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Chris Waddell

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SD: ....that's really interesting. I'm going to start just by asking you to identify yourself, your name.

CW: OK. I'm Chris Waddell, I'm co-ordinator of the Women's Exploratory Apprenticeship Training Program in the Apprenticeship Branch of the Ministry of Labour.

SD: And, I'd like you to talk a bit about your history during the period of the Depression and up to the time when you came to B.C. The kind of work you did and where your family was situated. Why you moved here eventually.

CW: OK. I was born and raised in a place called St. Vital a suburb of Winnipeg. I started my first job at the YWCA, actually it was during the Depression and I took a course there. It was sort of a catering course. On completion of the course the Y hired me and as other women went through the course, I had them serve several lunches or dinners and marked them on that and eventually from this, they either were passed or had to spend further training. I guess it might have been called Manpower Training, but it wasn't in those days it was National Selective Service, and this was a really innovative thing. The instructors in the course were dieticians, because dieticians couldn't get jobs and this was where they started. I was one of the fortunate

people, because I received 25¢ an hour and I worked for, I had a number of friends who went through business college and then went out and worked for six months for nothing, so that they could say that they had experience. In the early years of the war I went down to Toronto and I worked for a year at Eaton's, and then the person who had been director of the YWCA had become the head of National Selective Service and she asked me if I would be interested in taking a job at the British Embassy in Washington, DC. This was much to my surprise, because during the time I worked at the Y, I did my first bit of negotiations, because they were paying some of the steady staff a cost of living bonus and they didn't pay us a cost of living bonus. So I went in representing the women who didn't get it, some of whom were physically disabled, and said that if we had to pay unemployment insurance which was I'm sure was all of 17¢ a week, we should also be getting a cost of living bonus. Only I didn't realize that other people think ahead of time and the director had said as soon as I came in "and Chris how are you feeling today?" I'd had an accident and smashed up my back and I said, "I'm fine," and she said to me "well, you know there's lots of war jobs." So I figured she didn't like me. So I was surprised when she asked me to go, that was, you know,

when you're nineteen or twenty, you think things differently.

SD: Can I just ask you something about the organizing. How did the women come together at the Y to...

CW: It was just a question that, they, some of them couldn't speak English too well, I could. I had been born and raised there and so just individually they sort of, you know, like, we should do something about this. Probably the fact that my father was involved with union work/helped me. I didn't think of it as being union work, just a question that someone had to speak up and I felt that I was entitled to something, therefore I spoke on behalf of the other women.

SD: What was your father's union background?

CW: He was President of the OBU in Winnipeg with the street railway...

SD: Oh my goodness.

CW: Yea,

SD: So you grew up with...

CW: The first thing that ever happened to me, when my father took me out, was to take me down to the union office. So I knew, I certainly knew those, that part of it. Then when I went to work at Eaton's, in Toronto, because that gave me enough time off on weekends so I could go out with a boyfriend I had acquired, I was offered a job,

would have been the only woman working in a certain department of C.I.L. but I turned it down because I wanted to have weekends off and you know, after all, I was only going to be there for a short period of time, I thought. Anyway I took the job in Washington and I worked there for a year. Managed to see a great deal of Washington thanks to the guards, the policemen who are on guard there. *But found that* living in an Embassy, where there was class distinction. I probably upset everybody because I was working with the kitchen people and I was supposed to go out with them instead I got out with the, a couple of ATS women who came over, who were footmen, took jobs as footmen and some sailor that was over as a steward. I certainly muddled everything up. Finally quit the job and decided to go back to Winnipeg and I *stayed* in Winnipeg a couple of months, went back to Toronto and got married and quit work, cause that was the way I was raised. That one didn't work after one was married and that was going to be it.

SD: Had your mother worked at all?

CW: My mother had never worked in her life. Her mother had never worked. My father's mother had never worked. My dad in essence believed that women's place was in the home,

But  
not

because he felt if women were to go to work they would probably destroy the wage structure and would settle for lower wages, so women really should stay home. And of course in Winnipeg at that time, if one did get married, one had to quite work anyway. I just naturally assumed that life would go on beautifully, you got married, you had your children and would spend the rest of your life looking after children. I had a child that died a few hours after he was born and a miscarriage following that, which caused my husband to feel that if we had another child I'd probably die and that was fate and therefore, no way were we going to have any more children. He ran a rooming house for a period of time on Jarvis Street, which was quite an experience.

SD: IN Toronto?

