SD: Start by just the basics, getting your name, and . . . where you were born and so on, you gave me the material and the things that you wrote, but . . .

ET: Surely. You want it on the tape.

SD: Yes.

ET: Very well. Name, Eileen Tallman. Born, January 19th, 1913, in Montreal.

SD: And you came from a family which was first or second generation Canadian?

ET: Second generation Canadian.

SD: Right. And where did they come from, originally?

ET: Mother's people came from Ireland and Scotland, my father's people were Pennsylvania Dutch.

SD: And did you move to B.C. when you were young, or were you mostly working in the East?

ET: No, we moved from Montreal to Toronto when I was very young and I went to school in Toronto, and began work there. I was hired first as a trade union organizer in Toronto in 1940, and then it was 1943 that I came to Vancouver for four years.

SD: Right. Can you describe your first job? And how you became involved in trade union organizing, was it through the workplace?

ET: It wasn't through my first job, my first job was a

ET: (cont) junior teacher in a Toronto business college. And after that I worked for a number of years in offices. I tried to interest some of them in organizing, [illegible] without any success, except a few of the men, I remember, in one place were interested. But they got a $5 a month raise and that ended it. So it was not from the workplace that I became interested, it was from my political activity.

SD: You became involved in the CCF?

ET: Yes, actually I belonged to an organization called the New Youth Association of Canada, in 1934. And it was a predecessor of the Youth Movement of the CCF, Cooperative Commonwealth Youth Movement, which I believe we affiliated with them in 1935. And through reading and our educational work, actually, I became interested in the importance of trade union activity because it was always apparent to me that a socialist party had to have a pretty strong base amongst working people, and naturally organized working people were the best way to get them together and have that base.

SD: Why were you drawn to the CCF, or to this youth group?

ET: Well, in a rather peculiar way, I was working for a lady who happened to be a CCF member, and she got me interested in taking part in dramatic skits, which were all about the trials and tribulations of the Depression in those days. I had been interested in dramatics at high school and

ET: (cont) through these skits which we put on at CCF functions and various places I became friends with the young people that I was associated with, and they persuaded me then to join them, in the New Youth association, and I was a member of that organization until the Second World War.

SD: You did not come from a trade union family?

ET: No, I did not, in fact my father was always a Conservative in politics. My mother was not political at all but my dad and I used to have a lot of kidding back and forth about politics until he died, and that was the first time that the CCF won the Riding in which we lived. Was after his death.

SD: So the two of you worked at odds with each other living?

ET: Good-natured odds.

SD: Yeah. So you were a CCF'er and then you became interested in trade union organization. How did you become actually involved in the trade union movement?

ET: Well, in the mid-30's, you will recall, the CIO started up in the States and had great success in organizing mass production workers in steel, rubber, auto, and so on. It wasn't too long before the CIO came into Canada, and helped workers to organize there because it was the same situation. The trade union movement was practically limited to craft organizations, and all of the steel industry, auto industry, packing house industry, rubber industry, you could almost name it, was unorganized. Now the CCF, of course,

ET: (cont) realized the importance of helping the trade unions to get organized, and while we didn't very many of us take part in direct organization when the CIO first came into Canada, we became interested in the volunteer way. Now very often that would be, for instance, limited to drumming up financial support for trade unions that were on strike. And through that sort of activity, I became acquainted with a lot of actual trade union people in the Trades and Labor Congress. Give donations and so on to strikes. It was at this time that the Ontario CCF formed a CCF trade union committee, and one of the very active people in the CCYM, Fred Dowling, was named chairman of it, and I was secretary. So, this linked our CCYM activity with the work of the party in the trade unions. And as years went on a number of CCYM people became full-time organizers, Fred Dowling himself became the Canadian director of the United Packing House Workers Union.

SD: Right. So you began as a volunteer organizer, or volunteer worker, and then you became an organizer. How did that process happen, were you asked by the trade union movement to organize?

ET: In 1940, the Steelworkers organizing Committee, had its Canadian offices in the Manning Chambers Building in Toronto. And the director of that union, C.H. Millard, was asked so frequently by the bank clerks, when he went in to do his

ET: (cont) banking across the road, when he was going to assist them to organize, that he finally asked me if I would be interested in taking on this job. Well, I was working at the time, but I resigned from my office job, and that was the beginning of my full-time work in the trade unions. And it had to start from scratch. So you might say that it wasn't initiated by the union itself, but by requests from bank employees. We, first of all, had to learn a good deal about the conditions under which the employees were working, you know, in order to develop organizational literature. And I spent some time doing that before we actually started organizing. And the technique that we used to begin was to mail a leaflet to the tellers in every branch bank in Toronto, asking them to contact us. And it mushroomed from there. The response was more than we could have ever dreamed of. The word spread to Montreal, where the local representative of the Steelworkers had visits from bank clerks there and helped them to organize. We sent out eventually a leaflet to every branch bank in Canada. This was in 1941, and we had a fair response from as far away as Vancouver. And while we hadn't any local formed in Vancouver at the time, we kept in touch with active people in most of the chartered banks, by mail.

SD: How did you get hold of information like people's names, names of tellers, people who might be interested in organ-

SD: (cont) izing. Was it mostly through them contacting the union?

ET: Yes. From our initial, well, we had the initial group that wanted help, and they all knew people in other banks, who might be interested. Now, we must remember that at this time, the tellers in the banks were men, all men, and it was the men who showed the most interest in organizing.

SD: Do you feel that one of the reasons that they were interested might be because other men in other situations, such as industrial situations, were moving really rapidly into unions?

ET: Well, yes, they had only to compare their own conditions with what was happening in other plants and places that were unionizing. And it's hard to believe today, but $25 a week was a better than average salary, for tellers with all the responsiblity they had. This is getting too far off the story you want, I guess, but it's a story in itself, of the first Canadian bank strike, in Montreal, in 1942, and this was written up by a pamphlet which I wrote after the strike. And if you can read six point type, which is all we could afford in those days, you can read it one of these times.

SD: Well, that would be really interesting. Maybe we can get back to that a bit when we talk about experiences out here in comparing ways of organizing.

ET: Right.

SD: Cause I think that's a really useful experience cause people are doing that kind of organizing now.

ET: Right. That's the interesting thing that it's taken all this time, however, for organization to get going again.

SD: Right. By the CLC and people outside of them.

ET: That's right, SORWUC and CLC.

SD: So your first experience was with the bank workers, and that was essentially a defeat?

ET: It was a defeat because we lost the strike in Montreal, and, despite the fact that we had 400 out of the 600 employees in the union, there was no legislation at that time which required the bank involved, which was the Banque Canadienne Nationale to negotiate with the union. And between pressure brought on the employees who were on strike by the company and various others, the strike was lost.

SD: Cause they had no guarantees that there'd ever be negotiation? Or a settlement? Cause they worked in a bank that wasn't forced to do that.

