

SD: I am going to ask you to talk a bit about when you came to British Columbia and where you were born and why your family decided to emigrate. This is Mrs. Lil Stoneman.

LS: Well, we immigrated in 1913, and we had a large family... and that was the year of the big emigration, you know Canada ^{was} somewhat, you know, like the streets were paved with gold, it was so easy to get work out here... and

SD: What had your father been doing?

LS: He'd been a sailmaker, but he was getting elderly and sick, and we had the idea he might start a sound business with canvass covers for farmers and things like that, but it didn't materialize. And he died so...

SD: So, how many children were there in your family?

LS: There were seven, four boys and three girls. I was the youngest.

SD: And you all come?

LS: There were eight of us, ⁴ my sisters intended to come along too. (laughs) We were fortunate, my brothers had been here for several years, they were carpenters, and they'd got a house for us, with four bedrooms which we needed.

SD: And when you came to Canada, was it to B.C.? British Columbia?

LS: Oh no! Oh no, ^{we came} to Saskatoon.

SD: What were conditions like in Saskatoon when you arrived? What year was that?

LS: 1913. And they'd just finished paving the streets, Oh, it was quite a large city even then, and quite a good deal of work too. And of course after two or three months

LS: (cont) when I found what was what, I found out I could teach school on my Oxford University, certificate. They called us AAS, Associates of Arts, but if you put the "s" on you know, (laughs), that wouldn't have done (laughs). Then I went to Normal, third class for two months, and then the next year second class. I could've got a first class on this certificate, but oh you learned a great deal anyway, you met people, everything was so strange.

SD: Coming from a different country.

LS: Oh yes! Yes.

SD: And how did your family support you through college? Did you live with your parents?

LS: Oh yes! Oh yes, I wasn't, well I was just 18. Oh I did a few odd jobs for... but in August I answered an ad for a school and a man turned up (laughs) near Harris, and, he seemed satisfied with me, and so that started my teaching, out here.

SD: In British Columbia?

LS: Oh no, no, no no. In Saskatchewan. I didn't come here until '24.

SD: What was it like teaching in...?

LS: Oh, very difficult... Very difficult. The school itself, I hadn't done any teaching, you see, you don't until you go to a teaching college for three years in England, so I walked into the school not knowing a thing (laughs). But going to Normal you learn a good deal, mixing with other teachers.

SD: How old were your children? Was it like a one-room school?

LS: Oh Yes! ^{It was a one-room school} Some didn't have grade eight, Of course, you, had to put them in the grade that they fitted into.

SD: [And what kind of things would you be teaching these children? Would they be in school regularly? Or would they be out in some seasons?

LS: Well ^{through} the summer they have to help with the harvest, the bigger ones. [Of course it varied from time to time, but not very,] ^{Lenny?} except in Lenning, that was a village, and I had a village school. It was much more difficult, but it was easier living there...Most schools you had to walk two or three miles to school, and back.

SD: [Did you live with families?

LS: Pardon?

SD: Did you live with families? ?

LS: Oh yes, oh yes! ^{you lived with a family.} That was the thing you know to board the teacher, (laughs) [I think it was, never paid more than \$15 a month, and] the salary seemed to be about \$65 everywhere you went. (laughs)

SD: [And where there any organization of teachers ^{in Sasichewana} provincially?

LS: Not that I know of, and then if you did, you were...] the first school at Harris was 60 miles from Harris, from the railway. You know you never get to see anyone.

SD: ^{So you were} a very isolated

LS: Oh yes! Yes, very.

SD: Was that hard for you as a young woman?

LS: Well...you knew you had to do it. What I missed was the flat prairie, why] I think I cried many times. I wanted to see the ocean. I missed that more than anything.

SD: [When did you stop teaching?

LS: Well I took very ill, got appendicitis, six months in the hospital, I had to stop then, oh, the war was nearly at its end: 1917. But then, when I got married I had to go out and teach (laughs). It was quite easy to get a school there.

SD: [When did you get married?

LS: 1920.

SD: And who did you marry? What did your husband do?

LS: Oh he ^{my husband} was a painter.

SD: [A housepainter?
Yes.

LS: ^ Rather a good one. He was a master painter you know and in the summer he would go out and get enough work. But when we came here ^(to B.C. in 1924) you see conditions became [in '24 after they gradually became] very bad, until, what was the year, '27? 28? When things all broke up, you know the year of the stock... about then.

SD: 29.?

LS: Was it '29? ^{Oh,} ^ It seemed about... things began to get bad [any-
way before that happened,] but then the slump came. You couldn't get work anywhere of any kind. And eventually with many other people, we had to go on relief. \$18 for two weeks. * to page 10

SD: [Earlier on, after you were married you were able to teach?

LS: Yes, but I had to send to Regina and get a Notary Public, you see I'd changed my name. Then I got a certificate.

SD: They allowed women to teach who were married in Saskatchewan did they?

LS: Yes, yes.]

SD: [Because in some places they wouldn't.

LS: Well no ^{allow married to teach in B.C.} they wouldn't here. I couldn't get work when I came here in '24. They had so many teachers, [they said, even for subbing [they had too many], but I did private teaching then, for two or three years.)

[SD: So you had always worked even when you were married?

LS: Yes, yes, yes.

SD: Did your family support women working?

LS: Oh no, no. I was, of course I'd go home in between schools. I had to go home for the third examination to take, and then again the next year for the second. No, they had to support me (laughs); I didn't very much saved up.

SD: Did they think it was alright for you to be working though?

LS: Oh, yes, oh yes.

SD: Do you remember attitudes towards women in the 1920's in terms of whether women had a right to work, to a job? Do you remember any sort of prejudice around

LS: No.] There weren't very many male teachers in those days, for some reason, they thought it was beneath them, [you know] only women could teach. I think that was the idea...a good deal. And then they needed them badly.

[SD: So why did you decide to move to British Columbia? in 1924?

LS: Oh, it was my husband took the notion. And I didn't mind, I rather looked forward to coming. It was so much like England.

SD: And when you got there, was your husband able to work as a painter?]

LS: Oh yes, there was a good deal of work...then.

SD: So what happened that you ended up on relief?

LS: Well there was no work!

SD: And can you sort of talk about what it was like being on relief, what you received from the government, what the conditions were like, how people treated you?

LS: Oh, ^{Being on relief} it was degrading. Especially ^{side} I'd never dreamt of being in that position at all, [you know, then you,] of course the men went down to get their groceries, [you had to get groceries.] That lasted oh, two or three years. [And then, you know,] as the situation went on, conditions became worse, and of course, the people began to rebel against this ^{as} people will. Oh, ^{oh} various meetings and struggles took place, organizations were formed, unemployed block committees ~~and~~ and unemployed associations ^{which acted}. Eventually we won a voucher instead of the "gunny sack", as they called it [you know,] which was better than. The trouble was before you had all starchy food, I know I saw people with shelves full of macaroni and rice, all the cheap things.

SD: [Does that mean that people were physically ill ^{often} because of improper food?

LS: Well, that's very difficult to say unless you were in the medical profession.] We managed somehow. I never forget they gave ^{free} onions away and potatoes. I well remember the onions and crowds of people were down, they were in the shade, everybody scrambling to get a bag full of onions, ^{As} and they were bad, not outside but inside; they go right

LS: (cont) through, oh, that was terrible! I pushed in amongst the men, they nearly knocked my head off, I remember, but I stayed there (chuckles).

[SD: Were people starving?

LS: Well, yes and no.] You had to keep alive on the pittance that you got. Of course it was much cheaper in those days. One day my husband came home, and he had a club bag and he opened it and there was nothing in it. "Well," he says, "we'll have to go on to a soldiers' allowance." "So I didn't ^{get} any relief." I had about a dollar and a few cents; I went out and got a roast of meat for 25 cents, mostly bone. And with the rest of the money [you know a few,] just enough to make meals over for Saturday and Sunday, but then we only got 40 dollars which wasn't much more, but we had a cheque and we had to go to the bank and cash it which was a little better, than relief. As the war broke out then, they quickly raised, [they called] the war veterans' allowance. I remember the next cheque was 60. [But in the meantime, someone ^{had} told us about some land out to Coquitlam, had no money to buy any land (laughs) or anything else. Someone lent us a car. We could get this acre and a quarter for a 145 dollars, and, well, we had to decide quickly and the first cheque we received, from the army, war veterans' allowance, we paid five dollars payment on this land. My

LS: (cont) husband bought an old bicycle, he used to go from Coquitlam-Vancouver ^{to} Coquitlam. And put up a shell of a house. Now I think July ^{the} First we moved, and I remember we only had tar paper on the roof for several months until we could afford to buy some shakes to put on it, or something. I didn't show you the picture of it, did I?

SD: No.

LS: I'll do it now? I have some bigger ones.

[Break in tape]

SD: So this was in 1947?

LS: Yes, yes. That was the last done to it. We moved [break in tape] oh, just lovely, but the strawberries were alot of work, oh I never dreamed of going into the strawberry business.

SD: Did you go into the strawberry business?

