

SD: So, let's start by talking about your experiences in the Depression and the organizing of the unemployed. The stuff we were talking about before.

LW: Uhhh.

SD: Pretend the mike's not there.

LW: The first unemployed meeting was held in the first week of January, 1930; and it was led by Tom Griffin and Alan Campbell. And they marched to the *Cenotaph*; and *Scanlon*; the head of the horsemen, they tried, they tried to break the demonstration up, and Campbell grabbed his horse. And they marched to the City Hall. And the City Hall at that time was in the *Holden* Building, on East Hastings, that's where it was. Now let me think, I think the Mayor was W.H. Malkin, and that's where I think, yes. And the unemployed were organized by the then Communist Party.

SD: Did the CCF play a role in organizing, too?

LW: Not then. They get the credit, but they didn't <sup>of</sup> but I'll tell you: the Communist Party done the organizing of the unemployed first. But there was a member of the Party and, Malcolm Bruce, one of the labor men, the labor leaders of that time, he got suspicious of this comrade; and they broke his trunk open, Malcolm Bruce broke his trunk open; and he found the uniform of the Royal Mounted Police, and the *guys?* they was Inspector Esselwane of the Mounties. And from that time on they got suspicious of the Communist Party.

SD: Was Malcolm Bruce in the Communist Party or?

LW: Well I think they all were, but they won't admit it now, none of them will, you know, don't let on because Tom and them were

LW: (cont) all, but they all quit it, see when that happened. And then, in, then they had a meeting on the Cambie Street grounds; that's where they got that; and Tom Griffin, Alan Campbell, and Max Herndel, spoke, Max Herndel was a Swiss; and Tom said, "Down with the gunny sack route, down with the gunny sack!" And they wanted script, get the script, and they got Woodward's wooden money. And then Alan Campbell got deported, and so did Max Herndel.

SD: Where was Campbell from?

LW: Scotland, from the Clyde side.

SD: And Herndel was Swiss?

LW: Swiss, yeah. And then, in 19, then there was Harold Winch, see--but get this right about Harold Winch--because he had a better education, then he could make propaganda good. Harold Winch was in an unemployed parade; and he got hit over the head; and that was the beginning of his fight with unemployed; he never was in the Party. In 1932, Tommy Douglas, oh what's the other guy's name? He was a school teacher on the prairie, Herndel? no, Caldwell, Caldwell; he came, and I think there was another one. And they held a meeting in the old Forum. And they held a meeting in the Forum, and that's when the CCF Party was formed here in 1932, see.

SD: Did you join the CCF then ?

LW: I never paid any dues, but I voted NDP or CCF since I was 29, and I'm 76 now.

SD: You know, in the '30's, with the unemployed organizing, what kind of work did you do?

LW: Ah, I was out of work. I was a waitress, yeah.

SD: And did you, when the unemployed were marching, you said before that you leafleted, you were leafletting?

LW: Oh, I put the leaflets out for the election times and that, for the NDP or the CCF at that time, and I worked during the elections for Dorothy Steeves, see.

SD: Right.

LW: Yeah. And, oh you got no idea how tough things were.

SD: What was it like?

LW: Huh?

SD: What was it like then?

LW: Uh, well nobody had any money, there wasn't any money, and times were really tough, but when you're young you can take that. They had, oh <sup>you</sup> used to <sup>job</sup> mostly go to meetings; we went to meetings; and in the East End we were politically ~~conscious~~; they weren't in the West End, not so much as we were, see. (And, <sup>if</sup> I want to remember I never will) well I guess there isn't much else. We went to the, I think, the wages were, oh three and four, five dollars a week. I worked at housework for 10.

SD: Housework?

LW: Yeah, I did a housework.

SD: Was that because that was the only kind of work you could get?

LW: Yeah, that's all.

SD: No jobs waitressing, eh?

LW: No jobs at all. *You waste your carfare going after them*, and there wasn't any jobs.

And of course I never got any breaks anyway, see. There wasn't no jobs. But not like today; they didn't give you any free

LW: (cont) courses that you got paid for. If you want to take a course, like I'd have liked to take a dress-making course, but you had to pay for that; if you didn't have the money you didn't pay for it. I was active in the CCF, like and I put leaflets out for them. Oh I put, went down China<sup>town</sup>, and give the pictures of Dorothy Steeves to put in the winda' and stuff like that. Outside of that, I never took any, you know...

SD Right.

LW: Yeah. But, another thing we had in the East End during the Depression, the Commies organized that, it was the Women and Girls Club.

SD: Was that the Women's Labor League? Was it called that?

