

Interview: Garry Worth (GW)
Interviewer: Sean Griffin (SG)
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SG [00:00:05] Okay, Garry. First, let's just start things off by giving me your full name and your date of birth, where you were born, and so on.

GW [00:00:13] My name is Garry Worth. I was born in May 22nd, 1944, in Nanaimo, in the old Nanaimo General Hospital, which is long gone now. I have—I was raised in the Nanoose Bay and Parksville. I kind of call Parksville my hometown, but actually it was Nanoose Bay. What else? I've got a brother, younger brother, and an older sister. Nanaimo was my place of birth.

SG [00:00:47] And your home base too eh?

GW [00:00:49] Yeah.

SG [00:00:50] I understand your dad was raised in Trinity Valley in the sort of Vernon region and joined the Labour Progressive Party there, which would have been kinda of an off the beat kind of thing to do at that time?

GW [00:01:04] I guess I'm known as a red diaper baby. (laughter) I read Laxer's book, [James Laxer, Red Diaper Baby] and there was a lot of things that I, you know, that were in common with his book about the red diaper baby. But yeah, he was—my grandparents moved into the Trinity Valley from Britain about the turn of the century. My grandmother was actually way ahead of her time as far as a woman's libber and political activist for a woman. They're actually doing some history work on her now in the Vernon Museum, and it's quite interesting. I've been part of that. So, there was the guy in the society up there who was talking to me about my grandmother. Anyway, that's—my dad was raised there. He was born in 1913 and raised in the Trinity Valley. I remember him telling stories about his younger logging days. He started out horse logging, in the Trinity Valley area, and then around 1939 or '38 or '39, my mom and him and my sister moved to Vancouver Island. He was—he worked in the logging camps, and he was in the rigging and hooker, hook tender. Then I guess he—that was when the IWA [International Woodworkers of America] was first starting to get active, and he was in favor of the union at that time. Turned out that he was blackballed by the big forest companies that he was working for. I forget the name who they were now, but—then he kind of went into gyppo logging just with himself. I'll talk about his logging camp later, but, I remember in 1946, there was the long IWA strike, and they asked him to go up to the interior to be the picket captain. It was interesting because I found in the bookstore one time, there's this big book about the history of the IW, I'm looking through it, and look, here's a picture of my dad and about six or eight other guys that were just on the picket line. So, he tells the story about some of the issues that they had on the picket line where the guy with the rifle, he says, 'You're not going to shut this sawmill down.' (laughing) There's another story he tells. There was some guy with a logging truck that was going through the picket line. He says, 'We'll fix him. We'll put sugar in his gas tank.' Sugar was hard to get right after the war. Right? He says that logging truck ran better than ever with the sugar in it. (laughter) So, and that's when he met is it Nigel Morgan?

SG [00:04:02] Right. He was an IWA organizer.

GW [00:04:04] He told the story about how he met Nigel Morgan when they were doing some picket line work, and that's when he joined the Communist Party in 1946.

SG [00:04:13] Yeah. I see. I understand, at this time, because he was blackballed up there, he moved—you folks moved down to the coast around that time?

GW [00:04:21] No, he was—he had moved down there and was working for some of the logging camps, and then he got—he was in favor of the union, and I guess the companies found out and blackballed them there. Down there.

SG [00:04:34] Your mom, I understand, was also a bit of an activist.

GW [00:04:36] She was active in the Voice of Women. I remember she won—she made a trip to China. There was a group of ladies that went to China one time, and I remember that was a big event, going to China with the Voice of Women. I'm not sure if she was a member of the party or not. Probably. But you know, Dad was.

SG [00:04:57] So, when you were growing up in Nanaimo at this time, which was of course like many a big resource town, it was kind of accepted that everybody kinda got a job in the resource industries during the summer or whatever, and I presume you did the same?

GW [00:05:11] Oh yeah. Well, going back to my dad, he had—after he did some gyppo logging around Nanoose Bay in Nanaimo area, he built a logging camp on Thurlow Island, East Thurlow Island, which is right across from Rock Bay. There was about—he had about 20, 30 guys working at various times working for him, and I spent every summer in that logging camp, just when I was a little kid, right up until, I think he left the logging camp when I was about in Grade 10, 9 or 10. But I went to school for Grade 4 in Rock Bay because when he was building the logging camp on Thurlow, which was about half an hour or so across Johnstone Strait to Rock Bay, he used the old hotel—the old hospital as his bunk house and his cook house. So, for the first year while he was building the logging camp, we stayed in Rock Bay, and I went to school there for one year.

SG [00:06:22] They actually had a school there?

GW [00:06:24] Yeah, they had—there was about eight or nine students.

SG [00:06:29] That would have been an interesting—

GW [00:06:30] And it's interesting, my brother and I were up there last summer. Rock Bay is now an RV park. (laughter)

SG [00:06:37] That's ironic, isn't it.

GW [00:06:37] People have put their RVs there for long term.

SG [00:06:41] You also were working later on in Loughborough Inlet and Bute Inlet as well.

GW [00:06:47] Well, I got out of—the day I got out to high school, my dad at that—but by then had been—he had shut down his own logging camp, and he went as a general

foreman for another guy in Loughborough Inlet—Thurlow, which was just—Loughborough's just around the corner. The day I got out of school, they had a bit of a forest fire in the logging camp in Loughborough Inlet. I got a phone call in the morning that we had our graduation party, he wanted me to go up there and be fire watch. Well the fire was out, the crews were all, they're going to leave, so me and another fellow that my dad knew from Nanaimo, we went up there for two weeks for fire watch. And—

SG [00:07:37] Did you miss your graduation?

GW [00:07:39] Yeah. No, that was my graduation.