ET: No, and once the strike was broken there was no organization left. The bank had already transferred or fired a good many of the union leaders.

SD: So after the experience with the banks, where did you next go?

ET: Then the Steelworkers assigned me to assist with the drive to organize the John Inglis war plant in Toronto, which

ET: (cont) had some 17,000 workers, about half of them being women. They made munitions of all kinds. The strike was already started, and it involved competition between the Steelworkers and the Machinists. Which eventually came to a vote and the Steelworkers won it.

SD: Was that competition essentially between an industrial union and a craft union?

ET: Not really, because the Machinists organized industrially as well. But it was, I suppose, the CIO/AFL rivalry. Because Steel was affiliated to the CIO and the Machinists to the AFL.

SD: Right. How did the organizing campaign work in that area, did people use similar techniques, leaflets, & so on?

ET: Yes, we handed out leaflets at the plants with the help of employees, and we had shift meetings because there was a three-shift operation. We set up a network of union stewards in all the various buildings. And it was through really the stewards, once you get the thing started it's the stewards that carry on the rest of the organizing campaign, but somebody has to initiate it.

SD: So the process involved with these areas, was well in the first you were contacted by the workers themselves, but the union going in and initiating a process, developing it a bit, and then in a sense the bulk of the organizing being done by the workers on the job.

ET: Themselves, on the job, yes. There has to be a certain timing to this, though, when the employees no longer fear to come out in the open.

SD: What's the threshold around that, is it signing up a certain number of people?

ET: It's hard to say, cause each case is really different. But in, as I recall the John Inglis campaign, the workers became involved themselves fairly early on. This may be one of the differences between white collar workers and plant workers, in that the plant workers are a bit more militant and aggressive on their own behalf. We had a lot of very active and good women stewards in that drive, and they went on to become members of the executive of the union. I might say that we also organized the office workers of that plant, at the same time, and I was actively involved in negotiating the first union agreement for the office staff.

SD: Right. And was the office staff mostly women?

ET: Yes, as in most offices, the lesser-paid or lowly classifications are inevitably held by women, but we had quite a few highly skilled men in the office union, who were draftsmen, engineering assistants, this sort of classification, and they tended to be the ones who gravitated towards the leadership of the union.

SD: Do you feel that the fact that there were women working

SD: (cont) within the production plant itself and women in the office facilitated organizing women office workers?

ET: Oh, yes, I think that unless the plant workers had been active in getting the office workers involved, they would have as they have in so many others, just stayed unorganized and separate, and of course this is pretty well the history of office workers, for another reason, not particularly lack of interest, but the labor legislation, and I think this applies throughout Canada, required a separate bargaining unit for office workers from the plant workers. Theoretically on the basis that their interests were not the same, and so once you divided them in this way, and you had to have separate organizing drives, separate certification, which didn't coincide in timing, and all that, it became more difficult to organize the office workers.

SD: Right, because they wouldn't require the whole sweep, that would go on with the industry.

ET: That's right.

SD: That's really quite interesting. What effect did the fact that there were two different unions organizing within one plant have on the drive? Did it facilitate, or did it hold it back, or had it no effect?

ET: I think it always holds it back, to be quite honest. But there were differences in the approaches, I don't think

ET: (cont) this is really the place to go into all of them right now but there were, the Steelworkers always consider themselves more aggressive than the AFofL, and they could point to the fact that they really were the ones that got the basic steel industry organized.

SD: Right. So did people talk a lot about there being differences? The reason I'm interested in is that it's something that's happened, that happened consistently in this period.

ET: I think, I'm sure they must have because eventually they had to make a choice and so they had to be persuaded either by leaflets handed out by the rival unions or at meetings. Or by the type of leaders that came up through the employees for either union. This probably was the major factor.

SD: Right. Can we talk a bit about that? What kind of organizers did the union send in, what kind of organizers did people respond to, what kind of qualities were necessary to get people to sign up and be involved in a union drive?

ET: Well, we certainly had a great deal of diversity between union organizers, but I suppose one of the basic qualifications is that, you have a sincere interest in the welfare of the employees, that you are obviously prepared to work hard. That you are honest with them,

ET: (cont) at all times. Now, eventually in the Steelworkers Union, most of the organizers came out of the plants, or the offices. And so they had had a proving time to show whether they had good or bad leadership, and it was only after perhaps many years as a officer, a volunteer officer of the local union, that anybody got a full-time job. We were in as it were on the ground floor, because there weren't any real organized, there wasn't a base of organized plants, but as soon as there was, then the organizers tended to come out of the plants or the offices.

SD: That would be very important because they would be very in touch with the conditions.

ET: Yes, that's right.

SD: Okay, after Inglis, where did you then move? That was a success, right?

ET: Yes.

SD: Yeah. (laughing)

ET: Thank goodness for a few (laughing).

SD: Why was that a success against the failure of the banks, was that in part a question of legislation, the fact that it was maybe one plant that was being organized?

ET: Well, it was because it was wartime. And you couldn't, they couldn't afford to have a strike in a plant like that, and they didn't. And the government had made by then a pro-

ET: (cont) vision by then that if you won a vote, they made provision for a vote, and the fact that negotiations had to follow if the union secured a majority of employees. That was the difference.

SD: Right. And so it was facilitated by legislation.

ET: Yeah, and by the necessities of keeping production going during the war. Well, the reason that I then switched to Vancouver, in 1943, was that I had a sort of a nervous breakdown from working so hard (laughs). We used to have shift meetings at midnight and be up handing out leaflets at 6 a.m., so there was not very much sleep in that drive. And my Vancouver session was more or less sort of a, quotes, "rest".

SD: Recuperation.

ET: From actual organizing. And I was assigned to do administrative jobs training union officers in their duties, such as the financial secretary-treasurer, and doing all the publicity for the Steelworkers in organizing. Initiated a paper for the B.C. local called STEEL which carried on for three years, I guess. And then the Western Provinces News was incorporated in the Canadian edition of the paper.

SD: What areas was steel organizing at this time, what kind of plants?

ET: The plants were quite small and machine shops.

SD: And this was war industry?

ET: Um, well, most of them I suppose their products would be designed for the war.

SD: Right.