LW: Women's Labor League was a little different than that. This was supposed to be the Women and Girls Club. And, they, we got books to read, well now I guess I'm getting out of it, because I read like hell anyway, and I got the books I was told to read from a Jew; and I read Marx, the three volumes; and then I give it to my brother and he read it. And then the Jew told us to read Buckle, Thomas Buckle's history . We read all that and discussed it. We used to have discussions and that, see

SD: Was that in the Club?

LW: In the Club, yes. Now the Jew, he wasn't in the Club; he was, he had a dry-cleaning place on Vernon Drive; but he told us to get in there. But then I wasn't, you see I wasn't in the labor movement as such; I wasn't in it, I didn't pay any dues and that or anything.

SD: Right. But I imagine a lot of people, especially women, were in that position, where they were not in unions but they were sympathetic to the labor movement?

LW: Oh yes, they were, ~~we~~ were, everybody was sympathetic to the labor movement; all of the old-timers still are sympathetic. Whether they're out just for themselves or not, I was still sympathetic to them because, without labor, where would they be!

SD: In the, (~~fire~~ ~~scream~~) in the background) woops, god...in the '30's, when you were involved in the unemployed movement, what kind of things were they demanding? The unemployed?

LW: Oh, one summer, they had a parade to Stanley Park; and they had kids sittin' in the bath-tub, while the clothes ~~was~~ dryin' on the line, because they only got one issue of clothing. And that's one of the things they were agitating about, was clothes, see. And the doctors and the lawyers that were on welfare, they got their cheques sent to them, see. And us guys had to go down and get them, it was all relief lines. Where the Relief Office is now, there's a big garage down there now, see, and...

SD: Was it on Hastings?

LW: I think it's Hastings and Pender. But the City Hall, when I first came back from Owen Sound, the City Hall was on Main Street, next to the library, the old library, and then it was moved down to the Holden Building, see. And oh yes, I must give you this: So, they had another demonstration, things were gettin' real tough, see, and Gerry McGeer came out; he was the Mayor; he was the Reform Mayor then. And I'm goin' to tell ya' about those politics too. And he read

LW: (cont) the Riot Act on the steps of the Cenotaph. And behind him, behind his back, it said, <sup>is it</sup> "Nothing to you who pass by." Right behind on the Cenotaph, and he's readin' it to the sons that their fathers went overseas, see, and he read the Riot Act to them, see. But before that, Vancouver was a wide open city. They had a Mayor Taylor was Mayor. Then they decide<sup>d</sup>, they were going to reform the city. And they elected Mayor W.H. Malkin in 1929 or '28. And when he was campaigning, Malkin, he used to campaign with two preachers sitting on either side of him. (laughs) And he's got up there-- listen, and the alcoholics and the stewbums, what they call them now, the alcoholics and the drifters, they were drinking Malkin's Jamaican Ginger, Jaking they called it, see. And Malkin's sittin' there, and Malkin gets up and he says, "I'd rather <sup>go</sup> down to defeat with the women and the church on my side, rather than go to victory with Su Moy and Jo Selouna. Jo Selouna run the hookshops; Su Moy run the gambling, see. So he got in there, see, but then the Depression, the Depression got so bad, then they had--that's what I want to tell you this for, whether it's on there or not--Mackenzie King could see what was coming, so they had a federal election, see, and Mackenzie King was doing everything he can to get defeated, says he won't get the Tories a five-cent piece, So he got defeated. And Bennett, R.B. Bennett got in, and Bennett was the Conservative, just like Malkin was more or less the Conservative here; but the Depression got so bad--I don't know who got elected after Malkin right away--but, oh Gerry <sup>see,</sup>

LW: (cont) McGeer, he went on a crusading rampage. Some of the judges had to resign; well they weren't getting enough pension money anyway, *and if* they could get money, otherwise they were going to get it, see. You know, you couldn't blame them for that. So the Depression went on, right up till the beginning <sup>of</sup> *WWII*. Oh, then they decided that they had to get the unemployed off the streets, because it wasn't good for the tourist trade. (laughs) Jesus Christ! When I think of that! And I think Taylor got elected again before McGeer or after. But anyway, it's in the old Hotel Vancouver, they had a march to the Forum. And Arnold Webster spoke, that time. And they all had, nearly all of them had these government issue sweaters on, a sort of a khaki colored sweater.

SD: So everybody looked the same those days, if they were on relief.

LW: Everybody looked the same, when they were on the Welfare, <sup>see</sup> Then they decided it wasn't good for the tourist trade, so then they'd have to do something about it. So they got the relief camps going; and they sent them all out to the relief camps. But that wasn't very good, because the guys came back in, worse than ever, 20 cents a day they got. Then the war come.

SD: Can I ask you, before the war came,...

LW: Yeah.

SD: We'll just go back and ask some stuff: Okay, what about women, did women get relief just like guys did, or, how, and were alot of women on relief?

