

Barney McGuire 5 Mar 1965.mp3
Transcribed by Donna Sacuta (2024)

Interviewer [00:00:00] This is an interview with Mr. Barney McGuire, and the 5th of March 1965. Just for the record so you know who you're talking to. Now, I think that really you've been around and I think, why don't you give me your picture of what you know, of the mining, metal mining unions, what you picked up and if you can give me, now a lot of the information comes from old timers, doesn't it?

Barney McGuire [00:00:33] From where?

Interviewer [00:00:35] Old timers that you've met.

Barney McGuire [00:00:36] Yes.

Interviewer [00:00:37] You were directly involved in it?

Barney McGuire [00:00:39] Yeah.

Interviewer [00:00:41] Why don't you just try giving us a sort of an outline and I'll ask you some more questions.

Barney McGuire [00:00:48] Yes.

Interviewer [00:00:52] Why don't you start and I'll let you know.

Barney McGuire [00:00:56] As a person who started working in the mining camps in 1933 and then in 1946 started working as an organizer for the Mine Mill and Smelter Workers Union, and from 1946 until 1963, I worked different times for that organization as an organizer in all parts of B.C., in the Yukon, the Northwest Territories and out east. My first recollection of any union activity in the mines, that is that I was fairly close to was the Anyox strike in 1933. I was just starting to work at Alice Arm at that time, which is about 18 miles away. Then I went to work in the mines up in Bridge River in 1933 to 1935. Then I worked in the mines from 1935 to 1937, in the Salmo, Ymir, Nelson, Slocan area. It was while I was in that area that I first became associated with the Mine Mill and Smelter Workers Union, when I was working at the Ymir Yankee Girl Mine. In the winter of 1936, we applied for a charter from the Mine Mill Union. The charter number that we received was Local 300. So you can see that Local 300 was definitely one of the old-time locals. Now, prior to that, in 1935, Local 271 of Mine Mill and Smelter Workers was chartered at Bralorne It was the oldest number, that is in recent years, that was chartered. Now you take the number 271 and there was two charters granted around the Nelson country, one Salmo, one Ymir. They were 300 and 301, if I'm not mistaken. Now we see we're back in 1937, I believe it was, that Local 480 at Trail was chartered. I don't think there was any other Mine Mill locals chartered in B.C. until 1943. Then the first one was Copper Mountain. The second one was Britannia. Then from there on, they mushroomed out all throughout the province.

Interviewer [00:04:42] Let's go right back to the early days. Just to start off, there was a local of the Knights of Labor in Rossland around the turn of the century. When I read about this, it struck me, were the Knights of Labor in those mines? Do you know anything about the Knights of Labor?

Barney McGuire [00:05:06] Yes. Now, in talking with old timers that was in the Western Federation of Miners. Just as an example, George Casey, who was secretary of the Rossland Miners Union about 1904. It was at that time that they lost a strike there. He left. I happened to be a sort of a family friend of the Casey family. He went to Prince Rupert after he left Rossland. I was raised just north of Prince Rupert.

Interviewer [00:05:49] Did he say there was—

Barney McGuire [00:05:50] Yes. He mentioned to me that as a part of the formation of the Western Federation of Miners, it was composed of a number of small unions from different parts of the United States, and also that their main membership came from the Knights of Labor. Now, this can also be authenticated by this book here, Big Bill Haywood's book. Now he tells of the formation of the Western Federation of Miners, and he repeats that remark in there that they mainly came from the Knights of Labor. Of course, when they were set up, the Western Federation of Miners in 1893, they took in coal mines and everything in the mining industry upon an industrial basis.

Interviewer [00:07:02] In B.C., in the Western Federation of Miners, and the Knights of Labor [unclear]

Barney McGuire [00:07:08] That is my understanding, that amongst the first unions and the miners in British Columbia would be the Western Federation of Miners and the Knights Labor. Some of the old timers that I had spoken to the Western Federation of Miners went out of existence in the years from approximately 1915 to 1919, 1920. They were replaced in a good many of the camps by the Industrial Workers of the World (I.W.W.)

Interviewer [00:08:00] Which camps?

[00:08:02] Primarily my understanding was in the Slocan that the I.W.W. took over from the Western Federation of Miners. I understand they took over their hall there at Sandon. They took over it from the Western Federation. In recent years, when that hall was more or less, you might say rediscovered by the Mine Mill Union, I've seen some of the records have come out of that hall, and they were mostly records from the I.W.W. There were very few, if any, records of the Western Federation in that hall. That is the records that I've seen that come out of the Miners Hall in Sandon.

Interviewer [00:09:00] Where else? Do you know any other specific places?

Barney McGuire [00:09:04] Yes, I understand that— No, I really don't know of any other places where the I.W.W. took over from the Western Federation of Miners. Other than that, they were organized and in a good many other industries and places throughout the province but I don't know specifically of any place other than that that they took over from the Western Federation of Miners.

Interviewer [00:09:33] Why do you think the Western Federation of Miners declined?

Barney McGuire [00:09:39] Well, to quote you from Big Bill Haywood's book, he states that one of the reasons for the decline in membership of the Western Federation of Miners was that it turned from a previously militant union to virtually a company union. Now, he states that right in here, right in this book here, and he tells of the differences that he had with the leadership of the Western Federation of Miners. The Western Federation of Miners, they finally issued statements to the effect that Haywood was no longer connected

with the Western Federation of Miners and that he didn't speak on their behalf. All of which is authenticated in here, and I believe some of these statements are even quoted at the Western Federation of Miners issued regards Haywood.

Barney McGuire [00:10:55] I can well remember back in 1936, in the Salmo-Ymir area, when we first joined the Mine Mill Union we were being questioned by some of the old timers there as to what union it was that we were going to join. We told them that as far as we know, no as far as we know, it's the Mine Mill and Smelter Workers Union, we need a union, that's all we know. "Well," he said, "is that the same union that was in the Slocan several years ago?" We said, "Yes, we checked and we found out that that was so." "Well," he said, "if that is the case," he said, "that's the union that scabbed on us in the Slocan." That would be in the years from about 1916 to 1919. I am not too sure just which mine that was where he said this took place, but I do know that we had a lot of difficulty in healing that there split from the past amongst the miners at that particular time.