LS: Oh yes, oh yes. We put up a sign and we had to take it down: so many people called for strawberries. But we sent to the government for information, then people around helped us, gave us roots to start with.

LS: Oh yes, before light you had to get out and weed, and then cut the runners off, or you leave one runner on to make next year's plant, "maidens," they're called. And put disinfectant out for earwhigs. And then picking, that was hard too.

SD: So you and your husband shared the work around the garden?

LS: Oh yes, oh yes. He liked gardening, rather.

SD: During the Depression, when did you begin to become interested

SD: (cont) in political organising? How did that process develop?]

LS: It was the situation, You began to wonder why ^{why} it happened.

And there was a little hall near us in 320 - 20th Street, and there was a meeting advertized. And so I thought, well I'll go up [and, oh I forget the man's name, ^{but} it was a good lecture.

SD: What was it about?

LS: Well, what caused it and what could be done. In fact,]
the key word in all ^{this} time was "organize", which was correct.

You couldn't do anything without organizing, just one person couldn't go down and do... There was a little hall on

Fraser, ^I remember ^{his} name Mr. and Mrs. Habbinat, we used to meet there, Unemployed Council. Doesn't matter what the name was, it was what they did. They would help people:

I think I told you the time, some woman's husband had cashed the cheque, [that was after...] and went and left her with not

a cent, so Mr. and Mrs. Fordham, I said I'd go along, we went down to relief offices. Mr. Fordham was a little

nervous, [you know ^{type}] We spoke to the man behind the desk. It

was quiet for a moment; and all of a sudden: "And as for you,

you fat-bellied slug!" Or something like that (laughs). That was it!

Police came in no time, so I called them outside and ex-

plained to them what had happened, how it was an awful sit-

uation the woman was in, and of course, they let it slide,

I'm a good talker when I have to be (laughs). [But there

LS: (cont) was so many many cases.

SD: What happened then, did she get relief?

LS: Oh yes, yes.] Eventually they said they would ^{give her relief} when all this simmered down. A man could easily have been taken to jail. ^{a lot of people,} Oh, you just had to ^{step,} walk out of line and off you went to Okalla. It was just full with people, anyone who struggled. But you had to do it together.

SD: [Okay, when did you become involved in the Unemployed Council?

Do you remember the year, was it at the beginning of the Depression?]

LS: ^{I did become involved in the Unemployed Council} Well it was soon after '29 then, because everything stopped so sudden! There wasn't a bit of building/going on, and if there's no building, there's no painting. And even odd jobs were taken up. And as an example how difficult ^{it} what happened: You get to know friends, and they have a snowfall occasionally in Vancouver, ^{as you're aware of,} and it was about two o'clock one night and a young fellow called for my husband. They would be calling for men to clean the rails, to clean up the road. You couldn't get a job, ^{it} was just mobbed when they came home. I made him a cup of tea. Then another time, he was almost forced to go to work, to work on the Lions Gate Bridge, and he had to carry a 100 pound sack of cement, ^{Oh,} and he fell with it, and that didn't last very long. It was impossible to find any sort of work.

SD: Had he always been able to find work before then?

LS: Oh yes, he was a very good workman. Learned his trade in Toronto. He was a master painter. He'd always bought his own, by the 100 weight, lead and oil and mixed his own paint. A very good painter. So its stupid, people saying, "They don't want to work"; you hear that so often.

SD: Did he used to line up work every year?

ch yes

LS: He could go out. You only needed a few builders.

SD: What kinds of things did the Unemployed Councils do? They would provide services for people who were cut off work?

LS: They couldn't. No, the only thing was to go down to the Relief office. They had no money or funds. Oh maybe in a few cases they might, but that was the only thing to do.

SD: So the main thing they did was to go down to the Relief office?

LS: Yes, yes.

SD: Did they organize meetings or events?

LS: Oh yes, and you belonged, even in the, you've heard of the youth, what you call them, the single men who came to town.

SD: The relief camp workers?

yes,

LS: The relief camp workers, they had their own organization, as much as they could, and carried a card. Of course, you couldn't organize everyone, but basically.

SD: Was the unemployed organization done on a neighborhood level?

LS: Oh yes, very much so.

SD: How would that be done, how was it structured?

LS: Well, there was a hall, sometimes in a house they would meet, over in the West end. I went one time. There was various halls, I know ours was on Fraser, where I lived. There was another hall out South Vancouver. *They seemed autonomous, all these little halls.* [You had to have a hall ^{big enough.} Of course in the city, the Ukrainian Hall was used, a good deal, for meetings.

SD: How would you organize your neighborhood? How would you get people interested and involved?

LS: *Organizing your neighborhood* Well, that was easily done; you soon found out who was down on the relief line when you went, it was very easy. Of course, [not very many people,] people are always leary about things. We used to have our big May Day parades. They made up ^{the} most of the parade. [That was the only thing at that time.

SD: Would you leaflet the relief lines?

LS: Pardon?

SD: Would you give leaflets to the relief lines to get people to come out to meetings?

LS: *How would it leaflet* [Oh, not too much, it cost money. [Oh, by] word of mouth.] There was a field meeting place, Powell St. grounds, [I don't know if it is still there. And] if there was a speaker who wanted to speak on a certain subject, you couldn't pay for advert-

LS: (cont) izing, but word of mouth, ^(it spread by) [it spread], you'd have ten thousand people down there in no time. [I can remember meetings. And] there was another place we used to meet occasionally, Cambie Street grounds, that's where the bus depot is built now. [The women,] We'd organize the women at the time you see, apart from the regular unemployed, ^{unDe} Womens/Labour League [^]. [because that was the only thing to work on.] We were going to the City Council to ask for bedding, clothes which we needed, we couldn't buy any, [but] when we got there, to our surprise, [we should have known, I don't what was happened:] the men were having a meeting, So we all joined with them and went up to City Hall to ask for what they wanted.

SD: [What were the Womens Labour League?]

LS: ^[It originated The W.L. League ed in] Well the reason they did form, Ontario, a Mrs. Custance organized ^{it} some years ago. [and] they were wives and also women who worked with the unions at that time. [Well we found, I think they're still going I'm not sure, but they kept on there.] We found out that they weren't able to act here, because we had nothing to do with unions. ^{So} And so we disbanded and called ourselves Mothers Council to make it larger and work in a better way.

SD: [What kind of program were the Womens Labour League organized around?]

LS: [Well,] ^{They organized} around the unemployment issues, [just the same.] There

LS: (cont) were a few labour committees, The Workers Unity League started up. [The carpenters union, and] Then they formed their own unions. There was [a lumbermens, what was the initials of it, you know we used to know them off so patly,] The United Lumbermens Association, [something like that.] Howard Prichett⁺ was ^{Ande} a very notable person in that; he used to tell us how he used to crawl on his stomach, to get into a camp to speak to the men and organize. That was the key word: organize. I can remember Becky Buhay^{Ande} when she came here; 'organize', that was her key word, [and] you could do anything, organizing. It was only organization that we got rid of the gunny sack and had a cheque issued to us. I went to Saskatoon, it's always been my hometown, and the people were still on the gunny sack there. I nearly got in jail but I got up and tried to rouse them. They did afterwards, they were quite leary about it, going to the Council and asking for it to be abolished. Everyone was so afraid; they openly had [a Red, what you call it, that policeman, the head of it,] a Red Brigade, they were called that, because they were always sent against people wherever they organized you see.

SD: Was it Scanlon?^{Stanton?} ✓

LS: ^(Stanton?) Scanlon ✓ [yes] that's who it is. [yes.] Oh he was hated (laughs). He nearly got pushed off his horse alot of times. My husband was going to do it, that day we walked up ^{to} City Hall, he was

LS: (cont) waiting, [the other men,] and if he'd attacked us they were going to kill him, ready to do it.

[SD: The Workers Unity League, what was it?

LS: It's hard now to recall, but they had an office on, what few unions they could get together, they had, people coming. They had an office above that boot place, Pierre Paris store. I think he's left now. You know where I mean.

LS: Yes, to try to organize the workers.

SD: Were they associated with the Communist Party?

LS: No, I wouldn't say that, but I must say this, [whenever there was anything done, there was a Communist there to help do it ... whether they did it openly or not.

SD: [Were the Womens Labour League affiliated to the Workers Unity League?

LS: No, no, we weren't actually, I guess if I remember rightly, that's how I got into [the Workers Unity League, ^{I was} sent as a delegate to [them.]

SD: [What did you do with the delegate to the Workers Unity League?

LS: Well, just ^{I was there} to find out what was being done, get ideas what other people were doing?

SD: [Was that on a national level?

LS: No, no, not that I know of. It's quite likely in each province, but there was...

SD: Do you remember the kinds of things that were discussed at

SD: (cont) the meeting you went to?

LS: Well, no^W ^{the} One thing that would come up that had to be discussed, that was May Day, May Day Parade, [there was a lot of, and any serious thing.

SD: What principles, what were the principles of the Workers Unity League, for example, bettering "conditions?"

