

## Reviewing the Past and Looking to the Future: Activists Reminisce at the Mine Mill Centennial Conference Sudbury, May 1993

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# DOCUMENT

## Reviewing the Past and Looking to the Future: Activists Reminisce at the Mine Mill Centennial Conference Sudbury, May 1993

Dieter K. Buse and Mercedes Steedman

### *Preface*

#### *'You Had to be There': Listening to the Past*

ON A SATURDAY NIGHT in mid-May 1993 I was playing some eight-ball in the basement of the Mine Mill Hall in Sudbury. The Toronto Maple Leafs were on the move and the hockey game occupied considerable attention early in the evening, but as the night wore on, it was beer and sociability that were paramount. Wearing a T-shirt depicting a blues guitarist, and holding down one of two pool tables with friends, I was apparently conspicuous to one young worker. He struck up a conversation with me, intent on finding out where I had purchased the shirt, what I knew about blues, of which he was a decided advocate, and what I was doing in Sudbury. I explained that I had picked up the shirt in Paris — it took a few emphatic sentences to emphasize that it came from France and not Paris, Ontario — and that I was part of the conference on the history of the Mine Mill and Smelter Workers Union that had been going on upstairs for a couple of days. This required further explanations — which again took considerable conversational emphases — that I

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really was a professor and that I actually did study the history of the working *class*. None the worse for liquid wear, my inquisitive and new-found friend kept shaking his head in perplexed questioning. "Naw," he said, "you're not here for that shit." Cocking his head in disbelief, he laughed, "You came all the way up here for this stuff." It seemed to him incongruous that what was going on upstairs in the union hall, celebrating 100 years of a militant labour organization's life, meant anything, let alone the price of gas from Kingston. "Nobody cares about *that* any more," he concluded with finality, and walked off having assured me that he was indeed a union member and he was one of the few lucky enough to still have a job in the mine. I'm not sure he ever believed me: it seemed to him a colossal joke that anyone could care about his union's history. He thought his union was history, which is to say that it wasn't much. If class was a structure, he was in it up to his eyebrows; his vision, however, was definitely constricted. And if class was an historic process, he had apparently missed it. He just hadn't been there.

Yet there certainly were those who did invest their union's past with importance, and the Mine Mill & Smelter Workers centennial conference (1893-1993) was highlighted by two sessions of reminiscences involving men and women who participated directly in the class struggles associated with Mine Mill. The conference itself was one of the best organized and exciting events of this kind that I have ever attended, largely because it integrated labour movement and academic participants, was in part held on union premises, allowed for political debate and historical reflection but also made time for eating, drinking, and socializing, including Saturday night performances by Utah Phillips and Chuck Angus of The Grievous Angels, and never moved into esoteric, scholastic meandering. The centrepieces of the 13-15 May event were the two roundtable discussions involving long-time union activists. The transcripts of their comments, edited by conference organizers Dieter Buse and Mercedes Steedman, appear below.

The conference, subtitled "Where the Past Meets the Future- the Place of Alternate Unions in the Canadian Labour Movement," took place at the height of opposition to the Ontario New Democratic Party government's so-called Social Contract proposals to contain and curb the deficit through restraints on public sector unionists. Thus, Floyd Laughren, Treasurer of the Province of Ontario, and long-time MPP for Nickel Belt, received a cool reception when he addressed a benefit Banquet for the Miners' Memorial Site, alluded to in the comments of Ruth Reid below. Many in the crowd sported "Pink Slip" Floyd buttons in protest. Labour movement politics were also prominent in the proceedings. Ironically, Mine Mill's centennial turned into a call for the union to liquidate and join the Canadian Automobile Workers, a politics of integration championed by Madeleine Parent, long-time advocate of alternative, nationally autonomous labour organization. If most union leaders present supported this move with enthusiasm, there were many others, including perhaps the bulk of Mine Mill pensioners, who opposed this lowering of the curtain on the union that had meant so much to them. When Ray Stevenson rose to speak at a Mine Mill stewards' dinner, where the bulk of the

audience was over the age of 50, and where many remembered his role as a Mine Mill figure who supported the integration of the union into the United Steelworkers in 1967, feelings ran hot. One table away from me, a worker rose to give Stevenson a standing ovation while, three seats away, a voice of gruff animosity heckled, "Sit down! Once a Steel hog, always a Steel hog!" Memory, so short in our current political culture, is seared into the experience of Mine Mill's aged rank-and-file.