Barney McGuire [00:12:19] In the Nelson area, which you can include like the Slocan, the Salmo-Ymir area, there was never the same type of unionization in the '30s and in the '40s as there was in other parts of the province. I'll give you an example. In 1935, the miners on the Fraser River were out on strike. They went out on strike, you might say, without a union. They had an independent organization first. Then in 1937, the miners at Wells went out on strike. Then in 1939, the miners in the Bridge River were out on strike again. Now, here is something that is highly significant and it bears out what I'm saying. In Bridge River the rate was, after 1935 the rate of pay of the miners was approximately \$0.65 a day higher than the rate of pay of the miners in Wells in the Cariboo. And the rate of pay of the miners in Nelson was traditionally \$0.50 a day less than in the Cariboo. So there was quite a difference in wages. Now, if there was any justification for a union from the point of view of low wages, it would have been the Nelson-Salmo-Ymir area that would have been spearheading this.

Barney McGuire [00:14:04] One of the reasons that there wasn't this here unity amongst the workers, the workers there, that is not a great number of them, but the old timers and then it brushed off to their sons and a few other people was this here stigma from the past and the quarrels that had taken place between the Western Federation of Miners and the I.W.W. The old timers that I spoke to in the Nelson country about that, to the best of my knowledge, they're all dead, but they were very well known people in that country. Just to give you their names, Bill Hickey, a well known miner, Black Angus McDonald and a Walter Lyman Scotty. Everybody knew those people. Anybody that was in the Slocan or anyone of recent years would know those fellows by names and also another fellow by the name of Walter Capley. Now, this Capley may still be living in the Slocan. He was a few years ago. I think there's another old timer, if I'm not mistaken, who was living in Kaslo, and his name is Sam Nomlan, or "Spookum" was his nickname. He's possibly living in Kaslo. He would know some of the past history of the unionization during the First World War days in that country. Another chap who was raised in that country is also here in Vancouver right at the present time. He was also one of the charter members of the Salmo local at Salmo in 1936. He's now in Vancouver and he's working as a hiring agent for the United Keno on some other mines. Bill Butler is his name. This is a name and this is a fellow that due to his position in life right now, if he were to speak about anything like this, it would have to be anonymously. I'm sure you couldn't expect him to. He would he would be able to authenticate the fact that there was two locals chartered back there in 1936. He would also know old timers from the Slocan country because he was raised up in the Revelstoke country just north of Slocan. He was raised in a place called Beaton, B.C. Him

and I both the same age. We were quite young when we worked in the mines there at that particular time.

Barney McGuire [00:17:24] The reason that this was never mentioned around there very much and the reason that people have kept this quiet is that it was water under the bridge. It'd have done no good to mention it whatsoever. In fact it only hurt your own cause to mention this. Therefore, myself and others, we decided that nothing should be said about it. This feeling, if I'm not mistaken, it still carried over in the Slocan and Nelson area right to this very day. I can well remember back from 1946 to 1948 off and on I worked as a Mine Mille organizer in the area Salmo-Ymir-Nelson-Kaslo and so on from Mine Mill, and it was very difficult in getting the fellows to stay together and to work together the way they should. This was partly because of the fact that a whole number of people were living in the past and they couldn't forget about it, as much as we were trying very hard. This is borne out by the fact that in this area, Mine Mill at that time they formed, well by 1947, they formed what they call the Nelson District Miners Union with the idea of taking in all the mines in that area in the one local union and the one business agent. Previously they had different locals in all the different mines and it was a much improved set up to have them served by one local man with a headquarters, say, in Nelson, and they had numerous business agents in that area. John Moffatt was one of them.

Barney McGuire [00:19:28] Ken Smith was another who worked in there for a year. In recent years they've had a man there steady by the name of Bill Rudachyk, although you must remember now, the mines in the Slocan, in that area, they are more or less closed, and they have been for some particular time. I run into other old timers that were not working in the mining industry in other parts of the province. They told me about the differences that existed between the Western Federation of Miners and the I.W.W. They told me that once the I.W.W. was taking the place of the Western Federation of Miners, another big difference they had amongst themselves was over Big Bill Haywood himself, because some of them, they took the position that he had given the best years of his life to the labor movement and his health was gone, and that therefore they should approve of him going over to the Soviet Union, where he could spend the rest of his days in peace. Then the others on the other hand, they took the position, just the extreme opposite, that he had done something very wrong and running away not facing the music, but they had to stay there and face the music. However, the result was that it did cause these divisions amongst the membership, his departure to the Soviet Union.

Interviewer [00:21:19] Do you remember while it was still the Western Federation, do you remember who the leaders were in British Columbia of Western Federation of Miners?

Barney McGuire [00:21:34] The Western Federation of Miners, to begin with, their top officers were Haywood, Moyer and Pettibone. Then they had board members and business agents at different times. There was a Davidson who was one of their representatives, Bennett was another.

Interviewer [00:22:05] Bill Bennett?

Barney McGuire [00:22:07] This Bennett, I have a little bit of information on him. This booklet here is a record of the B.C. District Union from 1943 up until 1950. It's mentioned in here about himself at one time when he was a business agent or a board member for the locals in the Slocan area. One of the arbitration cases they had at that time, it's all given in this here.

Interviewer [00:22:53] Could you find it right now?

Barney McGuire [00:22:59] Yes, I think I could. By the way about the part he played in the 1939 [unclear] miners' strike.

Interviewer [00:23:07] No, I haven't.

