

**Interview: Dan Miller (DM)**  
**Interviewer: Rod Mickelburgh (RM)**  
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**Transcription: Warren Caragata**

**RM [00:00:05]** So we're very glad to have with us Dan Miller. This man was premier of British Columbia. But before that, he was a worker. And we're going to talk a bit about that and some other stuff. So it's good to see you Dan.

**DM [00:00:18]** Yeah. Good to see you too, Rod.

**RM [00:00:19]** Okay. So let's go right back to your early days, your family background, and what launched you into the world and that kind of stuff.

**DM [00:00:28]** Well, my dad was a carpenter, a good one, but he had a fatal flaw. It was called alcohol. So we tended to move around a lot when I was quite young. Whether that had an influence on my character, I'm not sure. But I remember, I counted them up, I think I went to 12 or 13 different schools on the way through school, you know, so it creates something, I think, a bit of an insular personality, I think, but not always. But, in any event, I graduated from high school in North Vancouver. Then I took an extra year—in those days, and I don't know why—

**RM [00:01:06]** I didn't realize you spent time in the Lower Mainland. I always thought you were an island guy or—

**DM [00:01:12]** No, no.

**RM [00:01:12]** Okay. Anyway. Keep going.

**DM [00:01:13]** Well, in those days you could take the first year of university at your high school.

**RM [00:01:17]** Yeah.

**DM [00:01:18]** Which was an excellent—

**RM [00:01:19]** —Grade 13.

**DM [00:01:19]** I don't know why it was ever done away with, you know? So I did that, and then I started looking for work. And I'd worked a bit on tugboats in the summer. My uncle was a tugboat skipper, and I discovered early on that life wasn't for me. I kept falling in the water. So in '64, February—I remember that distinctly because it was the night of the then-Cassius Clay–Sonny Liston fight, which to everybody's amazement, Clay won. Anyways, I wound up in Prince Rupert a couple of days later and went out to the local pulp mill and promptly got hired. I went to work the next day. And I'd spent, three, four, five months in a logging camp before that.

**RM [00:02:10]** Where was that?

**DM** [00:02:11] Mahatta River, up in the north end of Vancouver Island. Setting chokers first, and then—I was a bush scaler, you went behind the fallers measured their cut. And I remember meeting a couple of guys who were fallers and I enjoyed their company. I enjoyed the way they talked about labour and history and I knew nothing at that time. But these guys were denied membership in the IWA at that time. I don't know if you recall, but—

**RM** [00:02:45] —Because they were communists?

**DM** [00:02:45] Came out of the United States. Right. And that's when the IWA was still affiliated or part of the American union. And I thought it was interesting. It sort of stuck in my brain. I can still remember, Ivor McDonald was maybe one of the fallers—and these guys were communists, right? And they were not allowed to join the union. They were allowed to work and get the same rate, but they weren't allowed to join the union.

**RM** [00:03:10] In spite of the fact, who did all the original organizing of the IWA? The Communists.

**DM** [00:03:14] Yeah.

**RM** [00:03:15] Anyway, keep going.

**DM** [00:03:17] Anyway, that stuck in my brain. And so I wound up in Prince Rupert, and in my first year there—I only worked for a year—

**RM** [00:03:25] Was there a reason you went to Prince Rupert?

**DM** [00:03:28] A friend of mine had been there and said there's lots of work. Yeah. So I worked there for a year. And then three of us decided we were going to travel a bit. There were four of us actually— took the train across Canada, caught the Queen Mary in New York, got off in Southampton, and I spent a year and a half kind of kicking around, in London mostly, took a month or so to hitchhike through France, got kicked out. I ran out of money, and I went to the Canadian embassy, the consulate in Marseille. And I said, would you give me some money to get back to England? Well, no.

**RM** [00:04:15] There were standards even then.

**DM** [00:04:18] So they insisted that they call my mother who sent the fare to get back to England. So I was kind of embarrassed about that. Anyway, so I spent a year, year and a half, in England, met a woman, got married. My daughter was born just before I left. Went back to Prince Rupert when I got home. I got my job back in the pulp mill. And that was in '86. And then I worked there, I worked there for quite a while.

**RM** [00:04:53] It can't be 1986.

**DM** [00:04:55] Not '86. What am I saying?

**RM** [00:04:59] '76?

**DM** [00:05:00] No, '66. Maybe it is age. Anyways, I worked there in the production, various parts of the mill, for quite some time. Then I applied for and received a millwright

apprenticeship, which I completed. And I also got active in the union. I was recruited by Angus Macphee.

**RM** [00:05:31] The famous Angus Macphee.

**DM** [00:05:32] The famous Angus Macphee. Not enough people know about him, I don't think.

**RM** [00:05:35] Well, do you want to tell us about him?

**DM** [00:05:37] Well, he's this great big six-foot-five guy, a real intellectual. Scottish working class. His dad was quite a wit, too. And I learned a lot from Angus about the history of the labour movement. He wasn't your typical union leader. And so I was elected as corresponding secretary or something like that. And lo and behold, Angus had set up a library in the union office, books about labour and history. So I started reading some of those. Then I was in charge of it, and I started buying books for the library and gradually worked my way up, in the union, to various roles.

