

SD: Could you please give me your name?

JS: Dorothy Jean Mathie Scott.

SD: And where were you born?

JS: Brandon, Manitoba.

SD: And can you describe life in the Prairies when you were young?

JS: The happiest days of my life were spent from the time that I was a small child in Brandon, Manitoba, and we moved to a little town called McCauley, Manitoba, originally named Rutherglen by the Scottish settlers. [But] after 44 Irish families proliferated at a very fast pace the CPR came through and renamed the place McC^Auley. We moved from McC^Auley when I was fifteen to Roke^{CA}nville, Saskatchewan, which was an entirely different milieu, in that McC^Auley was an integrated community with everyone enjoying life together and Roke^{CA}nville had about five strata, definite cliques. And you knew which one you belonged to.

[SD: Where were you in the strata?]

JS: We were near the bottom. And that's why Frank Scott, whose father was a partner in the biggest store, and I, didn't get married till 50 years later, we've just been married two years, but we were sweethearts from the time I was 16 until we were 20.

SD: [Did you live on the Prairies during the Depression?]

[JS: Yes.]

SD: Can you describe the Depression on the Prairies? And a bit of your family's experience?]

JS: My family's Depression began 10 years before anyone else's, in 1922 when my father, who had bought a general store in McCauley, had the business foreclosed. And my mother became ill with fibroid tumors of the uterus. Which meant she wasn't really sick in the ordinary sense but she was bed-ridden, and I had to take care of her. By the time the real Depression came on we were in desperate, terrible straits, my father had graduated downward from the store that he owned in McCauley, to a small grocery store, to a tiny grocery store, to the final move into Rokenville when he was just a clerk, for a man in Rokenville who was dreadful. Every month my dad had a fight to eke a few dollars out of him, and there were five in my family and my mother was ill. So I found life pretty rough and couldn't even complete my grade 11 because my mother said, "You can't go to school," Don, my brother four years younger, and Pat six years younger, and Betty eight years younger have to go to school, and of course mother was in bed. [I find this a little difficult, to talk to you about, I, I, I, but I guess that's what you want me to talk about it from my viewpoint.]

SD: [Yeah.]

JS: [Well,] I had no skills, although I'm musical by nature, so I went to Winnipeg and was enrolled as a student nurse in the Victoria hospital, ^{insert pg. 4 *} but the very day I got my cap my Dad phoned and said, "Mother is worse than ever, you have to come home." So I went home and nursed my mother, who had a recovery several months after that. [So I'll skip the part where I got married, separated from a very traumatic experience, and looked for work as a housemaid.]

SD: [As a domestic.

JS: Right.

SD: And when was that and where was that?]

JS: My first job as a domestic was for a woman in ^BValcará, ^{res} Saskatchewan, who was the meanest woman I've ever worked for. She was the Anglican Minister's wife, and she wanted to make me feel subservient, and finally I did something I never thought I'd have the nerve to do, I was making only ^{seven dollars} and a half a month to houseclean. And that means washing down all the walls and floors and doing all the meals and everything else, and she treated me like a real slavey, and I walked away from that job. With nowhere to go and nothing, even without getting paid, because I couldn't bear to have my psyche so damaged.

SD: Were a lot of women at that time domestic workers?

JS: Yes.

SD: [Is that what young girls did when they were looking for work?

JS: Yes, yes.] ^{to page 3} If you were lucky your parents sent you to normal school, you became either a teacher or a nurse. And as a nurse you got no pay, in the little hospital I was in, for the first three months anyway, and then you got \$2.50 a month for the first year. By the time you graduated you got \$12.50. In the general hospitals it was better than that, but I didn't have grade 12 and had to go to a smaller hospital.

SD: [So were you at first unable to find work as a nurse? Is that why you became a domestic?

JS: Oh, yes, and anyway] I wasn't a qualified nurse, I didn't have an R.N. And I went from that job, after a day or two, I found work with another woman who also wanted her house cleaned and wanted me to take care of the house and two young teenagers while she went east. And as soon as she came back, she said to me, "Okay, you can go." And I had nowhere to go. So I went to the doctor of the small hospital and said, "I have had some experience nursing, practical nursing with my mother and other people, as well as my little bit of training." And I'd felt like I'd really come up a notch because I earned \$25 a month and I had to be receptionist, cook, laundry woman and run-around girl in the operating room. And I worked very, very hard.

JS: (cont) And learned to despise the nurses because they wouldn't lift a finger to help me, and I ran my health down very badly. I knew I had to get out of that situation and I answered an ad in the Regina Leader Post that offered \$10 a month for just working in a house. It turned out -- I took that job, in ^{SINTALUTA} ~~Seelata~~ Saskatchewan, and it turned out that the woman who was then just over 50, had been a complete cripple since she was 23, she had had five miscarriages as a young woman and apparently arthritis, complete arthritis, had crippled her into a position where she was, what am I trying to say, scissor-like. I had to clean her teeth and her ~~h~~nose and feed her every bit of food and also look after her evacuation. And I stayed with that job, even though I was very unhappy at it, because she was bitter. I thought that by singing to her and reading to her I would make her life happier. It didn't turn out that way. She actually resented my talent, and treated me so badly that I had to leave and I went from that job -- by the way, I went there on July the 1st or 2nd and by Thanksgiving time I tried to quit, and they begged me to stay, her daughter and her husband begged me to stay, even though he couldn't pay me. So in those days the Saskatchewan government gave domestics \$5 a month, and he promised me \$2.50 more. I never got the \$2.50, and it wasn't because he was dishonest, it was because he never had that

JS: (cont) two dollars and a half, that was, I think, the hardest year of my life. The hired man got \$7.50, which is another example of the attitudes of governments and the general populace, to the fact that although I worked harder than the hired man, he got more money than I did.

SD: Was the \$5 a month for domestics parallel to relief, it was as though the government was giving a subsidy to people to work, rather than give them relief money, is that how it happened?

JS: It must have been because the local MLA, whose nickname was Beef, actually it was Mr. Dundas, and he looked like a hunk of beef, a very vulgar, illiterate man, his wife, although he didn't -- you were supposed to have this hired girl if you owned enough land to call it a farm, she was a farm help. He got his wife a domestic, and I remember one little controversy where the mechanic in his garage said, "My wife's having another baby and I want a hired girl," and he said, "You can't have it!" And he said, "And I want to have the paper to say I have a hired girl by 5 o'clock tonight or you'll know why because I'll complain to the government about all this fraud," because other people with a little pull around town were also getting a girl on the basis of the fact that they were supposed to be farming.

SD: Free labor.

JS: He got it, the mechanic got the hired girl, for his, you know. So it was, really, on the basis of relief.

SD: What year was this, do you know?

JS: I'm talking about 1935 or '36, '37.

SD: And did the women who worked as domestics associate with each other at all?

JS: It's hard for me to answer that, because although I was a domestic -- there weren't very many in that small town -- I was, if you'll pardon my saying so, a cut above the usual because of my community work, I always either sang or led a choir and was interested in local politics and things like that. So there was no organization of domestics, whatsoever.

SD: None.

JS: I went from that job to a little better job in the town proper, and got \$6 a month.

SD: What were you then doing?

JS: Oh, housework. Yeah.

SD: What kind of tasks did you do for housework? You described the one nursing job, but was it like, heavy work?