SG [00:07:41] That was it, eh. (laughter)

GW [00:07:43] I thought, okay, when the guys come back in, I can go back home. He says, 'No, you're going to stay here and you're going to go to work.' So, I went to work right after I got out of high school in the logging camp, and that was where—I've been in the forest industry ever since.

SG [00:08:02] Well, I guess that was kind of accepted in those days that that's—

GW [00:08:05] I think it was. Yeah.

SG [00:08:06] Follow in the footsteps of, you know, parents or whatever.

GW [00:08:09] I didn't have any aspirations to go to university or college or anything like that.

SG [00:08:16] So, what kind of—when you're working in a place like that, did you get any formal training or was it all strictly, you know, learning as you go?

GW [00:08:22] I wouldn't say it was formal training. Not like it is now to run equipment. I only bought one pair of caulk boots, (laughter) and I worked in the rigging—setting chokers—for maybe 9 or 10 months. Then I got on to running equipment because I'd already run equipment when I was growing up, during the summers in my dad's camp. I knew how to drive a Cat, and they had a big Euclid gravel truck kind of thing to build logging road. And —

SG [00:08:55] How did you learn, though? Did someone teach you or did you just kinda trial by error?

GW [00:08:58] Well, you learned by watching the guys that were doing it, right? I mean, it's pretty simple to drive a Cat or to drive a big Yuke. They're pretty easy to drive, but —

SG [00:09:08] I don't know. I've never tried. (laughter)

GW [00:09:11] I did get on to running a track side yarder when I was—about a year and a half after I started in that camp. That was a big yarding machine. There was a wooden spar tree at that time, 120 foot tall. It was a major piece of equipment to learn how to run that track side yarder.

SG [00:09:30] I can imagine.

GW [00:09:31] I think I was pretty good at it by that time because—

SG [00:09:36] Were any of those camps up at that time certified with the IWA?

GW [00:09:41] Yes. The camp in Loughborough Inlet was certified IWA, but I have to admit, it wasn't a very active IWA unit at all. I mean, I remember the IWA had a boat came in once in a while with a staff rep that came in and visited us once. I remember that. It was a union camp. Yeah.

SG [00:10:05] But, as you say, you probably wouldn't have had a lot of connection with it because it wasn't an active local.

GW [00:10:11] No, it wasn't.

SG [00:10:11] Was that typical? I would imagine a lot of those camps, there was a certification, but not one that was really active.

GW [00:10:19] I think that was typical, right? The camps themselves were not. Yeah, there wasn't really kind of any grievances, so to speak of, right. I mean, it was—we all got along with the boss of that time, and so I don't—I think it was more of a you joined the union because the few people in the camp that were pro-union, so they just, you know, they all joined the IWA.

SG [00:10:48] What was the work schedule? You would be on the job and then out for a few days?

GW [00:10:52] It was a ten-and-four camp, Loughborough Inlet, and Dad's camp on Thurlow Island was a ten-and-four four camp as well. So ten days in, four days out.

SG [00:11:03] I understand you finally got tired of doing that and decided to come back to town.

GW [00:11:08] Dad left the employment of that logging camp after I'd been there a couple of years, and I was building logging road at that time with the Cat. They bought a new D7, I remember. Then I thought—I was thinking, well, I didn't know anybody who was left in the logging camp. All my friends had kind of moved on and my dad was gone. So, I figured I wanted to take the summer off, so I quit and took the summer off. Then I figured about the end of the summer, I better get—look for another job. I went into Nanaimo Bulldozing. Then they were looking for a Cat operator and turned out it was in Butte Inlet. I was tired of the ten-and-four camps, but here we were in there for two or three, four weeks at a time before we came out. That job only lasted about (in Butte Inlet)—I stayed in Nanaimo Bulldozing for, I think about a year, a couple of years, I think. We built the power line into Gold River. I remember I worked on that. That big power station for BC Hydro along the highway in Duncan, I remember working on that, for Nanaimo Bulldozing. It was a good job. I liked that that job. It was it— (laughter) I kid the 115 [International Union of Operating Engineers Local 115] staff rep in Kamloops. It cost me an initiation fee to get into the Operating Engineers, and then because I was out of work all one winter, I wanted to leave when I got a job in Port Alberni, I wanted to leave in good standing, so I had to pay my back dues. It cost me just as much to get out of the union as it did to get into it. (laughter)

SG [00:13:04] Local 115 was the Operating Engineers? Just to be clear. After a sort of a winter out of work, you decided to take a shot at going to Port Alberni, I understand too.

GW [00:13:17] Well, I had a friend who was a supervisor there, the lubrication foreman, and I had been out of work all winter because Nanaimo Bulldozing didn't have anything going on. I went over there, and I got hired right away. I started on the oiling crew. Within about, oh, five or six months, they were looking for apprentices in the millwright trade. There was four or five of us hired all at one time to take the millwright apprenticeship. At that time, MacMillan Bloedel was one of the best companies to serve your apprenticeship. They had a structured apprenticeship program, and I went to school at BCIT [British Columbia Institute of Technology] a month every year for four years. It was a good place to take your apprenticeship.

SG [00:14:13] Who would have been the union side of the apprenticeship program there? It would have been the pulp workers or?

GW [00:14:21] No, the company had their own apprenticeship program.

SG [00:14:27] But they were usually done in cooperation with a union in a certified plant, at least they would.

GW [00:14:32] There was—there must have been some kind of cooperation with the union, but I don't remember the union being very active in structuring the apprenticeship.

SG [00:14:42] Sorry, what union would it have been?

GW [00:14:45] Well, it was Pulp Sulfide [International Brotherhood of Pulp, Sulphite, and Paper Mill Workers (IBPSPMW)] at that time—the international.