**RM** [00:06:32] Do you remember any of the books you bought or that you put in the library?

**DM** [00:06:35] Oh, Ragged Trousered Philanthropists. Some of—wrote about the stockyards in Chicago.

**RM** [00:06:44] Upton Sinclair.

**DM** [00:06:45] Upton Sinclair. Yeah. Others. Those are the two I recall right now. Anyways, I don't know. Maybe I had a bit of a passion for it, I don't know. But soon I was chairman of the standing committee which met with the company to resolve grievances or try to. I was always, I think, viewed by—and I'll touch on the labour history there in a minute—but I was always viewed as a moderate. And in a way that, I was always trying to solve problems. You know, I mean, over the years later, I became minister of labour. But, when I reflect back on it, I realized I'd learned some things that, yeah, I support the labour movement. I think people should have the right to organize, improve their wages, working conditions, etc. it's been a huge difference in people's lives throughout our history in North America and in Europe as well. But there were some hotheads around in those days. I think when I first went up there, they had a wildcat strike not long after I got there. And those were quite common in those days. Something would happen, some issue that, when I look back, sometimes wasn't that important. But next thing you know, it was down tools. And the place is shut down illegally, right. And the labour board, you know. So I was always the moderate and that was fine, I didn't mind. It proved useful, I think, later in my political life. In any event, when Graham Lea got elected in 1975 during the Barrett...

**RM** [00:08:41] '72.

**DM** [00:08:43] Seventy-two, sorry. Seventy-five was the bad date.

**RM** [00:08:44] Yes. Right.

**DM** [00:08:46] He said to me, I'd like you to come down and be my ministerial assistant in Victoria. And I said, Graham, I don't know anything about—like, I'm a millwright, you know. Well, he said, put it this way. He said, if you don't try it, he said, try it. If it works, or it

doesn't work. But he said, if you don't try it, you'll be kicking your ass for the rest of your life. So I tried it and worked for him for three and a half years as his MA. And then, upon the demise of the Barrett government in '75, I went back to the pulp mill again.

**RM** [00:09:30] What was that like going back?

**DM** [00:09:31] Well, they keep hiring me, so. Or they kept hiring me.

**RM** [00:09:35] I don't know whether you had a jacket and tie or whatever. It was pretty casual in those days, but still. I mean, there you are. You're in the legislature, you're, you know, close to the seats of power sort of thing. And then all of a sudden, you're back in the pulp mill.

**DM** [00:09:48] Yeah.

**RM** [00:09:49] No problem?

**DM** [00:09:55] No, none whatsoever. Remember, Joe Davidson—

**RM** [00:09:56] —better money probably—

**DM** [00:09:58] Remember Joe Davidson.

**RM** [00:10:00] The postal guy?

**DM** [00:10:01] Yeah.

**RM** [00:10:01] Yeah. Postal worker.

**DM** [00:10:02] He was the longtime head of the postal workers.

**RM** [00:10:04] Right.

**DM** [00:10:05] Right. And when he either defeated or retired from that, he went back to work in the post office. No, it doesn't bother me. I can do anything. So I worked for Graham. Then I went back to the pulp mill, got more immersed in the NDP. I must have worked on, I don't know how many campaigns. We used to campaign federally, provincially, municipally. And I knocked on more damn doors, you know.

**RM** [00:10:37] Prince Rupert's got those hills, too.

**DM** [00:10:38] So. Yeah. Yeah, but a good place for the NDP. A good working-class town. So Graham went a bit screwy there to the end. He ran for—

**RM** [00:10:49] He did.

**DM** [00:10:51] —leadership. He failed. And then he subsequently left the NDP and then tried—

**RM** [00:10:58] Some wacko party.

**DM** [00:10:59] Wacko thing, a B.C. party or whatever it was, and that didn't last. So he retired or announced he wasn't running in '86. And I ran, and I won.

**RM** [00:11:11] From the pulp mill to the legislature.

**DM** [00:11:13] Yeah.

**RM** [00:11:14] All right. We're going to take you back, though. We'll catch up at some point.

**DM** [00:11:18] Sure.

**RM** [00:11:19] So, what year did you say, do you remember when you started at the pulp mill?

**DM** [00:11:25] Sixty-four.

**RM** [00:11:25] So was that, were they the international union then, or had they gone Canadian?

**DM** [00:11:31] No, they were still—no, they were Canadian.

**RM** [00:11:37] PPWC.

**DM** [00:11:37] And very interesting history there.

**RM** [00:11:38] Yes. Very.

**DM** [00:11:40] There were various attempts to sort of Canadianize unions that really were affiliated with or part of U.S. unions and the U.S. union, the International Brotherhood of Pulp, Sulphite and Paper Workers, or paper makers, out of New York or close to New York, there was a strong sense that they were pretty corrupt.

**RM** [00:12:03] A couple of them went to jail, I think, eventually.

**DM** [00:12:05] Yeah. And there were some incidents that happened that kind of cemented the argument for, at least in my mind, a Canadian-only union. I don't think that's necessarily an inviolate principle. You know, I think there's lots of U.S. unions that are—the Steelworkers, you know. But, I remember the story about delegates from Prince Rupert—there were—started within the PPWC, the Reform Movement for Democratic Action, which the international brotherhood didn't like at all. Anyway, so they had a convention in—I can't remember where it was but across the U.S. border. And so our delegates went down, I think they stayed in Montreal, but wherever, when they went to cross the border to attend the convention of their union, they were not allowed entry into the United States. And so, if you can't go to your own union's convention, then why do you belong to that union? Anyway, the PPWC eventually triumphed, was formed, and there endured many, many long battles with the unions that had remained with the international.