ET: Almost from the time that I arrived in Vancouver, I became active in the CCF here, and was secretary of the trade union committee for B.C. for several years. It was quite an important phase of history, actually, because when the war started, the Communist Party or the Labor Progressive Party as it subsequently became known, decided that they wanted the influence in all the basic industries in B.C. And their members were successful in the Canadian section of the International Woodworkers of America, largest operation in B.C., in Mine Mill and Smelter Workers, to cover the mining, in the Shipbuilding Boilermakers Union, in the Fishermens Union, the United Fishermen and Allied Workers, and in the smaller industry called I think the Moulders and Foundry Workers Union. It was a supply industry to other shipyard and metal plants. The reason that the CCF trade union committee decided to encourage CCF members in the unions to challenge the leadership of the Communist Party, was not due to the political, how shall we say, political theory of the CCF and the Communist Party as such, but because the differences of tactics of these two political organizations led to different policies, contrasting policies, in the labor movement itself. Now, for example, the attitude of

ET: (cont) the Communists at the time of the Stalin-Hitler pact, was that the war was an imperialist war, and it was business as usual as far as fighting for the rights of the workers, but as soon as Germany invaded Russia, the tactic turned around completely, and people were urged to continue with war production regardless of their working conditions. This is not an exaggeration. I remember the strike of the street railwaymen in Vancouver during that period, it must have been the mid-forties, and while , the CCF people were supporting the street railwaymen in their strike, the Communists union people were telling people to get to work any way they could.

SD: In other words to scab on the strike?

ET: Well, pool transportation, etc., etc. Now turn it off a minute.

(Break.)

SD: Go ahead.

ET: The function of the CCF trade union activity was to coordinate the activity of our members in locals all across the province. And we were able to make contact with them not by doing a lot of traveling but when they came to Vancouver for conventions or anything of that kind, my job was to arrange informal meetings of our CCF group, discuss how they were doing in the various industries in which they were represented. Side II: Quite early on, of course, there was an attempt to challenge the leadership

END TAPE
SIDE ONE

ET: (cont) in the Vancouver Labor Council, which was dominated by the Communist Party, as was the B.C. Federation in those days. And I was a delegate to the Council and instrumental in holding caucus meetings of delegates before every Labor Council meeting. We used to meet in the Steelworkers office, and discuss what resolutions we thought we would bring up or what criticism we would make of the policies being followed by the Council. I remember a number of people used to attend those caucuses very faithfully. George Home, for example, who was initially with the Boilermakers and then brought his local into the Steelworkers Union, later became president of the B.C. Federation, and following that political education director for the Canadian Labor Congress. Jim Burie, another one, became an organizer for the Packing House Workers, editor of their paper, education director and today is the Labor Counciler for the Canadian government in London, England. Another very colorful personality was Malcolm Bruce, who at one time had been in the Communist Party and was associated with the Amalgamated Building Workers, a small group who never did succeed in ousting the craft unions from the building trades. Malcolm was very effective in the Vancouver Labor Council meetings, except that he was, by this time, quite an age, and he used to go home before midnight, so (laughing) that was when all the

ET: (cont) action took place, they figured if they could . . .

SD: As soon as he'd leave?

ET: No, they always figured that whoever, they could fire you out by staying until midnite they could have a majority to carry out what they wanted. I'm talking about the leaders. Well, we did build up opposition, until the year that I left, 1947, we came within one vote of taking over the officers of the Vancouver Labor Council, and the next year, of course, the Communists were ousted from the IWA and subsequently from the Labor Council also.

SD: Let's go back a little bit. What were some of the differences that you perceived between the B.C. labor movement and the Ontario labor movement, thinking back?

ET: There is a much higher degree of politicization, politici-- is that the right word? -- they were much more politicized because the --

SD: In B.C.?

ET: In B.C. The socialist movement had been more developed, had more various shades of opinion, than in any other part of Canada, and they'd also had a longer history of unionism, radical unionism, in the basic industries, they had the IWW in the logging and mining camps in the early days. You had, I believe some influence from the one big union movement, which started in Winnipeg. So there was quite a

ET: (cont) difference politically in the development of an interest in politics in the trade union movement in B.C. Amongst the leadership. I don't think amongst the rank and file there was any difference.

SD: Right. So that also probably meant that the political differences amongst that leadership would be more intense?

ET: Exactly, yeah.

SD: And did that also mean that the CCF was able to play more of a role in B.C., within the union movement, than in Ontario, or was it pretty well the same?

ET: I wouldn't say that the CCF as a party played a big role in either Ontario or B.C., Now, to explain myself, the people within the CCF, who were active trade unionists, played a role, which was following more closely the CCF policy, and I suppose a fundamental difference between the two is that the, while the Communists believe that the end justifies the means, we've always taken the stand that the means will determine the end, and therefore if you one minute are telling the workers they should vote for the Liberals, and then the next minute telling them vote for the CCF, you're just contributing to the general confusion. Nobody ever learns that a basic change in the society, in the economic system, is necessary.

SD: Did that difference in ways of working manifest itself in other ways, for example, the LPP wanted unions to affiliate

SD: (cont) with them, did they want affiliation or did they want to win the leadership as LPP people?

ET: I can't recall that they proposed affiliation at all. They worked in different ways, just prior to the '30's, the Worker's Unity League was fairly active and this was a, almost an adjunct of the Communist Party, but not entirely. So it wasn't a question of affiliation but of an organization which they've dominated.

SD: Okay. And that was quite distinct from how the CCF saw its way of operating?

ET: Well, particularly in the Canadian Congress of Labor, not in the TLC, but in the CCL, most of the leaders, including A.R. Mosher who was the head of it, certainly C.H. Millard, who was the most influential CCF'er in the labor movement, were able to convince conventions to endorse the CCF as the political arm of labor. Later on, they formed political action committees to carry this out within the labor movement. And there are a number of good texts which deal with this phase, this is one of them.

SD: Yeah, yeah. A related question would be then, what was the CCF attitude towards the war, and how did that affect the kinds of positions that you would take in unions as opposed to those of the Labor Progressive Party which argued for more production, overtime and so on.

ET: Well CCF, I think, had a number of attitudes towards the

ET: (cont) war, ranging from coolness to, later, to full cooperation. Their stand was for conscription of wealth, at the same time, as men were conscripted. And, of course, this never came about. So at first they were opposed to conscripting men unless wealth was conscripted. I don't think that, if my recollection is right, during the war, that the needs of the workers were ever subordinated, shall we say, to the needs of the war. We felt that if people didn't get organized when they had some security, and don't forget they'd just come out of a long Depression, that they never would. And it wasn't that they made such tremendous economic gains, the average increase, I think, would be about 5¢ an hour, but it was to get their organization established.

SD: Recognition.

ET: Mnm hmn.

SD: Right. So that would include a different attitude towards, for example, signing a no-strike pledge?

ET: Yes.

SD: Now, another question then would be, if both the CCF or CCF members and LPP members were instrumental in organizing in industries where there were women present, what kind of attitudes did both organizations -- this is tricky, but I think it's somewhat relevant -- positions on women, how in terms of, how they would argue for women to be organ-

SD: (cont) ized, or what kind of contract positions they would suggest for women, for example, equal pay and equal work. Was there a program on the needs of women workers?

ET: I don't think there was a difference, really, between the two on that sort of basis at all. Now, remember that I wasn't organizing in B.C., so I can't speak from personal experience here, but I don't think there has ever been a difference between the two political groups, as far as economic standards of women are concerned.