LW: Yeah. Oh, all kinds of them, my generation. They got 30 dollars or something a week.

SD: Okay, for women. And...

LW: 30 dollars per month.

SD: Per month. Right. I remember reading somewhere that women were often sent to the YWCA for relief. Was that true?

LW: No, they went up to the Relief Office, then they got the relief. And you had a card, it had a number.

SD: Did women participate in the organizations of the unemployed?

LW: Oh yeah.

SD: What did they do?

LW: Well see, I can't say, because there was an awful lot of women, unlike they are today, they didn't even know what the score was. All they wanted to do was get by somehow or other. And they didn't understand. Just like lots of them today; they don't know what's going on around them.

SD: But the ones that did, did they participate in soup kitchens? Did they organize with Tom and the other men who were involved in organizing?

LW: Well Tom, he just used to speak, he done the speaking. But I don't think they didn't organize any soup kitchens. And I know--but I'll tell you something: Christmas time, the First Church, and the Salvation Army, they gave a free dinner; you could get a Christmas dinner free, see. But I never went near them, a free dinner. Then they had Andy ~~Rhodes~~ Oh, before they sent the guys to the Relief Camps, they went down on False Creek, because they all got put out of their homes, out of their hotel rooms and everything. And they were living in shacks down on False Creek. And Andy ~~Rhodes~~ he was the minister

LW: (cont) at First Church; and he went down there with a stack of bread, and he's handing out bread to the unemployed and getting his picture taken, while he's doin' it, see. And he has meetings in the church, and he gives talks. And the unemployed got in there one Sunday night when he's speakin'; and somebody said, what is it? oh, "Andy, there's goin' to be trouble. Andy's taking the collection." They called him Andy; they never called him the Reverend Andrew *Rhoden*. (His son writes once in a while). And they said, "Andy's takin' the collection up first, so there's goin' to be trouble in there." And there was. Him and this preaching of his, you know, alot of bull-shit, see, nobody took any notice of it. And then the war come. (coughs)

SD: Can I get you some water?

LW: I'll go and get it, dear. ...of the '30's. Oh yeah, we used <sup>toget</sup> an issue of clothing, finally we got clothes, but everybody got the same. And I used to sit, or they sat by the hour, ripping the clothes up and turning them inside out, so that the kids, the people at school wouldn't know they were on relief. Then they used to have to get notes from the school to get shoes for the kids--that's as true as I tell you. They had to bring (a nok home) from the teacher to get shoes, and then they went up and got the shoes. There's some of them you know, where was I? was out in a friend's house the other day, and the daughter said, "Oh, you used to baby-sit for mother or something, baby-sit." I said, "Babysittér! Your grandfather never had a dime to pay anybody to baby-sit." I said. "You were all in the same boat, living in the same house."

SD: Were most people on relief in the East End?

LW: ~~No!~~ They were all over/There/was, up here in the West End, the apartment block's torn down now, 840 Nelson, the people couldn't pay the rent, so the landlord had all the furniture collected, the suites are empty but he's got the furniture. There they are, <sup>they're</sup> sitting there crying. And they don't know. The East End comes and tells them, "Put your furniture back in your apartment." Going to tell them, "Get your furniture and put it back." See.

SD: Did they?

LW: I can't remember too much about that, whether they did, but they were an awful tame lot. They got a <sup>more</sup> militant bunch up here now. They talk about the prostitution and all this; that was just as bad in the Hungry '30's. They had prostitution then.

SD: I bet.

LW: Sure they did. Only they had it in East End of the city. And they had Joe Selowna, was <sup>only</sup> the front for a great big bunch of big-shots, ~~were into it up to their~~, and he's the guy that went to jail for them. When he got out, they let him have a job on East Hastings, bootlegging. But, before the Depression, when I was only in my '20's, I worked on Main, in the restaurants there, in <sup>the</sup> New Royal. Selowna had a place up the street, just half a block up on the corner, and the store's still there.

SD: You mentioned Mrs. Hutton and Mrs. Nielson...

LW: Yeah.

SD: Who are they?

LW: They were in the unemployed movement in the '30's. There was, oh there was quite a few of them, but I can't, Mrs. Hutton stands out.

SD: What did she do?

LW; Organizing, speaking in the meetings. You see, underneath it was the Communist Party; they controlled it, they controlled more. But after the CCF came in, they kind of, especially after they caught that guy, they broke the trunk open and found his uniform...

SD: Right. They were careful.

LW: Then they were more careful. They kinda <sup>got</sup> out of it.

SD: How about the Women's Labor Leagues? What were they?

LW: That was Communist too.

SD: Right.

LW: Those, they were all, the Communist Party controlled them.

SD: What did the Labor Leagues do? Did they do any organizing, or?