**RM** [00:13:27] Right. Pat O'Neal.

**DM** [00:13:30] Pat O'Neal.

**RM** [00:13:30] Prince Rupert.

**DM** [00:13:31] Prince Rupert.

**RM** [00:13:32] Did you know him at all?

**DM** [00:13:33] No. No.

**RM** [00:13:35] Just by reputation.

**DM** [00:13:37] Well, the story was he jumped ship.

**RM** [00:13:39] He did, yeah.

**DM** [00:13:39] Yeah.

**RM** [00:13:41] Under a different name.

**DM** [00:13:42] Yeah.

**RM** [00:13:45] So you didn't know him?

**DM** [00:13:46] Yeah.

**RM** [00:13:46] He was a character and was from Prince Rupert.

**DM** [00:13:49] Yeah.

**RM** [00:13:51] So Angus was a big part of that whole movement.

**DM** [00:13:53] Very big part of it. Yeah, yeah. He was well respected by people right across the spectrum of the labour movement. I know he had some really close contacts with the IWA at that time, Syd Thompson, I think from the island and probably others. So I learned a lot from Angus, a lot.

**RM** [00:14:15] Did any of that transform into your politics, like your political life? About other things? Like what did you learn?

**DM** [00:14:23] You know, Angus was a hard taskmaster. And if he didn't like what you were doing, he told you. So we ended up clashing on a lot of things, not least of which was Barrett's decision to order people back to work.

**RM** [00:14:45] Including the PPWC.

**DM** [00:14:46] Including PPWC. And if I'm not mistaken, at that time, the federal government—had they brought in the wage and price controls?

**RM** [00:14:57] It was almost simultaneous.

**DM** [00:15:00] Yeah. Now when I look back on it, you know what the limit was, the federal limit, 8.6 per cent.

**RM** [00:15:07] I know. We'll take it. So was that a bitter clash, because that was a very bitter moment when the Barrett government, an NDP government, ordered 50,000 workers back to work, including the PPWC and the CPU, who had been a three-month strike, and it killed their strike, and people, a lot of union people, couldn't—. Some of them supported it—but it must have been a real clash with you and Angus?

**DM** [00:15:38] It was. And with the other people that I knew in Prince Rupert, friends of mine, right. Now, I supported Barrett's decision to do that. And preceding that, you know, Bill King was— and I know he's one of your all-time favourites, too.

**RM** [00:15:55] You're right.

**DM** [00:15:57] He was a tough guy, Bill. Fair, and he put together the labour code. There were severe clashes with unions in the Barrett government. I remember, I think the '74, convention, I think it was '74. It was, man, it was a brawl. But Bill King understood, and I understood, I think, from my previous experience, that labour is not always right. Just because you support the notion of people being able to join unions and free collective bargaining and all of those things, it does not mean that labour is always right. Sometimes they can be very, very wrong. And I think what Bill stood for was principles. And he wasn't afraid to stand up for those principles, even if the people who opposed him were the labour movement. It was mostly the guy, what's his name in the—

**RM** [00:17:04] Len Guy.

**DM** [00:17:04] Len Guy.

**RM** [00:17:06] That guy.

**DM** [00:17:06] Yeah. Some of the construction unions.

**RM** [00:17:10] Yeah.

**DM** [00:17:11] Yeah. And you learn things along the way about life, too, you know? Anyways, I got elected city council in Prince Rupert in my third sojourn as an employee there. This is a little vignette to just to illustrate my point about politics and the fact that politics should not be about which way the wind is blowing. We had a rezoning application before council in an area that did have some social housing, but essentially just an area with lots of houses, and the city developed some lots there and there was a peculiar-sized lot and it wouldn't fit a single-family home. So we put it up for a fairly modest, multiple-family dwelling, you know. I can't remember how many units, and the neighbours objected to it. But I went through the municipal act and we said, okay, does it have an impact on traffic, parks, recreation, etc., all the boxes. Right. And it didn't.

**RM** [00:18:23] Right.

**DM** [00:18:24] And I voted in favour of it. And when I went to work in the pulp mill, some guys I'd worked with for 10 years wouldn't talk to me.

**RM** [00:18:38] Wow, wow.

**DM** [00:18:43] And so it was a lesson I learned about politics. It's not which way the wind blows, you gotta try to do the right thing, not be stupid about it, but you have to try to do

what you think is the right thing, and you got to be able to stand up and try to justify it, even though it's sometimes painful personally, you know, and I tried to carry that all through my career as a politician.

**RM** [00:19:12] I guess that applies to the union movement too.

**DM** [00:19:15] Yeah.

**RM** [00:19:15] Taking unpopular positions sometimes.

**DM** [00:19:17] Sometimes, yes. Yeah. Or labour leaders. You know, the good ones could fashion a collective agreement, and not that the members were always happy with it, but they realized, okay, this is what we're going to get, right? Yeah. The best ones.

**RM** [00:19:40] Were you ever involved in collective bargaining?

**DM** [00:19:44] I was, but not in an intensive way.

**RM** [00:19:46] Right.

**DM** [00:19:48] It was never my forte for some reason.

**RM** [00:19:50] Well, for a guy that, you know, likes to find a medium, a middle way—

**DM** [00:19:54] Yeah, yeah.

**RM** [00:19:56] You would have been perfect at the table. Or maybe you wouldn't have been.

**DM** [00:19:57] Maybe I wouldn't have been.

**RM** [00:19:59] Too reasonable.

**DM** [00:20:00] Yeah.

**RM** [00:20:04] Sorry. Go ahead.

**DM** [00:20:04] Yeah, I forgot where we were—

**RM** [00:20:06] I was going to go back to—Was it the money? Did you like the work? What was it? I mean, to me, you know, I've never done any industrial work in my life. So what's it like being in the pulp mill?

**DM** [00:20:20] It was good, I mean, the wages were pretty good. You know, in those days, you could raise a family on a single income if you worked hard. You could scrape and buy a fixer-upper. And that's a long, long shot from where we are today.