SG [00:14:48] Okay, and then after a few years, I understand you took a holiday to go to Kamloops.

GW [00:14:55] Yeah. Well—

SG [00:14:56] It turned into something more.

GW [00:14:56] We were thinking about—I lived in Parksville, and I commuted to Port Alberni every day for work. I was getting a bit tired of the drive, and it was either move to Port Alberni or—and then we went on a vacation up to see my grandmother in Vernon, and we stopped in. They were just about finished building the new pulp mill in Kamloops in 2000 and 2001—I mean 1970 and '71. I stopped in for an interview, and I was interviewed by a fellow that used to work at Harmac. He was on the interview panel, interviewed me for the job, and he found out that I had served my apprenticeship in Port Alberni, and it was pretty much—well, I got home a week later and there was a phone call waiting for me. They wanted—they hired me right there, right away, because that fellow from Harmac knew that MacMillan Bloedel had a good apprenticeship program.

SG [00:16:00] Oh, okay. Well, I would imagine that this would have been sort of when they were—the forest industry was really beginning to build up the infrastructure of pulp mills and so on around the province. So, millwrights would have been in pretty big demand, I would imagine.

GW [00:16:14] Oh yeah. The millwright was one of the more stable jobs in the pulp industry. Since then, they've kind of amalgamated trades a bit, but you still have

millwrights, welders, and pipefitters in one group and then instruments and electrical in the other side of the trade group.

SG [00:16:34] What did you have to do as a millwright? Just as an aside.

GW [00:16:37] It's repair heavy equipment, basically is a good way to describe it. We—there was all kinds of pumps and big—and on the pulp machine, there was big rolls and stuff we had. They would have a shut down, a major shut down, once a year where they would bring in all kinds of contractors as well as we would all work 12, 14, 15 hour shifts, during the shutdowns.

SG [00:17:06] You basically kept everything running.

GW [00:17:08] Yeah.

SG [00:17:11] Interesting. You mentioned that you hadn't been particularly active yourself in the union, but that that changed, later on after you'd been—

GW [00:17:20] I was never active in the Pulp Sulphide Union in Port Alberni. I was just a young kid then, right, and serving my apprenticeship. And then, it was still Pulp Sulfide when I applied for the job in Kamloops. In fact, one of the questions—there was a lot of discussion around the B.C. industry at that time about the Canadian union, right, the Pulp, Paper [and] Woodworkers of Canada [PPWC]. One of the questions was asked, was during my interview was, 'Well, what do you think of the Canadian union?' Well, I kind of flubbed that question off and didn't want to answer them. I was in favor of the Canadian union when I heard the discussion in Port Alberni, and then when I when I got to Kamloops a few years later, we did switch over to the PPWC. There was a lot of discussion in a lot of the pulp mills around B.C., and there was usually a group who were active in the international union who were also in favour of looking at the PPWC because, I remember Elk Falls, Campbell River, and Port Mellon, and places like that. But then, I guess the international or the Canadian side of the international saw the light; they better do something about becoming Canadian. Then they formed the CPU [Canadian Paperworkers Union], right, which basically took a lot of the wind out of our—the PPWC sails—because Kamloops was the last international local to join the PPWC.

SG [00:19:10] And that was in 1974?

GW [00:19:12] Yeah. About then. Yeah.

SG [00:19:16] When exactly did you kind of encounter the PPWC that you had this— had it been active organizing, doing anything in Port Alberni?

GW [00:19:27] There was an active camp. There was a bit of a campaign going on in Port Alberni. I remember the discussion. It never came to a head because then before they got too far along, I guess the CPU was formed. I remember the discussion of Port Alberni when I was an apprentice.

SG [00:19:46] Okay. This is also a time when you're working in Kamloops when they joined the PPWC in '74 that you started yourself to become active in—

GW [00:19:59] I got active—well, they joined, we joined—what year was it? We went into the PPWC '74.

SG [00:20:06] Seventy-four, right.

GW [00:20:09] Yeah, and then I got active in the local union around '77 or '78. I started off as a shop steward, safety steward, and then, I think it was a trustee in the local (Local 10) and our NEB [National Executive Board] rep. Each local had one person on the executive board of the national union. He went on staff, so the local executive came to me and says, 'Well we got an NEB meeting in Vancouver next week. Can you go down?' That was when I went down as a—and I stayed an NEB member for quite a few years after that. That was when I—my start of the link between the local and the national office.

SG [00:20:59] That's often how it starts, isn't it? Somebody comes and says, 'Hey, can you do this? Go to that meeting?' And off it goes. That was that's essentially what you did as well.

GW [00:21:07] Yeah.

SG [00:21:10] You also took on some new leadership roles in both the local and the national union?

GW [00:21:17] That was quite a bit later. When did I become? Well, I sat on the NEB for quite a few years as a Local 10 rep, and then I ran for secretary- treasurer. I think it was in the 90s, sometime, early in the—'93 or something like that. I ran for secretary-treasurer of the PPWC national office, and—

SG [00:21:44] So, that was quite a bit later.

GW [00:21:46] Quite a bit later. I was a wage delegate for several of the bargains in between, you know, in 1980 and '93. I remember that I was a wage delegate in '81. I think '86 was another bargain. I was active in the local and the national at the same time.

SG [00:22:09] You also mentioned to me that Weyerhaeuser that ran the mill, also had this 'Quality in Action' program which prompted a lot of pushback from the membership. What was that?