LW: They done agitating; they done agitating, for *recognition* of Russia and one thing and another. The States was worse than us. They were in a worse mess than we were.

SD: Mnmhn.

LW: Hundreds of thousands of them, out of work. No work. And then they say ~~the~~ *Roosevelt* saved the capitalist system. Roosevelt came on the scene; he makes a speech, see, "You have nothing to fear but fear itself."

SD: Do you feel that in those days the CCF was really strongly anti-capitalist? That most people who joined it almost had

SD: (cont) a Marxist kind of consciousness?

LW: <sup>no,</sup> No, <sup>are past</sup> they were always for the, to do it legally with the vote. But between you and I and the gangpole, I don't say it ~~but~~ I cannot see them changing anything with the vote. I can't see it. We'll get concessions, yes, if we ~~vote~~. But you see, I can't see this system, I won't live to see it, but I can't see this system lasting. But Russia, I heard ~~a guy on the air~~ say they're telling us alot of lies about it. But, Russia, she really hasn't got Socialism, she's got State Capitalism, so has China. You can't have a Communist society or a Socialist society in one country or even two; you got to have it all over the world. See what's happening in Spain: that guy resigned, and the Left Wing has taken them; it's going to come in the Third World.

SD: What about during the '30's? What kind of impact did the Spanish Civil War have? Did you follow what was going on there?

LW: Well, yeah. We knew what was going alright; but the Communists, the Louis Papineau Battalion that went over there, that was Communist controlled. That really was, you see. So people, they're just scared, they're leery of them; people got leery of the Communist Party because there was too many stool-pigeons, and Mounties, and ~~that~~ one, one Mountie, Esselwane that got in there, he died here not long ago, that got in there; that made them leery of anything to do with them. So they really didn't do too much, to help the Spanish.

SD: Why did you join the Comm, why did you join the CCF instead

SD: (cont) of the Communist Party?

LW: I never joined the NDP; I never joined the Communist Party either. Well, the Communist Party, I'd got suspicious of them before they broke the trunk open, before that. <sup>see</sup> I don't know what it was, just didn't trust them, the organization. Then when you read, you can see for yourself what's going on. You see, just like what's happened, homosexuality came right to the top. There was an awful lot of homosexualism went on, and <sup>it</sup> as the system was going down. And we're getting that now here; it's, that they brought it out in the open, it's better because there was too much blackmail going on; but it's a sign of decadence, decay, <sup>see</sup>. At least I think it is too. Now all those sex aberrations, they're all a sign of decline and decay. You don't see that over in China; oh I guess they got them over there but they don't...

SD: Yeah, you ~~were~~ saying before, people on welfare got 13 dollars a month?

LW: Thirteen dollars a month they got.

SD: And that must have been really hard to live on, eh?

LW: Well sure, and the married people got 22 I think for a couple.

SD: How about, I'm just trying to think about other questions during the '30's. Did you work at all during the '30's?

LW: Oh yeah. ~~I worked~~...

SD:

LW: Huh?

SD: It's alright.

LW: I worked at the Stratford ~~Hotel~~. But I worked more after the

LW: (cont) war started. Then I got a job, two and three...

SD: You said that you were a domestic worker, what was that...?

LW:

SD: No?

LW: I did work dom, I had one or two jobs as domestic service, but not steady, <sup>no,</sup> I didn't like it, I wouldn't work at it. Mostly restaurant work.

SD: Were there any attempts to organize the restaurants?

LW: Oh yeah, they always had a union in the restaurant side; I even belonged to it when I worked in Victoria. '26, see. But if you got laid off and out of work, you had to take a job wherever there was one.

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LW: (cont) *White Lunch* or anything like that, took a job in there.

And I worked in *the Log Cabin* on Hastings Street, <sup>and</sup> around there, but...

SD: So you worked in organized and un-organized places?

LW: Yeah.

SD: What were the organized places like? What did the union do for people?

LW: Well they got 15 dollars a month. The unions weren't as militant as they are today.

SD: So mostly they got wages for people?

LW: Well there was a standard wage. The unions couldn't do very much either because they were hit by the economic depression. This was the worst economic depression that the capitalist system ever had.

SD: Mnmhn.

LW: And Marx said that they would have them. And each succeeding one would be worse than the one before. Hitler and the Jews, well I applied the Marxist thought to that. The wealthy Jew, he knew what was blowing in the wind, so he got the hell out. The wealthy Jews got out in Germany. Nobody tells me anything different. They got out. But the poor Jew was left there; he got stuck. And England wouldn't take them, <sup>the United States wouldn't take them.</sup> I read, now this school teacher brought this

book to me, and I read it. (laughs). This piece is short, *biographies about* different figures, public figures, *one*

about Trotsky, <sup>see</sup>; And this American *he's the* head of Red Cross Trotsky.

in Russia, at that time, in 1917. He says, "He's four kinds

LW: (cont) of sons-of-bitches. But he's the greatest Jew since Jesus Christ. And sure...