**RM** [00:20:37] Yeah, I know.

**DM** [00:20:38] It just terrible now. So, yeah, I did okay. It bored the shit out of me after a while. I wanted to get out.



**RM** [00:20:50] Yeah. You liked being a millwright, though?

**DM** [00:20:52] I was a millwright, yeah.

**RM** [00:20:55] So you just fix machine. How did it work?

**DM** [00:20:58] Oh, it's a variety. It's not just that. It could be— in a pulp mill, it can be a whole variety of different types of work, repairing gearboxes in the shop, putting new pumps in out in the fields, doing a lot of steel work, building catwalks, chutes for chips and those kinds of things. So just a whole different variety of kind of work. Yeah.

**RM** [00:21:26] Yeah. You're telling me about life in the pulp mill. You know, not everybody believed in going to work every day.

**DM** [00:21:33] Well, I—

**RM** [00:21:35] You know, there's union feather-bedding.

**DM** [00:21:38] No, there's got to be—individuals have got to have their own sense of themselves. And this Len Dirks, who was president of the union at the time, used to say that if I don't feel like going— he wasn't a slacker, like he went all the time— but if something's happened and I don't feel like going, he says, I'm not going. And that's my right as an individual, as a human being. You know, I always thought it was pretty good philosophy.

**RM** [00:22:04] What did the company think?

**DM** [00:22:07] They were okay. In fact, I was elected to city council, and of course, you know, you work all day in the pulp mill. Then you go to meetings on Monday night and occasionally you'd be very, very late. So I pushed the edges on that. You know, if I had a tough day or whatever, I'd come in at 10 o'clock and some boss would try to give me shit. And frankly, I swear a lot, I'd tell them to fuck off.

**RM** [00:22:43] As your right, as an individual, as a human being.

**DM** [00:22:46] Yeah, but I wasn't a slacker. I mean, I worked, when I was there, I believed in work, you know.

**DM** [00:22:52] And what were relations like with the company? Was it CanCel, Columbia Cellulose?

**DM** [00:22:58] Pretty bad. It had gone through so many ownership changes. There'd been a lot of deaths. There were 12 or 13 deaths, that's all the time I was there.

**RM** [00:23:08] Oh my God.

**DM** [00:23:10] And so the relationship was very, very bad. There were various attempts to try to improve it and some were more successful than others. But, yeah, it became a bit toxic to work there. And again, I don't necessarily—I blame management. My view is management's responsible for running the operation, but I also think that the union had a role to play in improving instead of this-this [bumps his two fists together] try to work with

management, improve the safety performance and stop people being killed on the job. You know, it's not easy to turn that around, but, it's very, very important.

**RM** [00:24:00] You never thought of running for leadership of the union or anything like that? No. You were in these, not lesser positions, but, you know, lower positions?

**DM** [00:24:09] I thought about that. I didn't think that I wanted to pursue that up to the top, in other words become, say, the president of the union or the president of the PPWC or something. No, I just didn't see that for some reason. And of course, after I worked for Graham Lea, politics became a bit of my passion really.

**RM** [00:24:32] So he was right about that?

**DM** [00:24:34] Yeah.

**RM** [00:24:36] Let's talk a tiny bit, and then we'll move on some other stuff. Prince Rupert, I mean, that is one of my favourite communities in B.C. if not my favourite. It's just so different all the way up there. It's isolated, you know, it's a real, yeah, community spirit. But you referred to it earlier as a working-class town. Do you want to just elaborate on that?

**DM** [00:24:55] Well, it was more than that too. Prince Rupert was probably in some ways the most ethnically diverse community of its size you could find. The workforce came from all over the place. Italians, Portuguese, there was a big Chinese population, Indo-Canadian later, plus a native population, which surrounded and who were the primary workers in the fish-processing industry and in fishing itself. And I really liked that. I liked the fact that it was so diverse. You know, you'd have a Ukrainian New Year or Chinese New Year, Italo-Canadian Club would have a dinner. And everybody, for the most part got along quite well. I always remember that. I say that all the time about Rupert, how diverse it was and how well it worked. I really enjoyed that part of it.

**RM** [00:25:59] Do you think spending time there had an influence on you?

**DM** [00:26:02] Oh, very much so. Very much so. Yeah.

**RM** [00:26:07] Because of its spirit or this diversity you're talking about?

**DM** [00:26:09] Just the diversity, I think. Yeah.

**RM** [00:26:13] But I've always liked Prince Rupert because I've thought of it as, you know, an underdog place. And there's all these setbacks, you know the story. You know, the guy that went down with the Titanic and boom and bust, boom and bust in it. But there's this spirit that's almost like a working-class spirit.

**DM** [00:26:30] Yeah, there was. But really, if you look at it, since the—and this is true of people my age, you know, if you look at the post war, I was born in '44. But if you look at people my age in the postwar boom, we had the best of times. Go back to what I said about only having one job, you could buy a house and keep your family, you know. So for a long time, things ended, but for a long time, it appeared this was the way life was. The pulp mill was running, the fish plants were running. Fishing was doing well, you know, wages were good. It's a relatively wealthy community. I think Kitimat was the only one—in the old days, Kitimat used to top the list of wage earners. Now eventually [hands signal a decline] started slow, but then it accelerated.

**RM** [00:27:30] Yeah.

**DM** [00:27:33] It's not the same place. I was up there three years ago, and I felt kind of sad about it. You know, the pulp mill shut down, fish plants shut down. Now it's coming back. The port is really making it come back, but it's going to take a long time. You don't get over that economic decline in a hurry. And it was sad for me to walk up and down Second and Third Avenue and see a bunch of shops boarded up. And, you know, there used to be all kinds of bars there. There was only two or three left, you know.