What was so moving about the speeches of old-time Mine Mill figures was, indeed, this passion for what the union stood for: solidarity and struggle, sacrifice and selfless giving, epitomized by men and women who still remember the picket lines, summer camps, mass meetings, and individual efforts that were part of a working class proud of its labour, its vision, its political accomplishments and demands, and its cultural creations. This all resonated with academic and trade union movement accounts that addressed the staple topics of technological change, health and safety, law and the state, economic restructuring, and the newly emerging workers' arts and heritage movement. But its power was in the way that men and women in their later years reached back into their pasts to draw out the commitment and intensity of feeling about being working class that my disbelieving friend in the Mine Mill bar simply could not comprehend.

The following statements, edited lightly, and drawn from comments that often came from the heart rather than from a prepared page, convey some of this, but only some. To have sat a few feet away from Lil Greene and hear her speak of her days in the workers' movement — a secretary who served a literal who's who of the Canadian left — forced appreciation of the gendered meaning of women's experience, as did many other comments at the gathering where women stood again and again to reiterate the vital roles they played and to demand that their voices, now and then, be finally heard. In this they received, I think, the support of the audience (although whether that almost deferential acceptance was anything more than tokenism remains to be seen) as well as long overdue acknowledgements from comrades and companions. But listening to Lil Greene and other Mine Mill women was also about hearing of solidarities and struggles that linked men and women and children in class ways against those who would harm their immediate and long-term interests. When Tom Taylor walked out of the audience to grasp a microphone and offer his thanks to the leaders of Mine Mill and to pay tribute to generations of miners, union women, and their families, his voice cracked with emotion and feeling. There were tears in the eyes of many in the hall when the "Professor," Clinton Jencks, stood to sing "Joe Hill: I never died says he."

Mine Mill mattered because of people like these, who were there in our past to battle for ideas and principles and the basic protections workers deserved and needed. These pages are an indication of this, but only an indication. They convey, in limited ways, the powerful meaning of solidarity. They hint at the strong feelings still present whenever Mine Mill members gather and talk about their past. But you had to be there to appreciate that power and those feelings, to see them still alive after decades of change and challenge. Unfortunately, that cannot be conveyed by

words on a page, however much they are a necessary beginning. You had to be there.

If my friend in the bar is an indication of anything, it is that this conference's challenge and the power of these recollections of Mine Mill's past lie in translating the meaning of alternative unionism to our current period. Where the past meets the future is the present. My friend in the bar couldn't believe that it exists. He, like the working class in general, had to be there. Sometimes this doesn't happen. But it can. One part of alternative unionism's task is to recultivate a working-class appreciation of historical process, where past, present, and future meet. These commentaries are a step in that direction.

Bryan D. Palmer

### *Introduction*

IN 1993 THE MINE, Mill and Smelter Workers' Union celebrated 100 years of active union work. In its heyday Mine Mill was 100,000 strong with 50 locals in Canada; Sudbury alone had 23,000 members, making it the largest local in the International Mine, Mill, and Smelter Workers' Union. In Sudbury the exciting past and troubled present of what was once Canada's largest local, Local 598, was discussed and debated at a centennial conference.<sup>1</sup> The current political climate in Ontario and the possibilities of Local 598's merger with the Canadian Autoworkers (CAW) heightened interest and rekindled old passions. This debate about the future of Mine Mill became a constant subtext for discussions in the session presented below.

The Mine Mill Centennial Conference, from which the following transcript emerged, sought to combine labour activists and scholars interested in labour in a lively interchange of ideas. For two and a half days in mid-May 1993 some 200 stewards, interested persons, academics, labour leaders, and retired workers participated in a series of round tables, banquets, presentations, and discussion sessions.

As part of the celebrations, Mine Mill contacted retired members of Mine Mill now residing in all parts of Canada and invited them to return to Sudbury for the celebrations. In order to seize the opportunity of a gathering of so many Mine Mill veterans from the 1950s and 1960s the conference organizers undertook two initiatives. An oral history project was organized in which Laurentian University students were trained and then interviewed some 30 Mine Mill leaders. These interviews were transcribed and placed in the university's archives. In addition, a set of conference sessions gave retired activists an opportunity to address current political concerns and to reminisce about their rich and varied experiences in the Mine Mill movement. These sessions resulted in the transcripts printed below.

<sup>1</sup>The proceedings of the conference will be published through the Institute of Northern Ontario Research and Development (INORD) at Laurentian University in 1994 as, *Hard Labour Lessons: The Mine Mill Centennial Conference, 1993*.