LS: ^{The principles of the W.U.L. were} Work, work. Jobs. Of course, everybody wanted more relief. ^{They were very simple.}

SD: [Did they have particular kinds of positions on women and women workers? Or did the Womens⁹ Labour League have any positions about women?

LS: They weren't working, (Laughs).

SD: For example, child care or birth control?

LS: Well of course we organized that. ^{for childcare & b.c.} It was quite late, because I left in '39. [Whether it was carried on or not I don't know, but we] for a couple years, we worked on that. [Oh yes,] Miss Gutteridge [then], she'd been elected on the Council, and she didn't want anything to do with us.

[SD: Had she been involved in the Womens Labour League?]

LS: Oh yes, she ^{had been} was chairman. ^{of the W.U.L.} [And I didn't mind,] I took ^{on} secretary to it.

SD: [When you were secretary, what was your job?

LS: Oh, ^{I sent} send letters out to ^{the}, different organizations [came, from the] ^{I must say,} most of our assistance came from the foreign people, Ukrainians and the Russians and then the Jewish organizations ^{too}

LS: (cont) [they became,] at least one of them did, became quite working class. [They disagreed with the other type, they weren't all ,] there were many good Jewish workers.

SD: [Did the Workers Unity League tend to represent left-wing unions, as opposed to craft unions.

LS. Oh yes, oh yes. Their husbands wouldn't have liked them to come (laughs).

SD: What kind of organizing did you hear of in the 1930's?

Were people trying to organize to v..]

END OF TAPE - SIDE 1

SIDE 2:

SD: (cont) unionize domestic workers?

LS: I tried it, but it was very, very poor. My niece come to stay with me for a year. She had to work, we couldn't keep her, that's for sure. We made an effort, a few joined but it was difficult.

SD: what kinds of things were done?

LS: Well just get a few that we knew of together. She joined it but not much came of it, it was too difficult.

SD: Did you call any meetings for domestics?

LS: Yes, yes, ^{of course,} she worked at \$10 a month. She looked after children, and she had to go Sundays to cut up the vegetables for their dinner; that made her mad. (laughs) We didn't get very far with it.

LS: Why was that? Why was it difficult to organize them?

LS: To get them together. Because I was on the spot I got her to go to the meetings, but not very many turned up.

SD: Do you remember what you would do to try to get them together, Any specific actions that you took?

LS: It was just the same reason as with the men, it was to organize them, to show them what they could do.

SD: Did many women have to take domestic jobs in order to get relief?

LS: Well you couldn't get them, it was very hard, what was the use of getting work for \$10 a month. She had quite a job, then she went to a candy store, she learned to make chocolates,

LS: (cont) which wasn't too bad. Then, for any reason you'd be out of work, they wouldn't say yes or no or what. So we moved out in '39. We had to send her back to her mother, because we couldn't take her out, onto this piece of land with us. Oh that was hard work.

SD: Can you talk a little bit about ^{some of} the demonstrations that the unemployed organizations got together, for example against Gerry McGeer or some of the actions at the parade ground?

LS: [I don't know that we did much of this one but ^{we} heard he ^{that McGeer} was to preach the sermon at ^{the} United Church on Gore Avenue. Andrew Roden was the minister. Nothing was planned, we wanted to hear what he had to say, at least we didn't want to hear (laughs). So when he got up and went to the rostrum, [I don't know whether he began to speak or not; anyway at that point] everyone in the church got up, we arrived you see, quite early so noone else could get in. Every seat was taken up by an unemployed person. We got up and went out, Oh, his face! It was white and then it was red. He was a very choleric kind of person, easily aroused. Oh! That was awful, he could have killed us all. He had the police take him out, they changed their overcoats, you know there's always a hot head in a crowd of people. He was afraid of his life. We couldn't help it if anything would have happened to him. We saw four men, detectives, that walked away. Noone knew

LS: (cont) which one was ^{he was}, nothing came of it yet it was a demonstration.

SD: [How about when McGeer read the Riot Act?]

LS: [Oh that wasn't concerned with us, that was concerned with the ^{The Single unemployed} Single Unemployed, that was their name. Of course] they were together, it was easy for them to march and do things, more than the married people. And they all congregated on the cenotaph, all around the cenotaph. And after it was over they said that there wasn't one flower that had been crushed, the men kept to the grass. ^{Mc Geer} He must have heard of it, they said they were going to do it, and of course he arrived and read the Riot Act off. [Nothing came of it,] they all marched on, nothing came of it (laughs) that I know of. It was just a gesture to scare them, I suppose.

[SD: Did you ever demonstrate for clothing?

LS: Pardon?

SD: Did you ever go on a demonstration for clothing?

LS: Oh yes, ^{we had a demo. for clothing at one day} at the City Hall (laughs). I shall never forget it. I took a sheet along, you know, ^{your bedding} wore out, you patched it. So we all filled the council chambers. I don't how we got up there. And it was just like this: [one,] someone had just given the word, we were all going to get up and put all the sheets over McGeer's head, Of course you know what would've happened if we'd done it; we ^{would} all been carted off to jail. So, someone spoke, and it did work because not long after I can

LS: (cont) remember a nice green dress I received, but then it had, Vancouver Relief Office all printed in letters about that high across the back. So we had to demonstrate ^{well} again, ~~we~~ went to the relief office and said we wouldn't wear them, so they got some more of ~~them~~ without anything on.

SD: [What did you do to ~~stop~~ the gunny sacks? What were you demanding instead of gunny sacks?

LS: A voucher instead, money.

SD: Why was that?]

LS: * ^{after page 6} Who wanted to go and carry food home; it was degrading for one thing and people wanted to buy, to spend all of it on something they needed particularly, not on all starches; that was the reason we gave. Well we won out. [Okay?]

SD: When you did the organizing in the community, would you hold social events to draw people in?

LS: [Oh yes, oh yes. I can remember we ^{used to always} raffle a pair of sheets. You could buy them for ~~a~~ \$1.95 a pair, on ^{yes} 95¢ day at Woodward's. They were well needed. Oh ^{that's} where these little halls came in.

SD: And were there city-wide or regional councils made up of people ~~elected~~ from all the little area councils? How did the representation work?

LS: I don't recall, but we must have.] They seemed autonomous, all these little halls. There was an...Bob Leeless was the

LS: (cont) leader, if I remember. It wasn't done though very correctly I must say.

SD: Did you a liaison with the unemployed single men?

LS: More or less. It wasn't done, you know, and yet we did. It was more in feeling than anything else... That was fine.

SD: Were you ever cut off relief?

LS: No, but we had to sell our car or we would have, at least give it away. A man, oh and then we had to live on that. We sold it, it was under \$200, we paid \$800 for it and it was a Ford A. And we had to live on that on the rate of, but we had the money to spend which was a little better. Then we were cut off when we went onto veterans' allowance, it was much the same thing only five dollars difference. Four dollars difference a month.

SD: Did the Mothers' League ever take any action on, to support unemployed men, for example around the issue of tin canning?

LS: Oh yes, the time we went to jail. *The Mothers' League to support the unemployed men.*

SD: Can you describe that?

LS: (Laughing) We changed to Mothers Council at that time, it was broader. After the meeting, there must have been more than 20 or more, they went to the police station. The head police wasn't in, it was his deputy, so he invites us, by the way you scare these people by going to, you wouldn't think it would you but they are! We kept that man till half ^{past seven} and he didn't have any supper, well neither did we.

LS: (cont) ^e So he invited six of us, Mrs. Stevenson^s Mrs. Stewart,
her husband was the head of the streetcar railway, ^{union} [I think
her son is still there: Chuck, Chuck Stewart, Did you ever
hear of him in town?

SD: Yep.

LS: Yeh, Chuck. That was her son.] We stated our case, that they'd
been cut-off, and we wanted them to have something to eat. All
the sweat run down my back! ^{But,} You couldn't say too much.

[Anyway,] I got the phonebook, I phoned everybody, ministers
and people of influence. Just when we ^{were} nearly helpless, the
editor of a labour paper come to the door and said they'd
gotten word from Victoria, that they could go out tonight.
I was so mad, we went back to the hall, a few of us, ^{single employed} and
of the women went into the Busy Bee and had coffee (laughs).]
That's the first time I'd been in their hall [I think.] They
had no chairs; they all stood up, a bit of a platform. So
they went out, and I don't know how much they collected that
night but most of it went to Okalla, for treats for the
men. They were always arresting people out there at the
time. Later on, we thought we thought we'd get in a little
enjoyment so ^{we} engaged the Orange Hall. I don't know if that's
still there, just around the corner off Hastings. A pie social.
Pies were easy to make. And someone donated the milk, and it
was goats' milk and I never opened my mouth, I never told a
soul what it was (laughs), but it was good. But they had to

LS: (cont) get in and show their cards. (We couldn't have 2000 or a thousand. In fact two or three hundred turned up. Oh we had a little dance, just a little break. That's all we could afford to do anyway. People often took them into their homes. [I found out, this is a little aside, in Saskatoon, my nephew and his wife, ^F had never known of this:] ^{My nephew was} he was in the post office, at the time they broke the windows coming out, ^{the police} they gassed them and they had to come out one night, the single unemployed. And they broke every window coming down.... ^{Cordova.} What's the street behind Hastings? Columbia Street? No. Columbia?