**RM** [00:28:09] All right. So you went into politics and, you know, you got elected in '86 and then you formed government in '91. You were in the cabinet right off the bat.

**DM** [00:28:20] Yeah. Minister of Forests. Yeah.

**RM** [00:28:22] What was that like?

**DM** [00:28:24] It was great.

**RM** [00:28:25] Were you the forestry minister during Clayoquot Sound?

**DM** [00:28:28] Yeah, I can get to that. I had been the critic for about four years. And of course, that previously had been Bob Williams. You know, who I had numerous fights with.

**RM** [00:28:43] You and about 8 million other people.

**DM** [00:28:45] Have you read his book?

**RM** [00:28:46] I have.

**DM** [00:28:47] And he takes credit for—

**RM** [00:28:48] Everything.

**DM** [00:28:49] Yeah. Including about three or four things that I did. That's fine. That doesn't matter.

**RM** [00:28:54] Yeah. He's Bob Williams.

**DM** [00:28:56] Yeah. So I was forest critic and then I was made forest minister. And of course immediately we're on to, you know—Harcourt had identified expanding parks and wilderness. And I think the target was 6 per cent and we were faced with very tough choices right off the bat about demands from the environmental community to stop logging in many, many, many places. And I was the minister of forests and—go back to my background—I thought jobs were important. A lot of people didn't think about the fact that when you made a decision like that, that it had a real impact on people's lives. People lost their jobs, and families could be devastated by that. And so I—

**RM** [00:29:45] —and you'd lived that.

**DM** [00:29:47] And I'd lived that. And I tried my damndest to find the halfway point, you know. Where can we find some middle ground? But I discovered that, unlike trade unions,

who had a history of collective bargaining and knew that you had— to get a settlement, you had to give and take and find a middle ground. Your environmental community didn't have that history. All they wanted was more. So, if you just give in to, We just want more. Who said that? Samuel Gompers, didn't he.

**RM** [00:30:23] More.

**DM** [00:30:23] More.

**RM** [00:30:24] Yeah.

**DM** [00:30:28] You can't do that and go back to—well, people may be unhappy, but what about doing the right thing? And so Clayoquot Sound—and the thing that swayed me, in fact, with Sound is there had been a previous process put in place by the previous government, and the Aboriginal community was involved, the forest unions were involved, forest companies were involved, environmentalists were involved. Right. Okay. Try to hash out some plan that you can all more or less agree on, not to make everybody happy, but a plan that made sense. And they did that. And after they'd concluded or just before they concluded, the environmentalists walked away. My view was that people had busted their ass. They worked really, really hard to find this plan that would accommodate the various interests. And by walking away, you should not be rewarded. So we put forward what I thought at the time, and still do, was a very, very good plan for Clayoquot Sound with respect to parks and wilderness, a working forest so the forest industry could keep going, etc., etc. And it blew up.

**RM** [00:31:56] It did.

**DM** [00:31:58] Now, my view still is we shouldn't have backed down. Because by backing down, you told those people who walked away from the table because they're unhappy that all they had to do was keep walking away from the table. Now, I was—I think I was kind of stereotyped a bit as being a right winger, which I think is completely false. It's not right or left when it comes to those kind of questions. People don't understand what right and left means, and they apply it to—

**RM** [00:32:43] Its labelling.

**DM** [00:32:44] Labelling. So my reputation was sealed. But notwithstanding that, I did a whole lot of good things when I was minister of forests.

**RM** [00:32:56] Bad Dan.

**DM** [00:32:57] Yeah, a lot of good things when I was minister of forests. I reduced the annual allowable cut in many, many areas of the province. And it wasn't just me. The civil servants within the Ministry of Forests had actually started that process themselves because they realized that in many, many places, many areas, we were overcutting and the falldown—you know, the falldown is essentially when you've taken your first growth, there should be a second growth come up in time for future harvesting, but it wouldn't be the same quantity as the first growth. So I did a lot of that. Tried to do some innovative things because we were stuck in what—I later made a famous speech in Prince George about the Soviet-style forestry in B.C.

**RM** [00:33:52] Okay.

**DM** [00:33:54] But I said, let's try to be innovative. Let's try some things we haven't tried before. Why don't we take some of the highest potential forest lands in terms of soil quality and growth potential and sell off some of them, not huge swaths of privatization. But let's try some innovative experiments. I did the Vernon log yard where I—the Ministry of Forests put out contracts to harvest the timber, and it was taken to the Vernon log yard where companies could bid on the timber that had already been cut. Did a whole bunch of things like that.

**RM** [00:34:32] Well, this issue that we've just touched on, I mean, it is an issue that continues to bedevil the NDP, jobs versus the environment. You know, and you're on the jobs side.

**DM** [00:34:45] Yep.

**RM** [00:34:45] You know, as a working-class guy.

**DM** [00:34:47] Yeah.

**RM** [00:34:48] Worked in the resource industry. So that would've influenced your view of these things.

**DM** [00:34:53] Absolutely right. And still does. I mean, not to say, I don't deny the environmental side of things. I think it's important, but misinformation—you know, I remember, I had a fight with Vicky Husband.

**RM** [00:35:10] Yeah.

**DM** [00:35:11] There was an area out on Vancouver Island, I can't remember, on the way to Alberni, I think it was. And it had been harvested and then, as was the custom then, then slash-burned and it was called The Black Hole.