SD: Did you know about Trotsky in the '30's?

LW: Oh sure we do. But, yeah, well that's what happened. The Communist Party split in 1933, <sup>see.</sup> Some of them, I didn't join, but I was sympathetic to the Trotskysts. So was Tom,

SD: You were sympathetic to Trotskyism?

LW: Oh yeah, I was sympathetic to Trotsky. I had a great, a great revolutionary, and it shows Trotsky laying dead in his coffin or something. I had his picture on the wall for a while.

SD: Why were you interested in him?

LW: Well I just thought he told it like it is, that's why.

SD: Right.

LW: But I was going to tell you about the Jews: So the wealthy Jew in the final analysis, and they'll do it again. The wealthy Jew goes with the wealthy Gentile, to protect their material interests, just like the black millionaire goes with the white millionaire. Another thing they taught us when I was young, too, if you drink and smoke you go down in the struggle.

SD: What kind of attitudes were there towards women in the socialist movement?

LW: Oh well, socialist movement, they were all equal; they don't discriminate. They have, the socialist movement, they, the Communist Party was at the corner of Campbell Avenue and Hastings, underneath the billiards; the Socialist Party Hall was 666 Homer Street; and the real Socialists used to

LW: (cont) come there to speak; like they had a lawyer, *Lefau?*, W.W. *Lefau*, he used to come there and explain the system to us. Interest, rent and profit, that's what the capitalist system is. They could get 22 dollars a month instad of 13.

SD: So it was, it was important for women to marry so that they survive?

LW: Yes. They, but there was an awful lot of abortion too, among the married women.

SD: Was there?

LW: Yes. ~~An~~ awful lot of it in my class.

SD: How did people get abortions?

LW: Knitting needles, slippery elm.

SD: Did peoples...

LW: All kinds of concoctions, I'd said, quinine, everything they used. And I said, "And what did you doctors tell us?" I went there and they'd say, "We're to give life, not to take it."

SD: What about birth control? Was there any birth control?

LW: Yes. Dr. Telford, he used to tell the women about <sup>the</sup> birth control. He, that's another thing, Dr. Telford, he was one of the, well we called them phoney, but maybe he wasn't; he had a , he used to go around lecturing, and the title piece of his lecture was If I Were Dictator. And then he'd go through a long song and dance telling about, if he were a dictoator, see. And then he ran for Mayor, and got elected Mayor of the city. And I think he kinda fell out with the CCF, at that time, he fell out with them; I don't know what, but he was all for birth control. Give the women the birth

(Tape break.)  
LW: (cont) control pills. ~~she~~ had eight miscarriages.

SD: So self-induced abortions.

LW: Yeah. Well, she got pregnant, and she went to the doctor, and he told her the same old story, and so she got close to the window of his office. She threatened to go out the window if he didn't give her something. And he didn't want to have a scene or nothing in there. And he gave her a prescription. And she got it. And half of them didn't of them didn't take it right; they passed it around, and among them, *see.*

SD: Like working in the biscuit factory, what were the hours like and the conditions?

LW: Oh that's 50, almost 60 years ago. I was only 16. Ten hours, ten and a half hours a day, and we got four dollars a week. And then after we were there a year or so, it was the McLaughlin Biscuit Factory in Owen Sound, and after that we got five dollars a week, and I worked there a year and a half or so. Then I went to the white wear factory, didn't get paid any better, 'cause if you got any good at that you got shoved on piece-work. And then I came here; I just went from one thing to the other; got married and that. And ~~been~~ been on my own ever since. *Tape interruption*

SD: Do you want a break?

*Tape Interruption*

LW: In...

SD: '39.

LW: The first, you see my generation went throught two World Wars. I was 11 years old when the First World War started. And we

LW: (cont) went through the First World War; we went through the ; and I was going to school in 1917 when they tried to introduce conscription into Quebec. And they had a hell of a time with them; there's no way they're going over there and fight. This stuff they're talking about now; it's just a repetition, Quebec's always, *see*. And then 1918 come the Flu. *I got sent back to Owen Sound.* But 1918, the Flu, they just died just like flies; and out here, my father told me after I'd come here, he was living in the Main Hotel on Main Street, and there was an undertaking parlor down called Edwards. And he used to be, Edwards used to be out in the street waiting for it, you know, bring the corpses or whatever. They'd say, "How's business, Mr. Edwards?" "Fine, fine, never was better." *And they'd give him* a slug. Then in the 1920's came the flapper years. Right after the war came big, big changes for the women. They cut their hair. They wore their dresses shorter. And then's when they really started to go out to work. And then in the fall of '29, the stock market crashed. And I had a brother, in fact, in our family, there's a streak of *mathematics* runs through the family; and my youngest brother had it; he was a really, well I'd call him a genius for those days with mathematics, cause he never went to University but he could do it all. And we said, I said to him at the time, "Well, what's gonna, what, well so the stock market crashed." He said, "Ha, you wait and see what that means. You figure out what that means," he said. "You're gonna feel it." And we didn't believe you see, but we did. Yeah! And then, the Depression