CW: In Toronto, during the war years. Our rooming house was in an area where there were seven hotels, so when, and the women worked out of those hotels or on the street. I even had the experience of being approached when I was about eight months pregnant, you know, as to how much I charged. But it was a good experience. I think I got out of it probably at the right time because I was beginning to think I was a very, you know, I think the words I've used as, sort of like Mrs. Jesus Christ, you know, because

P.D. I was the boss, I was the person who said to my tenants yes, "you can do this, no you can't do that," and even though they were all twenty years older than me, I got away with it, because no one ever saw me drinking, nobody ever saw me drunk and all of them did drink. Therefore what I said was law, because after all, I had enough money to buy this house, there must be something... We lost a lot of our money with my husband gambling and we decided to come out to Vancouver. We arrived in V<sup>A</sup>ncouver in 1947 or 48 and were unable to, my husband was a bartender and he was not able to take a steady job until he had been living in the province for a certain period of time and I could have got eleven dollars a week on unemployment insurance, so I had to get a job. The job I got was with the Aristocratic Hamburger Company, corner of Broadway and Granville. Because they had no union and because they didn't know anything about dining rooms which I professed to know, I got the job working in the dining room, got paid more money than any other waitress in the place, which is the exact opposite of the way things should be, because women working on the counters, where they couldn't make tips, should have been making higher wages. The Company didn't know any better, so I started there. As a chain they did some very strange things. They had managers that

P.W.

moved from one store to another and occasionally a woman would get up to maybe \$28 a week, \$26 a week and then all of a sudden, they would change managers, so he'd let that person go, because he knew he could hire somebody else at \$16 or \$17 a week.

SD: What were the wages generally like and the working conditions, and can you also talk a bit about what kind of work you did, what you would do in a day's work?

P.W.  
CW: Well I started out there working at night and as I say it was a small dining room, so I would set up for the dinner, and just wait on customers and that was it. We had a janitor so I didn't have to vacuum floors or anything like that. But one of the things I remember very vividly, was a young woman who had something like eight children, who started there as a dishwasher and she would be receiving maybe it was 40 or 45¢ an hour, which was the government minimum. During the time that the cook who again was a woman, who made I think \$25 a week, she relieved that cook for three weeks while she was on her holidays and felt that she should have got some more money. But when she spoke to the manager and asked 'aren't I, you know, like I don't expect to get the same wages as Alma got, but shouldn't I be getting more because I am cooking instead of washing dishes?' And the response given to her was that, "Well, you're just proving that you're capable

P.W. of doing it." I saw these injustices going on but I'm afraid I wasn't too concerned about what happened to other people, I was just concerned about myself and didn't do anything. But a janitor did, one of the janitors who worked there at night, an older man, he saw the problems and he started to talking to people about joining a union. I think, in fact, I was probably the last person they asked to join. They really weren't very sure I had come here from the East. I was making better money than any of them were, plus I was able to make a fair amount in tips. Not as much as I would have made in Toronto, but I've always been very pleased that they did come and ask me before they actually applied for certification. Once the application for certification went in, we then were involved in a very tremendous fight because the company said it was the chain and the whole chain must be certified, not one individual establishment. There were actually two units that were organized. The janitor got fired. The union took the case to the Labour Relations Board, and he was reinstated in the job, so they didn't fire anyone else, but they did transfer a couple of people from one store to another. I think I kept a fairly low profile, they didn't realize how much involved I was with it, once I got in. Actually my husband, as a bartender, was a member of a sister organization, he was a member of what was then Local 676. The case was

P.W.

ruled, the Labour Relations Board ruled here that we could have a separate certification, but they took... the case went right to the Supreme Court of Canada. Oh, wait a minute. In actual fact what was taken there was... we realized we were losing, so we had to do something to get the place organized and the international union had had a case where they had an information picket line on; so we hired a law firm here who told us how to set this up. At that time I went to the union and they said to me, look<sup>at</sup>, we are going to do something and we don't want anyone who is a member to be behind a picket line. What we want you to do is stop paying your dues, so we can suspend you and then you won't have to worry about the picket line because you're ~~not~~ really a member and remember it's not a picket line in the ordinary sense of the word it's an information line, which is informing the public that this place is not in the union, but the Black Cat, which was half a block away was." That's the case that went to the Supreme Court.