[00:23:09] Well, Bill Cameron, a member of the carpenter's union, a the business agent in the carpenters union, he was one of the leaders of the 1939 sitdown strike [unclear]. He can fill you in on that. The person who can fill you in on the Wells strike, in 1937 is an Oren Ditto of Nanaimo . I. haven't got his address here but I can get it for you. This is a chap who is at the present time, he's 70 years of age and he is working in Courtenay. He comes into Nanaimo for the weekend. He's just about ready to retire. If you want to authenticate the charter which was granted in 1936 at Ymir, of all the other fellows that signed the charter application at that time, I can only think of two of them that's in a place where you could get them. One of them is a George Bain who was working as a miner at the Ymir Yankee Girl mine the same time I was. He was one of the signers of that charter, and he's now a fireman for the CM & S at Trail. He could also give you considerable history as to the union activity, attempts at union activity, in the Sheep Creek, that is Salmo-Ymir-Nelson area, around those years, 1935-37. George Bain.

Barney McGuire [00:25:46] What happened to myself personally was that as a result of just being a union member and everybody knowing about it, and actually the bosses. I got blackballed in B.C., which wasn't a very hard thing to have happened to you. I couldn't get a job at any of the other mines. I worked down east in the mines there until after 1939. Then I came back to British Columbia and with the war on I was able to get a job. The first Mine Mill local that I was a charter member of was in Yellowknife. That was in '43, I guess. I got into Yellowknife. There was two attempts made before we finally succeeded up there. I was later on the secretary of the local. I was business agent for a year and then I was back in there as an organizer for Mine Mill.

Barney McGuire [00:26:57] Another local that I was a charter member of was the Zeballos Miners Union Local 851, which is still in existence. I was elected secretary of that. That's in this here book here. That was in '45, I guess it was. Then I was also a charter member of the Taku Miners Union. That was in spring of '46. I was elected their secretary, and then the strike came off, the province-wide strike of Mine Mill throughout all the mining camps. I came down to Vancouver and it was shortly after that that I started working as a representative for Mine Mill. My first job with Mine Mill as an organizer was one of the foundries here in Vancouver. At that time, they had, I believe there was 16 foundries organized. Today they have two.

Barney McGuire [00:28:03] I worked for the Mine Mill approximately a year. I was laid off. During the time that I was laid off, I was also a charter member of the Spring Coulee Tunnel Miners Union, one of the charter members. I was elected secretary in that local. Then I went to work in Kimberly, and while in Kimberly, I was naturally a member of Local 651 there. We organized the tunnel workers there for the first time. We got a good contract, good conditions of work. Then I went back to work for Mine Mill as an organizer. I worked down east for them and then I was transferred out west here. Then I went to work in Yellowknife for a year. I was a business agent there. I quit there.

Barney McGuire [00:29:15] I come down and I worked in Alberta in the tunnels. Down east I worked at the Lakeshore Mine in Kirkland Lake and I only worked a little while and

they elected me president of the Mine Mill local. At that time Mine Mill and Steel were in a battle over membership there. Then I went back to work for Mine Mill on their staff. Worked down east for a considerable period of time, and then I came back west and worked in different parts of B.C. Then I was sent into Uranium City. While I was in Uranium City, we were successful in organizing four mines in there and got certified in them. Then I went into the Yukon. I was the man that organized the Yukon and organized United Keno, and Mackeno Mine. United Keno mine was quite a large operation. It had a mine, a mill camp and then there was the drivers that used to go back and forth between Whitehorse and Mayo and Whitehorse. Those garage workers were got about 35 to 40 of them, and then there was about 75 truck drivers we got them into one unit.

Barney McGuire [00:30:48] Then shortly after that, I went down and I organized in Cassiar, a Mine Mill local. Shortly after that, I came to Edmonton and it was about that time that they sent me into Lynn Lake, Manitoba. They told me they wanted to organize there and I went into Lynn Lake and I found out that the place was already organized by the A.F. of L., and they didn't have the best contract in the world. A fair contract. So I come on back out and I told Murphy and others that the place was under contract, the contract wasn't too bad and that it was in a closed company town. My opinion was that to go in there would be wrong because it would be raiding and we couldn't do it, even if we wanted to. We couldn't take over that particular place. The result was quite a difference of opinion amongst myself and the other officers of Mine Mill. The result was I was fired. I told them that I was willing to make an issue of it, that I wouldn't bloody well do it. They said that was all they had for me. There was no other thing they had for me to do.

Barney McGuire [00:32:28] Then I started back to work for them in 1962, I guess it was, and finished up working for them at the end of August in '63. Myself knowing the Mine Mill union and knowing it right from the start, how it was set up, how it operated, and knowing the men involved, the companies they had to deal with and so on, I was firmly convinced that once they lost Sudbury, there was no other way they could stay in existence other than at the expense of the workers. The set up of Mine Mill in western Canada and in Canada, that is the manner in which they functioned from 1943 up until this present time, or let me say it this way, the manner in which they functioned prior to the time that they lost Sudbury is something that's of extreme importance, and I think it's necessary to know their method of functioning in order to have a true picture of what did happen and their position today. There is no one will deny—and this is a part of what you want to hear right—there is no one to deny that in 1943 Mine Mill they become reactivated out here in British Columbia, and in two or three years they had all the mines organized, or just about all of them. No one will also deny that the plans of the Mine Mill union was to go out on a province-wide strike in 1946. A master agreement, that was the plans. That was set up and was agreed to at conventions. Now, what happened was this. A settlement was made with the C.M. & S. and it was decided that they would sign that agreement there. By the way, this is all borne out right here in this here book. Agreements were then signed with Trail and Kimberley. Later on in 1946, all the mines in the Province of British Columbia went out on strike, and we had the policy of a master agreement, the one-wage scale for all the mines in the province. What happened after that was this. First of all, there was the C.M. & S. operations that settled with two or three operations. After the strike, there was a copper mine that settled with two or three mines there. Then after that was the base metal mines. They settled. Then after that, the gold mines settled. There was a different wage scale in each category of mines, and the strategy of Mine Mill was changed from a master agreement to this strategy here, that they would pick on one mine in a particular category. They would choose the mine, the time and the place with which to strike. They were successful in all of the strikes that they conducted in recent years, and this is how they