The following were the types of questions posed to the participants before the sessions so that they would reflect on their personal experiences:

- How do you see the current global climate and what do you think are the consequences of this for labour today? Compare this situation to the one you experienced in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s.
- What do you feel should be the response of the trade union movement to the global restructuring of labour and capital? What form should the trade union movement take in this struggle? What should workers know in order to wage the fight as collective members of a trade union? How has this changed over the years?
- How do you feel the Cold War impacted on Mine Mill? What was the role of the Communists in Mine Mill?
- What was Mine Mills' involvement in social, recreational, and cultural activities? What was the significance of Mine Mill's cultural activism?

Participants were asked to address these issues in any way which they felt appropriate, to feel free to make their own personal statements, and to take the presentation in any direction which they wanted. However, time constraints (the sessions lasted approximately three hours) meant that these presentations only touched on some points of interest. Yet they offer readers an opportunity to identify aspects of a rich and vivid trade union past and a controversial present.

The panellists represent a fair assortment of Mine Mill activists: two women who worked with the Ladies' Auxiliary, two American representatives who were organizers and staff reps, two Local 598 past presidents, a past research director, an organizer, a staff rep, and a member of the national executive. Their union involvement ranged from the late 1930s to the 1980s. Brief biographies of the panellists are provided below.

Their statements contain some gems about the past and present of the labour movement. For those studying workers' experiences, the nature of work, difficulties of organizing, and the effects of work conditions and the Cold War on workers' children, these transcripts and the ensuing discussion provide many insights. The role of women in the Mine Mill union became a particularly sensitive issue at the conference because a booklet issued to commemorate the 100 years of Mine Mill included several photos of unidentified women from the Ladies' Auxiliary placed at the end of the booklet with the sole caption, "Goodnight Ladies," despite having identified all the men pictured in the book.

Most of the material reminds us what commemoration means to former activists and why it is needed to keep history alive. The memories of these individuals provide lessons, anecdotes, and theories of the past and present. The opportunity to celebrate and honour the elders of the labour movement made this conference a special one for all participants and we hope that these transcripts offer readers an opportunity to capture some of the drama and excitement of the occasion. We note that oral history often points researchers to where confirming documentation might be found as well as offering interesting tales that the written record frequently omits. We acknowledge that interviews and reminiscences of activists

must be carefully screened lest, as some researchers have found, memory serves only to confirm the pattern or perspective preferred. However, when a group is interviewed or allowed to reminisce, the individuals act as a check on each other, especially among a group that is as highly conscious of history as this one.

In the following, the philosophical assumptions and world view of the participants are often clearly enunciated. Trained by harsh experiences, self-education, and Mine Mill solidarity, these individuals place their own roles in larger contexts, acknowledging the significance of understanding historical trends and long-term perspectives.

### *A Short History of Mine Mill*

MINE MILL can trace its roots back to 1893 and the formation of the Western Federation of Miners (WFM) in the mining centres of the western United States. In 1905 the Western Federation of Miners joined with the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) and acted as their mining department for several years, but factional infighting caused the mining section to withdraw. By 1905 the Western Federation had 185 locals, including twenty in British Columbia and one in Cobalt, Ontario. The WFM fought for the eight-hour day, protective legislation and workers compensation. By 1916 the union was in decline and at its convention that year its members voted to change the name of the union to the International Union of Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers, and the current union was born.

Mine Mill continued to struggle for many years with threats from the mining consortiums and with internal conflict aggravated by the dual unionism of the IWW in the USA and the One Big Union in Canada. Mine Mill revived again in the 1930s and with the formation of the Council of Industrial Organizations (CIO), organizational efforts began to bear fruit.

During World War II, due to the shortage of labour and the government's recognition of collective bargaining, Mine Mill achieved certification at many work places including Sudbury. The demand for minerals and metals resulted in an expansion of mines and mills during and after the war so that unions in the resource sector expanded quickly.