During that period of time there was quietness sometimes because they figured they had got rid of all the union people. At one point the Board, they'd applied for a decertification, and we had a vote, I happened to be away, it was my one day off, I worked six days a week, although I was one of the people that only worked forty hours; most of them were working

P.W. forty four in those days. The restaurant association said that they would support the Aristocratic Company. In fact they didn't, but they had offered them support. Anyway, eventually even though, the Aristocratic Hamburger case was written up, out at the University, because it was the first step that had been done in Canada about an information picket line. There was a settlement that came about, that did not involve the law case, that was settled when the, at some top level in the East. And the Company then decided that they had owed money and they were supposed to pay costs to the union, so rather than do this, they said they would capitulate and they would send a letter out to all of the members, their employees, telling them it was alright for them to join a union. So the first I knew about this having arrived at was when I got a letter saying that it's alright for you to join the union. So quickly everybody started talking about it and some of the concensus was . there has to be something phoney for the company to agree. So I went down and spoke to the international representative. He explained to me exactly what the circumstances were. By this point of time there were only two people left in the particular shop where I was, myself and the dishwasher that I had previously mentioned. We were the only people that had joined the union who were still there. Some of them

P.W. had left just because they could some place else that was going to be better. But I was determined that I wasn't going to quite that place until everything was settled.

Immediately, once I knew it was safe, then to talk about the union I started to do so. Prior to that the company had done such things as take me from night shift, put me on to day shift, had suggested that maybe if somebody else wanted my job that they would put me on the counter and I had sent word back to them that you know, pass the word along that, I don't care if I wash dishes, I am not going to quit this job until everything is finalized.

We did get enough people to join the union, we started negotiating, and I was put on the negotiating committee. I felt that during negotiations the company was saying things that were not really truthful and the union, some of the people weren't there to refute it. So I refuted it. I didn't figure I was going to stay there very long anyway, so I wasn't gambling that much. I'd already put in a couple of years of sometimes rather hectic things.

It doesn't make you feel very comfortable when you know your manager and the supervisor is sitting there trying to figure out how to get rid of you. I think if you can bear up, you know somewhere along the line you're going to win out eventually. So we did sign an agreement with them. The union

p.w.

did. I nearly got fired because they had a party afterwards. I forgot to come back. I had to come back and apologize, you know. We were only supposed to be there for three hours while they had the official signing I stayed longer. So I went back and said, you know, "I'm very sorry" and anyway, they said, "that's fine, just never let it happen again." By this time the manager that was there knew nothing, you know, he was not involved in any of the thing but I still felt that they might have, you know, felt this was good reason to get rid of me. I know had an accident; we had some sick leave in that first agreement, I'd had an accident and they said, "well this really, you know, being involved in an accident doesn't really constitute sick leave," and they weren't prepared to pay me. Again the union came to my support and I did get paid for this. The company eventually admitted that the first year that they had the agreement, was in effect the first year that they'd ever made any profit. I'm sure that the turnover of staff was losing a lot of money for them, so that by the time that they had wages that weren't the best in the world were certainly at least stabilized. You knew the increases were coming along and everybody would eventually get a forty hour week. At that period of time I talked to people and said, "you should join the union," and apparently

P.W.

one of the business agents was there, heard and realized that I was taking somewhat of an active part. So once it was all official I then started to attend union meetings and I would say that first year that probably close to 50% of the executive of the Hotel and Restaurant, Local 28 was composed of women who, women or men, mostly women who worked for the Aristocratic.

SD: What year was that?

CW: I'm afraid I just can't...

SD: Do you remember there abouts.?

R.W. CW: It might have been '51, I think maybe around '51. It would be either '50 or '51. Because I believe it was 1952 when I eventually went to work for the union. Took some time. As I say, I attended union meetings, my husband was working out of town, so on my day off I often went to the office and said, probably bothered them a great deal, but what do you do about this? How do you do that? Something else, and eventually it turned out <sup>that</sup> they had an election and the person who, the man who had been business agent for several years was defeated. A woman by the name of Margaret Burgoyne who had been an assistant business agent became the business agent and they decided they had to hire another assistant business agent. Because I had been shop steward for a short period of time, where I worked, <sup>and</sup> had

P.W.

attended some meetings and had finally got brave enough under good and welfare, as they brought me along, to know that this was the right area for me to get up and talk, someone suggested that I would make...why didn't I put an application in? The person who asked me was Flo Allen. Flo had been President, had run, in I guess, every office, prior to this. So the night when they were looking at the applications, she turned to me and said where's your application? And I said, "well I don't think I've got enough experience, you know, I know the restuarant business good enough because I'd taken a lot of courses, but I'm not too sure about the union and I actually can understand both sides of the story." So she said to me, "do you know more than that man over there," pointing out another person who had applied for the job. And I said, "well, I maybe don't know as much about the union as he does, but I'm very sure I kn9w more about the business." She said, "put in your application." So I sat down with a pencil and a piece of paper and made an application, and the executive board hired me. I decided, my husband was pleased, my father was pleased. My father said something like 'every person should spend some time in the union, but get out while you still have all your good thoughts about it. Don't stay in too long.' So I decided I would put two years in and that was