JS: It sure was. And there were no amenities. You know, I could pump pails of water and carry two pails of water, and if I wanted ~~sling~~ one pail around without a drop spilling, you know, in a complete circle. I, in the winter of '35, '36, where times were very hard, we had no pork

JS: (cont) fat for pies, and I made pastry out of beef fat, and you should try that when it's cold. The yeast was the hard, cake yeast, and you started it the night before and hung the old honey pail on a little stick so that it was in the reservoir where the water kept the yeast -- the yeast froze during the night. In another place my friend married a Frenchman over by Lazare, and the old French lady knew how to keep one piece of yeast dough from the first baking that she had and rolled ^{it} in all the old winter coats and ^{unused} quilts and had it inside the trunk upstairs where it kept warm.

SD: Like sourdough bread.

JS: Right.

SD: Starter, yeah.

JS: You emptied all slops, you -- when I bring lettuce from the garden now and can wash it under a tap ^{and} people talk about isn't it great to have a dishwasher and all that, I think, "My gosh, isn't it wonderful just to have water come out of a tap!" When you have walked for a block or two and pumped it and then had to use it sparingly because you have to wash things two or three times, I will never accept all these amenities of life. And you try to make butter! on a hot prairie summer day, where you have to wash the little bits of fat that coagulate to make the butter, and it won't come, in quotes, "come", it's heartbreaking. You just have

JS: (cont) no idea, and the heat can be so oppressive, and the bugs, you know, outside. And cleaning lampshades, and all the other things. My mother told me in the summer of 1934, that she thinks she got all of a dollar, eighty-nine, in cash, to send to Eaton's for ^{a pair of} what was called Balbriggan ^a underpants, and a cotton shirt, vest. That's all the cash that she had. It was a major tragedy to get a hole in your silk stockings, there was no nylon then, because you didn't know when you could replace them.

SD: So you did much of the work, you did the work that women in the family would do except that you were paid to do this?

JS: Mnm hmn.

SD: Did women, like on the farms or in the houses you worked in, did the women share the tasks, or did you work so that the lady of the household would not have to work?

JS: In the situation I went to after this farm, ^(five dollars) \$5 a month, I was replacing the lady of the house, who had high blood pressure and the doctor said, "Don't work anymore," so always I worked where the whole load was on me. I didn't tell you about while I had gone back to this man I was married to in 1932, trying to make the marriage work, mostly because of my Christian upbringing and thought I had to do this. We worked in Glenborough, where he was the baker and I was to be a help in the kitchen and bed-

JS: (cont) room or whatever and serve in the restaurant that adjoined the bakery. I didn't get anything, he got \$25 a month, and I didn't get anything, and the conditions under which we worked were really terrible. The heat was so intense in this tin-covered building that to go upstairs and just put your hand where I'd try to have a rest in the afternoon, to just put your hand on the bedstead, which is metal, would even burn you. And the men there, the owner and his son, and the man I was married to, all required white clothing because they ^{were} working in a restaurant and bakery. I used to iron 17 shirts, and that meant keeping a fire going in a hot prairie kitchen. And that's the year that the grasshoppers were so bad the only jobs any of the men had in town, and they all wanted those jobs, was to spread sawdust that was impregnated with poison to kill the grasshoppers. And speaking of grasshoppers, in 1937, the spring of '37, I saw fields planted where not a blade of grass came up. That year, in that little town, there was what they called Memorial Day, Sunday, where they usually, it was in August, I'm not talking about November 11th, they always had a march to the cemetery and placed flowers on the grave, or in remembrance of men who died in the First World War. There wasn't one flower ^{blooming} in that town, and they had to send to Regina for a wreath. I was to sing in Flanders Fields, which I nearly always sang, and I got up

JS: (cont)toosing, and the dress that I had had a strip of organdy around the hem, probably to lengthen it -- you either lengthened or shortened according to styles, and that's all you could do. And I felt something biting my leg just above the knee, and there was a grasshopper, at least four inches long, the biggest one I think I've ever seen -- but I didn't, the pianist had already begun the introduction, I didn't want the audience to notice, so I very slowly reached down and very, very unnoticeably ^{clutched} this part till he cracked and let him drop on the platform (laughs).

note
SD: Did the sort of arrangement where the husband would get paid for the labor of both the wife and the husband, was that common?

JS: Oh, yes.

SD: So that would mean that women were totally dependent on their husbands". . .

JS: Mnm hmn.

SD: good will in terms of giving them . . .

JS: Oh, yes, you bet. And you see I had left, I finally left this man after trying to live with him five times at different intervals. And one of the threats that he always held over me, you know, was, "I've got a job, and you've got nothing."

SD: Right. How did you come to British Columbia?

JS: I moved, and this is my first trade union life, I moved from having lived in Calgary from 1939 to 1946 and in Brooks, Alberta, for a year, to Calgary in November of 1946, and determined that I was going to find work in a sort of atmosphere that I enjoyed. By this time I had worked out of housework by going first to night school, and that's another story because at one point I couldn't even afford three dollars a month for night school. But I finally . . .

SD: Why did you decide to go to night school?

JS: Oh, because I had to get out of being a domestic, I just couldn't take it any longer, and the reason that I got out of night school and was able to work half a day ^{at} of housework and half a day at school was that the war happened and my brother became a pilot and was generous in sending my parents a very nice allowance, and mother loaned me \$15 dollars a month to go to the Garbit Business College in Calgary. And I eventually became, kept going back to school, periodically, till I got secretarial status. And I came out here, I met Eileen, Suftrin, who was then Eileen Tallman, and, among other things, I met other people too, but I told her that I was -- you know, this job was very poor-paying, Retail-Wholesale union was just given the okay by the Steelworkers, they were subsidized -- Steelworker's subsidized Retail-Wholesale, and the Packing House Union, and they

JS: (cont) were each willing to pay \$50 a month, and so, ignoring some better jobs, I took that one.

SD: Okay, just to roll back a little bit, how did you develop a consciousness that would make you interested in working through the trade union movement?

JS: [You know, Sara, I think I'm being very glib about a lot of this because you're easy to talk to, so I would like to be as concrete as I can.] My grandfather, Major Arthur Charles Spencer Wells came from England in 1882, and helped form the Conservative Party in Manitoba, so that my mother was always politically conscious. And my father, perhaps partly through the cruel experience of this foreclosure [which was, I won't go into that, although] I had nightmares up until a few years ago, about walking into a store of my Dad's, and if I dared turn my eyes, just turn my eye, the minute I would look back, everything would be gone.

[SD: Like all your security swept away?

JS: I guess so.] And I think both parents, then, through both experience and background, joined the CCF, or [rather] were sympathetic to it, even before it formed. So I was listening to that all the time, and had a rebellious instinct, which I still have, [as you know I was one of the founders of the Memorial Society of B.C., and went across Canada three times to help form the national association of Memorial Societies, a beautiful rebellion against undertakers.]

JS: [(cont) So when Eileen accepted me for that job I was really very, very happy, to get involved.

SD: Right. You'd been active in the CCF up till then?

JS: Not very, because] in Calgary, I think my mother and dad and I were the only people that voted CCF in the whole Beau Valley constituency. But we voted CCF,

[SD: Might still be.

JS: Yeah, but we did,] and spoke about it openly, and went to a few public meetings that were held down there in Calgary East in the Labor Temple,] it was. But that was the limit of my --] but, believe me, I was so, so deeply hurt by the way I was treated as a domestic, because I never felt that I was any less a human being, and this is what was harder for me than the actual work I did, was to be treated the way I was treated.