By the end of the war, Mine Mill in Canada had established a programme for organizing. It included: "a 40 hour week, \$1.10 an hour minimum rate for miners, time and a half after 40 hours of work, six paid holidays with double time if worked, shift differential pay, one week paid vacation for two years or less of service, two weeks of vacation for two years or more of service, sick pay for up to two weeks, severance pay equal to one month's wages for every year worked, and guaranteed annual work or wage equivalent."<sup>2</sup> Mine Mill's unionization efforts, however, ran into several road blocks. In 1947 the Taft-Hartley Act became law in the United States. One of its requirements was that all labour unions were required to guarantee

<sup>2</sup>M. Solski and J. Smaller, *Mine Mill: The History of the International Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers in Canada Since 1895* (Ottawa 1985), 39.

that no members of the Communist Party were working for the union. Mine Mill refused and fought the act for many years. In 1949 the Canadian Congress of Labour, responding to a climate of red-baiting, expelled Mine Mill from the CCL. This act opened the door to years of inter-union warfare which resulted in the loss of many of its locals to the anti-communist United Steelworkers of America (USWA).

Mine Mill was certified as the bargaining agent in all Sudbury mines in 1944. In the early 1950s the Steelworkers started raiding Mine Mill, and this culminated in a battle for the union membership at INCO and Falconbridge. After a long strike in 1958 and internal feuding which brought a so-called 'reform' slate to control of the Local 598 executive — with the 'reformers' supported by Catholic priests and educators working for the Steelworkers — the original union solidarity was weakened. In 1962 Mine Mill lost the vote to represent INCO workers to the Steelworkers by a very narrow margin. A re-vote was called in 1965, and Steel carried the workers at INCO into their union. However, Falconbridge workers remained loyal to Mine Mill. These years of struggle left a legacy of bad blood between the two unions, and today, as Mine Mill moves to merge with Canadian Autoworkers Union, resentment from the past underlies the discussion and decision-making on Mine Mill's future.

In 1955 Mine Mill was the first international union to grant autonomy to its Canadian membership. The Canadian union continued the WFM philosophy that union activities must move beyond bread and butter issues and take on the broader social and political concerns of the working class. Under the banner of "education, independence and organization," Mine Mill built union halls, sponsored cultural and sports activities, set up libraries, and offered children the opportunity to spend their summer at a camp located at Richard Lake outside of Sudbury. Miners' and non-miners' children from all over Canada and the United States were welcome. Many of these activities would not have been possible without the active support of wives and daughters of the Mine Mill men, whether through the Ladies' Auxiliary or as volunteers at the camp.

Mine Mill is unique among trade unions in that it has sought to implement its slogan, "a union without women is only half organized." Auxiliaries were autonomous locals within the Mine Mill family of unions. They had their own chartered locals which sent delegates to national and international conventions. Under Mine Mill's Canadian constitution, they had the right to attend all local meetings of the union and to make recommendations to that body. In the Eastern District of the Canadian section of Mine Mill during the late 1940s and 1950s, auxiliary locals were chartered in Sudbury with groups active in Coniston, Levack, Lively, and Chelmsford. Other centres where auxiliaries existed were Kirkland Lake, Timmins, Red Lake, Rouyn-Noranda, Marmora, and Port Colborne. The auxiliary mandate moved women's activism well beyond the vision we normally hold of traditional working-class housewives. These women actively lobbied to obtain proper housing, sanitation and municipal services, for improvements in the



school systems, to secure workers' compensation, unemployment and old age benefits, and pushed government bodies to limit increases in the cost of living, to improve social services, and generally to make elected representatives "work for the welfare of all people, not only for the rich minority."<sup>3</sup> In the rich cultural activities, under the imaginative leadership of Weir Reid from 1952 to 1959, women helped run the ballet and drama classes, the libraries and play schools, and the film sessions. Before Reid was hired as recreation director women had initiated many of these activities. Today, Local 598, the last remaining local of this once-strong union, celebrates that heritage and moves toward the next 100 years as part of the CAW mining section.<sup>4</sup>

Dieter K. Buse  
Mercedes Steedman

### *Editing and Background*

AT THE CONFERENCE the activists' sessions were split in two to be manageable. We have combined them into one text. We did that by inserting the bulk of one session after the presentations and before the question period of the first. We have also moved one statement (Clinton Jencks) out of the chronological order in which it was presented because it provided a better entry into the whole collection.

The transcriptions of the sessions were slightly edited to improve comprehension and to reduce length. Major omissions were marked by .... and editorial additions are identified by [ ]. Most of the language has been left in its colloquial form. The moderators' introductions and interventions have been omitted.

<sup>3</sup>Mine Mill Ladies' Auxiliaries (Canada), Organizational booklet, 1966.