R.W.

going to be it. Twelve years later I was still there, because each year there was something that would come up that I was interested in and I was working on<sup>and</sup> I didn't really think that I should quit. Then after twelve years, I found that there were younger people coming in, some people who hadn't negotiated agreements that I'd been in on. That there were some of the things<sup>that</sup> they were doing that I didn't entirely agree with, <sup>in</sup> plus my own personal life, there were changes in that, and I decided that it was time for me to move on and for other people to come up. I found myself saying things to, particularly young women, that times were changing, they needed more training and that the only way I was going to be able to justifiably ask for more more money was if they were producing more. I had a feeling that some of them were looking at me and wondering who's side I was on. When I want training that badly, is, you know, should the union be doing this? So then, when I started to look for another job I knew I couldn't go and work for management. There was no way that I could believe in being part of their operation and what I had learned in twelve years, could only be used in certain areas and someone suggested, when I was talking of going down to California to meet my family, maybe I should apply for a job with the Department of Laobur there. So I nearly committed myself to

staying down there and then when I came back, I decided that I was being very foolish, because British Columbia is where I want to live, I don't want to live in California, anymore than four months out of the year. So as a result of this, I decided that while the Provincial Government did not have any women working in the Ministry of Labour, excepting in clerical positions, that I would go and ask them if there was any possibility of how they would feel if I applied for a job. I intended to also ask the Federal Government and thought I would have stood a better chance with the Federal Government, but in fact, the supervisor that I approached said, you know, like do you want to be a conciliation officer, an IRO, and I said I know you start at the bottom as an IRO, and his answer to me was, "well, if we have to hire a woman I would rather it be you than anyone else because you at least know how the Department operates." He said that up to the point of time of my coming in, they had not had any women applying for jobs as IRO's, they just had women applying for... I was the first person to apply. And so, that's it. I did apply. I did get the job and the union gave me a life membership when I left, which was, you know, a very thrilling thing to me because, it was something I had never thought of, and I... well I was 43 years of age, you don't usually give life

↓ memberships to people as young as that.

SD: OK, I'm going to go back and ask you about the material you've covered. Can you talk a bit about what proportion male to female workers there were within your own shop, I guess the Aristocratic where you worked and then within the chain?

PW CW: I would say that they had some car hops, I couldn't give you the figures. Where there were car hops they were always male. In our particular shop we didn't have car hops but we had a doughnut machine and one of the men worked on it. There was actually the janitor and this young fellow were the only men that were involved in our shop and there would probably be maybe fifteen women and that's, you know, there could have been more than that. I think...it's always the problem that I found out when I worked in the union is to try and find out how many people were on payroll, because if you're going to apply for certification usually there's a number of part time employees you forget to count. <sup>And</sup> ~~if~~ <sup>if</sup> they happen to work on the day that you're there, then they could work against your certification.

SD: Did the men and women receive pretty well equal wages or...

PW CW: Yes, in actual fact they did. There were more, there were times you might have a male cook, I think towards the time before I left, we did have a male cook at our shop. I don't

P.W.  
remember at any time then them ever having women car hops. It was always men car hops. I don't believe the cooks, as males, got more than the women did. We, prior to the union coming in, we probably had more women managers, but this seemed to change after the first application and then we ended up with more male managers.

SD: Did the union continue the policy of equal pay between men and women?

P.W.  
CW: I don't think there was ever any question, other than, you know, they might have car hops pay and waitresses pay, but the differential would be on the basis of the amount of tips a person could accrue in a certain job.

SD: When you finally got certified did you get certification for the entire chain?

P.W.  
CW: No, no we got actually two single certifications and the arguments were presented similar like they did to the banks, but the Labour Relations Board of that day still ruled that 'no', it was alright for us to have a single certification, and this is the issue that went into court, as I understand it.

SD: Once the two shops were certified, were you then able to go out and do more organizing of different Aristocratics?

P.W.  
CW: No, because it was still in court and they left it until such time as the Company capitulated and when the Company

Tape I.  
Side 2:

capitulated so they wouldn't have to pay all the extra costs, then they allowed us to sign up members in every shop...