SD: [Had you up to that point made any connections between those experiences as a domestic and yourself as a woman, in terms of thinking, questioning for example, that your husband would get paid, and you not paid, or that you would receive a certain wageless ^{than} men who worked doing less work in similar kinds of situations.

JS: I can't think that I did anything until I got to Vancouver, not anything concrete. Talked about it a lot, but . . .]

SD: So you got to Vancouver in 19--

JS: 46, and I started working on December the 10th, 1946, for

JS: (cont) the then-unorganized Retail-Wholesale Union, and the Packing^h House Workers Union, that was just getting a foothold in Vancouver and New~~West~~minster.

SD: And what kind of work did you do for them?

JS: Well, I was really just office work, although I went out and delivered leaflets, I was very anxious to do that, and join in the then, Office and Professional Workers Organizing Committee, and then negotiated with the IWA offices, And I became secretary to both the Vancouver Labor Council and the B.C. Federation of Labor, because the B.C. Fed had just come through this traumatic experience of the attempt by the Communist Party of Canada to take it over in the summer of 1948. And what they called the~~White~~ Bloc, won by one vote, in both the Labor Council~~and~~ the B.C. Fed. But the B.C. Fed, had no money because the IWA funds were frozen by the banks. And they had asked me if I would do the work of sort of two secretaries with one pay and, being me, I said, "Proud to do so."

SD: Okay, let me see. To start going through. So you had primarily an office job for Retail-Wholesale, but you also delivered leaflets, was that to places that were being organized?

JS: Right.

SD: Where were they organizing?

JS: Um, the biggest one was B.C. Sugar, which was quite an

JS: (cont) exciting campaign. The Canadian Labor Congress, did have a contract with B.C. Sugar, but agreed to allow Retail-Wholesale to take that if they could win the employees over and I went down there and delivered leaflets, I also delivered them to the first strike that I remember the Packing House Workers having at Catelli Products. And the meat places, Fletchers, Gaynor's, and Retail-Wholesale organized Mac and Mac, which was very difficult, and Marshall Wells. Both were their early conquests.

SD: Were those places where both men and women worked?

JS: Yes.

SD: Were you familiar at all with some of the contract demands?

JS: Oh, yes.

SD: Okay, so what kinds of struggles was Retail-Wholesale involved in, in terms of establishing working conditions?

JS: They were, they got very good contracts, except I used to get sick and tired of sitting in the Vancouver Labor Council Committee and hearing over and over again, "We got ten cents for the men and a nickel for the women." And that was the usual, not the unusual.

SD: Did men and women do different work?

JS: No. In parts they did, but there were areas -- there was a really good woman there in one of the meat-packing plants, I think it was Gaynor's, May Harvey. She was a spinster, and as far as I know she still is alive, a very fine woman.

SD: So there was no consciousness of equal pay within the union at all, for men and women?

JS: No. It was taken for granted that they would bargain for, quote, "10¢ for the men and a nickel for the women."

SD: Did people talk about a justification for that, ever, was there ever a discussion about it?

JS: If it came up at all, and it did come up, this old argument was, "But if they won't pack bacon..." He ~~was~~ to push that tray away because she can't, um, the factory act says that she can't lift more than 55 pounds, or something like that. Even though you carted a baby around, you know, and moved the washing, a load of heavy, wet clothes and things like that at home.

SD: Did you ever hear the argument that the man had a family to support and the woman didn't?

JS: Oh, heavens yes. Sure did. I was gonna show you a leaflet I came across the other day, saying that -- this is 1951-- that I was going to ^{be} one of the speakers at what they called Town Meeting in Canada, and... "Should married women work?" And of course I was married but single, ~~or~~ divorced and had a child, and there I was having to argue that it was alright to go to work. I don't know what they expected me to do.

SD: Who were you arguing against?

JS: The other lady on the program was a very fine person who

JS: (cont) was a prominent in the Roman Catholic congregation of Vancouver, and her argument was that it was better, much better for the family and the community, for a mother to stay home.

SD: Did she propose how women would support themselves if they stayed home?

JS: Um, oh well, of course, you didn't get divorced, you took whatever your husband would give you.

SD: So, um, you were working for Retail-Wholesale, and also the Packing House Union. Was that the same union, were they connected with each other?

JS: No, no. The Packing ^hHouse is now the Food and Allied Workers Union. Freddie Dowling organized those ~~pe~~ people right across Canada and held their first big strike in 1947, and they were getting 74¢ an hour, and they went on strike.

SD: So they were working with fruits and vegetables, primarily?

JS: No, meat, primarily.

SD: So what places were organized while you worked for them in Vancouver? Or B.C.?

JS: Well, as I said, there were the -- you're talking about Packing House now? -- Fletcher's and Gayn^eor's Meats, and Jack Diamond, you know, and Fokes, who owns stables of horses, not just one house, were people that they had to bargain with. There were the ~~f~~jam factories -- I shouldn't say no fruits, there were some, but when it came to the cold-storage fruit^s,

JS: (cont) that was Retail Wholesale, because you see those were warehouses, as opposed to preserving fruit. So they had-- and Buckerfield's, which soon became a monopoly, things like that. And the hide -- the men hated to be out of work and sent down to this hide-shaking place ^{BISSINGER'S} under Granville Bridge, I've forgotten the name of it -- but mainly meats. And fruits and jam.

SD: Is that mostly men who were . . .

JS: Yes, yes.

SD: And how did their contract compare with the Retail-Wholesale contract? That women were in?

JS: They were good. They were, really, comparative.

SD: Did you do any actual organizing at all?

JS: I wanted to, I tried to.

SD: Can you describe that for me?

JS: Oh, yes. I would like to have been an organizer, but the job usually went to men. That's why it was so unusual to find Eileen. The only woman I knew then was Ann Somebody in the tailoring trade, I've forgotten her last name . . .

SIDE II:

SD: Anne Marshall.

JS: Yeah, I think that was . . .

SD: For the ILGWU.

JS: Yeah, mnm hmn, mnm hmn. And, of course, she -- if you've met her you know that the needle trades were an abominable trade to try to deal with, they were dreadful. No, I did

END SIDE
ONE

JS: (cont) very little actual organizing, although I did try to get office workers and that was really tough.

SD: Can you talk about that, that's something that's very relevant right now.

JS: Yeah, it was just practically hopeless. Eileen, I only worked with Eileen from December to April because she left April '47, you know, to try to organize Eaton's in Toronto. And we would do what we could, a little bit of leafletting, and . . . but it was pretty well hopeless. And, really, the only places organized then were the B.C. Coop wholesale, and the Credit Union movement hadn't even got on its feet then. So mainly the offices that we had in the, what we called the ^{OPWOC'} ~~OPWOC'S~~ were just trade union offices, and believe me, it wasn't very pleasant negotiating with some trade union people.

SD: How was it organizing in the trade unions, was that difficult, to get the women?

JS: Oh, yeah, ^{it was} I think just as difficult, ~~It~~ was grudgingly acknowledged that their employees, the women, had a right to be organized. As a matter of fact, here I am, over 65, I left the IWA after having quite a varied experience in the trade unions, 25 years, and I have no pension. But I sat in the Woodworkers' Regional Executive Board many times taking notes and hearing them argue over how their pensions would be. And only once did I hear, uh, Kelly of New

JS: (cont) Westminster say, "Don't you think that we should talk a little about the female employees of this union?" And nothing more was said, because -- and they never got a pension.