SD: [Cordova?

LS: Cordova, yes. And [except one, and I went down myself, early Sunday morning, and there wasn't a bit of glass broken in the bible society. It shows [what,] how well-disciplined they were - [because] they had to be because any man could do an act of violence and the whole thing would blow up. [That's an example, two or three examples.] They weren't a rabble by any means, like the police tried to make out they were.

SD: [Were there any women involved in helping the unemployed men organize? Did they do things like cook?

LS: No they didn't, no, no. They just had tickets to go in these restaurants. No we didn't go there very often; but on that special occasion we went back to the hall, we told them we would, they wanted to know what had happened, from the police.]

LS: (cont) In fact, I never heard of any occasion, and you would think so with all those men around wouldn't you.

SD: Did your organization also organize unemployed women?

LS: No, we couldn't. No they were nearly]

END OF SIDE II

LS: (cont) all married.

SD: Why was that, that the organizing wasn't done?

LS: We didn't have time, all our efforts were taken up with ourselves. There was so much to do.

SD: Did anybody do any organizing of unemployed women?

LS: No, not that I know of.

SD: How many women were involved in Womens Labour League?

LS: Oh, it's hard to say, small groups, some on the Island too, yes, in Victoria.

SD: Was it a 100, a 150?

LS: More than that I think if you got them all together.

SD: And did you have a representation from different ethnic groups in the Womens Labour League?

LS: Oh yes, ^{ethnic groups} they were the bone, ^{of the WLL} they were good workers.

SD: Why did people decide to change the Womens Labour League? Was it in part to broaden its participation?

LS: Yes it was. We had, a Becky Buhay came from Toronto and we had meetings and we decided ^{that we} ~~they~~ weren't getting any bigger and it did broaden out a good deal. In fact we were accepted in the local council of women, to our big surprise, and I think it was Mrs. Stewart who went onto the platform. [And then we were asked, another lady and I,] there was to be a, national council [met here], and we were invited to the evening. And the government officials came:

LS: [(cont) Professor Weir who'd I'd known in Saskatoon years before, he was the Minister of Education here. So he gave me a big kiss (laughs).

SD: When was it that the Mothers Council became involved then? Was it during the Depression?

LS: Oh yes, oh yes, before '39. All this happened between '29 and '39. That was only about 10 years wasn't it. A lot was crowded in, everything happened in 1935, it seemed.

SD: What happened in 1935?

LS: The wars. Everything seemed to happen, ^{in 1935} it seemed to be a peak year for some reason.

SD: [What kind of things took place?

LS: Well the Spanish War. ^{In 1935 the Spanish war had broken out.} A good deal of the men went to Spain.

Oh there was a soldiers organization that my husband belonged to, [what was the name of that? Just ^{an} Unemployed, Soldiers' Organization, Ex-Servicemens, that was it, ^{The} Ex-Servicemens Organization. [You know] they had meetings, they had socials, and most of their leaders went to Spain and most were killed too.

SD: [What kind of issue was the Spanish Civil War? What was the question around it? Why did people support one side or the other?]

LS: Franco attacked the liberal governments you see. The leftist

LS: (cont) people, they were very very weak. [The men that did come back,] [everything was poorly organized. They did well at first, they got quite into Madrid, then Franco landed with German troops, and the Germans sent all their airplane power over. That was a prelude. Everyone thought Germany was trying out its air power, to see how it worked.

SD: [What kind of work did you do to support the Spanish civilians? ^{war}]

LS: Dr. Bethune came to town (laughs). [We got lost on Seymour Street.

SD: Were you with him?

LS: Yes (laughing further). [The first time he came it was the first time he'd tried out his blood transfusions you see, and he had a little small van. [Of course you've read the story, there's several books, ^{and the} pictures about him. Hayes and Size? run the automobile and I forget the other people. They showed the picture, The Heart of Spain, at the, is it the Captial Theatre? Anyway, it was ^{just} over town.] A soldier just jabbed his bayonet into the ground, and they hung up the blood and gave it, and you could see the color come back into the man's face. Of course then he did it on a bigger scale. Then the Chinese war broke out, and he went to China. But just before he went to China, he came back to Vancouver in the Orpheum Theatre. It was packed! And there were two women on the platform and I was very proud to re-

LS: (cont) present the working class more. And there was another women, Stanley, [her name escapes me at the moment.] The rest were men. Someone in the audience half-way through said, "Are you a Communist?" He stood up, we all stood up. He says, "Yes, I am." and oh, for 10 minutes everybody applauded, and there wasn't one sound against. And he hadn't been very long. Becky Buhay knew him quite well, she [sort of] helped train him to speak. She says he couldn't stand up and speak 10 minutes until he learned, and then he became a good speaker. We had supper with him at the Mayfair Cafe. So after that meeting [at the Orpheum, it was crowded, you couldn't go out the front door, and] he wanted us to change our policy and send money. We'd had 50 pairs of socks, we'd had knitted, ⁹ no we didn't send them but word came to us to sell the socks, [oh we made raffles of a dollar, so] we got a dollar which was good in those days for a pair of socks, [so that] we gave the donation to him, and he wanted a Canadian childrens' hospital ^{in Spain} there, and I think it was started. [What happened to it after I don't know.

[SD: This is in Spain?

LS: Yes, yes,] he thought that would do the most good, and send clothes. [So he wanted me to have some literature. He was staying at the Hotel Vancouver, and so, we...Very forceful

LS: (cont) man, grizzled rather, very forceful he was, he'd have to be to do what he did. So we went out a side door, it was pitch dark, I didn't know which way was which. So anyway he signaled for a cab, so we went down to the Hotel Vancouver (laughs). So he brought this literature out to me. I suppose it didn't last very long, changes took place, you couldn't send money there anyway after they'd lost.

SD: What kind of work did people do here to support the guys who'd gone over from Canada, and also to raise money?

LS: Oh, I think they sent what they could in the way of food, but there wasn't much food to send. Oh, we were always putting on a social or something to raise money for something. So, you got a...*they always found a little office somewhere.* oh, yes, I had \$50 given me, was it \$50?, a lady gave me a cheque. I know her son quite well now. To buy this wool to start this 50 pair of socks, remember.

SD: Was that done through the Mothers Council?

LS: No, I don't think, no, that was quite early, that was in '35, the Spanish War had broken out. It was only later that we'd changed. About a year or so before '39 that we'd changed.

SD: What organizations did you, though, work in, particularly, where did women go if they wanted to work in support of the Spanish Civil War?

LS: Oh, they had an office. There was no place to go. Mr. Rab-[?]iner ran it for some time. There was always found a little

LS: (cont) office somewhere down on, down on Hastings.

SD: What other things happened in 1935?

LS: (Chuckles). Then the Chinese war broke out, you know into Manchuria and ~~Ye Chow~~ the five provinces. We didn't have much to do with that, very well. [And yet we did,] I can remember they sent us a cushion, Mao Tse Tung's picture, on a cushion. [We was always busy at something, I don't know how I, (laughs)...]

SD: When you were involved in unemployed organizations, or maybe this was later on, at one point you went to visit the provincial cabinet, right?

LS: Oh that was in, that was in '51.

SD: Oh.

LS: Yes, with the, with the Mothers Council then.

SD: Can you describe that?

LS: Yes. What was her name? If I had the picture out, that was after I'd moved, I was living here at the time, that came much later, in '51 when I was living here...And we were invited, it was a coalition at the time; and that was the day, the same day that Bennett crossed the House. I didn't know he'd died until last week...He must have known we were coming, although I didn't have anything to say to him, he was noone at that time. And he had a photographer there and took that picture I showed you. Of course we told him what we'd come for,

LS: (cont) but he was noone, he had no influence at the time,
(The Workers Council went to get to know the cabinet)
 at all. So we invited, ~~We~~ were invited into the Cabinet.
 Johnston,
 Atsombe and [^]Brian Johnston, were, were members of the
 Coalition Cabinet. *Oh* We'd only a few minutes, you know,
 only a few minutes. And, *Dora*, the President, her
 picture is there. I thought she was never going to get
 through, she read the whole shebang. So I asked to speak,
 I jumped ^{up,} *oh*, as quick as I could, "I won't take two minutes."
 And I spoke for soldiers' wives. We didn't have any health
 insurance whatever. ¹⁵⁰ [And it wasn't long,] the next year, [that
 was in '51,] I think it was in '52, we were given hospital
 and care, and then free doctors. So it worked. I remember
 Shelford, I always remember him there. He was, no he became
 would
 a Social Creditor sometime ago. He [^]come right to us and
 shake our hands, and speak so well, of what we were discuss-
 ing, I always thought whether, it went very far or not, I
 don't know.

'41 or '42
 or
 50's?

SD: What kind of things did women do during the 1930's to help
 the *kinds of* struggles that were taking place, like specif-
 ically women, what would they do?