SD: So now can we go on to the union activites that you were involved in, while you were out here?

ET: Mnm hmn.

SD: You were involved in organizing, negotiating an office contract. Can you describe that?

ET: I haven't kept a copy of that contract, I don't imagine that it would be very outstanding compared with conditions today, but it was a first agreement for a white-collar union, in the CCL, and it was between the Office and Professional Workers Organizing Committee, and the Coop. I can't just recall whether it was the central office of the Coop -- Breen Melvin was the head of it at the time, I negotiated with him. Or whether it was a credit union, but it was the first agreement of its kind, and provided some basis for other white-collar people to see what could be gained by organization. I'm sorry -- one of

ET: (cont) the major reasons for organizing after wages, which are salaries, which are usually central, has always been the security of employment, and this is equally important to white-collar or industrial workers. The provision of grievance procedure, so that people can't be arbitrarily fired. And seniority provision, so that length of service will determine, in layoffs, to a great degree, who stays and who goes. So these -- and I'm quite sure that this first contract that we're speaking about, did include protection in both of those regards.

SD: How did the workers become interested in unionization?

ET: Well, I suppose they saw the results of organization all around them, particularly being a coop organization, they'd meet customers and the contacts would largely be union people. And that probably was their motivation.

SD: Was there any attempt to use that contract as the basis to go out to other office workers, at all?

ET: Not at that time that I recall. Well, there were always attempts to interest office workers but they were very slow in getting interested. And I don't know of any plants in the Steelworkers which organized their office workers at that time, although later on, of course, both American Can and Continental Can had master agreements covering plant and office.

SD: Right, and you were involved in the struggle of the Ameri-

SD: (cont) can Can?

ET: Yes.

SD: Can you describe that?

ET: Well, it was a rather interesting strike, because it was the first strike in Canada, I believe, on the issue of union security. And what they wanted was a union shop, in other words, that when a person was hired they were required to join the union. This was Local 2821 of the United Steelworkers.

SD: So it was precedent-setting.

ET: It was. It was also fought very bitterly by the company, for the same reason that the employers could see that if we won our strike for a union shop in one place it would spread to the rest. And so the company held out and held out. Um, could you cut the machine off? The settlement of that strike, which was reached on September 20th, 1945, followed a mediation by Justice Richards, and while the union shop, pure and simple, was not won, the settlement contained some very innovative provisions for union security. It combined a maintenance of membership clause, that once a person joined, they must maintain their membership for the life of the agreement, and irrevocable checkoff, in other words, once they had signed a checkoff then the dues were deducted for the rest of the life of the agreement, and a provision that isn't found in too many agree-

ET: (cont) ments, that the company would give every new employee a card stating that Local 2821 was the exclusive bargaining agency, and that the company, while not requiring the person to join the union, approves of membership in the union. The copy of the agreement, and the membership application forms can be obtained from the department steward, and giving the employee their steward's name. For 1945, this was a pretty unique settlement. I recall the settlement quite well, I took an active part in the strike, on the picket line, and in discussing the terms of settlement with the union, local union leaders. I remember that at one point because of the concern over the fact that here was a plant out on strike during the war, that a vice-president of the Canadian Congress of Labor addressed a meeting of the strikers, urging them to settle. And not stick by their union shop demands. I spoke, I believe, following him at the meeting, as did others, and as result the vote was to stay on strike till they got closer to their demands.

SD: Great. (mutual laughter)

ET: Yeah, I thought it was great. I have a card still as a volunteer picketer in that strike, I used to get up and spend some time with them on the picket line in the morning before I went to the office.

SD: Was that both men and women on strike, or was it mostly

SD: (cont) men?

ET: Yeah, there were men and women.

SD: Wow.

ET: Mnm hmn, mostly men but there were women workers.

SD: Did you notice, were those women plant workers or production workers?

ET: Mnm hmn.

SD: Did you notice a difference in any of the attitudes between the men and the women, and the degree of involvement?

ET: Well, the men were certainly much more involved, I think all the officers of the plant were men. Of the union were men.

SD: Do you think that was because the women saw themselves as only temporary workers, for the war period?

ET: Well, not entirely, but, where there are predominantly men in the plant, I think it's only natural that the leadership is dominated by men. And women are not usually prepared to give the time -- usually, they can't give it because of their home commitments, that men can give to doing work for the union.

SD: Right. Were there any special provisions in the contract, that dealt with women, for example equal pay, for equal pay, or maternity benefits?

ET: No. In fact I think, I'm a little bit wondering now whether there actually were women in American Can at that time.

ET: (cont) There certainly were in the can plants later. I'm not sure that, I think maybe that's not accurate that there were women there, I don't remember them.

SD: Yeah.

ET: And I would remember, I think, if there were any.

SD: Right. You were also a delegate to the Labor Council in this period of time that you're talking about?

ET: Yes, throughout that period, mnm hmn.

SD: Can you talk about, you talked about being involved in helping to lead a caucus at that time, within the Labor Council. What other kinds of things did you do on the Labor Council? What kind of positions would you argue for?

ET: Well, I . . . what kind of positions did I hold?

SD: Well, yeah, you were a delegate and . . .

ET: That was all.

SD: . . . were you a delegate for steel?

ET: Yes. For my local union.

SD: Right. And would you speak generally around issues that affected the union as a whole, and were you in the leadership of the caucus? That was built?

ET: Yes. And I was the only woman in it.

SD: Right. Were you the only woman on the Labor Council as well?

ET: No, but there were very, very few.

SD: Right. What other unions did the women come from?

SD: (cont) You don't remember.

ET: One of their activity which brought me into contact with a lot of trade union people in the AFof L section, was when the United Mine Workers sent out two men from Cape Breton during their strike in the early '40's, and I was asked by the, I think by the Labo r Council, to arrange an itinerary, so that they could make the appeal for strike assistance, to the affiliates of the Trades and Labor Congress. And I did take them with me to a meeting of the Vancouver TLC, and around, and arranged for them to get around the province generally. It was a very enjoyable two weeks, I got to know the conditions that the miners worked under - unbelievable!

SD: Right. The mine workers always had a strong women's auxiliary, I understand, too, in part because of being in company towns . . .

ET: Yes.

SD: Did you run into the women's auxiliaries at all when you were travelling around?

ET: No.

SD: I don't know how active they were in that period of time. Okay. And on the Labor Council, this is the period of 1945 from some of the things I've read, women were organizing, domestic workers were organizing as well now, I think that was in the TLC.

ET: It must've been, mnm hmn.

SD: Yeah. And also the Hotel and Restaurant Workers.

ET: Yes, that would be TLC also.

SD: There were separate Labor Councils at that time?