BREAK IN TAPE

JS: . . . gravy train, do you think you're gonna get the same wages as the guy on the greenchain? Well, the greenchain was the lowest one in the union contract, and yet here were we, most of us, with many years experience and skills and expected to do every kind of office work there was, and to be threatened with this, "You think you're gonna get as much as the guy on the greenchain?"

SD: Right. So how did organizations start, of women who were working for the union? Who did that organizing work?

JS: Oh, Eileen was responsible for saying in her own inimitable manner, "You know, you fellas, you've got to set a good example." She could embarrass people into going along with that.

SD: So did that happen through the Labor Council?

JS: Yes. It started with Steelworkers, because the Steelworkers, you know, being established, had enough prestige and money behind them that they could first of all give their employees, not only a good wage but fringe benefits, like, from

JS: (cont) the beginning I think they had a pension plan, which they paid for entirely.

SD: Mmm hmn. And so the Steelworkers organized their own offices and then it spread. Was that through women going around to various trade union offices and signing people up? or ?

JS: Well, not too much women going around and doing it.

The men did it because it looked like it was alright to do. They didn't do it because they wanted or because they offered it on a silver platter, believe me.

SD: So the men who were the staff people for the union would say, "Okay, the women who work here have to be organized," and would sign them up?

JS: Yeah. And Charlie Mallard, who was willing to say, "My secretary, who is worth her weight in gold, Margaret Lazarus, is worth every cent of this, I couldn't get along without her." But pardon me if I sound a little bit cynical, most of the people that I knew, the males on staff, did this to make themselves feel good, rather than do something that was of real and definite benefit. And could create a feeling that we were persons who deserved equal recognition.

SD: So that would affect the kind of contracts they'd be willing to offer?

JS: Oh, yes.

SD: And were you on the negotiating team?

JS: Yes. I was President of Local 15, not once but two or three times, but then that was really because very few people were interested. Even the women in the trade union offices, you know, they were there because they wanted a pretty good salary, and felt that they had some recognition in other areas. But . . . union meetings were not well-attended, only around negotiating time. I used to feel disappointed. And as for political action -- bleagh.

SD: Okay. To get back to the negotiating part, what unions did you negotiate with?

JS: Mostly IWA locals, and the Packing House did, and Retail-Wholesale offered a contract from the beginning. And then on the other hand, you know that we didn't amalgamate -- when I say 'we', I mean the entire trade unions, didn't amalgamate until 1956, so I didn't know much about the craft unions. However, when we did amalgamate, I found that there were some real good wage structures in the Carpenters and Plumbers and in the, Mr. Gervin was then secretary-treasurer, and became the first secretary-treasurer of the Amalgamated Labor Council, and his secretary was well-paid.

SD: Okay. What kinds of things would you negotiate, for the contract? What was the key contract demand?

JS: Well, of course wages and seniority, were the main things
grievance
And procedures -- it was great to have grievance

JS: (cont) procedure, although the IWA in particular had one man who could find a way to fire people. And of course trade unions weren't any different -- after all, just like we say, women are human beings. Trade union personnel, males, weren't any different from other people, in that they could be as subtle, or kind, or cruel as any other person.

SD: Management.

JS: Yeah. Mnm hmn.

SD: Right, okay. So there was no sort of higher level of consciousness with the trade union officers?

JS: I can't be unkind and say there wasn't any higher level. I met people I still admire and think of very kindly. Dan Radford who died a year ago January was a remarkable man. I worked with, I knew, Joe Morris from the time of the IWA split and was his secretary before he became the president of the Congress. And Jack Moore, who I thought was a genuine trade unionist. And many, many other people who I felt were, in quotes, 'real trade unionists'. But there were an awful lot of phonies, just as you would find them in any other area of life. However, I don't want to leave the impression that I'm being cynical, because I still get so heartwarmed when I see something like Barbara Fromm's program on Sunday night about labor rights. I am disappointed that trade unionists are also workers who think they were born only to work. That's been my main

JS: (cont) grievance and I've said it, for 25 years, I've said, "Why do you think you were born only to work?" Because there is such a great need for them to take a greater role in the community and do more for the working class.

SD: Okay. Was there a resistance to grievance procedure within the unions you negotiated with?

JS: Oh, yes. We didn't win them.

SD: What kinds of things would they say against?

JS: Mainly, the one I'm thinking of right now is, um, secretarial help who became involved emotionally with one side or another and would be the first grievance I ever had to handle was in Port Alberni, where they said a file went missing that was important to one side. And it was true, the woman in question had taken sides and so had either destroyed or taken out of the file something that was very important and which they fired her. We didn't win that grievance.

SD: Was that like sides inside the labor movement?

JS: Yeah.

SD: Was that in terms of the political debates going on?

JS: Yeah, right.

SD: So the union would be in a position, then, were it would -- that must've been really quite difficult in terms of having to defend a group of workers who at the same time would be affected by the general political . . .

JS: Right.

SD: And defending everyone was in that . . .

JS: And of course the reason I was hired by George Ho\me, who had won the secretary-ship of the B.C. Federation of Labor in '48, and Jim Bury, who had just won the secretary-ship of the Vancouver Labor Council, the reason was they knew I was part of that bloc.

SD: Yeah. And yet you were in a position whereas . . .

JS: I took the job of a girl who'd been fired. On Harold Pritchett's side, and he was the then leader of the Communist Party in B.C. I felt rather queer about that.

SD: And then were there women who were still Communist Party members or sympathizers who were still working within . . .

JS: Oh, yes. And they were in our union, the Office and Professional Women's Union, and we had some pretty sensitive experiences over that.

SD: Would you be able to describe some of them?

JS: Yeah.

SD: You don't necessarily have to give names, you can just give a sense of . . .

JS: Yeah, well, they ran for executive positions in the OTEU, against the group that I belonged to, and we had to defeat them if we wanted to keep the union under our control. Went on year after year after year. Might still be going on as far as I know because when I left working for the IWA there was still that situation where women who worked for the

JS: (cont) Fishermens Union and the Boilermakers Union and the still, quote, Red bloc unions, were opposed to, on the slate, were opposing persons from the so-called White bloc.

SD: And how would that kind of position effect the ability of the union to act effectively to defend all of its members? Would that be a problem at all in terms of grievances, and that kind of thing?

JS: Say that again.

SD: Did the political divisions inside the union affect its effectiveness as, you know, I guess an organization that could defend anybody.

JS: I think that the -- now, you're talking broadly, and I do think that it was rather sad that the Fishermens Union was kept out of the CLC for a long time. Yeah, certainly I think it hurt them. Unions closed ranks when there was threat of the complete breakdown, although I watched that Mine Mill and Smelter Workers Steelworkers fight in Trail with horror.

SD: Let me just turn this over.

END OF TAPE

Tape 2. Side One.