LW: (cont) years came for 10 years; we had that Depression, In 1939 the Second World War comes, and the phoney part, the phoney war they called it. And then in May 19, then in the spring of 1940, when Hitler went through Belgium and through France. And the reason that Churchill was the Prime Minister at that time, at 65, was because they lost all that generation in <sup>the</sup> First World War, you know, they lost their leaders and all, officers and everything. That's what put Churchill in there, <sup>see</sup>. And ~~they~~ went through the Second World War. Then things picked up. They had work for everybody; and they found a job for me right away. And I was in a box factory, putting strings through hat boxes, for Woodwards. And I nearly went nuts! So I quit, and I went down to Unemployment, and she said, "We're going to fix you labor job-jumpers!" Then I went down, I got a job at the corner of Princess and Hastings, in the Home Apple. I worked there, and then I quit there and went to the Hotel Vancouver, in the laundry there. I was an experienced laundry worker because when I went to the reform school, they put me in the laundry. And I learnt there, see, so when I went to the Hotel Vancouver, I had all that experience. And I worked there quite awhile, and...

SD: Was that unionized? Were the laundry workers unionized?

LW: No, no. Then I go, Christ, the Hotel Vancouver let you be in the union!

SD: Theyr'e unionized now.

LW: Yes, yeah, you bethcha. After, oh, the relief camp boys

LW: (cont) came in, and they were selling apples on the street. And also there was the university students ~~who~~ graduated those years, an awful lot of them couldn't find jobs; so a delegation of them went to see R.B. Bennett, the then Prime Minister and he told them, they presented their case, and told him they had no work and no jobs. He said, "No jobs!" he said. "You're too fussy; go out and do pick and shovel work, like I did." That's what he told them. And in the meantime, the boys came in from relief camps and they were selling apples on the street and taking up collections. And then they weren't getting anywhere and they decided to occupy the Art Gallery. So they went in to the Art Gallery<sup>er</sup> for awhile. First of all, they went to the library at Main and Hastings, and they occupied that for a bit; then they went in the library, then they went to the Art Gallery, and finally they landed in the Post Office; and they stayed in the Post Office for three weeks; and one Sunday morning about five o'clock in the morning, the Mounted Police came, and they tear-gassed them out of the Post Office. As they went down Hastings there; they smashed a few windows on the way down. And they were gassed. And they landed at the Ukrainian Labor Temple, at the corner of Pender and Keefer, Pender and Hocks, I forget which. And at the same time, there was a doctors' convention in the city; and there was two American doctors went down to the Labor Temple, and they treated the ones that were tear-gassed. And they refused to give their names. And a short time after that, the war broke out. And the government had all kinds of money, then, the money was, all of a sudden

LW: (cont) from being relief bums, they turned into heroes.

(laughs) And there was all kinds of money for them. And they went overseas. And nothing, oh, and they had a local politician from provincial government, Ian MacKenzie was his name, and he made a speech and he said, "There's nothing too good for the heroes from Anzio and Salerno." 'Cause they were all over in Italy. (laughs) That's as true as I tell you. After the Post Office episode, or before, that they marched 1000 of them, and they all had their government issue, khaki sweaters on; and they marched to the Old Forum. I think Arnold Webster--if you get the NDP paper, you can see Daisy Webster's column, well, it was Arnold Webster that spoke to them and I think Stewart Alsbury, but I'm not sure; but Webster addressed them anyway. That was just before, I think things--and that is the reason that the Unemployed Insurance was brought in, in '43, 'cause they didn't want any more of that going on.

SD: Were you, were you involved in any of those marches; were you present for them?

LW: No. I wasn't in any of them, see. But my husband was on his way to work that Sunday morning and he saw them running. But it was in all the papers. You can go to The Sun Archives, and look that up.

SD: Yeah, okay. When the unemployed organizing began, what did the organizers do to bring men and women together who were unemployed? Did they leaflet places where people would eat? Or stay? Did they...

LW: Oh they made the Unemployed Councils. They formed Unemployed

LW: (cont) Councils, in all the different depart--this was before the CCF, and we had Unemployed Councils in all the rooming houses and that in the East End. And they organized a chairman and a recording secretary, and whatever else they did.

SD: Did they approach the trade unions to support?