LS: [Well, talk to your neighbors more than anything. And help
 them out.] We were constantly going down to the relief office
 with some complaint, with someone who couldn't get on [or
 something or other, constantly. And then] of course the
 worst thing that happened were the *evictions*, [from the ha-,

LS: (cont) oh, there were many of those. Each little neighborhood sort of took care of its own unless something^{was} very large, and word travelled. (laughs) [I don't know how, word of mouth really,] noone had telephones I don't think in those days, not very many. And when someone was being^{erected} [convicted,] someone would come knock on the door, and we'd all go somewhere. The first thing to be done was the 'bumming sheet' (laughs). You had to take a 'bumming sheet', and go around, if there was a little store near, [people,] to get food to feed the pickets. And if the sheriff had removed the furniture, everybody helped to put it back in the house. That went on[/] till someone got tired. [And then of course we were constantly down to the relief office, a delegation would go, until the thing got rectified.] I remember we had ^a one place, oh, they were in an awful condition. Harold Wilson, I think they had Wilson, was an alderman, and he was awfully good, and we got him to come to this house, and [oh,] he ordered the mattresses all to be taken out and burned. Got them new mattresses, and a few things to help out. It just shows how you have to fight and struggle for everything, that's the only way you got anything. I think people have lost that ability or don't, things are not bad enough.

SD: How about, where were women working during the Depression? What kinds of jobs were they able to get, if they could get

SD: (cont) them?

LS: Oh, the canneries a good deal, canneries, low paid work, when they got it.

SD: Did women work in stores or restaurants?

LS: Oh yes, not married. It was very very difficult if you were married.

SD: Why was that?

LS: There were enough single ^{on the} market. I couldn't get a job teaching (here,) at all.

SD: [What were people saying, that only one person in a family should work, or?

LS: It's hard to tell. People do things of their accord, you can't dictate to everyone what to do, very much.

SD: These areas where women worked, were they, were any of them organized at all?

LS: I don't think so.] No. Store clerks weren't organized at all [I don't think,] not the way they are now, [I don't think there was any.

SD: How about canning?

LS: No, I don't think so.] You know what would happen if you did? Out! I think that was the reason. It was very difficult years, I must say.

SD: In 1935, there was, I think it was '35. there was also the Battle of Ballantyne Pier, was it that year or the year before?

LS: [I think yeh, everything happened worse, very bad, yes I never forget it, not that I was in it very much I'm glad to say, but I nearly did get in it.] I was working in the Unity League that day, [They let us have a table, and, we had a camp, Jubilee Camp now it's called, and we had tin cans for people, organizations came and got a can to collect, ^{for} to send to the children. [We heard, things would travel, I don't know how but, ^(laughs) you'd find out what was going on, so it was about, was it two o'clock?, oh I said I was going down. ^{there} They warned me not to, a couple fellows in the office. Well, I went, ^{to Ballantyne Pier} at corner of Heatly, [a street which ran this way.] American Can Company was on the corner, and [oh] I stood on the sidewalk. [And] police were on horses, half a dozen, one ^{on} both sides. [And] when this procession came; there was a blind man carrying a Union Jack, it was [a Longshore,] organized by the Longshore workers. ^{Oh,} There was some ship or something ^{was to be} loaded. [Anyway, here] (at the procession, the police must have fired a smoke-bomb or something, and it came in the middle of the road, and a man was crossing over, and he fell down, and I went over to pick him up, (to try), and [oh,] the police come together ^{across the road.} [like that.]

SD: [Sort of ^{across} the road?]

LS: Yes, yes. And [then other city police came down, and it wasn't 'till ^{the protest} they] crossed the track, and then ^{the protest} they] cut them off; [that was it, and] then the crowd; anyone who gathered. [Well] I ran

LS: (cont) onto the verandah of this house, ^{*} and there was at least four horses, the men had these long batons, not the little sticks they carry, they were special ^{long} ones. [It wasn't what you got this way, but what you got this way in return.] But I was determined I wasn't going to get hurt. ^{*} [And] there was a pipe there and I shinnied down that pipe into a lane, onto a shed ^{and dropped off the shed.} My face was all black; and I made my way up to Powell Street, and I was fairly safe there. But the crowds were running, and [there was] some street cars, had stalled, couldn't get by the crowd; so I got on one, I got back to the Workers Unity League on Hastings. [My hair,] I lost my hat I think, I dropped my purse, I went back and got my purse. And that went on until 10 o'clock at night. [And they couldn't get them out, ^{of course they were} mostly unemployed and union men in this big procession. There was railway cars loaded with gravel or something, so when the police came near them the men threw these stones at them; and It took them 'till 10 o'clock at night [to clear that,] to finish that battle. (laughs).

SD: [Were you there alone? Were there other women?

LS: Yes, no I was in the office alone, ^{down} on Hastings Street you see. I wanted to see what was going on, something terrible was going to happen.

SD: Were the other women there?

LS: [No, no, not that I knew of. Of course crowds gathered, and

LS: (cont) the people in this house, oh, ^{to page 36} I banged the door to let me in and they wouldn't dare open the door, (laughs), [so that was the way I escaped.] ^{How?} I would have gotten it across my head. They would have just gladly have done that, you could see it in their faces.

SD: Was your husband involved at all?

LS: ^{My husband was not as involved} Oh, not as much as I was, but he never said a word at what-
ever time I would come home. (But he did,) he organized a painters league, but it didn't amount to very much, it was just difficult. There was no work; you can't organize if there's no work [very well,] to organize for. ^{* husband.}

SD: Was he in the Battle of Ballantyne Pier?

LS: No, he was home I guess. ^{No,} I happened to be looking after the tin cans that day, ^{we} each of us took a day.

SD: Did they smoke-bomb the old man, who was leaving ^d the demonstration? I think I remember you mentioning that they --

LS: I don't think they hurt, no, noone was hurt.] It was the police I think that got hurt. They all got into the empty box cars.

SD: And did you talk to the police at all during the ~~event~~ ?

LS: They were coming down, that road you know, and when this man was hurt, I ran along pulling at one ^{police man's} sleeve, oh some silly expression about, "What would your mother think!" or something. [That's all I can remember, not that good, (laughs)]

LS: (cont) it didn't do any good. By the time the big amount of police came down, the men had crossed over and got into all these boxcars.

SD: In 1938, ^{did} were the Womens Labour League joined the Council of Women; is that correct?

LS: ^{In 1938 the W.L.L. joined the Council of Women.} Yes, yes, that was the, it wasn't long before, nothing was said, and they welcomed us. Mrs. Tilly Rolston was the president I believe, ^{and} And Mrs. Annie Stewart, (oh,) I nearly fit when I saw her go upon the platform, (laughs).

SD: Can you describe when she went up on the platform?

LS: Well, to be welcomed by the president you see. It was so unusual to us, more than, ...not that, I don't know what we gained, but we thought that the, it would be a thing, the best thing to do at the time, a matter of strategy.

SD: Who was in the Womens Council then?

LS: Mrs. Stewart was the president, and Mrs. Steveston. Her---

SD: What was the Womens Council, though, was it like a ...?
all

LS: Oh, ^{The women's Council was} the same as it is today, the same organizations, that are in it today, just the same. ^{all the} You might say, right-wing organizations.

SD:

LS: Yeh, you know, the organizations that are here. They did good work in their own way.

SD: What happened at the dinner you went to?

LS: Oh, lovely dinner! I remember there were little round things full of cream, oh it was a lovely dinner. We didn't have to pay, it was paid for by the parliament, the legislature. ^{You see?} And then we went around the receiving line, and I had a long dress, so did the other lady with me, only paid a dollar for it: a black slinky dress, not very little ornament. And then someone, before we came, the men were living in the post office, that was a story of its own, I think they were there quite awhile, a week or two, several, many days. I think their food went in, they cooked and everything in the post office. Someone told us that they were going to be raided that night. What was that woman's, the other lady, her husband had one arm I remember, after the do about 11 o'clock, we went down, there was a picket line around the post office. We stayed until 12 o'clock. There wasn't a sign of anything, so then we went home. I think it was the following week or so that they were raided with tear gas. Sunday morning it was. They all went down Cordova Street, I don't know where they went, to their hall I suppose.

SD: Was the CCF involved in any organizing?

LS: Yes, yes, but not to any great extent. They had their right and left-wings too, the same way as they do now, really. I could have killed that Winch, the elder Winch was different entirely, he was, they all knew the Communist Party was behind, helping. Harold didn't like it, he was different.

LS: (cont) It was his father, Ernie, Ernie was Harold's father. And that day we were going to the City Hall, ~~you~~^{he} get up on a car, "Oh, go back! Oh!" Waving us all to go back, "Oh, don't go to the city, Oh-h-h!" We just swept right by him and didn't pay any attention.

SD: Did the ^{Vancouver} Trades and Labor Council ^(Congress?) play any kind of role, or the Vancouver District Labor Council? [] }

LS: Not a thing, not a thing, not a thing.

SD: Were you involved in any political organizations?