<sup>4</sup>The editors recommend the following studies for background and further reading: Solski and Smaller, *Mine Mill* and C.M. Wallace and Ashley Thomson, eds., *Sudbury: Rail Town to Regional Capital* (Toronto 1993). Cameron Smith, *Unfinished Journey: The Lewis Family* (Toronto 1989), presents a perspective on the role of the Catholic Church, the CCF, NDP, and the Steelworkers. An informative short pamphlet by a past president of Mine Mill is, Jim Tester, "The Shaping of Sudbury: A Labour View," (Sudbury 1979), while the view of Ray Stevenson, a Mine Mill organizer accused of being a Communist during the raids but who joined the Steelworkers, predominates in "The Western Federation of Miners and Canadian Union of Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers," (Winnipeg 1993). The best researched study is available only in university libraries: John Lang, "A Lion in a Den of Daniels: a History of the International Union of Mine Mill and Smelter Workers, Sudbury, Ontario 1942-1962," MA Thesis, University of Guelph, 1970. Wayne Roberts, *Miner's Life: Bob Minor and Union Organizing in Timmins, Kirkland Lake, and Sudbury* (Hamilton 1979), outlines the impediments to organizing.

The moderators were Marge Reitsma-Street from the School of Social Work at Laurentian University and Joan Kuyek, a Sudbury activist and author; we would like to thank both.

*Reviewing the Past and Looking to the Future*

CLINTON JENCKS<sup>5</sup>: I really can't sit down and talk about stuff that's so important to me. And I want to start in a kind of unusual way [stands and sings]:

I dreamed I saw Joe Hill last night  
Just alive as you and me  
Says I, but Joe, you're 10 years dead [the audience joined in at this point]  
I never died says he  
I never died says he  
From San Diego through all of Canada in every mine and mill  
Where workers strike and organize  
That's where you'll find Joe Hill  
That's where you'll find Joe Hill

That's what I think this is all about. The thing that makes this union important, like the thing that made the farm workers' union important, was that the old Western Federation and Mine Mill made the rank-and-file member feel that he and she were important. They weren't depending upon the union to deliver the goods; they knew that the union could only deliver what they were willing to fight and to suffer for. Now I learned this the hard way. You know my name is Clinton Jencks, and I was nicknamed 'Palomino' by the Mexican-American people, with and for whom I worked in the south-west during the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s. One of the reasons that I have such a strong bond with the Canadian section of this union is that I was working in the colony of the south — the south-west of the United States — and you were working in the colony of the United States of the north. I found that we could depend on you when we got in trouble, and you could depend on us when you got in trouble. I think this is what this conference is all about. The big thing that has changed is the fact that we now have a global economy, and now we've got to look beyond our national borders and support our sisters and brothers wherever they live.

Well, let's get down to looking at the past. What was the impact of the Cold War on Mine Mill? Well, in a few words, it was devastating. Why? Because Mine Mill was a democratic rank-and-file controlled union with direct election of union

<sup>5</sup>Clinton Jencks was active in Mine Mill Locals 557 and 890 in the south-western US before becoming an international Mine Mill representative from 1953 to 1956. He was active in the fight to end discrimination against Mexican-Americans and assisted in the development of the film *Salt of the Earth*. He returned to school in 1959, earning a PhD from the University of California at Berkeley. Retired since 1986, he is now professor emeritus of economics and labour history at San Diego University.

officers and direct membership referendum on constitutional changes. The Cold War and its associated anti-Communist hysteria was used by the major corporations with which Mine Mill bargained as a direct weapon to weaken solidarity between workers, between local unions, and between national unions. In addition, the government's [ability to harass the unions was in direct relationship to the power of the corporations].

Picture specifically the following scenario: Mine Mill officers, staff, and representatives sitting in hearing rooms all week long, defending the right of the union to do its job — representing its members — and then flying out to all corners of Canada and the United States to participate in bargaining conferences, wage policy negotiations, and dealing with the raids of people who wanted the dues but not the responsibilities. In my opinion — and it's only my opinion — ultimately, the impact of the Cold War and the anti-communist hysteria was to force the Mine Mill merger with Steel. It destroyed Mine Mill as an international union, but it can never destroy the spirit of Mine Mill any more than you can destroy Joe Hill.