JS: You could say it was a kick in the stomach, that started me on my domestic career in this little Saskatchewan town. The next morning I left my husband with clothes enough to keep warm, that is, I had a skirt -- I had come, to the family, that had come to the family in Rokenville from relatives in Moosejaw where my uncle was a CNR baggageman considered by us to be rich. That skirt, in my present mind's eye, still looks neat and even nifty. Fitted close to my narrow thighs it was a soft, beige knitted fabric with two short inverted pleats in front, causing motion and eye appeal. My one sweater was really attractive since it was unique in style. The wool color was described on the label as Spanish Tile, rather elegant, deep maroon. My galoshes, wool underwear, brown bouclé winter coat with dyed rabbit fur trim, small brown felt hat were a carry over from the husband days when for the first and only time in my life I'd gone out on the urging of friends and charged those items to a store in his name. Considering I had no money and a Prairie winter temperature it was necessary. How I got a job: I can't remember who told me about the Reverend and Mrs. So-and-So. Faced with being a hired girl or not eating, I let it be known that I was available. Right away I got two offers. I was well-known in that little town as a soprano soloist at both United Church and in public concert. The school

JS: (cont) inspector's wife sang alto to my soprano so we were on a friendly basis. She and her husband were to go to Ontario for a holiday in May and ⁱⁿ their family two teenagers were still at home. When I told her I had two offers, she deferred to the Anglican Minister's wife, cause they didn't need me just yet. So I went to the Anglican house, and in retrospect it's interesting to note how Mrs. Anglican Minister treated me, knowing that I had some other work to go to. My god, what would it have been like if I had nowhere to go. Maid of all work was no loose job classification in those days. It was a locked-in condition, because a hired-girl was expected to do every and any kind of work pertaining to feeding and cleaning humans, house and livestock. If you carried water it was natural, and necessary, to carry it out, from the bedroom, the bathroom, the kitchen or any other spot where living and working conditions occurred. Furthermore the hired girl slept there. She was the employer's prisoner -- no chance to sleep in, and no government-run scheme for supplemental income if let out. So Mrs. Anglican Minister explained that she actually wanted the housecleaning done in addition to other work. Her morning tea would be brought to her bed by the Reverend, who put their tiny terrier pup in bed with her. The hired girl would be up, of course, keeping the kitchen stove

JS: (cont) properly drafted to produce boiled eggs, toast, and more tea. As well as a stove reservoir, and a tin boiler, capacity at least seven pails of water, full of hot water. Dishes, people, walls, floors and clothing required that amount of water, and more. Kitchens are cozy, friendly areas in one's[?] home, but to the hired girl every new kitchen is like finding that you've met someone you daren't trust. Instinct won't help, knowledge of dozens of other kitchens are of no real help, if the woman who's hired you is reasonably kind, that makes a difference. But Mrs. Anglican Minister was not kind, nor did she ever try to be. Dishes were washed in the shallow enameled metal washbasin, and when potatoes, carrots, etc., were prepared the washbasin served, as it did when I went upstairs to wash walls. Mrs. Anglican Minister used her funds for the tea table, not for the unseeable kitchen. Hired on a monthly basis, but unexpectedly, the reverend got word that they were to be transferred, and washing ceilings, walls, woodwork and floors, getting meals and cleaning up, is so dreary, that anything else seems preferable. I asked Mrs. Anglican Minister, "Need I stay?" Years after, I still wonder why that woman kept me on, because she knew they were transferring. From that time on she treated me with more obvious contempt than previously, when someone called I was expected to

JS: (cont) stop cleaning, make tea and serve her and her guests as though I were horribly low-cast, though Mrs. Anglican Minister was aware that I enjoyed a community-wide reputation as a singer. One morning I'd been called downstairs to get dinner ready, and was peeling potatoes at the washbasin, when I answered a knock at the back door. Mrs. Anglican Minister sat in the dining room and could have answered the door. I suspect she rather liked to have callers presented to her. This caller was a nice-looking young man, a salesman. He began, or we began, a conversation which lasted only a couple of minutes, when Mrs. Anglican Minister called out, ordering me to stop talking and usher in the young man, whom she hadn't seen. In to see her, in the parlor. Embarrassed but aware of her rights I asked the fellow to follow me, and in his presence the grande dame angrily and with pomposity said I should get on with the dinner and the walls, floor and woodwork-washing, topping it off by shutting the door with force between me and the kitchen and she and ^{the} young man in the living room. Embarrassed, yes. Enraged, damn well. Some few tears fell on the potatoe peelings, and they catalyzed and crystallized my benumb^{ed} psyche. The salesman had left by the front door. I knew a middle-aged couple who had a spare bed and were kindly. The potatoes still lay in the washbasin, only

JS: (cont) partly ready for the pot. I'd had not one dollar of pay. Perhaps Mrs. Anglican Minister thought I'd put the potatoes on to boil because it wasn't until I'd put what I owned into my only carryall, that old flannelette sheet, and walked out the front gate, that she realized I wasn't there. With her plain, mean face pulled back as though her bun of hair was stretching the skin over her bones, she shoved open the front door yelling at me: "Mrs. M., I expect those potatoes to be ready for dinner!" Courage or some dormant instinct for survival, not of the body but of the spirit, made me find my voice, not easily. I called back, wanting more to cry than speak, "In that case, Mrs. Anglican Minister, you'll have to do them yourself." I didn't see her again. The Reverend looked me up and paid me for the exact number of days I'd been hired, as hired girl.

SD: *This was an excerpt from* Mrs! Scott's diary, this is 1935. Okay, we were talking before that about Mine Mill. You were about to say something about Mine Mill and I turned off the tape.

JS: Oh, I was just horrified all through that fight, because I was close to the situation, working for the Vancouver Labor Council and then later on, for the Steelworkers Union in Vancouver, but aware of what was going on in Trail.

SD: As secretary for the Labor Council and the Federation, what kind of work did you do?

JS: Oh, purely office work.

SD: Right.

JS: Did a little speaking here and there, and . . .

SD: What would you speak on?

JS: On women. Women's rights -- that's when I was on Town Meeting of the Air, with another woman who was a community worker and a well-known Roman Catholic.

SD: What kind of position on women's rights would you represent? Was it one which the Federation held, or was it . . . ?

JS: I would have to say, it's one they gave token interest in, but that's what it amounts to, was token only.

SD: So what kind of things would you speak about, in terms of women's rights?

JS: Well, the right of women to earn as much as a male. I was really hurt when my boss and the secretary of the Labor Council said to me after a meeting where my wages were voted upon as well as his, "And they upped yours another \$30 after ^{HUGHIE} ~~HUEY~~ Allison made an emotional speech." And I said, "And did you resent that?" "Well, we had already agreed to give you \$20," and he was annoyed that I had been granted a higher rate of pay. He got \$50 at that same meeting, a \$50 raise. And he's a remarkable man, he's now the labor attache in London, England. And went to Kenya, and worked with the then-unknown Tom ~~M~~boya, his people came over on the good ship

JS: (cont) Hector in the 1600's to Canada and he's a real good socialist, but I mean, what I'm trying to say to you is even his attitude at that time, was women really shouldn't be claiming the same rates of pay, or equality in every area.

SD: So there was an issue of income and equal pay. Were there other issues that you spoke on?

JS: Oh, I think so. I think it was very difficult for a woman to get elected to a position, in the trade union movement. And if she did, she was almost a freak, it was~~so~~ unusual.

SD: Why?

JS: Well, (laughing) simply because she was a woman, and it was just considered that we were in a world of patriarchy, and also that we were upstarts if we tried to change the status quo.

SD: Were there women who tried to get elected to positions in their unions?

JS: Oh, yes. There have always been . . .

SD: What happened to them?

JS: They faded into oblivion, mostly. Or, like myself, are too old to get into anything now. Josephine Hallock was resented, because she would vote against, I remember one time the Labor Council, and this is a little less than fifteen years ago in Vancouver, she -- it required unanimous vote for something, I can't remember what it was. And Jo held out,

JS: (cont) and she was the only person who did. And the men resented bitterly, and yet she was one of the most honest people I have ever known, and really believed what she was doing was right.