END OF SIDE I

...and it was done with their, you know, blessing in effect. They had to do it in paper, but as I say it was still difficult, because it is so unusual for an employer to say that and because the fight had gone on for so long, and it was done at such a level away from the store, that there was really nobody, like I didn't talk union during that period of time, because I didn't know when the situation was going to change; so that really to get a letter saying, from management, "yes its Okay, you can join a union," it was quite a job trying to convince people that this was really for their own good. That, you know, they should be doing it.

SD: So you then went out and signed up the whole chain?

CW: Right. But we didn't apply for certification for some time later.

SD: How was that done, the signing up process? Did people go out to different shops, did you hold meetings?

P.W.  
CW: Ok, no, we worked on the basis that the union representatives went to the different shops and would talk to someone in the shop, such as myself, who might know enough and encouraged us to carry on then and the company did not take action against us at that time.

SD: So it was almost like self-organization, it *within* each shop, with the support of the union...

CW: Right.

SD: When that first period of organizing was taking place and you had not yet been approached by the union did you know what was happening?

CW: No, I had no idea. They did it, as I say, using the night janitor, who had the opportunity of seeing the people who worked nights at the last thing, the people who came on morning the first thing. Because my dining room closed earlier than the counter, I was out of the shop before this talk ever began. And I really think they were afraid to approach me, because <sup>they</sup> I felt I might be the person who could have gone to management. Everytime you organize you're always faced with the fact that you think someone is going to go, in this particular case, nobody went. There were a couple that they didn't ask at all because they knew that they would be, you know, would cause difficulties.

SD: What kind of issues prompted people to organize?

CW: The wage in itself, the sort of offers that would be given to people, if you stay so long the prospects that are there,

P.W. and then once they started they discovered those prospects weren't there. That they could see as I say, people who finally moved up to be a store manager or a manageress as the case may be and mostly manageresses in those days, and be getting up to \$28 a week and then all of a sudden just be let go on some very flimsy excuse.

SD: What was the first contract? What kind of demands did the union include? Do you remember them?

CW: Yea, I'm afraid I really couldn't bring them to mind now. P.W. I would suggest it would be something like the first year that maybe everybody was going to get \$20 a week, which was certainly above the minimum wage and that there was a cutback in days and hours of work. I think that was probably, I'm not sure whether it was the first year or the second year, that we got a five day week.

SD: Did you establish a union shop?

CW: Yes, yea. This was one of the major things that came in. P.W. Even with that in the contract it was very difficult, because there was such a turnover in staff that to try and get people to know why they had to join the union, get them out to meetings, it wasn't an easy thing, you were actually re-organizing three and four times a year.

SD: Was that constant, was that a constant problem with that union?

CW: Yes, in a place like a hamburger chain, yes it was.

P.W.  
There was a great turnover. In fact, I would say from my years with the union, it took quite a period of time before any of the establishments actually became more easily...<sup>that</sup> they settled down. The Georgia Hotel, for example, that was probably one of the first hotels where you began to have people that had a record of five and ten years employment and it was during the time that I worked with Local 28 that Margaret Burgoyne, who was the business agent when I first started to work with her, was removed from office for conduct unbecoming an official.

SD: What happened?

P.W.  
CW: Charges were laid against her by the executive board, because she had appeared at places where negotiations were taking place under the influence of liquor. That she'd appeared in establishments and had been, had got intoxicated to the point that someone had to go down and get her out of the place. It was an unfortunate thing, a personal problem in her own life, and she was charged and hearings were held and she was removed from office. She then, she had some very good points and some of the people recognized it, so they, She got application cards from another union and signed up a number of people in three hotels, enough to apply for certification. So this caused a great deal of turmoil and that also resulted in another

P.W. court case that went on for a period of time and it was with the merger of the CLC and Trades and Labour Congress that a decision was arrived at that in effect, the applications - this was only known at the very top level - that they were not properly set up to have had members and that the case ended there. But there was a matter of maybe a year and a half where things were in great turmoil. I can remember standing on a street corner with some of the men standing behind me, saying things like, you know, maybe we should push her out in front of that car. I don't think they intended to do it, but it certainly was a very uneasy feeling when you know, something like this happens. That again was something that set the union back a long <sup>period of</sup> time.

SD: Was she trying to raid established locals?

P.W. CW: Yes. The Georgia Hotel which had been under contract for many years with Local 28 and she had signed up a great number of people there, at the Niagara Hotel, and I just can't remember what the other one was. She actually had signed up sufficient people that they were asking for Local 28 to be decertified. Marble Arch was the other one.

SD: AS the hotel component of the union grew, did that mean that the restaurant component had a different kind of relation to the union?