Now, on a more delightful, upbeat note, I would like to relay a personal experience of mine. The giant Kennecott Copper Corporation decided in 1948 that they would no longer bargain with my local union, Local 890, until our officers, local and international, signed the non-communist affidavit. They claimed the union just wasn't 'patriotic'. [Not] 'Patriotic', bullshit. It [Mine Mill] was a threat to their profits. Well, a lot of our members got scared: "They're not going to negotiate a contract with us, what will we do?" Well, I had done a little reading about the early history of Mine Mill, and I'd done a little reading about another organization that the Western Federation started, the Industrial Workers of the World. I didn't talk about that history, instead I said, "Look guys. Look what's been going on for years. We fought hard and we won national bargaining, didn't we?" "Yeah." "And that made us stronger, didn't it?" "Yeah." And I said, "Look what the companies are doing. They've got us tied down to contracts, they hold out for months, drag on negotiations, they wear us down, and eventually what do they do? They try to buy us off with a little wage increase. And some of the most vital things that affect the men and women on their jobs — their working conditions, the way they get treated, the right to promotion and the right to grieve — well, we can't get that this year." And the list of unsettled things began to pile up. So I said, "Look, we're free now, we don't need to negotiate once a year, we can negotiate every day. We're not tied down. We don't have to wait for the company...." And we did that; we organized our committees. Every day we were in the company's offices with something that hadn't been settled for years. And the guys understood they weren't going to get anything unless they backed it up. So we had a few quiet shutdowns — they couldn't be called wildcats 'cause we didn't have a contract. The end of this story was that after six months nobody had signed the affidavits yet, but Kennecott Copper came and begged us to sign a contract so that they could get us tied down for one, two, or three years. So that's the other side [of the story].

When we're not divided by political beliefs but we do our job, then the Cold War can't destroy us.

Now, I have two minutes to deal with probably what's been the most debated question in our union: What was the contribution of the communists in Mine Mill? Well, I'm going to say some not-so-surprising things. In all my years, and that's a lot of years, in Mine Mill, I never knew who was a communist and who was not. We never judged each other according to political beliefs or affiliation, but rather we judged one another by what were we willing to do or not to do to carry out the union policies democratically determined by the rank and file. I never, and nobody else that I knew of, ever supported or opposed any person running for union office on the basis of political affiliation, communists or otherwise. Instead I [offered my support based upon] how effective I thought that person would be in serving our membership. Never in all of my years in the union did any communist or Communist Party representative try to tell me what position to take, what to do, or influence me on union matters. Sure, I talked to members of the Communist Party during that period because they were people that I could depend on to help us when we needed help. Those communists I did know outside of the union were generally strong supporters of the union idea, of working-class solidarity, non-discrimination, and national autonomy. And I generally thought of them as people we could depend upon for support in the community when we got into a struggle and we needed and asked for their support. That's my experience, and all of the rest was a means of the company taking our eyes off the ball and confusing people about what we were doing. It was all a lot of fluff signifying nothing except that very thing — to confuse us, to divide us, to weaken us. When we refused to be weakened or divided we were strong... And that doesn't mean we walked out on every issue, it just meant we sought compromises but we were not hampered or tied down by somebody else's rules, except the ones that we made up.

**MIKE FARRELL<sup>6</sup>:** I'm going to relate briefly a history of the union as I remember it, a bit of Mike Farrell, and perhaps tell a couple of stories which you might find interesting.

I joined the Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers' Local 240 in Kirkland Lake in 1950 at the age of 19. In those days in Ontario, for those who are old enough to remember, the province was tied up tighter than a drum. There was no television of course, there was no bowling, there was no pool, but there were bootleggers (but you know, miners didn't frequent those places). At that time the union used to have its meetings on Sunday evening. Somebody whose name is lost to history dragged a young fellow out to the membership meeting, and lo and behold, I became

<sup>6</sup>Mike Farrell was a Mine Mill staff rep for 12 years, later serving in the same capacity for 18 years for the Steelworkers after the merger in 1967. He spent eight years in the mining industry and has worked for over 30 years in the union movement.

involved. Within a few months I was on the executive board and entertainment committee of Local 240. Incidentally, that local was the oldest active local union in the Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers.