done it. Like that. Then all the other mines in that category would keep working. These other mines all over, they would contribute to support that particular mine that was out on strike. They won all their strikes. They didn't have many, but they won them. It had the effect of bringing up the rates of pay of the other mines in that category. Then the next year they'd work it over here in base metals, copper or whatever the case may be. Another part in order to understand Mine Mill we must understand is this. As much as a lot of people don't like to call a union a business, I think that you have to face up to the fact that it's got to be an operation that makes money, or it doesn't stay in existence. You can break Mine Mill down into its larger locals and into its smaller locals. This is what you will see about the set up of Mine Mill. You might say that you have particularly three locals that are financial liability, I mean financial assets, and quite large financial assets. I'm talking about prior to their loss of Sudbury.

Interviewer [00:37:59] Which ones would they be? Trail?

Interviewer [00:38:03] That would be Trail, Kimberley and Sudbury and these other little properties, it would cost more to service them than they were getting funding. This was the backbone of the organization. This is very important to have this in your mind, in my way of thinking. Here was the strategy that they pursued from '46 on. They would keep all these other mines and all these other categories working. Now, plus the support from these other mines, Trail, Kimberley and particularly Sudbury, they couldn't lose. There was no such a thing as them not being able to finance a strike. I'm talking prior to the loss of Sudbury. This is a set up and a method of functioning that the mine operators knew existed, and it worked very well for Mine Mill. To a point, I think it must be said that they done quite well and up until recent years, I think it would be an exaggeration to say that they had to exist at the expense of the workers due to that particular method of operation that they had. Considering their circumstances, which you must, in that just a couple of years after this set up was set up and followed, they were expelled from the mainstream of the labor movement. To be quite honest about it, you must admit then that they would have to get most of their support from themselves. With this particular set up of Mine Mill, they could and they did successfully finance all of their strikes here in western Canada. Now, what happened a few years ago was, and this is what I found out, that Mine Mill, they went out on strike in Sudbury. They didn't have enough money to support these strikers in Sudbury. What they had there was, in reality, a hunger strike. That was one of the main reasons for the workers turning against them down there.

Barney McGuire [00:40:21] Shortly after the Sudbury strike and during the time of the Gillis administration in Sudbury, and you're familiar with the time they took over there prior to the Steelworkers coming in and winning. What happened out here in British Columbia was this. There was about five open pit mines opened in the province. Those open pit mines that opened in the province were Nimpkish, there was Jedway, there was Bethlehem Copper, there was Phoenix, there was Craigmont and also Kennedy Lake. Keeping in mind that the mine operators knew the set up of Mine Mill and knowing that they knew that the backbone of Mine Mill was Sudbury and also that they knew Mine Mill was broke, it was bankrupt as a result of the Gillis administration not sending in their per capita tax. What they done was this. They offered Mine Mill certifications in all of these mines that I am telling you about. Then once (interruption) once they offered them certification the company put pressure to bear upon Mine Mill for an agreement. Due to the fact that Mine Mill was in this position, they were able to write the kind of agreements that they wanted right from beginning to end and agreements that lasted well over three years. The idea of the agreement was that it would last over three years because three years, once a mine starts operation, they have a tax-free period.

Barney McGuire [00:42:22] They had studied Murphy quite well, the mine operators. They knew the set up of Mine Mill and they judged it that Murphy would sign these agreements in order to plug a hole where the Steelworkers might come in by. They were absolutely 100 percent correct in their thinking and in their calculation as to how Murphy would react. A number of the workers that had been very loyal supporters of Mine Mill, they took great issue with the signing of these agreements, that is secretly with the officers in Mine Mill. They raised particular Cain about it. They told him that it was wrong because as an example, at Kennedy Lake, Murphy negotiated there 12 hours and then they come out with an agreement. They never went through a Conciliation Officer or a Conciliation Board. He flew in and out with the company personnel man who negotiated on behalf of the company. That is they used the same airplane coming into the camp and out of the camp. This was made quite an issue of by the committee. Murphy's a big reason in convincing a lot of his loyal members, and I myself at that time fell for it, although I sure as hell wouldn't put my name to any of those bloody agreements. This is the argument that he come out with. "We've got everything tied up in Sudbury. We're broke. We're going to win Sudbury. When we get our economic strength restored, then we reopen all these agreements, and we've got to sign these agreements to keep the steelworkers out."

Barney McGuire [00:44:22] So the fellows, he had six or seven of them over there in Kennedy Lake, they agreed to signing the agreement with him. Upon that basis, he was able to get these six or seven agreements signed throughout the province. This signing of agreements before the mine got into production was a complete reversal of their policy from the past. I happen to know this very well because in the past when I worked as a Mine Mill organizer, a part of my job was this. I would watch these mines and as soon as the mill started, then we'd go in and organize it and then you had bargaining power because you had them in the three-year tax-free period. We would only sign a one-year agreement. That's all we would sign, or two years at the most, in the hopes that somebody, some place else in the meantime would win a higher wage and then we'd go after them again during this tax-free period. When they had the strength and when they had the workers behind them, they were able to hold off in organizing these places and then they could put pressure to bear upon the company. I think that it's a signing of these agreements in the province that's actually going to bring the downfall of Mine Mill because I feel that the way a worker looks at it is this. He wants the maximum results for the dues dollars that he puts out and the Mine Mill is just not able to give it to him, particularly since their loss of Sudbury. I am of the opinion that all they are doing now is existing by virtue of the wishes of the employers. The employers are doing as they want to with them. The Remac strike, which was during the time that they were in difficulties in Sudbury, when you study it, it was a complete hoax. I'll give you a write up on that and you'll see how I've authenticated the dates of the agreements and so on. It's quite obvious that they just were not capable of financially supporting the workers. In the Britannia strike up here, it's just a complete hoax from beginning to end in that it amounts to that they're willing to settle for a wage cut. They have to settle for a wage cut, and this they were willing to do quite some months ago. In other words, anything to get those dues dollars in to keep them alive. My thoughts are that they cannot contribute to the welfare of the working people. I've had many of the old timers tell me they should either go down fighting or else they should join the Steelworkers. Either one or the other. I'm afraid that would be my opinion of them, too, at the particular time.