LS: Oh, the ^{I was in} Communist Party, if you can call it that political at the time, well it was I suppose.

SD: When did you join in it and why?

LS: [Well, ^{I joined it} after that meeting I went to, and after I started meeting people.

SD: [Did you meet them] through unemployed work?

LS: [Oh, yes, oh yes definitely, oh yes. And then] you were asked to go to the classes in different matters and understand [the] international, what was happening on the international scene too, and chiefly what had happened in the Soviet Union, how they'd won out just by organization. Many thought that in a few years we would, but it didn't happen. ... [that they would change in Canada] and it was just about the point but we weren't strong enough, the other side was too strong. And then the States would've helped out Canada.

SD: [What kind of different areas of work did the Communist Party do?

LS: Well mostly as I said before, [the main thing was the employment situation. ^{for the CP)}

SD: [Did they sell their paper?

LS: Pardon?

SD: Did they sell a paper or leaflet.

LS: Yes, oh yes. [There was a wonderful^{eh} the weekly, the Worker that came from Toronto, and then various papers printed here. [And then there wasn't,] they decided to change their name to the Progressive Workers. That was after '39, I think they did that.

SD: [Why did they do that, did they have a change of policy or...?]

LS: ^b Because the Red Scare, ^d you know what happened in the United States, well it was on a lesser scale here. You'd lose your job, be fired. It was my job on the north shore, for two or three years, to manage the paper affairs here, [and] I worked the club up to a ^{dollar} thousand club here. [No. that's not it, I had a pen, they had a banquet once a year and give you a little gift.] We used to sell down to the dock yard every week and to the mills. ^e And they were glad to see us.

SD: [Did women go out very often and do that?

LS: Oh, [I did it every week, with a friend up here,] ^f many days we used to meet.

SD: What kind of work did the women do during the 1930's, who

SD: [Would you be involved in the unemployed work ~~work~~ ?

LS: Oh yes, in your district. (you'd) help.

SD: What kind of studying did women who were Communist do around the question of women?

LS: We took two years, ^{Becky Buhay had some work with us.} [I remember] with Becky Buhay, and I won a prize, (it's in there), a second prize for the suffragette movement. It's funny how you find out things; I went to the library and found a large volume, [and everything knows the main story of] the suffragette movement [but it didn't accomplish anything,] didn't seem to get anywhere until they worked with the working class women and then they obtained results and got the vote. They would have gone on, for a long time with not accomplishing anything. That was their main objective, to get the vote, for women.

SD: [What other things did you study in Becky Buhay's group?]

LS: [Well] she took mainly women's work with us, if I can remember. Then Tom McKewan, he would hold classes. Bill Bennett, he was awfully good, old Bill Bennett. And Jack Taylor, [he he was very good, wasn't English, he lost his life in Spain I remember.]

[Different men working in different, I know] the man who ran the unemployed movement, he was very good. [There's not many were capable of doing it, it took quite a few years.] [Particularly, The Golden Bough we studied, whatever books we could find, then the English books too of course, and] a little of

LS: (cont) Adam Smith [I can remember] and Marx and Engels works which were a little difficult; the Engels I can remember, was he was quite a good writer. It's very difficult studying Marx, very.

SD: [Did you tend to look mostly at the question of women?

LS: No, we took in the whole family and children, you couldn't separate women very well. The whole family was enough to fight about.

SD: [What kind of issues did you fight around in terms of the family?

LS: *Family issues included to* Keep from starving; *(Hwas)* one thing. More and more money for rent, five dollars a month for rent, if you couldn't pay it, you were evicted. [Luckily,] I was fortunate in a way, there was a little Chinese store, and a friend of mine, "Oh," she says, "I was thinking of you; would you like a job teaching?" So I went down, and they had a boy just come from China, he was about 17, Chu Cha Hen. And "Would I teach him English?" And he came to the house. The first day and I thought, "oh, have I come to this!" He was sitting by the table and he'd fall asleep for about 10 minutes or so, and he couldn't speak a word of English. I did that every day; I think it was \$12 a month, and that helped pay our rent, and two or three dollars over, our rent was \$15, this bungalow. We got to like him and he got to like us.

LS: (cont) I had him up for Christmas Day; and he taught me how to use chopsticks (laughs). He had an English and Chinese dictionary. He had to tell me a story one day: he'd been sent to the Safeway, Main Street he lived you see, to buy some steak, and he said a pound of "long steak". Everybody roared, it does sound funny. I'd been taking up measurements that day, and he thought he knew what to say, a pound of long steak instead of 'round'. (laughs) He did the banking. I taught him a good deal.

SD: Did the women who were Communists talk at all about birth control or abortions?

LS: [Oh yes, they] were doing it. [They were doing it] with all kinds of things, [I think] that's what started us first, and then, this nurse in Kitchener, her case came up, and so I wrote to, who was the man, in Kitchener, it'll come to me anyway.

SD: Kaufman?

LS: Kaufman, [yes]. [The rubber, the rubber...how he got into it?] He couldn't have been making pessaries, could he? Well I wonder how he got into it. Anyway, they ^{soon} got her out of jail. We helped. Every once in a while I'd be getting a telegram from them. Too bad I had to burn all my correspondence. That's what started us, it was very popular. [Of course, the nurses,] we had four nurses, they didn't report to us exactly, I don't

LS: (cont) know who they reported to I'm sure, but we gave them the names, who to go to. Then they would go and visit.

SD: How did you find the names of women?

LS: Oh, we'd get them; people would, different branches ^{of the Mothers Council} would then send us in the names. That was in '38. Well, I had to stop that in '39.

SD: Was the birth control organized through the Mothers Council?

LS: We must have then, yes we changed from the Womens Labour League, yes we must have been under the Mothers Council at that time.

SD: Why would women want birth control?

LS: ^{women wanted c.c.} Because they were doing it by other methods, so dangerous. You couldn't ^{keep,} have children, ^{or} there were many complaints, or we would never have started it.

SD: Was it that women were so impoverished?

LS: Yes, ^{they} didn't want another mouth to feed, it was too bad. Oh, they were a big response. ^{ability.}

SD: How about the dangers of pregnancy, in giving birth?

LS: That's natural anyway. They'd have to--

SD: Weren't women using abortions?

LS: Well, ^{if were using} yes, all different methods, ^{of abortion} you never heard of such things! I don't know anything about it personally, but anything they would use.

SD: So, would you call public meetings to talk about birth control?

LS: [No, not a public meeting, because we were afraid for one thing. You see this nurse had got into so much trouble. No it just went on through our meeting,] no we didn't make ^{birth control} it public, we would've been afraid. [As far as I know,] ^{It was} about a year and a half that ^{organizing} took place, I don't know what happened. [I was severed completely from Vancouver, when I moved out to Coquitlam.]

SD: Were ^{were} women in the CCF involved in birth control?

LS: [Oh yes, very much, yes, because] Miss Gutteridge was chairman, except when ~~she~~ became alderman.

SD: [What happened then?

LS: Well she stopped, she would hardly speak to me, I phoned her up. Oh, she didn't want anything to do with me. There was a Howard Lassie, came out from England, prominent social people, friends of the people in England. [They wanted to know.] She got invited to the lunch and she wouldn't take me along, something happened, so I met them afterwards. They were making big strides in England. They called them Planned Parenthood; it didn't sound so bad as ^{The} Birth Control League.

SD: Was child care an issue at all? Day care?

LS: Tried to, ^{we} but nothing very much. One thing we did organize, ^{organizing} a girl I knew was a tap dancer, and we arranged the classes for her to go to, they paid 10¢, for the children to learn

LS: (cont) to tap dance (laughs). I can remember that.

The Nurses' Association invited us to their annual meeting,

[She was to ^{must have known} them, and I went along to accompany her; ?

when we got there, there was nothing to stick the music on,

had an awful time, but we managed.] She was very good at

tap dancing, I remember Don't Give Up the Ship, did you

know that tune (laughs).

SD: Did you, did the Womens Labour League or the Communist Party talk about the need to socialize housework?

LS: Housework?

SD: Yes.

LS: To make it easier?

SD: Yes. How did you see the position of women in the home?

LS: [I don't think of social position of women in the home. Oh, I don't think so.] I don't think we were that far ad-

vanced. (laughs). ^{food} Having enough food. The question did come up when you were asking for a little more than food, your utensils wore out...but not too much was ever done about

it, I don't know of anyone, except privately, I know one

woman, she was cooking in tin cans honestly because I went

there myself, ^H shows what publicity can do, 10 sets of dishes

within no time, ^{was} sent to her.)

SD: [How did your publiciz~~ing~~ ^{this} change this?]

LS: Just by word of mouth.

SD: Not by the newspaper?]

LS: Well, just a little. It was only a small paper.

SD: This was The Worker?

LS: No, it was The People's Advocate, then it had another name, had two or three names. I remember The People's Advocate for quite some time. Word got around so easily somehow.

SD: Did people of that time think that women suffered particular forms of discrimination, at all?