SD: Yeah, okay. What about other women who were women who were in the leadership, like Eileen Sufrin? Did you feel that it was difficult for them to receive the recognition they deserved?

JS: Oh, absolutely. Eileen carried on, not an overt, but a running battle that people knew about in the whole Steelworkers Union. As a matter of fact, Bill Mahoney and Larry Sefton, two very powerful people in the United Steel workers wrote to David J. McDonald, asking that he consider giving her equal pay with other respresentatives, because she was doing representatives' work, bargaining with John Englis and all, big farms, and signing good contracts and doing organizing, and had done a job that nobody else could be trusted to do, that is, try to organize Eaton's. And David J. McDonald refused to give her equal pay and she resigned.

SD: In protest over this?

JS: Yes.

SD: Right. Were there ~~ther~~ other ways in which the kind of work she was doing, you know, was not really fully recognized by the union? Do you think?

JS: No, that's the main things I know about. She was always very active in the CCF and the NDP. I don't know whether she ever saw the nomination, but she would have been an excellent candidate, but she never got a nomination.

SD: Right. Okay. ~~W~~ Also, you talked a little bit about daycare and childcare. You were involved in . . .

JS: Well, I had had to raise a child without any so-called daycare, although my mother came to my rescue when my son was about seven, and she said, that's how I moved to B.C., she said, "Come out to Vancouver, there are jobs and I'll keep an eye on your child while he goes to school," because I had to work in Vancouver and live in Burnaby and we could afford to live in Burnaby easier than Vancouver, and without my mother's help. But I was aware all the time of the extra burden that women had, not just in the welfare of their children under a mother's care, but also the difference it meant to children in their daily life with their peers, their schoolmates and their other friends, when there was a mother at home, or someone caring for them. And I saw, and still see, adequate daycare as meaning the difference between a liberated woman with children and one who is tied down because believe me, even if you don't keep them clean and fed all the time there are still so many things to do for a child, and they need that.

SD: Right. Was daycare an issue that came up at all within the labor movement?

JS: Oh, yes. I have given you a photograph of myself arguing vociferously and continuously on that, in the B.C. Federation of Labor. And I must say that I got better response than I expected. The reason that I was pleased to get that response was that I noticed men were glad to hear about it, they had never thought about it. And after I spoke I was asked by a number of delegates to tell them more about it. *They* just hadn't ever contemplated what it would mean, for women to be able to have careful and educated supervision for children, outside the home.

SD: Right. What year was that that you were speaking on daycare?

JS: That year must have been 1966.

SD: Okay. Was there any discussion of daycare before then at all?

JS: No.

SD: So that was just when it was beginning. And did women in the OTEU talk at all about daycare as an issue in terms of anxieties about taking care of their children, and ...

JS: I don't recall anything, if at all, of that kind of talk.

SD: Were there other issues that I guess in a sense that might be specifically women's issues that came up within the union, like maternity leave?

JS: Yes. And they were hooted at, at first.

SD: Oh, yeah, by who? By everyone, or . . .?

JS: Oh, by the men, you know, "What are you girls -- quote, 'girls' -- think you're gonna get?" And they were just as difficult to bargain with as anybody. As a matter of fact, I think they were harder to bargain with. Because, in actuality, it's still easier to negotiate with some one, ^{of} I don't want to say superior intelligence, but I mean, someone with the kind of native intelligence that allows for humanitarian view while they're negotiating all the various things that go with a ^{union} contract.

SD: Did you achieve maternity leave at all in your contract?

JS: A little bit, in the beginning. Not the maternity leave with pay that is now obtained.

SD: But no loss of seniority, that kind of thing?

JS: Yeah.

SD: And do you think that some of the things that OTEU achieved, or the women working for the trade unions achieved, had any kind of spillover or effect on demands that went into the union contracts?

JS: I do.

SD: Okay, can you talk about that?

JS: Well, I felt that any time negotiations went on for female categories in a mixed operation, that is, male and female, that I really felt the negotiators from the union

JS: (cont) side were glad to be able to say, "The women in so-and-so are getting this," and used us as a yardstick.

SD: That's interesting.

JS: Yeah. We were blacklisted as far as getting jobs with places like B.C. Electric or big companies, you know, you didn't go from a union office to an office in the private sector, at least I didn't know anybody that did.

SD: Right, because they'd be afraid that you'd organize, or demand those conditions.

JS: That's right. Right.

SD: You probably would, too (laughing). You said also that you had been involved in organizing a choir when you worked for the Labor Council. Did you organize social activities generally?

JS: Oh, yes, that's my forte, is people, you know, I like working with people. I probably if I'd had the opportunity for further education, likely I'd have gone into teaching first, and then evolved into other things, because I still like to do that kind of thing. That's probably why I'm President of the local Council of Women and have been ^{with} the Business and Professional Women's Club, etc.

SD: Were you involved in any particular strike situations?

JS: Oh, heavens, yes. I've had this organized workers walk through a picket line that I'm standing on and singing Solidarity Forever at the top of my lungs.

SD: When was this?

JS: About 1970, and there I was, I took time off from my job at the IWA to be on the OTEU picket line down in, down in one of the iron companies, Opal Skilling could tell you about that. And it was a legitimate strike! Where the company had an office in one location and an office in another location and one Monday morning the people came and there wasn't anything but a telephone sitting on the floor, that's how they got out of saying, "We don't have to negotiate with these employees, there is no one at that location anymore".

SD: So people put up a picket line?

JS: Well, the picket line had been up before that, as I tell you, it's a pretty bitter thing to stand on a picket line shouting your lungs out at a group of men that you don't want to go to work.

SD: And they were in the union, a union?

JS: They were in the Steelworkers union. They walked through our picket line.

SD: Do you think that part of why they did that was because it was women?

JS: No. There was an argument there about whether we had a right to continue that picket line, but we had a legitimate right to be there, and we wanted to keep that plant from operating. Yep. It wasn't always like that. I got wonderful support

JS: (cont) and so did, I shouldn't say I, I mean the OTEU got good support, many times, through the B.C. Federation of Labor from other unions. But it hurt when you didn't get the support you felt you should.

SD: How about the IWA -- you worked for them?

JS: Mnm hmn. Nearly 14 years.

SD: Right. And were you there in 1946? During the strike?

JS: In 1946, no. I was with the Packing ^hHouse Union and Retail-Wholesale. In 1948 this big split developed and other unions came to the rescue of the IWA and I churned out leaflets night and day then, in fact I just left my work for a whole week with the Packing House and Retail-Wholesale and did nothing but keep that old mimeograph machine going.

SD: And what was this around, this was around the . . .

JS: This was where the White bloc of the IWA, which had huge membership in Vancouver and New Westminster, they had to have help in getting their point across, and I was with the so-called White Bloc and churned out these leaflets. I was told at that time by one of the men in local 1-217, that they would see that I got paid for all this night work that I did. I have never got paid nor have I ever sent them a bill.

SD: What were the issues that the White bloc was taking up, in terms of its confrontation . . .

JS: The only issue was, really, that the Communist Party, had

JS: (cont) decided to dissolve the Woodworkers Union and form a new union called the Woodworkers Industrial Union of Canada, which spelt WUIC, and they were called the Wooies.

SD: And so the organization was to prevent a split in the union?