Interviewer [00:48:03] How much financial aid did they get? Is there any aid from the States?

Barney McGuire [00:48:09] You mean the Mine Mill at the present time? They would get financial support from their other locals.

Interviewer [00:48:27] Is there much?

Barney McGuire [00:48:29] This, of course, I'm in no position to know. The Britannia strike, I don't think there's any doubt about it. They're capable of financing the Britannia strike, which is not a big one, though. That isn't a big number of workers to support out on strike. There's not many there right at the present time.

Interviewer [00:49:01] Do you know, anything about in the '40s there was a battle in Trail, wasn't there with the Steelworkers. Were you in on it?

Barney McGuire [00:49:09] No, I wasn't in on that at all. That was in you mean 1949-50. No, I was never in on that. I was in Trail back in 1946-47 with Mine Mill, but I was never in there during that battle between Steelworkers and Mine Mill.

Interviewer [00:49:37] You don't know anything.

Barney McGuire [00:49:38] No, I really am not too familiar with too much of what took place there.

Interviewer [00:49:48] Let's go back, I have a couple of questions. One is the I.W.W., when did they stop?

Barney McGuire [00:49:58] When did they go out of existence? I would say they went out of existence in the mines in about 1919 or 1920.

Interviewer [00:50:08] What about the O.B.U.? Did a lot of them join the O.B.U.?

Barney McGuire [00:50:12] Yes. This is my understanding that they did join the O.B.U. I don't think the O.B.U. had recognition or any contracts in any of the mining camps.

Interviewer [00:50:34] Of course the I.W.W. never had that anyway, did they?

Barney McGuire [00:50:39] Yes, I think they did. They got some contracts, if I'm not mistaken in the Slocan, that is the Nelson area. I think they had contracts there and they conducted strikes in that area.

Interviewer [00:51:04] Do you know of any local, which locals of the Western Federation of Miners in B.C. sort of stayed on? Were there any that stayed on through the '20s?

Barney McGuire [00:51:20] No. They went out of existence completely. In the 1930s, that would be about late 1930s, they set up in Vancouver, I guess it would be about 1936, I guess, or '37. They set up in Vancouver a local union where all the miners could belong to, and where they could come in and pay their dues. This local was Local 289, which is still in existence. 289 comes after 271, which was formed at Bralorne in 1935. They had a man in Vancouver by the name of George Price. I think George is passed on now for some time. He was retired back in 1944, he retired in about 1946, if I'm not mistaken, or about '46 or '47. George Price retired because I remember him quite well. I think about 1947, I guess, that George Price retired and then of course, Mine Mill under Murphy, they were the one took over his function. George, his function was to keep the union alive in the

province, recruit members wherever he could. George Price was up in Bridge River in '35. I think he was also back there in '39 too.

Interviewer [00:53:36] Was he a Mine Mill man?

Barney McGuire [00:53:37] Oh yes,.

Interviewer [00:53:37] He was put on salary?

Barney McGuire [00:53:39] Yes. Yes. George Price was the only man they were able to maintain in B.C. here for quite some time, although they did have others that worked from time to time for them.

Interviewer [00:53:58] In the mines during the twenties, there are no unions.

Barney McGuire [00:54:05] Yes.

Interviewer [00:54:06] Were there in the mines sort of, that is to say there are no unions to have certification. 3.

Barney McGuire [00:54:13] Yeah.

Interviewer [00:54:13] Were there any sort of committees, informal committees in any of the mines or people that met and talked, did you know of?

Barney McGuire [00:54:26] Oh yes. To the best of my knowledge, in fact ever since I started working in the mines, there was always these committees or what you would call a company union. It was not unusual at all for that type of a set up.

Interviewer [00:54:45] It was a company union?

Barney McGuire [00:54:46] Yes.

Interviewer [00:54:47] What I meant is that maybe some of the old members say, the I.W.W., might try to agitate for a union. I mean sort of a shadow union but not a company union.

Barney McGuire [00:55:09] No, to the best of my knowledge, there wasn't any of that, although there was attempts in setting up independent unions that wouldn't be company unions, like at Wells and like at Bridge River in the past. When the fellows would get ideas about joining a bona fide organization, well, that's when employers wouldn't recognize them. No, I think one of the mistakes that the I.W.W. made, they were too bloody militant. I know that the fellows, during the years that I worked in the mines prior to unionization, had rejoined these company unions and so on. I think we would have brought along legitimate unions an awful lot faster, because it would have shown up their inadequacy and "Well, what is the answer to this anyhow?" We didn't do though. Not too many actors in any of these so-called company unions.

Interviewer [00:56:26] Can you tell me anything how the Mine Mill got started again? The first local was?

Barney McGuire [00:56:28] In B.C.? How it first got started was this. Harvey Murphy was working in the shipyards in '42 Prior to that, he had spent a year in the concentration camp, you know, as a member of the Communist Party opposing war. Then when he got out, he went to work in the shipyards.

Interviewer [00:56:58] This was when, in '42?

Barney McGuire [00:56:58] Yeah, '42. Then in '43, he started to work as a Mine Mill organizer. At that time, Mine Mill was broken up into seven different districts, United States and Canada. District 7 was composed of British Columbia, Alaska and some of these states south of us. Number 8 District, that was Ontario East. The board member for District 7 was a Chase Powers from the States. He is the man that hired Harvey Murphy. Harvey Murphy went to him, "Chase, I used to be a Communist Party in those days." Harvey Murphy went to Chase Powers and he said, "Well, now this is the time, I'm the guy and let's go ahead." Of course, Powers said, "Well," he said. "I don't know," he said, "If you can organize or not." He said, "I don't know whether the time is right."