GW [00:22:21] Yeah. It was during the late eighties when the quality of work life programs were being implemented across a lot of the industries. The auto workers back east, I remember they had—and I don't know, for some reason, it just, it didn't sit right with myself and a few other people on the executive of the local union. Weyerhaeuser, at that time, called it 'Quality in Action.' It was a team concept, quality of work life program, that was quite common in a lot of all of the industries. We took an active stand against it. We told the company that we're, you know, we're not in favour. We had little QIA slash stickers that we put all over the workplace, and we actually structured between the PPWC local, the National, and the Confederation of Canadian Unions [CCU] office in Toronto, we structured a shop stewards' course around quality of work life. We took that to a lot of the PPWC locals, and we also did some of the CCU affiliates as well.

SG [00:23:45] What was Weyerhaeuser trying to do with this QIA program?

GW [00:23:49] Well, it was become part of the team, right? Basically, it was an anti-union, anti-worker type of program. It was based on the Japanese system of management out of Japan, where, you know, it was lots of trades flexibility, and you're all on the same team.

Basically, what it was, was reduce manpower through people doing each other's jobs and becoming part of the team. It just didn't ring right with a lot of us.

SG [00:24:25] Right. You also mentioned that Local 10, which was your local up in Kamloops was a tough local. I think they were the words you used.

GW [00:24:37] Yeah. We—I guess that's one way to describe it—a tough local. We had several wobbles, and I don't think it was anything to do with joining the PPWC. I remember when we when I first started there, there was a couple of wobbles when the mill was being—when it was under construction, the new mill. So, it was just the way the membership and maybe it was some blame to be on the management side as well of how they managed the mill. There were a few wobbles, and we had some legal strikes and some illegal strikes. So, I remember—what year would that have been in the late—sometime in the eighties, Weyerhaeuser was trying to implement multi trades. They wanted the millwrights and the pipefitters and welders to work, you know, as one trade. We took a lot of—we resisted that a lot. It started out as an overtime ban, I think, in the pipe shop, and then the overtime ban grew to the millwright job and the welders and the electrical. Pretty soon it also took over on to the production side where they were all in favor of the issue of resisting this flexible work practices. We had one or two injunctions from the labour board. The company went to the labour board right away, got an injunction to go back to work. We resisted a couple of injunctions before we settled that issue. I think we settled it with—there was some flexibility, but the oilers got trade rate out of it or something like that.

SG [00:26:40] So, it did result in some changes?

GW [00:26:41] Yeah, we've got some changes.

SG [00:26:43] Well, I think one of the hallmarks of the PPWC and indeed many of the Canadian unions, was their emphasis on rank and file democracy and the involvement of the rank and file at every level.

GW [00:26:54] Yeah.

SG [00:26:55] Sometimes a lot of people would say it to a pain, (laughter) but the fact is in your particular local, it sounds like it did animate you towards doing a lot of things that got changes.

GW [00:27:06] That was one of the hallmarks of the PPWC was rank and file control, local autonomy. I wasn't around the original discussion in the early sixties. There was a fellow by the name of Orville Braaten and another fellow, Angus McPhee, who was a great guy. I didn't know Orville; Orville had died. Apparently, talking to Jess Succamore who knew these guys when they were all talking about Canadian unionism, there was a little bit of a different philosophy between Orville and Angus about local autonomy.

SG [00:27:44] Oh, I see.

GW [00:27:45] Orville had passed away from a heart attack, quite early. By that time, the constitution was already settled anyway. Local autonomy sometimes became an issue. I think Orville's vision was something like what CAIMAW's [Canadian Association of Industrial, Mechanical, and Allied Workers] was where there was a central union office. But the PPWC, we were affiliated to the CCU local by local. There were a lot of issues that the

local, you know, did them. They took on shop steward's training, the safety courses with the assistance of the National Union as well, but the local had a lot of autonomy.

SG [00:28:34] I gather that was part of the—the insistence on that was maintaining that local autonomy.

GW [00:28:39] Yeah, that was part of the constitution. Yeah.

SG [00:28:43] You also began to get involved at this point—you mentioned it earlier about on the bigger stage—with the CCU and the national leadership of the PPWC. Tell me how that came about.

GW [00:28:53] Yeah. I had attended one CCU convention—was in Vancouver at the Georgia Hotel, and somebody there then suggested that I should run for Western vice-president. Well, I thought it was a little bit too early in my career, so I declined that. Then the next convention two years later, I think it was in '83 or '85—I forget—in Toronto. I did step up and ran for Western vice-president. I was Western vice-president for two years, I think. Jess Succamore was the president at that time. Oh, no, later—not that time. Then CAIMAW started having discussions with the CAW [Canadian Auto Workers] and Jess stepped down as president as I stepped up as president for six years of the CCU.

SG [00:30:00] I see. Beginning when?

GW [00:30:03] What year was that?

SG [00:30:05] I think CAIMAW joined CAW in 1990, I believe.

GW [00:30:10] Yeah, I think I became president in '89.

SG [00:30:13] Okay.

GW [00:30:14] For six years. I should say that Jess and CAIMAW were quite upfront when they were having discussions with the CAW. They came to the CCU Executive Board meeting with—they were quite open that they were in discussions with the CAW. I remember Madeline Parent—Madeline and Kent Rowley were the initial organizers of the CCU, right? The Chemical Textile Union [Canadian Textile and Chemical Union] and the textile workers back East. I think that Madeline and Kent had a bigger picture. It wasn't just going to be a small little labour central. Madeline was sat at the executive table when CAIMAW started—reported back about discussions with the CAW, and Madeline was quite in favor of that. You know, she was pleased that there was a bigger picture there that CAIMAW was looking at the CAW. It was interesting that, like I say, I think they always had a bigger picture of Canadian unionism, but—so the CCU was pretty much started the Canadianization of the Canadian labor movement, right? CAIMAW, PPWC, the bus drivers in Vancouver, Victoria were ICTU [Independent Canadian Transit Union]. There was half a dozen, four or five unions back East. The chemical textile workers, there was an oil local in Montreal, Halifax—what were they called—it was it was a municipal union or something in Halifax. I think they're still in the CCU.