**RM** [00:35:25] Right by the highway. Yeah, we've all seen it.

**DM** [00:35:27] Yeah. The Black Hole. You couldn't find it today. You couldn't, unless you knew the coordinates, you would never know that, you know, there'd been harvesting there. And I went to—I wasn't afraid of challenges. I'd go to these environmental meetings and I'd try to, you know. But when you're when you're trying to answer complex questions and all your staring at in opposition is a photograph of a black hole, well, the black hole photograph wins every time. It doesn't mean science wins. It doesn't mean facts win. And as my son who—stepson—later became a forest technician, he's working in the U.S. in Portland. He had many, many friends. And he was a bike rider and Portland is, you know, a great place for beer and bike riding and everything else. But he had lots of friends, and he tried to explain to them what he did as a forest technician in sort of laying out cut blocks. And he told me, he said, yeah one day this friend of mine said to me, Scott, I don't care. I know what I believe. In other words, it doesn't matter what you say, right. I think there's a lot of that pervades our society. It's getting worse, actually. You know, it really is, the lack of civil discourse.

**RM** [00:36:59] It's bad.

**DM** [00:37:00] People who think their rights are paramount to other people's rights. Yeah, I decry where we are now.

**RM** [00:37:10] Well, it's different. And somehow, out of nowhere, you became premier.

**DM** [00:37:15] Yeah.

**RM** [00:37:15] And I'm not sure, but I think you may have been the first working-class—I mean, you're working class. I mean, I don't know whether you originally were middle class, but you were working class.

**DM** [00:37:26] I wasn't middle class at all. I would say I was on the lower end of it. But go back to my story about my moving around a lot.

**RM** [00:37:34] You're working class.

**DM** [00:37:35] I am, absolutely.

**RM** [00:37:37] And you became premier.

**DM** [00:37:38] Yep.

**RM** [00:37:39] First one in B.C., do you think?

**DM** [00:37:43] I suspect, although Glen's working class.

**RM** [00:37:46] Well, I don't know whether—he just worked for the union, didn't he? Did he actually work? I mean—

**DM** [00:37:50] He just worked for the union.

**RM** [00:37:51] Yeah, that's a porkchopper.

**DM** [00:37:52] But his dad was head of the painters' union, I believe.

**RM** [00:37:54] Yeah. They're porkchoppers (laughter).

**DM** [00:37:56] Well, yeah, I wouldn't say that, but he had the same outlook as me.

**RM** [00:38:02] Yeah.

**DM** [00:38:03] Right. As did John Horgan.

**RM** [00:38:05] Yeah. So he worked in a—so we've had two pulp mill premiers.

**DM** [00:38:10] Yeah.

**RM** [00:38:10] Because he worked in—

**DM** [00:38:11] Ocean Falls.

**RM** [00:38:12] Yeah. But I mean—when you became premier, I mean, did I see some quote from you saying it's hard to imagine a guy from the pulp mill in Prince Rupert becoming premier?

**DM** [00:38:23] It probably—yeah.

**RM** [00:38:25] We're you aware of that. Did it—

**DM** [00:38:27] Yeah, I always tried to be the same, regardless of the company I was keeping. Right? Whether it was meeting with the heads of forest companies or the forest unions, I believe I treated everybody the same, right.

**RM** [00:38:49] You still brought your working-class outlook to things.

**DM** [00:38:52] Yeah. For sure.

**RM** [00:38:54] I mean, it didn't mean you supported the unions all the time or whatever, but that was part of you.

**DM** [00:38:59] That's right. But I remember when I was minister of labour, I spoke to the B.C. Federation convention and there was a big dispute in Alberni. They were building an addition.

**RM** [00:39:09] Oh, yes.

**DM** [00:39:11] One union. I think it was the Boilermakers, I think. Well, maybe it had been drywall, or whatever. There was one small contract that was non-union. Next thing you know, everything's down, right? I talked to the unions. I talked to MacMillan Bloedel, but I got nowhere with either one of them. So in my speech to the Federation of Labour convention, I talked about some of the things I'd done, you know, particularly as labour minister and there was a lot of legislation I brought through, but I said, I admonished them. I said, you can't ask me to object to environmental protesters shutting down logging if you can't stop doing that yourself—like you know you can't have—just because you're a trade union doesn't mean you're right, I guess. And it wasn't all that well received.

**RM** [00:40:23] I was going to ask, how was that received?

**DM** [00:40:25] Well, it was kind of interesting because Mike Harcourt had made a speech to the Federation before me, and then I made mine. And then some columnist said, well, that Miller is really showing strength.

**RM** [00:40:38] Because of course he agreed with you.

**DM** [00:40:39] Ergo, Harcourt wasn't, you know.

**RM** [00:40:42] Yeah.

**DM** [00:40:43] So I guess, I wasn't afraid to stand up and speak my mind about certain things, even though I knew not everybody would agree with that. But just, this is how it is, you know.

**RM** [00:40:56] So what did you do as labour minister that helped the working class?

**DM** [00:41:01] I did a complete rewrite of the Employment Standards Act. The most comprehensive rewrite to date at that time. I increased the minimum wage by \$1 in two tranches, 50 cents and 50 cents. Got away with it. A whole bunch of legislation, some of which I've really forgotten. Trying to solve disputes. There was a firefighters issue. Vernon had locked out their firefighters, and they just wouldn't back off, the City of Vernon. I said, well, I'm going to do something. You better get a settlement here, like you can't do this. This is untenable to have—because they couldn't withdraw their labour.