LS: It wasn't really mentioned too much; ^{that it suffered discrimination} we'd always been used to it. Just put up with it. [Later on, when things,] ^{how} it was the war that changed that.

SD: How?

LS: Women entered all the factories and did everything.

SD: Did attitudes towards women change because of that?

LS: Oh I think so, I think so.

SD: During the Depression, did people think that women shouldn't be working because they were taking jobs away from men? ^{how}

LS: There was a feeling they were taking a man's job, or a man should have the work. ^{and} But then, the men wouldn't do that work.

Always, the canneries were always well filled, alot of women.

There always has been a strong fishermen's union in Vancouver, and a women's auxiliary. They did alot, and they still do.

SD: Did that exist in the '30's?

LS: Oh yes, oh yes, there was alot of fish, oh yes, yes I know several women who worked ^{in a} large cannery over, not quite, half way between us and

Tape 3. Side I

SD: And the canneries were organized, to some extent, by the fishermen's union?

LS: Yes, as I said before, the fishermens union itself was quite strong. It was a basic industry, at the time.

SD: Were there any women who were particularly important in terms in the kinds of public roles they played in Vancouver during the '30's?

LS: No, oh ^{there} was a big cleavage between the working class ^{and} others. ^{Speaking about the fishermens union, a couple living, I think they're still living in Deep Cove; they've come here to visit me once. They were quite prominent in the fishermen's union. And there's Homer Stevens, was the president for many years. They built a great big hall on Cordova Street, which was used a good deal.}

SD: Did you try and teach at all during this period of time? ^(and)

LS: Only privately. You couldn't get near a school.

SD: In terms of women who were working, were their wages ^{and their conditions} generally worse than other workers?

LS: Oh yes. ^{Women's wages was less than others.} This niece of mine, she got \$10, of course it wasn't very high up in the scale, but she did alot of work for it.

Oh yes, and ^{they} they tried hard to, ~~for~~ women in the stores, but they couldn't. It's only just recently that the workers in stores have organized so well, ^{not} not too long ago.

SD: [How did you arrange to do your housework? Did your husband and you share your housework at all?

LS: I just had a small house, I managed, didn't have too much to do, really (laughs).

SD: Was he also in the Communist Party?

LS: Yes, ^{My husband was also in it} for awhile, but he was much older, and he became sick. He couldn't seem to, you had to understand, you had to,] I had a good education, you see, and it was easier for me, to read these books, [you know they're not easy...] Not that that kept you out of it, if a person was willing, but I liked to study, it was all new to me.

SD: And did you find that being politically active changed your life in some ways?

LS: Oh yes.

SD: How?

LS: Up to now my father was conservative, and we were conservative, in the old country. I went two or three times to church on Sundays...so ^{it was} an entirely different person really than what I had been. I don't think I ^{would} ever, you can tell I don't believe in religion at all anymore. You just cannot, it takes a few years to, and the older I get the more convinced I am.

SD: How did your family react to ^{you} becoming politicized?

LS: ^{Well of course,} I always did as I pleased, after I was 18 and left. I'd left home by then. My brothers were union men in Saskatoon,

LS: (cont) but he's changed now. So many people, some little thing happens and they leave, or change. You have to be quite strong, and now it's all I can do to look after myself.

SD: What kind of skills did you need to be involved in organizing?

LS: Well the best one was to be a speaker, I never was somehow, I didn't mind getting up in school, I liked to teach, but I never became a speaker for some reason, too scared I guess. Yes, that was the chief quality.

SD: Were there other women who did speak?

LS: Oh yes, yes, yes, it was surprising. That wasn't the only thing, you had to have something to speak about, something behind you. It's easy enough to stand up and be just a gabber. The men were very educated really, good speakers. I've seen Malcom Bruce just speak to 10,000 people down at Powell Street grounds.

SD: How did the men who were involved in organizing ^{see} the role of women, did they encourage women to speak?

LS: Oh yes, oh yes, very much so.

SD: What kind of things did they see women doing?

LS: As soon as you were able, you were elected to committees. Oh yes, they were very, they tried to show how women had been kept backward.

SD: Did that, sorry...

LS: No that was alright. What were you going to say?

SD: Did women play an important role in community organizing around unemployemen?

LS: Yes, along with the men, whatever was going on. Always some 'dos' going on, concerts and things, and evenings and so on. That fishermens hall for years I can remember, the paper always had its yearly banquet there. Prizes were the head, if you sat at the head table, people who would work for the paper. That was about the most important thing, was the press. Took alot of money to run it too. They used to be mad with us many times, we were too. We saide our activities were never printed. Then they would blame us for not having enough material to print.

SD: Was that in terms of: the unemployed organizing or Mothers Council?

LS: Yes, yes, and all the work that we did.

SD: Did you primarily do work with women after you joined the Mothers' Council?

LS: Yes, yes, all the time. We organized children too somewhat. I held a concert one time, little group of children in the neighborhood. Germany had a strong workers union here, before the war broke out. They had headquarters over on Main Street. I don't know what happened to them; they fled, afraid to be imprisoned, or went back to Germany, I don't know what

LS: (cont) happened to them. This is digressing a little, but across the road from there, when the war did break out, there was a hall, I looked through to see who it was, and here was the big Nazi swastika, covered the end wall, oh it scared the life out of me. An man came out and I thought he was going to follow me and I went into a store and went out the back and went through another store. There was a regular Nazi headquarters there, of course it didn't last long. Another time, they'd come out, and here they were urinating at the edge of the pavement, great big stormtrooper guys they looked like, oh I was scared! I've never been so scared. I thought it would grow and take over the town. That was before '39; back then when they were beginning to move. They had been moving for, taking all these countries before '39.

SD: Did they attack the organizations of the Workers Unity League?

LS: No, I don't think so, they weren't that strong. But it was a beginning, a hall. I'd left just after that.

SD: When you moved to the country, did you do any political work then?

LS: No, the war had broken out. I did join the Red Cross out there, and took a First Aid course in New Westminster. I got a badge for it. Oh, started to do some knitting, too. You had to give all your activity to the war then.

SD: How did people understand the war? ^{And} what was going there?

LS: We understood it pretty well; we understood it long before it was understood here, and then most of the Communists went to the war, they understood, far more than the ordinary people did, right from the beginning.

SD: How was it seen? What kind of war was it seen as?

LS: Against the people. They ^(CP) were accepted very gladly into the armies.

SD: Were you involved in work then around fighting against facism at all?

LS: That was before that, before the war broke out.

SD: What kind of work was that?

LS: Oh, just talking about it, explaining to people. Spain was a prelude to all this; that was what the Spanish war was, against facism, of course not many people understood it at the time. So by the time, '39, people began to understand it far more.

SD: Did your husband go to war?

LS: Pardon?

SD: No, go ahead.

LS: No, no.

SD: Did your husband go to war?

LS: Oh no, not, the first one, ^{the} first World War, no he was too old.

SD: Did you find that women in terms of their political activities,

SD: (cont) that they were sometimes held back by the kinds of responsibilities they had in the home, like child care?

LS: Oh yes, and understanding. Oh yes, very much so, even now they are, a good deal. *elaborate?*

SD: What would people say about that? What would women say about that? How did you know that that was the problem?

LS: It has been difficult, ^{it's} a little easier now, to even get a woman to run, she wouldn't be accepted by the committee of the party she belonged to. Most of the parties were the same. If you're not accepted in the party, well you're not accepted outside either. That has changed. It was quite an achievement for Mrs. Thatcher, I don't know how long she's going to stay there, but (laughs)...Then we had Dolly Steeves ^{here} for quite a few years, on the north shore. The CCF always seemed a little scared somehow, to go too far, for some reason.

SD: What kind of role did they play in those days, in organizing in the unions?

LS: Not too bad, in their own way, and in their own party. I remember once, I went to speak to them. Kind of a foolish thing. I asked if I could come and speak, and they said yes, was just to say a few words. I had no bomb in my pocket, always saw the Communists as having bombs, to throw ^{you know,} revolutionaries. I forget, it was some simple thing, they let me come in and speak,

LS: (Cont) ^{I was} asking them to join with us, because strength, unity makes strength, but they were always, seemed to me scared. Seemed Communism was the kiss of death to them, anything they did.

SD: Did the CCF work with women?

LS: Yes, somewhat. They had their own womens section, I believe. They had quite a few prominent women. One that we sent to Russia. Darned if I can remember her name, a great friend of Mrs. Gutteridge. Oh, she was scared out of her life; she'd been asked through the Soviet Union organization, you asked me about it the other day; we spoke to her and assured her that we would help her in all way we could. She came back and gave a good account of it. Here she was scared out of her life to go.

SD: Can you talk a bit about this Soviet organization?

LS: When, How do you mean?

SD: Well, let's see...

LS: I hadn't been then, it was, I didn't go 'till '64. ^{Of course,} We'd read, we'd had all the publications, ^{come} to us.

SD: What kind of work did you do to support the Soviet Union?

LS: They didn't need supporting then, that late, I don't think. Oh, during the war, the clothes were sent, they gathered up a quite a lot of clothes to send. My sister-in-law. I didn't get into that I don't think.