SG [00:32:08] So, if you can cast your mind back there, I mean, as you say, the PPWC and the other Canadian unions kind of led the surge for Canadian autonomy and Canadian sovereignty.

GW [00:32:20] Yeah.

SG [00:32:20] And then the big change came, of course, when UAW Canadian locals switched over and Canadianized themselves. What—do you recall sort of thinking about that, seeing what that process would lead to at the time?

GW [00:32:36] Well, it was interesting that Bob White formed the CAW. We, you know, the—like we were ostracized from the CLC [Canadian Labour Congress] when we broke away from the international unions. We couldn't join the BC Fed [BC Federation of Labour] or the CLC.

SG [00:32:56] Right.

GW [00:32:57] But they allowed them, the CAW, to stay in the CLC, which was I guess—that might have been a bit of a shift in the mind thought of where Canadian unionism was going.

SG [00:33:09] I think so, yeah.

GW [00:33:13] We looked at that as—quite interested. That was, you know, they were—wanted to join their own Canadian union, because I think in the International Pulp Sulfite, it was one of the worst examples of international—of the American unions with a certain amount of corruption going on within the executive of the International Pulp Sulphite Union. They were using some of our pension monies to do things, and they were, the staff—the president of the international was on the dole somehow or other. We always heard rumors about that. So, yeah, it was a positive development in the Canadian union movement.

SG [00:34:03] Right. Okay. I recall when I was covering various conventions back in the eighties and whatnot, there was a lot of looking at the PPWC as one of the innovators at the time of trying to raise new issues about forest policy in the province and look at alternatives and whatnot.

GW [00:34:24] Yeah.

SG [00:34:25] Can you tell me about some what might have been from the inside, sort of?

GW [00:34:29] I think the PPWC was a bit ahead of the curve on forest policy issues. I remember those resolutions coming up to the PPWC convention, and actually, those resolutions came out of Kamloops. I helped draft some of those resolutions to form a forestry officer, to form an environmental officer position, which were all part time. They were structured to deal with forestry and environment because the pulp industry was not the most clean industry environment-wise, right, for a lot of—well for all the years. Then we drafted a resolution to put a position paper together. I mean, myself and the Western vice executive assistant and I drafted a position paper on—I think it was around tree farm licenses and that kind of thing. I guess because even though we were part of the forest industry and our jobs depended on those trees and not, you know, in those jobs, but we could see that things were not—like, how long can this last? You know, like we're exporting raw logs; we're clearcutting thousands of acres. We're actually—there was lots of rumors then about using good saw logs to chips, for making the chips to make pulp, which is taboo now. Now where are we today? We're in a crunch because there's a lack of fiber, right? About half the mills are shut down, mostly because a lack of fiber. I think, like I

say, we were ahead of the curve a bit. Even though it—our jobs depended on forest trees, we were still critical of corporations and how they were running the industry. Like in the sixties, seventies, maybe even into the eighties, running the pulp mill was like a license to print money. They were making a lot of money. You know, they had cheap fiber, cheap water, cheap electricity, lots of electricity. I guess that was our mantra was this these corporations are making a ton of money here. Then when they started to run out of fiber, they just—they shut some of the mills down, right.

SG [00:37:05] Did you ever get a hearing with government as to the enactment of any of these policies?

GW [00:37:11] Not that I recall. no. Not directly, no. I remember sitting in on a meeting with Mike Harcourt when he was premier. Colleen McCrory from the Valhalla Society in the Kootenays had asked me to sit with her, and Jack Munro and a couple of staff reps were on the other side of the table. I can't remember what the meeting was about, but it wasn't a camaraderie type meeting, you know. We were kind of sitting across from Harcourt and the IWA. At that time, I think the IWA had a bit of a narrow position. You know, they were in favor of export of raw logs as long as their truck drivers and fallers got work, but they forgot about their sawmill guys, you know. I'm not going to be too critical of Jack Munro in his days, but that was that was then.

SG [00:38:15] Yeah, there were certainly many discussions in many circles about forest policy at that time. That's true.

GW [00:38:20] Yeah.

SG [00:38:24] Although there definitely was a lot of tension, I think, in the labour movement between the Canadian union movement particularly CAIMAW because of its organizing in Trail and so on. But the PPWC seems to have been—had a different kind of approach. They were much more cooperative and had a reputation for that. Is that your sense of it, too?

GW [00:38:46] Later. Yes. There was a bit of animosity, I think, in the mid seventies, when—or in the early seventies when we were breaking away from the international. We were all the same cult, you know, even if you were in the international or the CPU or the PPWC, we had the same employers, a lot of them. The employers own two or three—at that time, two or three different pulp mills. I guess it was just—you know, if the PPWC I think went on strike once by themselves, and around I think it was 1970, but they didn't get any better deal than what the industry, what the pattern bargain was. I guess it was just that we could see the light, and there's no sense being too antagonistic with the other union in the industry. You may as well sit together.

SG [00:39:51] Did you not have also joint bargaining with the CPU and—and later on as well?

GW [00:39:55] In 1981 was the first bargain I sat in on, and there wasn't joint bargaining then. We sat in different rooms at different times, and met with the same employers, but it was different rooms. Then I think it might have been '83 or '86 that we got together with the CPU and sat at the joint, same table.