**RM** [00:41:49] Right.

**DM** [00:41:52] So I brought in the Firefighters Collective Bargaining Act, which gave them the right to go to arbitration. Right. I did all kinds of things like that. Some really good labour legislation, brought in mandatory certification for about half a dozen trades.

**RM** [00:42:09] Oh, great.

**DM** [00:42:10] Right. So that no longer—you had to have that ticket. Right. I was praised by—god, the electrical unions, even the Automobile Dealers Association praised it. You know what happened when Campbell got in. He got rid of it all.

**RM** [00:42:27] Yeah.

**DM** [00:42:27] And Harry Bains, who's proven in my view to be one of the better labour ministers we've ever had, has brought all that stuff back.

**RM** [00:42:36] Right? Yeah. It doesn't get any headlines, but it's really important.

**DM** [00:42:40] Yeah.

**RM** [00:42:41] Good stuff. Does that go back to your background as a millwright, appreciating the trades and so on and the importance of that?

**DM** [00:42:49] Very much so, yeah. I tried my damndest to improve and increase the number of apprentices, but again, I hit a brick wall. For a lot of reasons —employers didn't want to do it. I threatened them, I said, I'm going to bring in a quota. Caused several of them to have near-heart attacks, you know?

**RM** [00:43:12] So this is all great, but why—you might have run for leader of the party. You know, you were interim premier. I mean, that's pretty good base from which to run. But you decided you weren't going to run for leadership of the NDP. Why not?

**DM** [00:43:27] Well—

**RM** [00:43:28] This is in 2000.

**DM** [00:43:29] Yeah, I know. I was always a big fan of Glen Clark's. Right. And I thought he would be—as I said in one interview, I think with Vaughn Palmer—he's a keeper, right? He's a whole lot younger than me. He's 10 years younger than me. And when I looked at where I stood, in terms of being able to win, I didn't think I could. And the other thing is that after 15 years or almost 15 years, I realized it had taken a toll on me, particularly on my family. Politics has always been to me—you can't dip your toe in the water. You gotta



jump in the water. And what that does in terms of your personal life is it excludes other things that are more important. And so I could see the toll it had taken on my then-wife, who passed away in 2015.

**RM** [00:44:41] Is that Gayle?

**DM** [00:44:42] Yeah.

**DM** [00:44:43] Yeah.

**DM** [00:44:45] She didn't like the limelight. And it took a real toll on her. And I realized as well that it had taken a toll on me when I looked at myself before I retired, I saw a guy with great big bags under his eyes, black [motions with his hands to his eyes]. You know. Not that I lacked energy, but I realized I was kind of burning up my energy.

**RM** [00:45:09] Who is this guy?

**DM** [00:45:10] You know, six months after I retired, they disappeared, you know [motions with hands to his cheeks and eyes]. So I just thought, given my age, given that I was a strong supporter of Glen Clark. And I guess, to be frank, I didn't think that I could win. I decided not to run.

**RM** [00:45:30] No regrets about that?

**DM** [00:45:31] No. None whatsoever. No. I think everybody has to understand their own sense of their own limitations. I was never in politics for the grandeur of being the top person. I was there because I'd like to make a difference, regardless of which portfolio. And I had a number of them, which ones I had. Yeah.

**RM** [00:45:56] I want to ask you about one more thing here, which never gets much publicity—but I was researching around last night—Royal Roads University. You had a real role in creating that university.

**DM** [00:46:10] Absolutely.

**RM** [00:46:10] And one of the things you emphasized—you wanted it not to just be this academic—but actually, you know, for working people, and skills and so on. So let's just talk about that.

**DM** [00:46:21] Yeah, very much so, yeah. That was—at the time I was minister of post-secondary education [See notes].

**RM** [00:46:27] Right.

**DM** [00:46:28] And my first task when I got that job was to get the University of Northern B.C. underway. And that had been—there was just like internal squabbling right across the north. Not to diss on Tom Perry, but he was the minister, and—

**RM** [00:46:45] I know Tom Perry. You wouldn't be the first.

**DM** [00:46:49] But, you know. Anyway, so I got things—I pounded a few heads and got things put together. And away we went, we built the thing, you know, opened by Premier Harcourt and Queen Elizabeth.

**RM** [00:47:07] With Iona Campagnolo as chancellor.

**DM** [00:47:08] Iona Campagnolo was chancellor.

**RM** [00:47:09] Your old pal.

**DM** [00:47:10] Who I helped defeat after her first term.

**RM** [00:47:14] Exactly. Keep going.

**DM** [00:47:15] But we'll leave that. I mean, she just passed away.

**RM** [00:47:18] Yeah. I wrote the obit for her in the Globe.

**DM** [00:47:20] Yeah. I thought she was a very good lieutenant governor.

**RM** [00:47:28] Excellent.

**DM** [00:47:29] Yeah.

**RM** [00:47:30] We'll stop there.

**DM** [00:47:31] Yeah.

**RM** [00:47:32] Anyway, she was a good chancellor, too. Anyway, Royal Roads.

**DM** [00:47:36] Then the federal government decided to close Royal Roads Military College. And right away from the community—well, the province should take it over. Well, no, we just opened the first new university in Canada in 35 years. I didn't have a budget. And my first reaction was, no — there's no way I'm going to take this over. Forget it. But it was Moe Sihota's riding. And most of the faculty lived in Elizabeth Cull's riding, and she was minister of finance. So I got the green light to do it from cabinet. And, my then-deputy, Gary Waters, great guy— we sat down and said, okay, what do we want to do here? And we hired, oh, who was it from Saskatchewan? Geez, I'm sorry, I forget. I forget his name. Anyways—

**RM** [00:48:30] Keep going.

**DM** [00:48:30] We put this plan together for an unconventional university. You know, universities operate in a bicameral model—you know, the Senate, etc., right? You try to get any change in a university. Forget it, right. So we set it up—no tenure, board of directors. Right. I want it to be nimble. I want it to be able to give the kind of courses through the course offerings that were in demand that would give people a real opportunity. A lot of it turned out to be MBAs, but notwithstanding that, a distance education. And it was a struggle, man, I'll tell you, it was a real struggle. But we did it, and it's operating today, very, very effectively. Stuart [Philip] Steenkamp is the president. They've made a deal now to open a second campus out in the western communities. Yeah, I'm very, very happy. In fact, I got an honorary doctorate.