That was about the same time that the split developed within the Canadian Congress of Labour, the predecessor of the Canadian Labour Congress, and a number of unions were ostracized or kicked out, whichever phraseology you want to use. The two most prominent ones were the Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers and the United Electrical Workers of America, known as UE. So the raids had started. Basically they started — as Mike [Solski] will probably relate — here in Sudbury. At that time, they couldn't get to first base in Sudbury. But in Port Colborne, Timmins, and in Kirkland Lake they were successful.<sup>7</sup> So at a tender age I found myself passing out leaflets at 5:30 in the morning at the plant gates and fighting for a principle that I felt was correct, and nothing has ever changed my mind about that, I want you to know. There was a group of us at that time — I suppose we were young Mine Mill lions, idealists, packsack miners — who went from mine to mine. We really didn't know too much about the union, but we knew that the boss hated the union. I'm not sure if that's logical, but since the boss hated the union, the union had to be a damn good thing for the workers. That was the early thinking. So wherever we went we tried to organize the union and we were reasonably successful in places like Cobalt, Temagami, Elliot Lake, and Bancroft. I ended up at the Faraday Mine in Bancroft in the fall of 1956. It was a lot of years ago when two gentlemen by the names of Ray Stevenson and the late Nels Thibault came to me and said, "Farrell, you're doing a pretty good job organizing, you're signing people up, do you want to go on the staff?" I said, "What the hell does that mean?" "Just keep on doing what you're doing." So I tried it for three months and three months became a full-time vocation over 30 years. And organize we did, to the best of our ability.

It was an extremely difficult era. I talked to a number of young people [about this period of history], and when I started to talk about the McCarthy era they asked, "What was that, Mike?" Then I realized how old I am getting. As Brother Jencks pointed out — and I know it was not as bad in Canada as it was in the States, but it certainly overflowed into this country — if you had a progressive bone in your body, you were labelled [a communist]. The heat was on, the battle was on all over North America. I had the good fortune — perhaps that is not the proper term — but I had a friend of a friend who called me up in Kirkland Lake when I was up visiting my relatives probably about 20 years ago. He was a cop at one of the mines which was closing down, and even now I won't say which mine it was because it wouldn't make any difference or mean anything to you. He had a twinge of conscience. He had been given the blacklist, the black book, and was told to burn it. He called me up on a Sunday afternoon, and he said, "I hear you're in town,

<sup>7</sup>Mine Mill charters: Port Colborne Local 637 in 1943; Timmins Local 241 in 1944; Kirkland Lake Local 240 in 1936.

Mike, I got something you might want to see." And I said, "What's that?" He said, "I got the blacklist on one of the bigger mines in Kirkland Lake which has been running for approximately 40 years. Would you like to come and have a look at it before I burn it?" Well, I looked at it and I tried everything to take it out of his hands, obviously without success, but I spent two or three hours over three or four drinks, or maybe it was five or six, perusing the book, and my God, it was a who's who of the labour movement. Everybody who was involved in the labour movement, whether in the Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers, the Steelworkers, the UAW, the UE, was in that book. And they were labelled. Oh, Stevenson was there, Solski was there, Thibault was there, I could go on. Farrell was there, Larry Sefton was there incidentally, and other names that would mean something to you if I went back 30 to 40 years. They had, I guess, meticulously recorded any name that appeared in a union publication written by an activist. You may recall that the old Mine Mill Herald listed the names of men who stood for local union election. You could tell from the way it was written in the book that they had somebody subscribing to the miners' union paper. So the guy who was on the executive board, his name went into the little book. Incidentally, the book wasn't very little either. So I saw it. I'm probably the only union staff rep that I know of who ever saw a company's blacklist. And I tell you, it was a pretty sobering experience. A pretty sobering experience.

When I became involved in Kirkland Lake, the first contract I worked under had four things: obviously, we had wages. You never forget your first job in the mine — \$9.17 a shift for a runner, \$8.72 for a helper on a machine, the liner machine. We had five paid holidays a year, time and a half if you worked — not double time and a half, not triple time — time and a half. We had \$2,000 life insurance. And lo and behold, we had two weeks vacation after five years. After one year we had one week, after five years, we had two weeks. It didn't matter if you were there 35 years, you [still] had two weeks vacation. Some of the things that we have today — optical plans, drug plans, dental plans, floating holidays, extra vacation leave — God, we never even thought of those things. We were so happy to get (you had the 40-hour week here in Sudbury long before we had it in the gold mines in Timmins and Kirkland Lake) the 40-hour week, but we had to pay for it dearly, believe me. Struggle and strife, the old story. [When we got the 40-hour week], we thought we were on cloud nine. So I guess as I got older I learned to have a little patience with some of our younger brothers who really didn't want to work Friday night any more... [Being a union rep] was a most rewarding experience. I travelled to most of the major mining camps in Canada. I missed the Labrador iron ore range, and from what I've been told about that, I don't suppose I missed very much. But I met a lot of good people, I met some characters, and I saw and dealt with people in negotiations, arbitrations, and all the things a staff rep has to do [which] I probably would not have done otherwise.