ET: Oh, yes, the Canadian Congress of Labor, and the Trades and Labor Congress of Canada, both had separate councils across, in all the provinces, and separate centers in Canada, separate conventions. However, I recall that we good relations with a number of the AFofL unions, just the same. The Seafarer's Union was quite active in assisting us in the American Can strike, and I used to get up and help George Johnston hand out leaflets at the Hudson Bay Company, which was, I guess the first attempt to try and get that store organized. The Meat cutters had the meat department in Woodwards, and never could get beyond that. And, to this day, of course, none of the department stores in Vancouver and environs are organized.

SD: Yeah, other than leafletting, were you involved, did you do more work around the Bay organizing drive?

ET: No.

SD: How successful were they with that drive, did you know anything about this? They failed, right?

ET: They failed, yes. I don't think they attracted enough interest amongst the employees.

SD: Okay, were there any other, either events in this period of time or union drives, that you think are significant for the time that you were in Vancouver, that you'd like to talk about before we move on?

ET: Well, one of the, I should have remembered this before, one of the outstanding labor disputes of the time was the strike at the Vancouver Province, which involved the International Typographical Union. And it so happened that the offices of the Province were kitty-corner across from the building that the Steelworkers offices were in. And I recall being active in the Steel locals and others, Packing House probably, too, in support of those strikers. In fact, at one point in the conflict when they were trying to bring papers out of the Province that they had got printed, with the help of the Teamsters, that we got a loudspeaker out of our office window on the ninth floor, telling them that we were backing them and this, that and the other, which led our landlord to come up very threateningly (laughs). We could address the crowd on the street from the window.

SD: Right. That's wonderful. Um, were the tactics used within the trade movement at this point in time fairly militant, people sittingdown on thejob or wildcats and so on? Or was it contained by the fact that the war was . . .?

ET: I wouldn't say it was contained, because the Province strike

ET: (cont) is a pretty good example of sustained militancy. And so was the American Can strike.

SD: Were many of these strikes for first contracts?

ET: No, I don't think so, I think they were for union issues, along the way.

SD: Right.

END OF TAPE.

SD: Would you like to describe the Eaton's organizing drive, how you got involved and the history and that?

ET: Well, I was still in Vancouver when I was approached by Norman Twist, then Canadian director of the Retail Wholesale and Department Store Workers Union, to see if I would be interested in heading a drive in the T. Eaton Company in Toronto. Up to that point Retail-Wholesale had a fairly good base amongst supermarket employees, and chocolate factories and that sort of enterprise in Toronto, but the big challenge, of course, in retail, is the department stores themselves because they're such huge employers. And because the fact that they're unorganized has a depressing effect on wages, conditions, of all unorganized retail and service workers. A number of people who'd known my work in the Steelworkers, I think mentioned me to Norm Twist, and so after talking the matter over, I foolishly agreed. Another case of rushing in where angels fear to tread. However, I went back in May, 1947. A couple of other people for the staff had already been arranged, a young man from Hamilton by the name of Lynn Williams, that's L-Y-N-N, who had done a little organizing but whose background was mainly a YMCA worker. During the summer I met with Lynn and others in the retail field and we discussed the possible strategy of starting the Eaton drive. Again, it was a long

ET: (cont) orientation period of visiting the stores, seeing the physical layout, locating where the employees were, where the departments were, because Eaton's is literally spread throughout the city of Toronto, between warehouses, delivery depots, mail order and several large, three large retail stores, department stores. We had a number of leads left over from a previous organizational attempt that had been undertaken by the union, or a union, five or six years before that. And these leads still proved useful; we got a number of contacts from them. More important, I suppose, we found out exactly how many departments there were, how many employees there were in each department. This kind of information is absolutely essential because you have to know when you've reached a majority in an organizing drive. In the Fall of that year we opened an office very quietly, caps? we found an excellent spot above a restaurant and beer parlor, on the same, near the Eaton's factory, but with a side entrance and a stairway going up to the union office where people could be going in the restaurant or the beer parlor. It was just a small place but we were small, too, I think we had a staff of four at that time. We did a great deal of home-calling during that Fall, and our objective was to get one hundred people, if possible, from different departments, who would agree to take some part in an organizing drive, once we'reached that

ET: (cont) number. We did so within some months and had our first meeting, which was addressed by Norman Twist. And from there on it became an open campaign in that we openly started to distribute leaflets at all the various parts of the business, there were some 10,000 employees involved, on a weekly basis. A review of these leaflets would indicate all the various problems that existed, not only in low wages but lack of security, no overtime, no pension plan, no grievance procedure. In other words, the whole bit, as far as an unorganized business is concerned. Now I can't take you through all the next three years because you're not interested to that extent, I'm sure, today, but I'd be glad to supply you with more information at any time, and, as I mentioned earlier, I hope in the next few months, to do a review of that campaign so that some of the things will be on the record.

SD: What are the highlights in terms of those three years? Like what were the things that you felt were the most important things for people to know or understand about that campaign, like, how it was successful signing people up and eventually why it failed?

ET: We made a lot of use of what you might call gimmicks, I suppose, in order to catch the imagination of employees and public alike, cause it's rather interesting that in

ET: (cont) the four years in which that drive was in progress I don't think we had ten inches of newspaper coverage, which shows the power of advertising, because the day after we lost the vote the Globe and Mail had an eight inch editorial saying naturally we failed, the employees didn't want us. Some of the kinds of things we did which created a lot of interest were we handed out shopping bags marked "Join Local 1000" our local number, and the public had quite a good time with that, and you could see them all over Toronto in different places. Another day we handed out balloons to the children entering the store on a Saturday. Again, printed "Join local 1000" and we had quite a lot of fun with those in different departments. In the shoe department one of the kids let go of his balloon and it went up to the ceiling and the manager had to get up on a ladder and recover it. And there were other things, many, many other things like that to catch interest. And then of course on our leaflets there was a steady campaign of the sort of things that unions had achieved. Lynn Williams and I went to Macy's in New York. We met with their union executive, we went through the store and talked to the employees, to their stewards, and came back able to tell the Eaton employees just how much had been accomplished, by organizing department store in New York City. We started a training pro-

ET: (cont) gram for union people. We had a manual on department store organization. We used to have educational meetings. We had meetings with speakers, of course, from other unions, some very large meetings, which leaders like Charlie Millard and George Burt, and A.R. Mosher and others spoke.

SD: What kind of backup did you get from other unions, and other forces in the trade unions, and how important was that in order to be able to have a successful drive?

ET: Well, from the very beginning, we realized that we couldn't possibly organize Eaton's without the support of other unions, and this became particularly true when Retail Wholesale ran into some financial difficulties and jurisdictional difficulties in the United States. So, were were fortunate in that we kept the Ontario trade unions very well-informed of what we were doing. We appealed for monthly donations from unions towards the drive, and many times these donations enabled us to meet our payroll. We attended every provincial and national convention and reported on the Eaton drive, and the trade union movement in general was well aware of what we were doing. The committee that directed the drive, I should say, was a top committee of the Canadian Labor Congress. It was chaired by Fred Dowling, and had members on it -- well, I can give you those, just make a little note

ET: (cont) there and I'll give you the members, the other members, but they were all the top officers of the Congress. So that from the standpoint of moral support and financial support this was crucial. When we had to have literature distributions or any of these demonstrations I've mentioned, we relied on volunteers from other unions, to come and help us and they did, very faithfully.