JS: Yeah. Oh, and it was a terrible battle. If you look into records there you see where the president of the IWA was thrown into a ditch, and, there were dreadful fights. People told me that camps were so badly split that families who had been friends for years stopped speaking to each other, they spat upon each other, it was a dreadful thing.

SD: And you worked for the White bloc? Was this in part because of your previous involvement with the CCF?

JS: ^(uh) Um, really, it was just the fact that I was working for unions that were in the White, because I was not involved politically myself, but I was a member of the CCF, and of course opposed to the takeover by the Communist Party, as, of course, the leader of the Communist Party, we've always been told that Nigel Morgan who was leader, and Harold Pritchett, who was certainly the trade union leader then and was also the secretary-treasurer of the B.C. Federation of Labor did not want to do that, but had orders from above to go ahead and try it, and it split the trade union movement in B.C. as it has never been split before and it took years for it to heal. As a matter of fact,

JS: (cont) I think the IWA only amended their constitution a few years ago to allow Communists to be members.

SD: Hmm, okay. Were there other strikes during the '40's that you were involved with at all?

JS: Well, I did mention that nationally the Packing House Workers went on strike.

SD: Right.

JS: There were also strikes in the Retail-Wholesale Union, and at the same time that the Packing House Workers were out the Steelworkers were out right across Canada.

SD: What kind of work would you do around supporting the strikes? When you worked with the unions?

JS: Oh, if , naturally I did an awful lot of extra office work, because strikes meant a lot more work in the office. And if necessary I would go out and distribute leaflets.

SD: Right. So you would know people in the unions?

JS: Oh, yes, I think they knew me very well, for a long time.

SD: What about your community and family and friends, your social milieu that you were in, were most of the people you knew involved in the labor movement?

JS: Yes. To a great extent. One of the strange things that I noticed about the labor movement and it rather saddened me, was that ^{there} were echelons within the movement, and when you went to a social event like a dance, you noticed that the president of one union danced with the wife of the

JS: (cont) president of another union, and that the secretary-treasurer of one union, would dance with the wife of the secretary-treasurer of another union. And if you weren't really anything more than the lower ordinary member, you didn't get dancing with the executives. Some people say that isn't true, but it is! It was.

SD: And was there, were there any sort of either formal women's committees or informal groups of women who would spend time together who were active in the labor movement?

JS: The auxiliaries were encouraged as long as all they did was visit the sick and injured member in hospital and give him cigarettes and the local union paper.

SD: Right.

JS: And feed the strikers when there was a strike.

SD: What about other kinds of organizations? Did that happen at all?

JS: No, no.

SD: No women's committees? But did women who were trade union activists spend time together and talk at all?

JS: Yes. Oh, yes, umn hm. We were very honest with each other, too, we knew where we stood, we knew what the cards read.

SD: What kinds of things would you talk about, or consider?

JS: Well, I think we were very reasonable and intelligent in the way that we would study contracts, and get contracts

JS: (cont) from Eastern Canada where we felt that they were a jump ahead, or even when I was in the IWA, we always tried to follow the head office of the IWA in Portland, because for some reason or other they were a step ahead of the rest of us. So that I feel that we were constructive in our meetings. It was too bad that the division of the Communists and the, more, CCF group was always evident, there, too. And I think that was a carryover from the IWA bitter battle.

SD: Yeah. And the split in the B.C. Federation of Labor.

JS: Yeah. Right.

SD: So you would look at these contracts in order to be able to set sort of, look at your goals in terms of negotiation and things?

JS: Mnm hmn, mnm hmn.

SD: Trying to see if there's stuff I haven't covered. Were most of the people who worked for the unions women?

JS: Oh, yes.

SD: Was it almost exclusively women?

JS: Yes. Mnm hmn. Very few male office people. And don't you understand that the reason was that men didn't want to belittle themselves and become mere office workers.

SD: So that was an attitude that was really present?

JS: ^{If} I'm cynical, if I sound that way, it's quite natural and quite reasonable that I am, because that's the way we

JS: (cont) were treated. As long as we kept our place -- I was an upstart, and it's a wonder that I had any male friends, but Joe Morris knew that if he yelled at me I just yelled back, and we had an understanding.

SD: Right. Okay, were most of the, so then almost all the leadership people in the union would be women, then? Within OTEU?

JS: Oh, yes.

SD: The whole executive board.

JS: Yeah. But when it came to appointing people to top jobs, they were always men.

SD: That's what I was gonna ask next, yeah.

JS: Yeah, this is what burnt me up, you couldn't get . . . Opal Skilling has got to where she is because at one time a woman quit being our little secretary-treasurer and Opal was out of a job, she'd been fired by the man in that picture, at the IWA. And she took it on, and I give Opal full credit, she took it on when there was nothing in it. And stuck with it, and of course she's got a good job, and had a good one for quite some time. And has done a good job, I think.

SD: But in terms of a national level, or international level, there are men who are in the leadership of the OTEU?

JS: Absolutely. And when the Canadian Labor^U Congress^{presented} its brief to the Royal Commission on the Status of Women, and

JS: (cont) I was a committee person^{but} here, who do you think gave it? Donald McDonald! A man gave the brief on the status of women! I was sick.

SD: Right. Did the OTEU as a union with a large female component try and encourage other women in other unions to get active?

JS: Yes.

SD: What kind of things would you try and do?

JS: Well, to the extent that we had any influence at all, which wasn't very great, we did try to get women in other unions to, or rather in other industries, even, to do something. And the OTEU made a few feeble attempts at bringing in other groups, but . . . I don't know what their membership is now, but I tell you, we never got anywhere.

SD: How would you try and get other women to be active? Do you remember anything?

JS: Yeah, we would leafletize, now and then. But we didn't have any money to spend. And in Vancouver, the office employees union was the B.C. Hydro, they were the big ones and they were very busy doing their own things, and we were looked on as a poor relation.

SD: Would you leaflet to try and organize?

JS: Yeah.

SD: Okay. And did the union have a newsletter?

JS: Um, yeah. It seems to me that Opal put . . . when you're

JS: (cont) talking about a newsletter, do you mean locally?

Because we did have an international paper. From Howard
Cocklin.?

SD: Yeah. But was there like a local paper that might have . . .

JS: No, not very, I wouldn't say there was a regular one.

I didn't see it.

SD: And union discussions would talk about equal pay, and
maternity leave?

JS: Oh, yes. Mnm hmn.

SD: Did people talk at all about equal work?

JS: Yes, oh yes. I think that all aspects of the working area
were well-discussed.

SD: About political activity, were most of the women involved
in the union, and who you ran into who were active unionists,
involved politically as well, either with the CCF or . . .?

END OF TAPE
SIDE ONE

JS: No. I was very disappointed all the years I worked in the
unions, union offices, to find that there were very few
that wanted to have any political life at all. I was loaned
to the NDP, right out of the office, I took my typewriter
with me, during political campaigns, when I worked for the
IWA, which, I told you was nearly 14 years. And they would
let me go and work actively in the political, cause they
knew how I felt. But I had nobody to talk to about politics
during the lunch hour.

SD: You were involved with the CCF?

JS: Yes.

SD: What kind of work did you do with them?