SD: How did you see the Soviet Union; was it an alternative to the society you were living in?

LS: Oh yes, particularly ^{after} I'd been there. We'd listened to everyone who'd ever went and came back. They wouldn't have people there that wasn't going to speak, tell the truth. They didn't want anyone coming there and going back and telling alot of lies. By '64, I thought it was a most well-ordered country; everything seemed so orderly. The people stood in neat, to get on the buses. The children were awfully good, I thought, well-clothed. I never saw, no beggars, they wouldn't be allowed to beg, noone needs to beg, you must have a living wage, your full wage if there isn't work, you have your wage. ^{of course} It's taken them years and years to get, ^{they} even have to still go further. The biggest thing really they ever did, was sending up the thrust, that's the thing, in sending up a Sputnik, it isn't that, it's the thrust of getting it up, and they did it before anyone else. It makes me mad, to listen to the States programs, they're so full of hate, just hate!

SD: Did all women who were involved in doing Communist work go through the educational committees with Becky Buhay?

LS: No, not everyone. They were sortof, if you wanted to, as you see, you had to spend quite a good deal of time, get as many books as you could...always a fairly small study class. I

LS: (cont) think the, I know they did too, the different cultural organizations, they had their own classes too, because they had the facilities, they were quite large halls. You ever been in the Ukrainian hall on Pender, 815 Pender isn't it, 808 Pender, quite large halls. They really knew more than we did in many respects.

SD: During the Second World War, do you know if the women's organizations changed as more women went into industry, working jobs?

LS: No I couldn't answer that for sure. I had nothing to do with them; I never worked really (laughs).

SD: You worked but you didn't work.

LS: I never went into industrial work. I don't think I'd be very good at it (laughs). Don't like doing the dishes anyway.

SD: How did you feel about doing housework?

LS: Oh I don't like it, never did. I liked to cook but I'd sooner do other things.

SD: Even though you were active politically, did you still have to do your housework?

LS: Oh yes, oh yes, of course. Oh yes.

SD: Did women specifically try to get other women involved in political work? Did you see that as a real priority to get women?

LS: Oh yes, but it was difficult, not very many.

SD: Why was that?

LS: Oh, they were afraid. They've ^{been} told they don't know anything by their husbands, don't understand.

SD: Right.

LS: Am I right? (laughing) My husband didn't. Strange, we never quarreled about religion or politics, never! But it was money, "where's the five dollars I gave you last week?"

SD: Do you remember what happened to, do you remember any names of women who were active in the birth control movement?

LS: Except Mrs. Gutteridge, she was the chairman, you see. No, we were the only two table officers, more or less. One of the nurses was Gerry McGeer's sister. I remember that quite well, a nurse. No I don't remember the other nurses, I had all their names, and I had to burn it, I couldn't keep the correspondence.

SD: Did you experience alot of harrassment from the police?

LS: Fortunately I didn't. Like I told you I was lucky I suppose. I should have been; no I was very lucky.

SD: Were other people harrassed?

LS: Oh yes.

SD: What kind of things happened?

LS: Hit over the head with sticks. The men particularly, they'd arrest them. Okalla was full of them. ^H They didn't move on, or...

SD: Vagrancy was it?

LS: Mmmn. I don't particularly know any women. And everyone was, this Red squad, they were afraid of it. About half a dozen under this Scanlon; they were trained to do that, they were called the Red Squad.

SD: Were they violent?

LS: Oh yes!

SD: What kind of examples of this violence?

LS: Well they had these long batons, and then on horseback. It wasn't so much this way, but when they swung backwards ^{that} it was hard. Oh I've seen men knocked down with it. You get a big hit over the head with it. I was fortunate I suppose.

SD: When did you come back from Coquitlam?

LS: '47. I was out there seven years. ^{Then} I joined the north Vancouver, well there was ^a womens group first, I didn't understand, and they disbanded, who was left ^{we} joined the Party group, here.

SD: What was the women's group?

LS: They, something like a small replica of a Party group.

SD: And was it in order to bring women in to political work?

LS: To meet together. They were quite elderly. Several elderly ones. And then they disbanded them after awhile. Those of us who were young ^{enough} went into the...

SD: Were there any major sort of strikes or big struggles that

SD: (cont) were, where women had a high profile, during that period?

LS: Most of them to a certain extent. I remember ^{one} although, ^{now} where was that? Right in Burnaby. My husband had been in it and he tells me, it was more what he did; he got a big stick from the bush, it was in the bush, a shingle, the men were taking out shingles, and they dumped a load of shingles, upset it. A Mountie came towards him, and Wilfred went like that and the ^{Mountie} monkey turned and went away, he said, without doing anything. Oh we went out to cook for the men that day, a bunch of us, they had a tent, and we cooked the meal. Shingle strike, ^a shingle mill, I think. Whenever there was anything, if we were close, we went on a picket line, didn't think anything of it.

SD: Did women did get involved in doing support the big organizing campaigns in the unions, like the IWA?

LS: Just by word of mouth, and talking. Mostly I must say, most of the women were on the timid side naturally.

SD: Did you get a job teaching again after you came back?

LS: I have to stop and think. No not since then, no over here.

SD: So, basically your political experience ^s came out of the 1930's and the kind of economic conditions?

LS: Yes, yes.

SD: Is there anything else that you think you ^{think} should go on the

SD: (cont)tape, that you can remember, that I didn't ask you about?

LS: Oh I wouldn't have missed it.

SD: Okay.

LS: It was a great education, don't you think? You can't remember everything, but... And it was just 10 years then that it all took place.

SD: Was that the peak of...

LS: No, no, in '29. The, what you call it, the...

SD: Stock market.

LS: The stock market fell. And then I moved to Coquitlam.

But most of the activity took place in the 10 years.

The most difficult. There was nothing much, things have quieted down you see, when I moved here, the war was over, and the work picked up I believe, quite a deal. Of course my husband was getting a fair pension, and...

SD: Was your husband alot older than you?

LS: Oh yes, about 14 years I think.

SD: How did you meet him?

LS: Well I belonged to an English church then in Saskatoon.

That was '14. And the padre, the minister of the church was the padre, the [Ninth] CMR's, the cavalry regiment, so they gave him a farewell dance, so two or three boys that were in the choir with me that belonged to the church, said,

LS: (cont) "Do you want to meet Stoneley, Lil?" I said, "Sure, I don't mind." So we filled up the card, he brought the card back from the war, we never corresponded, it was the funniest thing (laughs). So we [re] married in 1920; it was kind of a quick marriage, because he was going to Toronto. I was 25 in 1920 and I was working at Arthur Rose's, and I couldn't get a teaching job. Doctor didn't want me to go out and teach school, so I went to night school and got a smattering of shorthand and typewriting with it. Got a job with Arthur Rose's Cleaners in Saskatoon. We got on fine. Awfully nice people. So he said, "Well if we don't married, I'm going to Saskatoon, but if you want to get married, /so two weeks we were married. But I kept on working, oh for about a year or so.

SD: Were there any other kinds of struggles that you were involved in at all, during the period of the '30's, like around immigrant workers, or?

LS: Oh I think I gave you a good account, that was enough struggle, believe me! There was always someone to do something for, go somewhere. It seemed to me I was out all the time, then meetings, then we had big meetings, big open meetings.

SD: Sounds like you enjoyed it though.

LS: No, I can't say, ^{I can't} it was too horrible. No, I wouldn't want it, it was too horrible.

SD: The conditions?

LS: Yes, yes. All the struggles. I don't know how we got through it, really.

Interruption of tape

SD: No if you could just tell the story, it's a good story though.

LS: I couldn't say what year it was. It was when the unemployed was at its worst. Oh yes, it was organized from the unemployed, system, out in South Vancouver, so Kitty Fordham, we put up a bed on a truck, and rigged up a clothesline, and put all the boys, we washed, we washed them out and hung them up. The crowd just roared, they thought it was great fun.

SD: Was it clothes?

LS: Yes, the boys¹, oh we had some dry ones there for 'em later. We put 'em in bed naked and he'd keep throwing the clothes off. (Laughing). We had an awful time getting there, but it was fun. It showed how people had to go along with, just one change of clothes, that was the idea. I think we had placards with that information written on (Laughs). I remember the *crowd* just roared, it was fun.

SD: Was there a really strong sense of people working together in those days?

LS: Oh yes, and in the Peace Council we always put a float. I remember here with Elsie Dean ^{LCD(?)}, we made a bottle out of milk, and it was advertizing the --

END OF SIDE I

SIDE II:

LS: (cont) dangers of Strontium 99 was it[?], in our milk. They let us go in the Dominion Day Parade here; we put several peace ~~capsule~~ ^{Council} floats in. Another one, we had a house, we made a house out of an old truck, and she sewed for days in our back yard, yards and yards of unbleached calico we put over it. Those were the two I remember. They were well received; there was never annoying, nothing annoying from the audience, going by. We had to get my husband to drive it, and we decorated it. (laughs).

END OF SIDE II

END OF TAPE