P.W. CW: Well the biggest amount, the largest number of restaurants that were under certification, with the exception of the

P.W. Aristocratic, where as I say there was a great turnover of staff and a lot of, there wasn't too much profit to be divided amongst people, so you could negotiate, or that you could show any strength. I don't think we could have ever got a strike vote out of those different chains, different establishments. And the restaurants themselves were usually certified for the front end; they were not certified for the kitchen. In Vancouver at that time the kitchen staff was nearly 100% Chinese and they worked things out among themselves where if they were away for a day, their cousin came in and worked and they were not, no way were they interested in belonging to the union. So when you when you went to make application, the Labour Relations Board at that time, said the unit must be, the total unit not the front end. Therefore we had difficulty. In fact we found it nearly impossible, to sign up the people, the Chinese people at that time who were in the kitchens. So we couldn't. The applications we made for certification were lost because the unit, the whole establishment was not large enough. We had a minority of people. There could be many people working in the kitchen that you weren't aware of at all and the front end just didn't cover it. So we actually couldn't seem to get certification there. We also found that if we were applying for certification where our sister Local 676, the bartenders, had the other

P.W.  
part of the house, then we had the help of them in getting the other people organized. They went to talk to the staff that was there and a hotel that had a, in those days, <sup>first</sup> it was only beer parlours, as it became beer parlours or cocktail lounges, people who had those types of outlets were making more money than a restaurant, who in those days was not allowed to serve mixed drinks. find

SD: Did you find that it was particularly difficult to organize in the restaurants because of the kind of close relationship between the supervisory personnel and the staff?

P.W.  
CW: OK. I can give you an example of that. There was a restaurant in CNR station that had five employees. I tried to organize it once; I couldn't do anything. Two years later, two women came in and said, "we want to be organized." I told them of my past experience and said, "look, I will give you the application cards; if you can get all those women signed up that you tell me about I'll be very happy to go out and speak to them, write their receipts and make application." I did that. They had everybody signed up. There was a challenge and we had to have a vote. One the day of the vote, one woman had quit and they'd hired another person. I suggested that probably it was going to be a very close vote. It was suggested to me that the woman who had quit would be entitled to vote. Remember, we didn't have very much money in those days; I'd been

late getting there because the street car was held up. I phoned the woman and told her that if she would take a cab down I would pay her cab fare there and back, cause she'd just washed her hair and had it in curlers. She came down and she voted and when we counted up the vote, I got one vote. So there, obviously the pressure from the people that were there... I can remember another instance in a hotel where the same thing happened. They approached the union. I didn't happen to be the business agent that dealt with that, but I know they approached, said they wanted to join the union, they got these cards from somebody's husband, they paid their money, it was challenged, when it came to a vote everyone of them voted no, they didn't want to belong to the union. I talked to a woman one night in a hotel who came from a hotel, in a private house, and said that, you know, these are the advantages. She was so frightened that she would lose her job so I explained how certification went. I would tell no one that she'd belonged to the union and she didn't have to tell anyone and at that point in time I said to her, like, "what kind of money are you making?" And she said, "well, I'm not getting paid. They're teaching me the job." On this basis she had, she wouldn't have counted, because she would not show on payroll, she didn't understand that but she

P.W. was so afraid of losing a job for which she wasn't being paid, that she would not sign an application card.

SD: What kind of pressure would supervisory personnel put on people. Would they mostly threaten that they'd lose their jobs or...

CW: I can remember an instance in a hotel where there were a lot of people who had come from Portugal and these people were told, people who could not speak English were told by the person who could speak English, not the management, management doesn't do that very often, in this case he had them say, "you know, if you join the union you will have to pay for everything including even a glass of water, and there's a good possibility you might be deported." Now the only way I got this information was by one of our members, a maid who was doing translation for me. I actually could not have got anyone to come out publicly and say this was a threat. I don't know if the people were here illegally or not, but just the fact they were told they might be deported and the fact they were told they were going to have to pay for these things, that all things would change, you know, the union would bring in these things, And if you're talking, if you try to get around to people in their homes sometimes they're very frightened. Even if, you know, its a woman talking to a woman, they still are very very frightened. They

R.W.  
won't risk their jobs. They'll do anything rather than be forced into it. Even when husbands were saying to wives, you should join, it's a good thing. Wives, I had one man, who said, "well I'll sign the card for her." I had to explain, "no, that isn't the way it works, she must sign her own card," and she would not sign her own card.

SD: Did you ever hypothesize about why there was that kind of fear of unionism among women, <sup>or</sup> maybe lack of knowledge about unions?