SG [00:40:23] One of the big ones that I recall was the Fletcher Challenge strike which was—

GW [00:40:27] Oh, that was an ugly—I was president of the PPWC in 1995. In '97 pattern bargain came up and because there was mills in both PPWC and the CEP [Communications, Energy, and Paper Workers Union of Canada] at that time, so we chose Fletcher Challenge as the pattern company. We had bargained with—we had set the pattern with Fletcher Challenge because the bureau broke up, technically. We used to bargain with the Pulp Bureau [Pulp and Paper Industrial Relations Bureau] who on behalf—who represented the industry. But then the industry broke up the Pulp Bureau and just did each mill or each company by itself, right? In the previous bargain to 1987, we had bargained the pattern agreement with Fletcher Challenge as well. We caught them a bit flat footed, and we struck them for I think it was two weeks around the end of the year or something, and we got a deal out of it. When it came to the next pattern bargain, we chose Fletcher Challenge again because they had mills in both unions, in pulp and paper, but they were ready for us, and they took us on, and it led to—I think we went out on strike around September or October. September, I think. It was a nine and a half month strike.

SG [00:42:02] What year was this?

GW [00:42:04] This was in '97.

SG [00:42:06] Ninety-seven. Okay.

GW [00:42:07] It went on into nine and a half months into '98. The issues were flexible work practices, trades flex, long term agreement and 365 day operation. Vince Ready was the mediator during that whole process, and he had cancer for a couple of months in there. There was an—I can't remember the other mediator's name. He said in as well. Near the end of nine months, Vince Ready was back in action—he was the mediator, and he called myself up and Bryan Payne, the vice-president—the Western vice-president of the CEP. He says, 'Meet me in the Richmond Hotel,' and with the company negotiator, who was a lawyer that they had hired right before the bargaining even started. I should also say that we suspect that there was some kind of cost sharing. I think—the other companies we heard later were paying so much a ton. All the other companies were running, right, full bore. We heard later that they were paying so much a ton to Fletcher Challenge for what they produced because we were also had our strike support—strike pay system, and they were getting \$400 a week strike pay.

SG [00:43:50] They had their own strike pay for the employers in effect.

GW [00:43:52] Yeah, and our guys were getting pretty good strike pay, 400 bucks a week. As a result of that, the other locals just increased their union dues a little bit or either cash flow and made up what they had to pay to support the strike fund. They thought we could get the perfect agreement because they could stay on strike forever. Well, five months I was starting to get calls. I had to sell my camper. I had to sell my boat. Six months, seven months, so my wife just left me. (laughter) You know, all these things. We were starting to get calls. When Vince called us, (Brian and I), and said, 'Meet me in the Richmond Hotel.' We did. We took a bit of heat for that. I did for sure. The locals, you know, 'You sat in a meeting with Vince Ready without 100 wage delegates sitting behind you?' You know, that was kind of what the rank and file—the democratic process was, right.

SG [00:45:00] You were president, in your capacity as president of the PPWC?

GW [00:45:04] Yeah, I was president and spokesman at the wage table. Looking back, I think we should have negotiated something around 365 because 365 didn't affect all that—that was run the mill 365 days a year, right? It didn't affect—it only affected the production workers and only half of them at any particular statutory holiday. It was a money issue. You get good—double time and a half when you work stats and all kinds of alternate time off and all that. Looking back, maybe we could have avoided the strike if we had negotiated or looked at something around 365.

SG [00:45:50] What happened in this meeting with Vince Ready and whatnot?

GW [00:45:54] Oh he, you know how Vince works. He got us to an agreement. He found out the issues right away. The long term agreement—I've looked at Vince's settlements since. One of Vince's criteria is a long term agreement. That's what the long term—I think it was six years or five years or something.

SG [00:46:16] Which was unusual for the time.

GW [00:46:17] Yeah. We were started at one, and two years was the maximum. Anyway, they got full flex, and I'm not sure how—you know, full flex in the pulp industry, trades flexibility, was quite an indi—we had specific trades in the pulp industry, so it was a really hard nut to crack to break that flexible work practices, and I'm not sure how ever successful it was later. There was full flex, 365 and long term. We got our pensions and benefits, and we did okay but there was a major breakthrough on the 365 and full flex.

SG [00:47:01] Yeah, I think that was very typical of what happened in a lot of the resource industries that the employers wanted complete continuous production for everything. Certainly, I know from the fishing industry that we gave up a lot and—

GW [00:47:15] Sure.

SG [00:47:15] Perhaps made a mistake not giving that up because the plants closed instead. (laughter)

GW [00:47:21] It's quite a hassle to shut a pulp mill down for one or two days on a stat, you know.

SG [00:47:26] It's true, it's interesting. It's interesting the role, of course, that Vince Ready has played over the years. I mean, many unionists have sat across to me and say, 'Vince Ready set the pattern here.'

GW [00:47:38] (laughter) We've all seen how Vince operates. Right? And he's still out there.

SG [00:47:41] Yeah. It's amazing. Amazing guy. I mean, he comes out of Mine Mill [International Union of Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers of Canada].

GW [00:47:45] Yeah. That's right.

SG [00:47:47] Militant local. It's interesting. As I was saying earlier that the—or as you were saying earlier—the big merger or the emergence of the CAW from the UAW kind of changed the pattern. A lot of Canadian unions went into the CAW. It wasn't just CAIMAW.

It was CASAW [Canadian Association of Smelter and Allied Workers]; it was ICTU and many others. But PPWC did not go.