**RM** [00:49:34] I noticed that.

**DM** [00:49:34] Yeah.

**RM** [00:49:35] But the reason I brought it up, first of all, that's great. But also I saw it described as a university for working people.

**DM** [00:49:42] Well, because we'd gone through some exercises when I'm minister of labour and we published a number of papers—but training and skills training—and one of them was training for what? Technology was changing the nature of the workforce. It was changing everything. And people needed an opportunity to get the skills they needed to participate in the workforce. That was kind of my push.

**RM** [00:50:10] Because it was changing.

**DM** [00:50:11] Because it was changing and we had to be more innovative. And I was struck by—I went to, oh—I was in Kitimat for a conference on skills training, apprenticeships, etc. And I met a young schoolteacher from the high school in Kitimat who, on his own hook, had bought two courses from, I think, the University of Texas. I can't remember the name of the courses, but notwithstanding that, this young fellow told me about how these things had changed the dynamics in the classroom. He said kids who used to be dropouts are staying in, and he combined classroom training with going out to industry and looking at what's happened. Like a big new ship would come into Kitimat harbour. The kids would be down there learning about the technology on that ship, and it stimulated them. It got them going. And I thought, God, why don't we do more of that kind of thing? And I used that example at the speech I gave when I got my honorary doctorate. You can learn a lot from what other people are doing. And the other thing is, when I was appointed minister of advanced education and labour, a combined portfolio—

**RM** [00:51:37] You didn't have any advanced education?

**RM** [00:51:39] I had grade 13.

**RM** [00:51:40] Yeah.

**DM** [00:51:41] But I noticed some academics complained in the paper. And you know who one of them was? Stan Persky.

**RM** [00:51:52] Really?

**DM** [00:51:53] How can Dan Miller be the minister of advanced education? He doesn't have a university degree.

**RM** [00:51:59] Stan said that?

**DM** [00:52:00] Yep.

**RM** [00:52:01] Oh my God.

**DM** [00:52:02] And my reaction or my thought about that was, that's what's wrong with universities.

**RM** [00:52:09] You had a degree in the school of hard knocks.

**RM** [00:52:12] Well, I don't know.

**RM** [00:52:14] But again, so this was a different kind of a university that if—you know, it would be open and give people skills they needed to enter the workforce for working-class people, working-class workers.

**DM** [00:52:27] And I didn't quite achieve—I wanted to more—I wanted to try and set it up so that labour might actually consider sending some of their brightest and best, you know. I mean, if you're going to be a labour leader, you should understand economics. And I don't think it ever quite got there.

**RM** [00:52:52] Well, they do the winter school and the CLC has their schools.

**DM** [00:52:56] Yeah.

**RM** [00:52:57] But yeah. Bill King always wanted to set up a labour college.

**DM** [00:53:00] Yeah.

**RM** [00:53:07] Union guy became premier and so on. Just for our purposes as the Labour Heritage Centre. You know, the impact of the labour movement on the sort of person—maybe I'm stretching it too much—on the sort of person you are and why unions are good and so on.

**DM** [00:53:27] Yeah. I said earlier that I'm not sure it wasn't just inherent in me. I never liked injustice, regardless of where I saw it, I never liked it.

**RM** [00:53:40] We okay, Natasha? Okay. Keep going.

**DM** [00:53:46] And I think where I got that from, I'm not certain.

**RM** [00:53:50] You joined the union and you took part in the union.

**DM** [00:53:54] Yeah, but it might as well been just my nature because I talked about the insecurity that comes as a young child moving too often. And I was always a small skinny kid, often bullied by the jocks, you know, who got the girls too.

**RM** [00:54:13] The John Horgans.

**DM** [00:54:14] Yeah. So, I don't know, maybe it's just my nature, but, yeah.

**RM** [00:54:23] Positive force in society.

**DM** [00:54:25] Oh, very much so. Just look at history. And I don't think people understand labour history that much. I don't think they really understand the reasons why it's important for people to come together collectively to try to improve their position. It's the only entity that's not subject to the Combines Act, right—which essentially means you can't collude to set prices. It's the only one. And that's important. People have the right to try to improve their position, collectively improve, whether it's wages or pensions or working conditions or

whatever it might be. And I think that's fundamentally important. And it's been a huge, huge boon to our society. Now go back to what I said, I mean, they're not always right.

**RM** [00:55:23] Well, you don't have to qualify it.

**DM** [00:55:24] But the principle is there.

**RM** [00:55:26] Were you proud to be a part of the union movement?

**DM** [00:55:28] Absolutely, absolutely.

**RM** [00:55:31] And you became premier.

**DM** [00:55:33] Yeah.

**RM** [00:55:34] And who would have thunk it?

**DM** [00:55:35] Yeah.

**RM** [00:55:35] This is great, Dan. That's wonderful. Anything else you want to—

**DM** [00:55:40] No, no. I didn't run for premier. But I had no doubts I'd been a good one.