SD: And thatwas like, that was throughout the drive. Now, at what point did the employees themselves begin to do the leafletting and get involved in the union?

ET: Not until fairly late, I would say perhaps a year before the, a year or more before the vote was actually held. And one of the reasons, obviously, was that people were very insecure as to being fired for union activity, actually Eaton's didn't employ this tactic, what they did was to improve wages and other employee conditions, all through the drive. And eventually we got to the point where employees were helping to hand out the leaflets and this had a great psychological effect on the rest. One amusing incident was when one of our stewards handed John David Eaton a leaflet, and he handed it back to him and said, "You need it more than I do."

SD: That's great. So you got monthly pledges. How much money altogether did you get from the union, do you remember?

ET: I don't remember but I know that the total cost of the drive was something like a quarter of a million, which in these days is peanuts for four years, and a staff of seven people. In the final months before the vote other unions loaned us about ten organizers, but actually we found that it was too short a period in which to integrate into the work and get them to know the personalities and so on. If we had had double the staff we had all through the drive, I think we might've made it. Did you ask me why it failed, I think you did.

SD: Yeah.

ET: Well, A) the delay in the requirements of labor legislation, were I suppose the biggest drawback. Now the Ontario Labor Board changed its rules after we'd been going for about a year, so that in addition to a signed application for membership it had to be accompanied by one dollar, at least one dollar, so we had to go back and get one dollar from each of the people who had by then signed up, well over a thousand, I suppose. There was a long, long fight before the Labor Board, as to the bargaining unit. David Lewis was our council and he worked with us night after night, trying to make sure that our interests were protected in defining the bargaining unit. There was several hundred departments and types of employees, this was, took

ET: (cont) a long time. Then, well, as a matter of fact, the company was able to delay these proceedings up to, leading up to a vote for over a year, and this kind of turnout, sorry, this kind of delay and the resulting turnover in staff, which at all times was about 35%, took away a lot of our leading supporters in the union and others, because it was the sort of occupation that as soon as somebody got a more preferable job they left. Then at the very end the company came out in the open andhad their supervisory people initiate a loyal Eatonian's group, which began leafletting as well, and because they were known as supervisory people to the employees, succeeded in scaring a lot of them from open activity prior to the vote. In other words the people who could have talked up a vote became too nervous about doing so. Then when we had the vote, we only lost by 600 with 9600, I believe, voting, so it was very close, but it shouldn't have been that close because we had well over 5000 cards signed, of people who were still there. In the total drive we signed 10,000.

SD: Right, and many of those people had gone.

ET: Oh, yes.

SD: So it was defeated?

ET: Yes. Now you may be interested in just an additional

ET: (cont) word about the role of women in the whole thing because of course, again, probably more than half of the employees were women, in this case. We had some wonderfully dedicated people, including very long service employees in Eaton's, who, in the end came out and appeared on the, at least took part in radio programs, who allowed their pictures and statements to be used in a leaflet to go to the other employees, and I could go into a lot of them But I can think there were all kinds: there were salesladies, there were restaurant workers, elevator operators, mail-order clerks. Another thing involving women that was always interesting, we had a float of the Eaton workers in every Labor Day Parade, and we had a Miss Local 1000 contest, and Miss Local 1000 was on the float.

SD: Were there women officers in the union, out of that core of shop stewards, were many of them women?

ET: Oh, yes. Oh yes I would say that a really good percentage were women. And at the end we did a thing that may be reminiscent of YMCA, or whatever, kind of campaigns, but we had a big board along the whole wall of one of the offices, and we had the steward's name of each major section there, with an objective of so many members to get each week. And markedup with stars or otherwise, the ones who'd achieved their objective, and people used

ET: (cont) to come in and look at the board and see how everybody was doing, it was a great way of keeping people interested and involved in a personal way.

SD: Yeah, in the union drive, how it went. Right. Were many of the women part-time workers?

ET: Mnm hmn.

SD: Was that like a big problem?

ET: This was a big problem, because the part-time workers were very difficult to reach in the leafletting, 'cause most of them would come on after the leafletting was over, which was at 9 o'clock in the morning. So we had to rely on full-time workers to approach them and see that they got leaflets. We endedup with a fair number of part-timers as members, and the labor board ruled that they had to work so many hours a week in order to be eligible, and I'm not sure how many actually were, but I would think that it would not be a favorable group as far as the vote was concerned, 'cause they weren't that much involved.

SD: Right. And were most of those part-time workers women?

ET: Oh, yes. I think nearly all. And it was a pin-money sort of approach to a lot of them.

SD: What kind of tactics did the employers use, other than raising wages and so on, did they used to, because there were so many women working there, did they ever talk about

SD: (cont) how women didn't deserve higher wages cause they were only working for pin-money or that this wasn't a serious job or anything like that?

ET: No. In fact, the company never put out any written material, that I can recall. It was all done through supervisors, and of course some of them were very outspoken against the union. But not in the name of Eaton's as such.

SD: Right, right.

ET: And therewere what you might call prestige departments that were very difficult, like the most expensive dress salons, well, supervisors there let it be known that it just wasn't the thing to do.to be in a union in that kind of a place.

SD: So it was almost as though the people who worked there were told, or expected, to identify with the product, the expensive dresses.

ET: And the same was pretty well true in the straight commission departments of furniture and major appliances, it was very hard to get the saleman to identify with a union, when they were constantly urged that individual initiative etcetera was all that was needed.

SD: Did people in prestige departments make better wages than otherpeople, or was it the same?

ET: A lot of them worked on salary plus commission, so it

ET: (cont) wasn't better salaries, it was up to their sales.

SD: Right. What kinds of demands did department store workers have, were there any demands to remove commission, for example, and just have a straight hourly wage?

ET: No. Of course we never got to negotiating, to the point where the employees would have then themselves drawn up a first agreement. We had a good many objectives along the way, for example, we were quite adament about night openings. Of course these came after the union was defeated, anyway.

SD: Right. In these various unions that we've talked about, how were first contracts developed, were they developed off of a master contract, did employees in a particular area or for a particular company sit down together and work out a contract proposal, how did that process occur?

ET: You're talking about companies apart from Eaton's?

SD: Well, yeah, the ones that we spoke about earlier that you were involved in.