GW [00:48:16] When CAIMAW started reporting that they were having discussions with the CAW, we actually put a paper together. It was called One Big Union. All the affiliates in the CCU would sort of form one big union, and there was a paper written by it about it. John Lang, who was secretary- treasurer at that time, put a pretty good paper together, but it didn't get off. It didn't get any traction at all because, I think the PPWC locals were opposed to it. Some of the other affiliates were already in discussions with the CAW as well, even though CAIMAW was one of the first. Eventually three or four of them went into the CAW, you know, ICTU and CASAW and some of the affiliates back East—Chemical Textile Union, which was sort of affiliated with CAIMAW anyway. They were also on board with the CAW.

SG [00:49:26] The United Electrical Workers joined the CAW as well.

GW [00:49:32] Right. Yeah.

SG [00:49:34] So that was a big one. So why was PPWC in general not in favor of one big union?

GW [00:49:40] I don't know. I couldn't get my finger on my—I don't know for sure. It was that—I think there was that historical of how we broke away from the international union and hung on to a lot of the local executives and the locals, and—(laughter). There was a term that the PPWC used quite a lot during those years was 'the pork choppers.' You know, we didn't have any pork choppers in the PPWC. There were two elected full time officers but there were no staff reps who we call pork choppers. Right. You've heard that term.

SG [00:50:22] Right. Yeah.

GW [00:50:24] So, maybe that had something to do with that I don't know.

SG [00:50:28] What were your own views on that? Were you—at the time. Do you recall?

GW [00:50:32] Well, I retired from one of the biggest pork chopper unions in Canada, so—(laughter)

SG [00:50:37] That's true.

GW [00:50:38] You know, it's—what's the term? It's the beauty of the beast, you know. Like you couldn't run a union like Unifor without a full time staff reps and lots of them because—and that's a good—why—one of the other reasons when Kamloops went into the CEP, Kamloops local was not just the pulp mill. We had two or three auto dealerships. We had the bus drivers for a while. Early on, they were in the Local 10. Since then, there's another (since I've retired), there's another rubber company that—we were a multi-unit local in Kamloops. It was—to expect the volunteers to look after the other units, it was kind of onerous on those people to do their, you know, for nothing, to do their volunteer work as staff reps. When we went into the CEP, there was a staff rep to look after some of the other units in Kamloops as well, which was an advantage. That was—I think you couldn't run a big union without staff reps.

SG [00:52:02] No, it's unfortunate they became known as pork choppers (laughter) because the original pork choppers comes from a reference to the international representatives from the U.S.

GW [00:52:13] That's right. Yeah. It did. When they sat down for dinner on their per diems, they didn't want to be seen to be eating steak. So they had pork chops (laughter).

SG [00:52:22] Right. Another merger also took place in the labour movement with the formation of CEP, which—where were you at that point when that that emergence came—2002, I think it was?

GW [00:52:39] Which?

SG [00:52:40] 2002.

GW [00:52:40] 2002. Oh, yeah. I was back at the mill because I went back in 2000. Communication, Energy and Paper Workers. I can't recall what my mind thought was. I thought that was inevitable, that they were going to form the—no, 202 was Unifor, right?

SG [00:53:09] Unifor was 2013.

GW [00:53:11] Oh, that's right. What am I thinking. Yeah. That's right.

SG [00:53:16] I think Local 10 joined the CEP in 2002.

GW [00:53:21] Right. That's what it was. Well, yeah. Let me explain that. That started from the Local 10's perspective. We were looking at the—the CCU then was basically was not like the old CCU. A lot of the affiliates had left. We were looking at as a local at the BC Fed [BC Federation of Labour]. Jim Sinclair was president of the Fed and doing some positive things. We as a local thought, well, maybe we can get into the BC Fed as a local because the PPWC National didn't want to get into the Fed or the CLC [Canadian Labour Congress]. We thought, well, okay, maybe we can do it. Well, it didn't go anywhere with the National Union at that time. We were also getting some assistance from one of the staff reps in the CEP about trades, stores rates. Stores were going after trade rate in the stores, and we were getting a lot of help out of the one of the CEP staff reps about that, on that. So, push came to shove, and the local says, well, we may as well join the CEP because of all the things that were beneficial to our local. Being a multi unit local with other units to service and getting help already from one of the CEP staff reps. We took a vote, and the vote was, I think it was, 59 or 60 percent in favour of joining the CEP.

SG [00:55:02] By the sounds of it, again, the local's basic interests were the overarching issue here. For members.

GW [00:55:09] Yeah, it did go to a labour board hearing, and the vice-chair proposed that the PPWC that we have another vote. Well, the PPWC didn't want to have another vote because they knew they probably would lose it. We just stayed with—CEP Local 10B was what we became then.

SG [00:55:32] Right. Okay.

GW [00:55:34] I think it was also that, and the pulp side, we were still working for a big multinational corporation, right? Weyerhaeuser. We needed a little bit more help to deal

with that big company. It was—I think it was overall better benefit even for the pulp membership in Kamloops.

SG [00:55:57] Before that you also, or around this time, you mentioned that you also had a stint on the Labour Relations Board yourself.

GW [00:56:04] Yeah. I was appointed to as an employee rep on the BC Labour Relations Board. It was an interesting issue—I sat in on a few, just as a winger on an arbitration or a hearing of something. I was on the members committee. Raj Chouhan and I were on the members committee on the employees' side, and then there was a couple on the other side. It was an interesting experience, and I got to know Stephen Kelleher quite well. In fact, during that time, my time on the labour board, I had sat as a winger on a PPWC arbitration on job evaluation. That was another thing that the PPWC never originally never got into was job evaluation. That was too much of a joint thing, right? We would agree or disagree. and if we disagreed, they'd go to arbitration. Well, the industry had a pretty set job evaluation plan, and the arbitrators had a hard time getting any more dollars or cents out of the evaluation plan that was already set through the plan. When I sat in as a winger on that arbitration in Prince George, I could see the futility of all this process. I went back to the NEB and I proposed that we—I knew Steven Kelleher quite well, and I asked him to come to the executive board meeting of the PPWC and explain the pros and cons of job evaluation. Eventually they got into the job evaluation plan. It took, I think it was a convention resolution that, later, that we got into the job evaluation plan, and they're in it now. But then when I, when I went— finished my term as the PPWC president, I went back to the mill in Kamloops. I had—I was still on the labour board as an employee rep for a while there. I got a call from a head hunter because the Socreds had won the election and what was that, oh, 2001.

