agreements, and the reference to the fact that even under the NDP the teachers couldn't reach an agreement.

[01:52:45] RW: We reached a transitional agreement in the first round of provincial bargaining with the NDP, we reached an agreement with the government in 1998, and teachers ratified it, and ratified both of those provincial deals, and yes, the second deal was legislated, but the way that event has been characterized, it has been put alongside and lumped in with later legislated agreements, which weren't agreed to by the teachers in discussion with the government and ratified by a vote of the teachers—they were agreements that the government had unilaterally passed into law and said: "This is your collective agreement!" But in the media coverage of the

history, the “broken” history of the provincial bargaining, that part of history got lost. My last and final involvement with the Federation was the four years that I spent on staff from 1999 to 2003. And because I’ve been involved directly in the first two rounds of provincial bargaining, as a staff member I was one of the two staff members who were in support of the third bargaining team, and interestingly, the third team contained Jim Iker, as he had been the member of the first, and the second, and was still a member of the third provincial bargaining team.

[01:54:31] RW: And that team was in the process of negotiating a new agreement, when the Liberal government was elected in 2001, and then in 2002 passed a legislation, which tore up the 1998 agreement between the BCTF and the government, which had been the legislated agreement. And ever since then, and it has been a particular irony for me, the terms and conditions of that agreement that we negotiated in 1998, with those provisions on class size, and mainstreaming, and all of those, they have become—a dozen years more later, fifteen years later, more than that—they had become the Holy Grail for the BCTF. That deal, that I “wickedly” negotiated in “the back room”, with no salary increase for the first two years, that’s what the court case and legislation has been about: the fact that the Liberals tore up that agreement that had been legislated, and so it has been a particular interest to me, the transformation of the terms of that agreement from being very widely criticized at the time, although I’d still got the 73 percent vote from the membership, as a “legislated, back room, substandard” deal, that the conditions for teachers that we negotiated into that deal in 1998 are now what teachers have spent a great deal of time, and effort, and rightly so, trying to get back.

[01:56:36] RW: So, for me that’s been a certain closing justification, that maybe it wasn’t quite so bad after all! And, I think, you know that’s a sort of the happy note, if there is a happy note from all of this, then I’d like to end on this.

[01:56:56] LK: Yes, thank you very much for this, it’s been really great. These are the stories that we need to hear, and this really has been a positive contribution to our process.

[01:57:12] RW: Well, thanks, Larry—yeah, actually, once I got into it... I

[01:57:19] RW: warned you at the beginning (laughs)...