ET: Well, most of the first agreements were not part of master agreements. There were not very many master agreements in Canada. Master agreements applied usually across the line and eventually extended to Canadians. And the first agreements would be drawn up by having a meeting of employees, and, depending on the type of agreement held in that industry or that area, they would be told what was

ET: (cont) in other contracts. Or perhaps they had to develop it right from the word go. But once the, once there was a basis of organization there were other contracts to guide them. And theydecided which issues were of the utmost importance to them. Usually to begin with, the most important issue would be wages. But as the union matured other issues, pensions, for instance, became of prime interest.

SD: Right. And also, how was an organizing committee constructed; there were four, maybe five full-timers who were paid, and then what about other organizers? There'd be people who were within the union itself and then there'd be supporters. Were the supporters in a committee that would support the union drive, or did they attend union meetings, or anything like that?

ET: You mean from the employees that you were organizing?

SD: Well, you'd have employees and then you'd have staff employees and then you'd have a few people from other unions who were helping .

ET: We didn't have much of people from other unions.

SD: Right.

ET: No. The way they helped usually was leafletting, they didn't become involved in the actual union organization. It would be almost to much to expect because they all had their own union activities, their own union meetings

ET: (cont) and usually active people.

SD: Right. Afterthe drive to organize Eaton's, you were then involved again with Steel, right?

ET: Yes, after the vote we stayed around for a year and leaf-letted Eaton's and a lot of the employees who had been in the union continued to be active in the chance that they wanted to get going right away again for another vote. But it was apparent at the end of the year there just wasn't that amount of support, it was pretty disappointing to the people that worked so hard. A lot of them left Eaton's. A And so at the end of the year, the ones who'd stayed on in department store organizing went and tried their luck in Regina and Army and Navy and had an awful time there with anti-union endeavors, and I believe they went to Windsor and did some organizing there. And then they went to other unions. Wally Ross and Lynn Williams went to the Steelworkers. Wally Ross went on to organize Kitimat. Lynn Williams held a succession of positions until today he's the international secretary-treasurer of the union in Pittsburgh, second highest office in the union, and he's only a young man of 52, I believe. And we had two very --three, very competent women. Marjorie Gough, who's living in Harrison Hot Springs now, did the publicity for the Eaton drive for several years until for reasonssof ill health she had to give it up. Olive Richardson was

ET: (cont) originally our office worker and then we recognized that she had good talent as an organizer and she became a full-time organizer. She's now one of the conciliation officers for the Ontario Department of Labor. Mrs. May Colston who was an employee of Eaton's at the College Street store, a part-timer incidentally, worked for us part-time, and did an excellent job. They were the three that come to mind. Now, then, in '52 I went back to the Steelworkers Union, Mr. Millard asked me to set up an office workers department in their national office, to assist in the organization and negotiation of agreements, education work with their white-collar unions. Because by this time there were a number of offices in the union. My work in this connection took me to Sault Ste. Marie, Hamilton, Kingston, and I was involved in, I guess, all of these negotiations, for their office workers from then on. We had ~~a~~ joint negotiations for the office workers in General Steelwares in -- no, we weren't joint, we wanted them to be joint but they were not. Negotiations for General Steelwares office people in London, Ontario, Toronto and Montreal, and we used to end up with three conciliation boards in those places, too. That took an awful lot of work and effort.

SD: Oh, yes.

ET: You were asking about master agreements. I helped to organ-

ET: (cont) ize the office workers at Continental Can in Toronto, and they were brought under the master agreement to begin with. Got a very good agreement to start with, plus a wage increase and so on. In these negotiating situations, there was always the problem of trying to get the office workers elevated to the same wage rate, per hour, we'll say, as the plant workers. Naturally there were different classifications ranging right from the junior clerk, or the messenger boy up to the top job which might be Cost clerk or whatever, but invariably the lowest paid office worker would probably be anywhere from 50 to 75 per cent below the labour rate in that same company's plant, and so our strategy in office negotiation was to ask for a starting rate in the office and the labour rate in the plant, and in order then to make distinctions for the differences in skill and so on in the office jobs, they would have had to raise the whole works, and we had many a conciliation board brief which I prepared which showed the fact that the, you had to get up to a cost clerk before you hit the labour rate in the plant. Then within this broad discrepancy the case of women was even worse. Because although it wasn't so much unequal pay between a woman and a man doing the same job, the women were as a whole in all the lower paid jobs and were not given an opportunity to rise even in jobs which no reason women Side II; couldn't hold, in accounting for instance, to the top office jobs. So there was always this, this was met in negotiations not by so much demand for equal pay as a demand for proper

ET: (cont) job classification. The SteelWorkers Union had

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ET: (cont) a job evaluation manual, worked out in the U.S. Different for the plant than for the office, but worked out in detail for all jobs. And it was always our proposal in negotiations to try to get that job evaluation manual for the office workers. Because once you evaluate the job rather than the individual, it's only then a step away to getting a posting for a job open to either a woman or a man.

SD: Again in that situation were women active in the union?

ET: Oh yes. We had some women officers of locals, I think of one general steelworkers local, we had a woman as president. They were equally active and equally interested.

SD: Why was that the case when in fact, in some of the other situations, earlier on women weren't active at all? Do you have any idea why?

ET: Well I think I said when in the plants, in the Steelworkers Union, that I had experience with, there were very few women compared to men; and therefore the men tended to be more active, and numerically, to hold most of the positions. But when you get a situation like described in Eatons, or in the offices where women were often the majority, they were also quite interested and active.

SD: Did you think that was because they felt more confidence? Or that there was a real tendency within the union movement, for women when they felt that men could do the job, to see them as more confident as being union leaders?

ET: I really don't know why, but naturally we always encouraged women to take an active part, to be stewards, to be officers, to

ET: (cont) attend union schools; and many of these office workers did. I conducted a course in, for white-collar workers, at one summer school, I guess it'd be '55, for the Steelworkers, and about half of the students, perhaps over half, were women. I think perhaps the fact that they had encouragement from women around them at work, made them feel less inadequate, than when there was just a few of them surrounded by men.

SD: Were women intimidated by activity: speaking and so on, was that something you picked up on from women who were involved in the labour movement, a fear to stand up and speak or to be involved in setting policy, that kind of thing?

ET: No again this is almost an individual thing; some women are remarkably good at expressing themselves. In other words they are vocal and not afraid to get up and speak. And other women who are very capable, never acquired the ability to express themselves too well vocally. It's a question again of their involvement and interest. Public speaking courses are needed for both men and women in unions. You realize that the more you attend conventions.

SD: Yeah. Did the whole question of kids, womens relationship to their children ever come up at all, when you were working with women and their process of unionization, for example, people worrying about how they were going to look after their kids when they were at work, or whether they could get maternity leave, those kinds of issues, is that something you remember?