CW: Well, it doesn't, I have to think carefully about this, P.W. because you look at bartenders where there is really 100%, everybody just believed automatically that if a new hotel opened up and it had a beer parlour, then everybody will be union. And I think throughout the states this is <sup>w</sup> what happens; once you get past a certain mark that it is usual for people to belong to a union then the others will go along with it. With the hotel and restaurant industry, which was such a transient industry, then people would say, "well why should I join a union because I don't intend to be doing this very long." Many of them, this is what they would, or, "why should I join a union and take a chance of losing my job because I need the money for this particular thing." It could be at that time, like, I was there for fifteen years, but I can remember meeting someone on the street and her

P.W. saying to me, "do you remember you know fifteen years ago you asked me to join the union and guess what, you know, I kept saying that I'm only going to be there a short time and I'm still there today." A lot of the women who take what they believe is part time work and it becomes a lifetime committment, don't realize when they start out, that if they joined a union, they could better their conditions. They're not going to be there. They didn't, at least, used to believe that they were going to be there for a period of time.

SD: Did you find that after the Second World War at least a component of your workforce <sup>were</sup> women who had been in war industries or had some experience with trade unionism, that that would effect their desire to join a union?

P.W. CW: No. Because I believe that some women who worked during the war had to really fight to get full union status. I can think of the street railway where at first they didn't want the women who were operating the streetcars to have full union membership. So that some of them had gone through that way, so they weren't too knowledgeable. Another thing that, an argument that I found presented on a number of occasions were women whose husbands belonged to unions and who used this as reason of getting out of the house and going having a few beers with the boys.

P.D. Women said : well all that happens at union meetings is that everybody argues and and then everybody goes out and drinks beer. I don't want to be involved in that. I have a house to look after, children to look after. I can't take time to go to union meetings."

SD: So in that instance the kind of responsibilities <sup>Women had</sup> outside of the workplace affected their ability...

CW: Oh, I am very sure...I would say my own experience, because I didn't have children, because <sup>My</sup> husband worked out of town a fair part of the time, actually worked towards my being advanced; if I had wanted to be an officer of the B.C. FED or whatever we called it in that days, there was no question. I could have run and been elected. In fact I was immediately put on committees. The first conference I went to I was put on the credentials committee. At the Trades and Labour Council I was put on a committee, where there were probably men who had belonged for a much longer period of time than myself and not been recognized, but they were anxious to show that they did believe in women's rights, so I was given a bonus position because I was a woman.

SD: Was that because women in the trade union movement at that time were raising the issues of women's rights?

P.W. CW: No, no. They weren't doing it. It wasn't being done. It was the men themselves felt and you know, it was pointed out, to me, by people that were there in office, that, "we are anxious to bring women in. We want to have them visible so that more women will realize that they should join a union." And actually the papers abetted to a point where they would go through and pick up the few women who were working as business agents. I think there were maybe four around that time and they had, you know, write-ups in the papers and our pictures and some write up about us, letting people know that women are not only trade union members but they were operating either as business agents or presidents.

SD: What kind of other measures did the unions take to try and activate women?

P.W. CW: I don't think they were taking any specific attitude towards women, certainly in the beginning it was just a question that more than 50% of your staff in a hotel would probably be female.

SD: Were there any specific kinds of contract demands that came out in the union...

P.W. CW: Money. We were at such a low level what we were looking at was money.

SD: Did you ever put that in terms of women's right to make equal wages with men or relatively equal wages?

CW: Only to this point, that it happened while I was still working for the union, was that when a hotel specifically decided to cut back in staff, which usually would happen in those days because there weren't that many conferences, from September on there was a cutback. So the area they would cutback would be, ~~were~~ they could, waitresses and maids would be sent home early. Because again men felt, what we should do is guarantee them so many hours, but because women had other responsibilities that maybe they had to be at home to make sure the fires were going, they themselves broke what the union was writing up. The hotel was supposed to guarantee them six hours. They wouldn't take it. The restaurants had the same type of agreement that said that if you worked a short shift you should get bonus pay. The employer actually wanted them to work full shifts and the women didn't want to work full shifts, and their argument was why should we pay people to work four hours when actually we've got eight hours work. So while the union, the bartenders union was getting extra pay because the men wanted full time work, the women actually only wanted part time work and they weren't worrying about the few cents per hour because their other responsibilities were there and they would rather be home.

SD: Did issues like child care, or sexual harassment, or issues around uniforms and maternity leave, those kinds of things

which, I suppose, could be specifically women's issues, ever come up in the union while you were there?