LW: No, the trade unions, I don't know, we didn't hear much about them, were inclined to be reactionary. They weren't like they are today because there was too many trade unions out of work; they were all<sup>out</sup> of work same as everybody else. You haven't a clue to what it was like.

SD: True.

LW: No, you can't even, can you imagine your father and mother going up the the relief offices with a gunny sack to get your food, well that's the way it started. And that was the worst, they call it the Great Depression. But Marx said each one is worse than the one before. They had one in 1914, before the First World War; they had one in 1907; and they had one, I don't know about Canada, but 1894 they had Cox's Army, unemployed army marched on Washington, at that time. And the only thing that saved the States then was Roosevelt; they said he saved capitalism.

SD: Right. right. True. You talked, we've talked a bit about the role of the Church; specifically can you talk about how the Church was seen in your community, and the kind of role it played in people's lives; and in particular what attitude it had toward trade unions or labor organizations?

LW: Well I can't say anything about the trade unions, because I

LW: (cont) don't remember too much about them.

SD: Or the Church?

LW: I don't remember the Church because I never went to it. But I think the Catholic Church was more in sympathy with the people, not the bishop, the ordinary priest was. But mostly what I remember about the Church, was Rhoden, the Reverend Andrew Rodden, the First United Church at Gore and Hastings there; it's a new church now. But he was busy preaching about what was going on behind the Green Curtains, that was the beer parlors, and they used to have it curtained off with green curtains or something. (laughs) But he did go down to--you see, before they put them in the relief camps, as the loggers were all laid off of work, and their meal tickets were used up, and the hotels couldn't carry them any longer; then they sent them to what they call them, they gave them ticket to what they call the Refuge; and they went down there, to go; and then those that didn't go there went over to the Flats, the False Creek Flats, they called them, and they built make-shift places to live, like ~~old~~, they get tins from old cars and boards, and they made themselves places to sleep you know --Andy went down there, we all called him Andy, Andy went down there, and he brought down sacks of bread, and he had his picture taken, handing out the loaves of bread to the unemployed. (laughs)

SD: Wasn't that sacriligious?

LW: Huh?

SD: *Loaves and fishes?*

LW: Well we just laughed at Andy, you know. And that's when they just laughed at him. Once in awhile, we went and listened to him and preach, and especially when he got going on what was going on behind the Green Curtain. (laughs)

SD: What did your father do?

LW: Carpenter.

SD: And was he in a trade union?

LW: Oh yes, he was always a trade unionist, all the carpenters were, the skilled workers.

SD: And he had a fairly strong, a strong position on picket lines, did he?

LW: Yeah, but he wasn't any different than all the trade un, than all the carpenters and skilled tradesmen at that time. They were all union people, they still are, they all belong to the union.

SD: Can you tell me the story about your father talking to your brother about not crossing the picket lines?

LW: Yeah, it was the strike of 1923, the longshore strike, and somebody got him to go down there on the boats or something. And my father got him and told him, he'd rather see him dead than cross a picket line. No.

SD: Can you talk to me a little bit about what the conditions were like in the restaurants where you worked? You told me about wages.

LW: The best wages I've got was when I worked after the war, in a coffee shop, but it's gone now, mostly catered to the longshoreman and that. And I think we got 27 dollars a week which

LW: (cont) then. 'Cause the nice girls wouldn't work down there. But that's a way out of date now. I don't know anything about the restaurants today.

SD: Did you work a six day week?

LW: Yeah.

SD: And 10 hours a day.

LW: Oh I worked in the Hudson Bay, in the cafeteria when I was 17. And we got nine dollars and seventy-five cents a week, but then that's nearly 60 years ago, see. So I don't know too much, 'cause I've been a married woman, and I just worked with the old man.

SD: Do you think you <sup>became</sup> politically active because your community was?

LW: No.

SD: What influenced you to become *active*?

LW: Nothing. *I'd just - natural -* I liked *asking* questions about people, I like to know about them, and what they do and everything; and then I read that, read mostly biographies and that. But no I can't say I was too deeply active. I just a, not like some of them.

SD: Can you talk about the delegation that was sent by the unemployed to ~~the~~ City Hall in Vancouver, and what that delegation did?

LW: I don't ~~know~~ know about the first one, but one delegation I was on went to the City Hall, and I'm not sure, but I think it was Alderman Miller they were talking to; and we had a lady with that had got her lights, gas cut off. And so we wanted to know if they were going to turn the light and gas on for her.

LW: (cont) And he said, "What's the matter with the coal oil lamps? They're good enough for the farmers." And the head of the delegation said, "Well, what about if the <sup>lamps, the</sup> kids knock the lamps down, the house catches on fire, then what is the insurance company going to say?" Anyway, that night they turned the lights on for her. And as they left the City Hall, Mayor Taylor slipped her a dollar.