JS: Anything that they asked me to do. Joe's jobs, or, well I never got any of the high falutin⁷ jobs. As a matter of fact that the CCF and the trade unions were afflicted to a degree with the same attitude to women as other areas of life. I remember going to a luncheon once when I moved five times because, first of all, Tommy Douglas's wife didn't show up on time, so I was asked to sit in the seat that she was to have, and Grace McInnis was the speaker and she hadn't showed up and I was asked to move then and sit in the seat she was to have, and I, I did it. I wonder now why I was so willing to do any damn thing they wanted me to do, just to sort of, it's all for the party. And I belittled myself, and probably would have gained more ground if I had stood my ground, and said, "I'm sorry, I'm here as a person, too."

SD: Was there any activity inside the CCF around women's rights?

JS: By women, yes.

SD: What form did it take? What kinds of things?

JS: Oh, just a little discussion now . . . conventions, we began talking 15 years ago, bringing things like that up, and there was reasonable support for it as long as nobody had to put their money where their mouth was.

SD: Right. Did that discussion in the CCF affect the trade

SD: (cont) unions, spill over and affect the trade unions at all?

JS: No. Discussion about women's rights?

SD: About women in the . . .

JS: Yeah. And you know there were excellent women. At one time ^{here} in the early '40's, there were five CCF women in the Victoria legislature. And they were great women, I knew them: Laura Jamieson and Grace McInnis ~~was~~ were two of them whom I know pretty well. And Gladys Webster was another wonderful person, Arnold's first wife, And they were highly respected, too. But, like Grace McInnis said, you had to be twice as smart and work twice as hard to gain the same amount of respect as a man.

SD: Okay. Are there any women who you feel should be particularly noted in terms of the kind of contribution they made to the labor movement?

JS: Well, of course Eileen. And I think that Josephine Hallock ought to get some sort of recognition. Unfortunately, some of the wonderful ones that you could have known are gone, like Helena Gutteridge, did you ever hear of her?

SD: Oh, sure.

JS: She was a remarkable person.

BREAK IN TAPE

JS: This is when I had just acquired enough typing speed to be able to type with two hands, and I did get a job in headquarters orderly room, up on 10th Street hill in Calgary, which was the number two wireless and air gunnery school. I was civil employee, I didn't belong to the women's division of the RCAF. And men ran the show, then, there were very few women who were in any official capacity. I do remember an assistant to the adjutant being a Miss somebody, but that was the exception rather than the rule. We had nothing to say about our salaries, of course, and I was in a room probably half a dozen women with 30 men. And I have, we had to work, start work at 8:30 in the morning because it was wartime, we had nothing to say about that either. One thing, we did get three weeks vacation, which was away ahead of anything else at that time. I was doing part clerical and part stenography, so that as soon as the last message came in to discontinue -- or, rather the first message came in to discontinue classes I knew the war was going to be over in a few days. And I quit immediately, so that I could go to secretarial school and better my earning ability. The terrible thing about working there, perhaps this isn't cogent to what you're talking about, but every six weeks we graduated 200 young men, and the mortality rate for wireless air gunners was 85%. And I used to see them standing there graduating with

JS: (cont) the flag going up and the air force tune -- (singing)

Da da Da da, da da Da da, (etc.) -- I'd see that flag and look at those young men and realize that 85% would be dead within a few months.

SD: Did they know the percentages?

JS: Sure.

SD: Did they volunteer for the job?

JS: They were the volunteers, ~~it~~ was the French Canadians who were sent out there as what we called GD's, General Duties, that caused terrible trouble on the campus, or the area, because all the others were in the thing for a matter of life and death and they were just clean-up men, they didn't have to join. There was a riot there while I was there, the Australians ~~--~~^{You} see, it was a Commonwealth air training plant, and the Australians and New Zealanders were rebels, and they even burned the efficiency pennant, and the flag, and took the man who was in charge of the station that night, high rank, down to the ring and pummeled him, went down to the guardhouse and freed all the prisoners and tore out the toilets and commandeered trucks and drove wildly through the streets of Calgary. There wasn't a thing in the papers about it.

SD: They were protesting?

JS: They were protesting the conditions, the commander of the station was an English, British Army, his name was Owen,

JS: (cont) and he thought he could treat those fellows like you used to treat people in the British army, for instance he'd have a man who'd committed the minor dismearor do pack grill with 40 pounds on his back up and down in front of the school for several hours. And they rioted. And, for instance, when they gave a dictum that the Australians were not to wear the Australian hat, felt hat, with one side turned up, a very gay looking thing, they all appeared the very next day wearing their own Australian hats. And the day after the riot, Air Vice-Marshal ^{W.S.M.} ~~Housen~~ was at the gate with army trucks and said, "I hear there's been a bit of trouble up here." At that gate and that gate are army trucks. Anyone who is dissatisfied with the Air Force will please just step out and go into the army." And nobody moved. The two people, an Australian and a Canadian, who incited the riot, were charged with mutiny, which was punishable by death.

SD: So did they die?

JS: No. They were given jail terms. But it was very interesting.

SD: And did the army at any point deal with the whole question of women coming into the war industry or into the army during . . .

JS: Oh, no, they were so bloody glad that women would do anything, and women were getting pay that was unheard of.

SD: Yeah. So the women were just sort of relieved that they had jobs and that they were there.

JS: Oh, yes, yes.

SD: Were they anxious towards the end of the war that they would not be able to find employment?

JS: Hm, well, I don't know. . .

SD: Was there any discussion about that?

JS: Yeah. This is why I quit right away. Because I was part of the rumblings that were going on about, "Now what are we all gonna do for jobs?" And so I didn't even wait for the school to disband, I just quit that week and enrolled in Mrs. Hogan's secretarial school, and upped my status considerably in the, both earnings and prestige.

SD: Do you remember in terms of press coverage or general articles anything that referred to the need for women to go back to the home, and give up their jobs to the returned men?

JS: No, I don't recall a lot of that, I recall it starting, uh, softly. I don't remember a great wave of that, because there were lots of jobs, and women just wanted to have babies.

SD: Right.

JS: They sure did.

BREAK IN TAPE

JS: ^{her mother?} . . . very much, in a sort of non-declarative manner.

All her life she was what we would have called a staunch fellow, and her devotion to what she believed very deeply was more humanitarian than political.

SD: She was like a Christian socialist?

JS: Well, yes, she was. She changed her Christian label once or twice, that is, she was born into the Anglican Church, and as long as she ever went to church, although she became a Presbyterian and then United through marrying my father, she would intone the Lord's Prayer, rather than say it, you know, because she had a British background. But she was so true to what she believed and felt that I'm sure I would have felt that I was sinning against her if I hadn't been true to the things that she believed in.

SD: I have one last question which is that, you see yourself as a feminist now. . .

JS: Oh, heavens, yes.

SD: And does that come out of the experiences that you had in the labor movement and as a woman?

JS: Oh, very much so. In fact, when I went the other day to the arthritis clinic, and the lady said, "Are you Miss or Mrs.?" I said, "Would you please put Ms?" And I got the same repost as I always get. (laughs) A little kind of giggle. And I just stand on my dignity, I don't try to -- sometimes I make a little speech. But most of the time I just insist

JS: (cont) that I want that category not for myself but for all the women.

SD: Do you feel that your consciousness around women's oppression and women's rights has changed, and deepened, from let's say the 1930's or '40's?

JS: No, I can't use the word deepened. It's moderated, because I couldn't, mind you I still flare up far too fast, I have often wished I could be cool, but I can't where the injustice against human beings! human beings whom I know! And here I have to say this with great feeling -- women do have an ability, whether it's god-given or what else, for greater sensitivity, for greater perception to other people's needs and feelings. And I will die a rabid feminist, because I just can't be any different.