Barney McGuire [00:58:07] What Harvey went and then, he went down to longshoreman's union, and this can be authenticated. He borrowed \$1,000 from them so he would have some money to start out on the road. He got it and he started out organizing and he went into Copper Mountain. I knew some of the fellows up there that he knew, and there was no trouble to organize at all. Then he went into Britannia and there was a number of people up there that he had connections through the Communist Party and old members of the Workers Unity League and so on. That's how he got his connections. Then throughout the mining camps, it was fairly easy to organize during those years. Then Local 480 in Trail got certified in 1944. Britannia and Copper Mountain got certified in '43 and then Kimberley followed Then Pioneer, Bralorne and Wells and then the other mines like Stewart and those mines that are closed down like around Hazelton and a mine up along that, Mercury mine up there. Fort St. James and Mercury Mine, they got the union in there too. Of course it just mushroomed once it started. There was no holding it back. There was a great many changes made once the unions got in that were very, very good, you know. I think that's one of the reasons of the great loyalty of a lot of the old timers to this day towards Mine Mill is the improvements they made once they got the unions in during the war years, because particularly at Copper Mountain and Britannia where they were closed company towns. If anybody was caught receiving a big parcel from Eaton's, buying their groceries in a place other than the company store, that was reasons for dismissal, which they changed to right away. Then there was double-bunks and rooms not much bigger than this. There'd be four bunks, three or four bunks and there'd be different men, in the different bunks, three different shifts. You had to supply your own blankets. Up until about 1944, you had to pack your own blankets all over the country. There was no holidays with pay, no statutory holidays. Well, these are the improvements you see that were made just by virtue of getting a union into the camps you might say. These loyalties, they linger on and on, particularly with fellows who have read nothing else other than the Mine Mill publications, which I think very falsely tell the history of unionization in the mining camps in the States and in Canada. It doesn't there telling them of the history of unions in the mining industry. It doesn't tell of the birth of the Western Federation of Miners, how it was an offshoot, as Haywood calls it, of the Knights of Labor, and how they went to quarrels with the United Mine Workers in some places and how they were in quarrels with the I.W.W. in other places. What I mean is this, that workers will only support a union as long as that union is doing the job for them and they don't care what the name of the union is, who its officers are or anything like that. I think the same thing can be said about the Steelworkers. If they don't do a job for the workers, then the workers are going to get somebody else and so on.

That's my thoughts as to what will happen, and I'm sure that's what has happened in the past. They only support a union that is doing something for them.

Barney McGuire [01:03:10] Another development here in British Columbia in the mining has been the start of the Tunnel and Rock Workers' Union. Now this is something that you should check into too. The best person to give you the history of that, right from the beginning, and I was in on that by the way. That started at Kemano is Bill Slewidge.

Interviewer [01:03:37] How do you spell that?

Barney McGuire [01:03:37] SLEWIDGE. Bill Slewidge is a representative of the Hod Carriers Union. I'll give you their phone number, by the way, it's MU4-7021. The Tunnel and Rock Workers, it started as a result of the Kemano master agreement that was signed, you might say, in which the Tunnel Workers were brought under the Hod Carriers. There was quite a bit of dissatisfaction over the rates and so on. They asked Mine Mill to come on in there, and I was sent in there. The result was that the Tunnel and Rock Workers Union was set up. There's quite a bit of history to tell about that. What has happened in years gone by since they were sent up, they've done quite a good job, I would say, on behalf of the tunnel miners, how they've increased their wages and so on. I can remember the Tunnel Workers' strike there when they went out on strike. That was back in, I just forget what year, that was back about 1950 I guess. They were out on strike to improve their wages and they wanted to bring Mine Mill in there. The A.F. of L. building trades at that time, they had that master agreement covering everything. The company opposed this action of the miners. What happened was that Murphy pulled out of there with Mine Mill and that the Tunnel and Rock Workers was set up. Murphy made a deal with the A.F.L. Building Trades Council at that time that he'd pull out of Kemano provided they'd support him when he'd be taking on Steel at Trail, which did happen. This all happens. That can be verified by what happened at Trail. The A.F.L. unions, that is the Building Trades Council, they supported Mine Mill in their fight with the steel workers in Trail. This is where the deal was made. Murphy figured he was going to have to fight the Steelworkers in Trail, and so sort of to strengthen his hand for the future, he made this deal that they'd support him and then he would pull out of Kemano. We'd no longer try and take over the tunnel workers there.

Barney McGuire [01:06:55] There were many other aspects of the union and what has happened over a period of years. I would say that the main thing, as I see it, is this. Mine Mill has become weakened and has just simply in no position to do anything for the workers. We're staying in existence at the expense of the workers. I think there's also another aspect of it that's very important, and that is the political aspects.

Interviewer [01:07:42] You think—

Barney McGuire [01:07:44] The political aspects as I see this. The big business interests, the mining interests, they're naturally aligned politically to the old-line parties and to the Social Credit party. Right at the moment, to say that Murphy is Communist-dominated or controlled by the Communist Party, I think that you couldn't see anything further from the truth. You couldn't say anything further from the truth in that. I would say that he is dominated by the mining companies. That's who he is dominated by, not the Communist Party. He has the Communist Party tricked or fooled into supporting him. I feel that it may not be very long until the Communist Party will be disowning Mine Mill and telling them to go and get into the Steelworkers or something of that nature, because union workers that you talk to and even people who are members of the Communist Party, they've told me,

they've told other organizers with Steel that they're disgracing themselves by supporting Mine Mill. This is their honest opinion. Why the hell should they do that? There is quite a big difference of opinion amongst themselves, I know, on this question of Mine Mill. I think the general opinion of the members of the Communist Party right out here in B.C. is that. That they are themselves of the opinion that they're disgracing themselves by supporting Mine Mill. I understand that their leadership down east tells them that they must support Mine Mill.

