

This interview is of Ray Haynes, a former president of the BC Federation of Labour. The major themes discussed are labour unions, protests, politics, communism, international issues, NDP

Interviewers: Ken Bauder and Andrea Walisser

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Date Range: 1950s – 1990s

Sound Recording Length: 01:39:06

Ray Haynes is a former president of the BC Federation of Labour. As a young man Haynes worked at Hudson's Bay Company Wholesale, a division of the Hudson's Bay Company, where he reported earning a low wage and working in poor conditions. He then worked at Canadian White Pine sawmill where he learned about labour and other social issues from union members who were communist, Leninist, and Trotskyist. He worked at White Pine for only 18 months even though he was earning a high wage. Haynes told himself that if he did not leave the mill he would be just like the men working in their 60s working the green chain. After Haynes quit he did a few other jobs and eventually returned to Hudson's Bay Company Wholesale, but with a union background. Within a few years of his return, Haynes and a partner organized a union which he headed from 1954 to 1966. He became the president of the BC Federation of Labour in 1973. Afterwards, Haynes and his family resettled to on Quadra Island and ran a resort for 5 years. He briefly worked as a union liaison on the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Inquiry led by Justice Thomas Berger. He worked 10 years with the nurses union, and helped organize hundreds of nurses and brought their pay up to the "standard of everybody else" in the province. His last 2 to 3 years, before his retirement in 1993, were with the Vancouver Municipal and Regional Employee's Union (VMREU), Local 15, which later joined CUPE.

Section 0:00 – 7:00

- In this section of the interview Haynes describes his work trajectory leading to his becoming president of the BC Federation of Labour. He worked at Hudson's Bay wholesale, a division of the Hudson's Bay Company, making very low wages in very poor conditions. He discusses how he got a "wonderful education" when he worked at Canadian White Pine and learnt about labour unions, which he did not have a clue about previously. He eventually left Canadian White Pine and went back to Hudson's Bay Wholesale but with a union background; with a partner he organized for the Retail Wholesale & Department Store Union (RWDSU). He discusses how he became president of the BC Federation of Labour in 1973. Afterwards he and his family briefly ran a resort and he also served briefly as labour liaison to the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Inquiry. After then describes 10 years of working for the nurses union. Then he discusses his last 2 to 3 years before this retirement in 1993 with the Vancouver Municipal and Regional Employee's Union (VMREU), local 15.

Section 7:01 – 23:10

- In this section of the interview Haynes expresses his thoughts about the Fraser River, overdevelopment in the province, and the direction of the current labour movement. He reflects upon his experiences when he was an active member of the labour movement. Haynes believes labour unions are much more divided now than previously. He describes how the labour unions in British Columbia were involved with international issues and

how McCarthyism (and anti-communist sentiments) influenced the labour movement. For instance, he mentions that the Fishermen's Union was expelled temporarily from the BC Federation of Labour because they were suspected of being communists.

#### Section 23:11 – 31:28

- In this section Haynes discusses the early part of his working life in British Columbia, when wages were low. He describes when he became involved with the IWA (which is now called IWA - Forest Industry Pension Trust and Plan), while he was working at Canadian White Pine, he noticed the differences between unorganized and organized labour, such as being able to take any complaint on any issue, such as safety, to the business owners. When reflecting back upon his time at the BC Federation of Labour, he observes that there was not one woman in their photos, and that women were often mistreated in the unions. He mentions the emergence of the environmental committee in the BCFed and how this was linked to the 1962 book *Silent Spring* by Rachel Carson. Haynes also discusses the politics behind organizing a union strike.

#### Section 31:29 – 57:30

- In this section Haynes offers further detail about how unions in British Columbia became involved in international events, asserting that the unions in British Columbia were ahead of their times. He tells how the labour unions in British Columbia shut down the province for 5-10 minutes to protest the war in Vietnam. Haynes says he went to California to meet Caesar Chavez, and describes how unions in the province supported Chavez's Grape Workers Union boycott, which was a do not buy and do not handle boycott. Haynes believes the labour unions in Vancouver did more to support this boycott than any other provincial organization in North America. Haynes was invited to a conference in San Francisco to speak on behalf of the BC Federation of Labour against the Amchitka nuclear test off the coast of Alaska. Haynes also discusses his experiences engaging with corporate and political leaders when he was active in the labour movement.

#### Section 57:30 – 1:16:00

- In this section of the interview Haynes discusses the effects of technology changes on work in BC, and notes that unions got "hit hard with their benefits" when the New Democrat Party (NDP) was elected to lead the government. He expresses concerns that automation has affected the workplace, and questions whether it's possible for people who work at home to think about being in a union. Haynes also discusses his family in this section.

#### Section 1:16:01 – 1:39:06

- In this section of the interview Haynes discusses the individuals who made significant changes in BC for the labour movement. He describes about his mentors pushed him into joining the BC Federation of Labour. He recalls some of the individuals he fought against during the labour movement. Haynes also reflects on how the media coverage of labour issues has changed. He argues that the coverage before, when he was active, was much more extensive than it is now. There were full-time labour reporters in the newspapers who wrote on all issues. He also briefly mentions how the labour movement changed with the end of the Cold War.