

J This is an interview with Mr George Ritchie
the material to be used for a biography of
Arthur Evans the date is April 23 1975
George can you tell me when you first
became involved with unemployed, with
the relief camps.

G. In the hungry thirties

J And how did you become involved where
you a young man looking for work
and wages

G I got laid off from work and I went
home, Mother called me in the morning
for work and I said "I can't go to work
I'm off the mill shut down. Dad said
"Well George you've got to get a job
So I went down to Beatty Street looking
for relief and they said "You can go
home and your father can keep you
I walked out one door and into another
and changed my name to George Beatty
and I got 50¢ and a ticket on the
train to Hope

J Was that to a relief camp

G Yes

J. O.K. How did you like relief camps
What were your impressions of them

G. Not very good

J They gave a young

G. The Fraser canyon was in bad shape in those days and they put us to work on them on the road and give us little pay. I was talking to a fellow the other day we were talking about different things on the highway and he picks up a book and he says right here it says that road put up from Revelstoke to Holden or 12 or 14 million dollars and the roads no damn good to them at all they done away with it - just to keep us out of mischief if you want to put it that way

J Yes that was part of their plan, philosophy to keep you out of sight

G. Yes to get you out of sight.

T. There was a union of unemployed did you become a member of that

G. Yes

T. Did you come out in Dec 1934 when some of the boys came in Van to try and get work and wages

G. Yes.

T. You went back again and there was a concerted drive to bring the men out in March. Did you come out then

G. I came out then

T. You came into Van. There was quite a few of you would you like to tell me some of the things that the relief camp boys had to do to bring to the attention of the authorities and the citizens their plight

G. Well in Hudson's Bay that was a start

T. Yes I've seen a lot of affidavits about the Hudson's Bay

G. That's what started it

T. Do you also remember the snake parades

7. From what evidence I can find you may have been the originators of the snoble parade

6. From one side to the other and just keep on going

7. I also think that you were in at least one delegation that I'm aware of to see Gerry McGeer. Would you like to tell me something about that

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3. All right we came out of the Hudsons Bay store the first thing I was told, they said were sending a delegation up to see Gerry McGeer so we went down to Hastings st in the old Holden building and went upstairs and there was a policeman took us into McGeer's office Gerry was sitting on a big high chair I call it and he said whats your name I said George Ritchie He said where do you live I said 7194 Cullodden Dhuk Everyone of us had our homes in Vancouver and thats the reason why after that they chucked us out into a car and

5. Took us too the police station, we were only in there for 24 hours, but if we happened to be a transient we would have got 6 months

J Right - would you like to tell me something about that it's not done today but it was a very common occurrence for a man not to have a permanent place of abode to go to jail for 30 days, it was a very common sentence I believe

G Yeh

J Okay you tried all areas I know McLeer you went to Patello with delegations and it appeared the only way to go was to Ottawa were you part of that decision making

G yes

T Okay you went to Ottawa or you tried

G we tried

T would you like to tell me anything

that you remember about going on
the train any of your stops anywhere
that you think might be of interest

6 The train went practically all the
way through, when we stopped outside
of Regina we marched into Regina
and we got permission to stay down in
one of the stadiums near the RCMP

We had to - I was busy at that time
there were 5 or 10 of us or more who
had to get smart and get a meeting

going strong enough So we decided then
to send a delegation to Ottawa, the next

day we were up to the square we
had a Chev dump truck and Arthur

Evans says to me Heh big Ben he

says get down the road a little
ways down there I'm going to call

and I want to know if its alright

I says OK I went down everything

was fine all of a sudden the
police came rushing in and there

7
G happened to be a man standing there what looked like your Dad and they got him instead of your Dad - Well we laughed about that, and the riot started right then Windows broken everything else people running then the next day I think we made an advance group go and see (R. B. Bennett ^{Gardner}) they had machine guns set up to stop the boys from going any farther

J. Yes it was a pretty sad part of history, a great deal has been made about the young men being coerced having been intimidated and led by a man who was a communist
Could you tell me in your own feelings did it bother you that my father was a communist

G No

J Okay we get no that's pretty simple

G at that time I was one myself, ~~the~~

J I'm thinking of - there were talks from mostly elected officials, that this was

J. a revolution, that you were armed that this; What was your reason for going on the Ottawa trek what did you want from the govt.

G. I just wanted a different kind of wages than what we were getting 20¢ a day wasn't very much to live on and the camps set way out in the bush there way out by ourselves, just like a bunch of animals, we were

J. Were you ever other than Harry Miller were you ever arrested in any of your other activities with the relief camp workers

G. No

J. How did you find the police were you intimidated other than Regina did you find them sympathetic or completely unsympathetic

G. I found out the worst ones was the C.P.R.

J. From what I hear a great many of them

T were black and tans

G A guy up at - just out of Van he had those 2 bloody dogs

T Do you remember Mr Scanlon

G He and his bloody old horse

T Would you like to give me your impressions of my father as a leader as an organizer

G He was one of the best ones I've ever known of, He could hold a crowd down in any meeting. In telling you he was very interesting, people would like the house and talk for 1/2 hr. I know that for a fact

T Did you feel that he had taken no
I'll ask you a different question Did you feel that the men themselves had part in the decision making of this Trek.

G Oh yes

T So it wasnt a man leading all the way - It was a man who carried

J out the discussions and the functions from the rank and file would that be right?

G Yes

J Was this your first beginning in a trade union or had you been in one before

G It was the first.

J How old a man were you when you went on the trek

G I was about 27 or 28.

J After you came back; you did come back to Vancouver did you after you were dispersed from Regina. Did you then find in 39 the gov had lots of money clothes

G at that time I was at a mill and I stuck there

J After thinking back in history what do you think it has for young people today do you think that there are any lessons to be given to young with unemployment coming on

T us very badly

G It looks like its coming back again

T And what would you suggest to young men who would fall into the category of no work no wages Do you think that your example is a good one for them

G I think so

T In what ways would you say do you think an organization

G Its only in organization that its going to help you out you cant do anything individually you have to have a majority

T We come back to united we stand

G Thats right - that came up last week over at North Vancouver and I was very suprised to see the young men the young women very interested in what we had to say down there that day

T Good that was in a high school that you were at

G They were asking questions left & right That Harlan thats her cousin (wife)

G was in the relief camp himself - was able to give them a little more understanding

But back to the archives over here & you said to me you did a pretty good job that

We had a phone call from the school

J That's fine may I have permission to use this material on this tape for my fathers biography

G Yes

J Thank you.