Interviewer [01:09:37] You think that they got to deal with Social Credit.

Barney McGuire [01:09:45] No, I don't think the Communist Party had anything to do with it. Murphy definitely. Definitely. If he isn't paid by the employers or something to that effect, it will be one of the greatest surprises of my life. The political aspects of it is this. He had supported every party under the sun excepting the N.D.P. Now, years ago, when the fight was whether to affiliate to the C.C.F. or adopt what we call non-partisan political action policy, that was quite a bit different than opposing the N.D.P. today. I can well remember when the Mine Mill conventions adopted this policy of a non-partisan political action policy. Many of the locals on their own went out and they supported, they worked for C.C.F. candidates, but they wouldn't affiliate. They'd go on out and they'd work to support them. What Murphy has done is he has done everything under the sun to oppose the C.C.F. and particularly to oppose the N.D.P. This is one of the things where I differed with him, and I told him that. I said, "Murphy, under no circumstances am I going to oppose the N.D.P." I said, "I may not agree with each and every item that is in their policy, but I will not oppose them, and that's all there is to it." I found out that throughout the province, what they have done, they have sabotaged it, particularly on election times.

Interviewer [01:11:30] Like in the [unclear] by-election.

Barney McGuire [01:11:32] Yes, and non-registration of voters is the big thing, like over in these different areas where there's just the Mine Mill local and non-registration of voters is very, very important. This Britannia hoax, the political aspects there are this. that is a Social Credit riding. Mine Mill controls that riding. They control it by virtue of the members that they have at Britannia and at Bralorne and Pioneer. What they do is this. They sabotage the N.D.P., which elects the Social Credit. They do not come on out and work openly against the N.D.P., or very little of it, but they sabotage their efforts, which elects the N.D.P. [Social Credit].

Interviewer [01:12:17] How do they do that?

Barney McGuire [01:12:20] By primarily non-registration of voters.

Interviewer [01:12:24] Do they go up and say don't register?

Barney McGuire [01:12:27] It's just never mentioned. It's just never mentioned. It's just ignored. I noticed that in 1963, the last year I worked for them over at Sooke. The number that was on the voters list there from the mine I think there was about two or three people on the voters list out of about 120 working at the mine. Up at the Port McNeill of a camp of around 100, five or six on the voters list. Up at the Western mines, there was not one. There was no polling booth up there at all. There was nobody on the voters list. This is something that definitely has to be kept in mind. It has to be watched. It's of extreme importance. When these people are not registered, that is the working people are not registered. On the other hand, we see it where the mine managers, the accountants there

at the mines, they make sure they register all their suppliers and they don't give a hoot about anybody else.

Barney McGuire [01:13:36] When this takes place, it has the effect of helping Social Credit or a Liberal or a Conservative candidate. Murphy's been making these deals with the old-line parties for years and years. The employers, what do they see in the Steelworkers Union? They not only see a union that's capable of backing the workers up, but they see a union that supports the N.D.P. They know bloody well that at least the Steelworkers Union will do. It will be out registering people to vote and so on, and it will make the difference of at least two or three seats in this province or maybe more than that.

Barney McGuire [01:14:38] There's a good many people have had many differences of opinion with Murphy over this same question. A lot of them, they never brought it out into the open because they found themselves in the union. They wanted to try and live with one another the best way that they could. I do know that this has been going on for quite some time, open collusion with the old-line political parties. I think that the preservation of Mine Mill and the carrying on of Mine Mill in the manner that it has existed for the last several years, it's nothing else but an attempt to turn back the clock about 30 to 50 years is how it is. I find out that their policy is completely reversed from that of a policy of a militant union to now nothing better than a company union. When I'm looking at this book here, it just reminds me, the lawyers that they have hired in Vancouver at the present time to fight their cases for them. There's a firm called Bull, Housser & Tupper. They're one of the oldest legal firms in the city and I don't think there's any firm that's known to be more conservative than Bull, Housser & Tupper. That is a firm of lawyers that the employers used against us back in 1926. I'll show it to you right here. I have it marked here. Bull, Housser & Tupper. They used this firm of lawyers against us back in 1946 when I was up in the Taku Mine at the time. They used them for several years. That is the mining company. This was the firm of lawyers that they used against us. Now today, this is the firm of lawyers that Mine Mill is using in their fight with Steelworkers and so on. That's one of the examples of that.

Barney McGuire [01:17:11] That is why the Workers Unity League and the organizer who went into Anyox at that time was Tom Bradley. Just where you could locate him here in Vancouver I'm not too sure, but I think you could find him fairly easy. That was the Anyox strike '33.

Interviewer [01:17:53] Do you know anything more about that?

Barney McGuire [01:17:56] Well, yes, I was 18 miles away at that particular time and I can remember being told about what did happen there. They were out on strike, that is the mine went out on strike. They worked down below at the smelter at the beach it was called. The company, they asked for a truce of 48 hours, to postpone it for 48 hours. The miners wouldn't do it. During this period, they brought in the police and they had battleships which were sitting out at the entrance to Anyox, so to speak. All boats that came in and out, they were checked at that time. They scabbed Anyox. They operated the mine with scabs, after they drove the miners out. There was a whole number of miners there that were beat up by the police. There was a whole number of miners blacklisted as a result of that strike. I remember them trying to recruit scabs in Alice Arm. I don't think there was any. There was nobody from Alice Arm went to work there. At Stewart, I don't think there was anybody from Stewart went to work there either. The only, I think there was one from Alice Arm and one from Anyox were young people that didn't know any better and they weren't living at home and their parents forced them into it or they lied to

them and they got them to go to work there. Other than that, there was nobody scabbed from Alice Arm on Anyox. I remember at Alice Arm at that time all of the single fellows on relief, they cut them off relief and they told them jobs were available for them at Anyox. Not one of them would go to work there. Then they got in touch with the union at Prince Rupert, and the union down there sent them enough food to tide them over until such time as they were forced to call the strike off. It wasn't long after that Anyox closed down, and of course, the people went all over the province.