SD: What other things did the delegation to City Hall demand?

LW: They wanted a second issue of clothing, 'cause they were only getting one issue. And they wanted to get two issues, so they'd have a change. So at the time, they had to go down to Cordova Street to pick up their <sup>clothing</sup> parcels and the clothes were always the same; and everybody knew you were on welfare if you wore them, the sweaters and stuff that they'd get. So somebody wrote a sign up over the wicket where you got your clothes, your parcel from, and it said, "Abandon hope, all ye who enter here."

SD: What was the impact of the 1933 Longshore strike on Vancouver? That was a hard strike wasn't it?

LW: Well, yes. It was a tough <sup>strike</sup>; but lots of people thought that they shouldn't have went on strike. They think that there was something fishy behind that. And anyways, they brought a bunch, quite a few of the unemployed out from Saskatchewan, to break the strike, to scab. But the people weren't exactly unsympathetic to them, because they were starving on the prairies, between the dust storms and the cold winters, so they took their jobs here. And anyways, everybody knew that the Long-

LW: (cont) shoremen that were on strike, they were the scabs that broke the strike in 1923.

SD: So it was hard for them to get public sympathy?

LW: Yes, very hard, but people were rather indifferent about it.

END OF SIDE II

Side One:

SD: In 1935, the unemployed went by freight train to Ottawa. Can you talk a little bit about the On to Ottawa Trek and the Regina Riot?

LW: No, I don't remember; at that time I wasn't too involved, 'cause I was workin' in the CCF. But they had a trek to Ottawa, and then the Mounties tackled with them in Regina. And an awful lot of people are of the opinion that there was some scull-duggery; there was stool-pigeons or something; lots of people think the Mounties cooked them up themselves.

SD: There was an election in 1933; can you talk a bit about that election in which Duff Patullo and Whisner ran?

LW: Yes. Duff Patullo and Gordon Whisner, was elected the Attorney General; they were the leaders of the Liberal Party. And right in the depth of Depression, when it was absolutely impossible to get work of any kind, the Liberal Party came out with the slogan, "Work and Wages". And that was the year that Harold Winch got elected to Parliament.

SD: In terms of the welfare system, you mentioned that welfare had something called 'husband catchers'. Who were these people and what did they do?

LW: Oh, that was a terminology that the unemployed <sup>had</sup> when they went up, if they were ~~married~~ and separated, and they went up to collect their relief. Well, if they, they'd send them up, and everybody called them the 'head ~~catchers~~, the husband catchers', and it was, well I guess he was some kind of a social worker, they went up to see them, and then they tried to trace the husband. And if they could find him, they'd take him to court,

LW: (cont) get a judgement against him. But lots of times, the woman, the wife would be off welfare and find out that she couldn't collect anything from, she'd only be able to collect once from her husband, then he'd disappear again. But the Relief didn't care as long as they got her off relief.

SD: Also, were there social workers who worked with the Relief Office; and what were they like in those days?

LW: Yes, they had social workers in those days, but the one in the East End, in particular, nobody had any use for her. She came down to see my girlfriend one day; and she told her that her husband has a real good job in Seattle; and she's going to send her and the two kids to Seattle to meet her husband. And so the lady didn't want to go; she wanted no part of it. So the social worker came down this day; she said, "Come on," she said, "I'll take you up to the breakfast." So she took her up to breakfast, and bought her a package of cigarettes. So the lady thought, "Oh, oh something fishy's coming." So she went up to the, the social worker took her up to the immigration place; and so when she went in to get her medical, she said to the examining officer or the examining doctor, she said, "Do I have to go to Seattle?" And he said, "Don't you want to go?"; and she said, "No!" He said, "Well, who's that out there with you?" She said, "She's the social worker." And he said, "I thought she was a social worker." And he said, "Lady, there's no power on earth can make you leave the land of your birth." So she came out, and the social worker says, "You cooked your goose; you cooked your goose

LW: (cont) good!" So she, the lady started to cry and she came <sup>home</sup> and everybody told her, "Oh, stop crying, you got small kids. They can't, they won't be able to put you off relief, they can't, see." And the teacher spoke very well of her, that she kept her kids nice and clean and everything, and that was the end of that.

SD: But they did cut people off welfare if they thought somehow that they could afford to support themselves?

LW: Oh yes. But that was <sup>only</sup> when people went off themselves; they didn't want the welfare if they could get any kind of a job, because they didn't want them social workers, see.

SD: *Why did men go to* war, after the Depression, was it because they went for patriotic reasons?

LW: They might say it was, it wasn't. They went because they, well they was gonna' get a pay check, get some clothes to wear, were better than what the government gives you; the GI clothes were better than what they were wearing. And so...

END OF SIDE I