SG [00:58:20] 2001, yeah.

GW [00:58:22] About 2002, some time, I got a call from this head hunter. They were looking for an assistant deputy minister of labour for the new Ministry of Labour in Victoria. I was going to Vancouver for something else that particular time anyway. So, I said—I went on this 55 floors above one of these skyscrapers in Vancouver and sat in on an interview. After I'm going down the elevator, I says, 'Jesus, that interview went pretty well. You know, I got a chance. I could never work for this government.' (laughter) I started to realize what I had done.

SG [00:59:01] As you're coming down the elevator.

GW [00:59:02] I didn't get a call, so. I think I got that reference—the head hunter probably asked Steve Kelleher if you got any names to suggest, and he suggested—I knew Steve quite well, so he probably suggested my name, and I think that was the connection. (laughter)

SG [00:59:23] As you went down the elevator, you realized this was not a government you could work for—

GW [00:59:25] I realized I could never work for the Socreds.

SG [00:59:25] And it would have been particularly hard at that time because they really went after the labour movement after 2001.

GW [00:59:34] Oh, yeah. I realized I could never work for the Socreds.

SG [00:59:36] You've commented to me that these were some of the best years in the industry when you were working there.

GW [00:59:45] Oh, yeah.

SG [00:59:46] In terms of what they were making.

GW [00:59:47] Like I said earlier, owning a pulp mill, running a pulp mill was a, like a license to print money. I think that's one of the things that I—my psyche was—I was anti-corporate all my life in the forest industry. You know, I grew up working in the forest. I could see a lot of waste going on in the trees and the logging side of it. The industry did very well for itself. Then when they started to run out of the fiber and the mills, some of the mills were getting too old, they just shut them down, you know and we're what—about half the mills now? And I'm not sure that we're done yet. Northwood [Pulp] just shut one line down in Prince George a couple months ago. They shut one of the mills down in the other side of Prince George operation. They shut it down completely. Fibre's at a bit of a crunch right now.

GW [01:00:53] What's that done to a lot of your—what would have been your children's, people working in the industry, sort of, what's been the impact on them with all that job loss?

GW [01:01:05] Well, I've got two grandsons in Kamloops. When they got out of high school a few years ago, they were sort of talking to grandpa about maybe giving them an in, in the pulp mill. I says, 'I don't know if you want to work in that pulp industry.' Sure. It's good money and good benefits, but their father had connections in the city. So, they both work for the city now, which is—maybe the pay is not as good, but the the long term security, I think, is better in working for the city than it is working for Kruger in Kamloops.

SG [01:01:42] This is for the City of Kamloops?

SG [01:01:43] Yeah. City of Kamloops. Yeah, there's—it's—the forest industry I think is still a priority—well not a priority, but it's still one of the main industries in B.C. yet. But we're having a lot of discussion about old growth timber and the export of raw logs and how much fiber is available. I know the Kamloops local and Unifor met with the mayor just about a month ago. They had a tour of the pulp mill, and the Kamloops City Council has agreed to write a letter to the provincial government, you know, advocating that they improve the fibre supply and whatever they can to help the industry. I remember when Domtar was going after tax relief, from the city. I was a retired already then. In my ways, I wrote a letter to the editor that exposed some of the profits that Domtar that time was making, you know, because they had just made a pitch to the city council about what their profits were and the business end of it. I used some numbers, and I came up with a pretty good argument. Why are we giving them a tax break? They wanted the tax break because some of the other communities around B.C. were getting tax breaks when those mills were in trouble. So, I have a reputation of writing letters to the editor about anti-corporatism (laughter).

SG [01:03:29] You've maintained that stance?

GW [01:03:32] Yeah. (laughter)

SG [01:03:35] The interesting thing is that the PPWC even though as you say, it's gone through a whole number of different changes, it's still managed to kind of keep a place there and— but it's now the Public and Private Workers of Canada. They've changed their name instead of the pulp and paper workers. I notice that there's also been a few new sort of cooperative arrangements they've had with the Steelworkers [United Steelworkers of Canada] and Unifor.

GW [01:04:00] Recently, a joint meeting with the three unions: Steel, Unifor, and the PPWC. That was a good thing. You know, I think that carries on in the sense of where they agreed to bargain jointly with the CEP and now Unifor. They bargain jointly now with Unifor as well. Canfor was the last pattern bargain. I think it was last year or was it the year before? I don't think the PPWC could have done that by themselves up. If you saw that position paper that Jim Stanford and another fellow from back East put together, that was a pretty sophisticated position paper on what's going on in forestry in B.C. I don't think that the PPWC could have done that by themselves. It's good that, Unifor and the Steelworkers put that together. We'll see where it goes. I don't know what the mindset is within the PPWC these days. I don't have any connections anymore. They're still a proud individual type union, but they've lost a lot of members, but they're picking up some new members. I think the sugar workers joined the PPWC a couple of years ago, and they went through a long struggle to get a collective agreement. But I'm not sure what their mindset is. How long can they survive as a small, independent union? I guess they'll have to think about that themselves.

GW [01:05:39] Good. Okay, that sounds like a good note to end on Garry. I really appreciate your time and coming down to do this.