Interviewer [01:21:11] Any other things you know about the Workers Unity League?

Barney McGuire [01:21:15] No. I wasn't connected with the Workers Unity League. The Workers Unity League was responsible for initiating, organizing and a number of other industries and other places across Canada. I believe they were also responsible for initiating the Flin Flon strike, the miners' strike at Flin Flon. Then, of course, they disbanded later on, and they advised all of their members to go into the unions that were already in existence. This argument, so I'm told, it's one of the arguments that's being used in amongst the Communists themselves on this issue of Mine Mill and Steelworkers. They say the argument that they've put up is, that is, it's a number of them. They say, "Well, Mine Mill has been beat. It can't do anything. What's wrong with them? Get back in there in the mainstream of the labor movement where they can do something." What they done with the Workers Unity League, as I said, and this is an example they tell me.

Interviewer [01:22:48] You said something about Bridge River. You were there when they organized the union. This was in thirty—

Barney McGuire [01:22:58] Bridge River? No, I wasn't in Bridge River when they went out on strike.

Interviewer [01:23:04] When was this?

Barney McGuire [01:23:05] This was in '35, and that's the time when I left there and I went into the Nelson country. Well, in '35, they had a strike there, which only lasted just a couple of days. The miners got exactly what they wanted.

Interviewer [01:23:24] How did this come about?

Barney McGuire [01:23:26] It came about as a result of the miners getting together and deciding to go on out on strike. An offshoot of that was the setting up of Mine Mille Local 271. It would be in the fall of 1935 or spring of 1936 because it was in the winter.

Interviewer [01:24:05] That would be one of the first locals.

Barney McGuire [01:24:06] Yes. That was the first local of Mine Mill that was set up since the disintegration of the Western Federation of Miners back in the First World War. That was the first local that was set up.

Interviewer [01:24:22] Was it purely a local initiative? Was it a purely an initiative of the local miners?

Barney McGuire [01:24:30] Yes, I would say so. Yes, I would say so. I was just trying to think of the names of some of the fellows who may have been up there at that time. There are fellows up at Bralorne that was in there at that time that could give you this exact

history and the chain of events. Lars Larson is the name of one fellow, he still is at Bralorne. That would be in regard to the 1935 strike and the chartering of Mine Mill Local 271. Another fellow, he is a retired miner, Glen Osborne. He is either living in Vancouver or living in Kamloops, and incidentally, Osborne is one of the members of this Granduc disaster. That's the fellow. Glen Osborne.

Interviewer [01:25:57] He was in the same thing.

Barney McGuire [01:25:59] Yes, he was in that. There are others that were in that I knew, but of course there are out of there. There would still be other old timers up in that valley and they'd be able to fill you in on the events back then.

Interviewer [01:26:22] Well, I think that just about covers.

Barney McGuire [01:26:23] Yes. We were mentioning Tom Bradley. On the logging, you have already made your contacts in the logging, I guess, haven't you.

Interviewer [01:26:45] Well not that many, actually.

Barney McGuire [01:26:51] You people have interviewed Harold Pritchett, haven't you.

Interviewer [01:26:52] No, I'll just put that down, logging. But I've got to know it's him anyway.

Barney McGuire [01:27:06] That would be Harold Pritchett. There's another old timer, John McCuish.

Interviewer [01:27:11] How do you spell that?

Barney McGuire [01:27:11] That's McCuish. He's an old member of the I.W.W., John McCuish. He's quite a bit older man than Harold Pritchett.

Interviewer [01:27:31] He was in the I.W.W.?

Barney McGuire [01:27:32] Yeah, he was in the I.W.W.

Interviewer [01:27:35] In the logging camps?

Barney McGuire [01:27:35] Yeah. In fact, this John McCuish would be— I'll tell you what. If I can locate old John or find somebody that knows his address, I'll phone it into you.

Interviewer [01:27:59] Phone us at the Fed.

Barney McGuire [01:28:00] Yeah. I know that—.

Interviewer [01:28:05] He'd be a good man to get a hold of.

Barney McGuire [01:28:06] Yes, John McCuish would be your ideal man to get a hold of as far as the logging is concerned. On the Workers Unity League, Tom McEwen of course.

Interviewer [01:28:22] Do you know anybody else from the I.W.W.?

Barney McGuire [01:28:33] Can't think of them right on the spur of the moment. Not too many of them around nowadays, you know. I know one of the former I.W.W. organizers back in the 1920s, he's living in Alice Arm now. Morris Peterson. Morris Peterson. He's living in Alice Arm.

Interviewer [01:29:19] Is that 'en' or 'on'?

Barney McGuire [01:29:21] Gosh, that I'm not too sure. He is a man that, well, Morris is getting up in years now. I was thinking that a person might be able to get some information from him by writing to him. I don't know. He's shaky, hard for him to write. Frank Calder knows Morris Peterson, I'm quite sure of Frank Calder knows Morris Peterson. Sometime when Calder goes into Alice Arm, it is an idea that you might be able to get him to interview Morris. Well, the last time I was into Alice Arm and I was talking to Morris about the I.W.W., he was reminiscing and he was quite bitter about how working people never stick together and he said it was always that way, and things like that. He didn't go into any details, but he used to be an organizer for them in the area, I believe, from Prince George to Prince Rupert back in the 1920s, early thirties. With a lot of those fellows, they got blackballed and they will have to go and settle in some other part of the country where they're not known. In order to make a living, well, they have to keep their sympathies to themselves. I guess this is what happened to Morris Peterson, the same way as it happened to this George Casey, who I was telling you about from Rossland who settled in Prince Rupert. One of his son-in-laws happened to be George Hill, who was the C.C.F. candidate up there several years ago.

Barney McGuire [01:32:06] That gives you a little bit more of it.