ET: Oh, certainly. I think that the fact that women who had children to look after at home were certainly more inhibited

ET: (cont) from taking a part in the union because they carried out that responsibility, there was noone else to look after these children, unless the father was on shift work or something like that. There certainly was no childcare arrangements for a union, activists amongst women. As for maternity leave, yes, this was an issue, I should have mentioned, that was important in union agreements. But it was also a matter that was important by legislation, and I think one should have a look at what's been done in the federal labour code and in the provinces in this regard. I have a study on, or you could get a study on maternity leave policies in Canada which would give you an answer, broken down by province, by industry, of maternity leave policies; give you the answer to that question very specifically.

SD: Which would be good. Another question is: you were working with, helping to organize women in essentially a female job ghetto in the period after the war; were many of the women who worked at Eatons, women who had come out of war industries, decided to stay in the work force but couldn't get any work in an industrial setting, or were they women who had moved initially in to...

ET: I would say that the majority of them were women who had not worked in war plants. Certainly among the sales force you would find women who had pre-war service, alot of them. And this was true among the restaurant workers. I think because of the type of work they did, they wouldn't have moved out of Eatons to a war plant to begin with; alot of them were too old, and the work would be too heavy. And

ET: (cont) consequently they didn't move back in again either because they just weren't in the war plants. Now this may be too much of a generalization, undoubtedly, there were some. But if you go into a department store, and you look carefully at the sales clerks, they are not the war plant or any plant type of worker; they're just not, they're a sales clerk.

SD: Right. Do you have any idea of, was there talk in the labour movement at all in that period, what was going to happen to women and what happened to women who had been employed during the war? where they were going?
There was a generalized period of lay off.

ET: I think the women in general expected you were going to be laid off, and certainly the men (laughs) were anxious to see that they were. There just were not enough jobs, for women to remain after the war.

SD: What kind of home life did a union organizers have?
And how did that affect you?

ET: Well, you don't — it, whether you're a male or female union organizer, it seriously interferes with your home life. When we were organizing Eatons, I don't think I was home for supper, except for the weekends, in that whole period; and this was true of most of our staff, because we started out from the union office, downtown, to make calls at night, and we weren't through until about nine-thirty. And even weekends we often had meetings of one kind or another, perhaps, conferences of other unions to report our progress, this sort of thing. So, it's going to interfere with your

ET: (cont) home life, and if you're not prepared for that, then you're not prepared to organize.

SD: How did you cope with that? Was it that it was so exciting to you as an organizer to be doing this work you accepted it?

ET: Yes, I certainly had a social life but it was crowded in on top of alot of work and so you were tired an awful lot of the time.

SD: What unions were involved with?

ET: Well, I was to begin with, a member of the Office and Professional Workers Organizing Committee. March the third, 1941. And I remained with that union as a member until 1950. And I was also of course a member of the Steelworkers Union throughout this time, and was up until I left then in 1956. And then Retail, Wholesale Department Store Union, 1948. Department Store Employees Union, Local 1000, it was the Eaton Local. My local with the Steelworkers was the, Local, the last Local was 4487, that's the Inglis Office Workers. And Public Service Alliance of Canada, during the time that I was working in the labour department in Ottawa. The Office Employees International Union, in 1965. And briefly I went back and worked in the office of the Steelworkers for one summer.

SD: Was it difficult at all being a woman working in quite male environment in terms of the early period when you were union organizing, being on the Labour Council in Vancouver for awhile. Did you find that challenging? Did you think

SD: (cont) of it all in terms of, "I'm a woman, and I'm in this environment?

ET: I suppose I'd had a pretty good initiation in the CCYM and the CCF, where there was never any distinction between men and women, and you developed independently of sex, as it were, in your activities. So I wasn't all that conscious of — in other words I didn't have any inferiority complexes about working with men. on the Labour Council, where there were very very few women, the difficulty with not being a women, but just being a person in a pretty minority political situation, for some time that is.

SD: Right, and the kind of pressures that created —

ET: Mhmn. The Union movement has changed significantly; we haven't dealt with that.

SD: Right. Would you like to talk about that?

ET: I'd perhaps like to write you something on that.

SD: Sure.

ET: Because I think this requires a little more than off-the-cuff. It's certainly true that there are alot of significant changes, changes in the expectations of workers, all this sort of thing. So I wouldn't mind doing something written on that, Sara, and I'll mail it to you.

SD: Sure, that's great.

ET: One thing we haven't mentioned which was certainly a highlight in my life, I'll never forget, was being sent as a representative of the Canadian Congress of Labour, to the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, Womens

ET: (cont) School in Champagne near Paris, in France, in 1953. I came about this rather accidentally because the Canadian delegate who was to go was Elma Hannah, who's head of the Communication Workers in Canada, and a good friend of mine. Her International Union Convention happened to be on at the same time in San Francisco, so she couldn't go to France and I took her place. It was a tremendous experience: about 35, 40 women from all over the world, and we spent two weeks together, and some of the most interesting days in my life were spent listening to conditions of women workers, in other countries. Everyone had to prepare a brief statement of conditions of women in their countries. And even apart from the formal sessions we learned so much from one another in informal conversations, and walks and so on during that time. Following that, I began correspondence with a number of these women trade union leaders in Sweden, Germany, Denmark, France, Holland, and we kept correspondence for as long as 20 years. And some of them have of course died by now. But I still hear regularly every Christmas from my friend in Denmark, who became the first woman to head a trade union in that country; she was head of the Tobacco Workers Union. And from two women in Germany who are now retired.

SD: And a related question, somewhat, is: were there many women who were heads of unions that you ran into in Canada, in the period that you were active? What kinds of positions would they have?

ET: Well, you couldn't count them on one hand. Elma Hanna was the only I can remember who was the head of the union; she was head of the Communications Workers as I mentioned, came from Regina, Saskatchewan, from that telephone company. There were a number of very fine women in the Auxiliaries of the United Automobile Workers, that I came in contact with now and then.

SD: What the reason for women not being in those kind of leadership positions? Was it that women in general weren't really active within the union movement? Was there discrimination; was it maybe a combination of both; was it women's own sense of their own inability to take these kinds of responsibility?

ET: That would be part of it but again I think it's probably more connected with whether or not there were large numbers of women in the union we were talking about. Now today, the largest union in Canada is headed by a competent woman, Grace Hartman, CUPE, and of course Shirley Carr from that same union is the vice-president of the CLC. Now those women, undoubtedly came ahead because they were capable, and also because they could count on the support of alot of women in their organization. While women were not in a top leadership position in unions, their influence was considerable in a number of auxiliary positions. For instance, the editor of the Steelworkers paper, Packing House paper in Canada, the Congress Magazine, and a number of other publications, we could go on quite a list, were all women.

SD: That's interesting.

ET: Behind every successful trade union leader was a woman secretary. And I'm talking now of women who actually were quite influential in policy decisions, as well as just the ordinary variety of secretarial correspondence. Margaret Lazarus was such a woman in the Steelworkers Union, secretary to Charlie Mallard, leader Bill Bill Mahoney.

SD: Right.

END OF SIDE II