P.W. ↓  
CW: No. Sexual harassment. The only thing I could think of is that a maid might have a problem with a guest if she hand't followed the rules about leaving a door open, this type of thing. That was the only thing that I can think of specifically. Maternity, no, still fifteen years ago that wasn't an issue.

SD: You were a delegate, both to the B.C. Fed, and <sup>also</sup> the Trades and Labour Congress?

CW: That's right.

SD: Can you talk a bit about your responsibilities as a delegate?

P.W. ↓  
CW: I spoke on various issues that would come up, as they related to the Hotel and restaurant industry. Probably tried to make people more aware of the difficulties that are inherent in a transient industry, rather than a person learning a trade and staying right in an area so that they didn't have to keep reorganizing. I think that any courses that were offered by either of the organizations, I certainly took them. That's the first time that I realized that there were was a Maternity Protection Act in the Department of Labour was when Bill Black was conducting a course out at UBC. So I think I took every course that there was. I know that I took a course at the Workmen's Compensation and I can remember the first thing happened when I came to

work here/was somebody shows me a leaflet and I'm saying 'hey, I was there', and there was my picture taken when I was representing the union. I also had the opportunity to be sent to international conferences and I think my first big one was down in Chicago and I remember when I got off the plane on Easter Sunday, in Chicago, I was nearly ready to, if I could have figured a way of getting back on the plane and coming home I would have done so, because I just found it a little larger than I expected. But again, I found myself on committees immediately there and had the benefit of finding out what they were doing in the United States and what sort of training they were carrying on. Went to Western Conferences down the coast and again found out what they were doing, which probably led me to believe, that things that happened in the United States probably happen anywhere from 5 to 10 years later here. I keep saying to people, "if we could only benefit by their errors and could move and take advantage of those we wouldn't be in the spots we are sometimes today." And I think that applies to many things, not just to unionism. But the international union, we always had women on the executive and women business agents were not unusual in the United States. It was very common thing, I didn't see it as strange. They had places like Seattle

P.W. where, you know, all the waitresses were in unions and there were a number of women business agents both in the, maybe in a cooking, in those days they didn't always have a miscellaneous local. You would have a cooks' local and a waitresses' local, this type of thing.

SD: Did you ever find any conflicts between the international and the canadian or...

CW: During my period of time all I can say is, that it was very evident to me that all the money that was paid out in law, legal fees, plus the money that was paid the international representative, was far in excess of the number of memberships we had here. We were getting 50, 60,000 <sup>dollars</sup> a year, at a point of time where we probably were lucky to get a thousand members in the province and the per capita we were paying to the international was very low. That included a death benefit and a monthly magazine.

SD: Because I know at different points in the union's history there were some conflicts between Canada and the international union.

P.W. CW: Not in the period of time that I was active. And I must say that I took a lot, <sup>got</sup> a great deal of my training from the international representative, which probably would, because it was that type of relationship, he would be pointing out costs of things. Not to try and convince me it was a good thing, but so that I could better explain

to members what happened.

SD: Was training a really big issue for you because you saw it as a way of establishing a stable workforce?

P.W. ↓  
CW: Oh, not only that, but in the office I kept finding people coming in from Europe that had all sorts of training. They could give me certificates. We weren't doing anything on it. This really bothered me. This I felt was, and we did, we put on night school courses for waitresses. I can remember when management in the Georgia said, "now we've got this beautiful dining room but <sup>if</sup> people don't understand what wine is and how to serve properly, you know, they're not going to have jobs here." So this is probably the start of it, plus the fact that I had the exposure to the training that was going on in the United States. I just, to me, training was such an important thing. It seemed a natural thing to me that should be followed up.

SD: What kind of grievances were common?

P.W. ↓  
CW: Well, in many times I would have <sup>a</sup> woman come in with a grievance because she'd been let go. I would sit down and say, "alright let's write out exactly what happened and then find out what you want me to do." After I had written all those things down, the women would turn to me and say, do you think I'll be cut off unemployment insurance because of this? They weren't prepared to fight to go back on the job. All they were concerned about, at that time would be, could I get my

unemployment insurance.

SD: So that would mean that very few grievances were actually...

P. 2  
CW: I had grievances that I didn't know enough about the legislation, at one time when the government brought in equal pay and we had two <sup>classes</sup> we had a pot washer and a dish washer. And these were actually different jobs. The pot washer washed pots and the dish washer washed dishes, but when they brought in an automatic dishwasher they put the men on it because it was a very heavy job. But one woman got on it, and so, they were all being paid pot washers wages and I just walked in and said there's equal pay. She's working here with the men so you have to pay her equal pay and they said, "that's fine and paid her."

END OF TAPE I

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