BARNEY MCGUIRE<sup>8</sup>: Thank you sister chairman, brothers and sisters. What I would like to talk about today is the importance of unions being involved in community affairs. And the example that I want to give is the Cumberland Historical Society, their annual Miners' Memorial Days, and how they have been connected with Mine Mill 598. About eight years ago, the Cumberland Historical Society decided to embark upon a historical restoration program. As a historical society they have always had as their fundamental policy to document anything that happened in the area as labour history. If I had to stop speaking right now, those are the words that I would repeat. I think that says volumes.

I went into Cumberland promoting the Mine Mill book<sup>9</sup> about nine years ago and as a result of our conversations, they embarked upon a historical restoration program. In Cumberland was where Ginger Goodwin was murdered; he was a member of the Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers' Union. One of the events that they sponsor is an annual Miners' Memorial Day. It is patterned after the ground that you people in Sudbury broke for us. We pay respect to all workers who lost their lives in industrial accidents, and most importantly, pledge to work for safe working conditions for all workers for the future. In sponsoring their Miners' Memorial Days, they absolutely insist and will not sponsor it unless there is representation from all union bodies — the Confederation of Canadian Unions, the Canadian Labour Congress, and the BC-Yukon Building Trades. The city council and the mayor are actively involved.

One of the things we have done there in the past several years is erect a cairn commemorating the 295 miners killed during the working life of the mines. A cairn has been erected honouring the members of the Chinese and Japanese communities, and a cairn has also been erected honouring the black community. We have a storyboard plaque erected on Comox Lake, and on [one side of] it is The Ballad of Ginger Goodwin, and on the other side of that plaque is a map of the area. This plaque was consecrated by Bishop Remi de Roo from Victoria, BC. We were successful in getting the mountain on which Ginger Goodwin was murdered named Mount Ginger Goodwin, and this was the result of over two years of work. We have placed a plaque at the foot of the mountain. I want to read you this: "Mount Ginger Goodwin was officially named by Cumberland mayor Bronco Moncrief on Miners' Memorial Day, June 24, 1989. Albert Ginger Goodwin, pacifist, socialist, and trade unionist, was shot by Dominion Police just above this site. One of BC's labour martyrs, a worker's friend, Goodwin lies buried in the Cumberland cemetery." His headstone was erected by the Canadian Association of Industrial, Mechanical and Allied Workers' Mining Council and by the Sudbury Mine, Mill

<sup>8</sup>Barney McGuire has been a union activist since the mid-1930s. He worked as a miner and later held positions in many locals. As an organizer, he brought the ideas and protections of Mine Mill to the isolated mining camps in Canada's Northwest. He began work with the Steelworkers in the early 1960s.

<sup>9</sup>Solski and Smaller, *Mine Mill*.

and Smelter Workers' Union Local 598. A replica of a coal mine has been built in the basement of the museum. We placed a plaque sponsored by the B.C. Federation of Labour at the site of number four mine. That mine had a very unusual history. One of the important points to remember was that 64 men were murdered in that mine.

Another year, we sponsored a book, *The History of Ginger Goodwin*. I want to say that I think this is a part of our trade union history and that we should make the book available to as many trade unionists as we can. The people of Cumberland, at one of our annual events, erected a plaque at the entrance to town. This plaque is 12 feet by eight feet and it states, "In honour of our miners." It's a magnificent document. No picture does this plaque justice, because a picture does not show the flame on the miner's lamp and other similar details. Last year, we erected a plaque at number five mine site.

... This coming Miners' Memorial Day we are going to show a film made by high school students in Vancouver after they read the book on Ginger Goodwin. And another highlight of this year's events, along with Brother Briggs being there: the Cumberland Historical Society is working on a project to tell the history of all the women that worked in Cumberland, how they lived after their husbands were murdered in the mines, and so on. Also this year, our guest speaker is going to be Nancy Riche, vice-president of the Canadian Labour Congress, and our guest of honour is going to be June Roberts [one of the women active in CLASS at the strike in Yellowknife]; you know her well. Here's the statement she recently made in Yellowknife when they came to remove her trailer and her car. She said, "I would sooner lose it all than have my husband cross that picket line." And I think that is quite an honour to have someone like that there. I feel that what has been done in Cumberland is of historic significance and it will help us pave the way for other people to do this in other areas in the future. And I want to close by saying this: I'd like to see each and every one of you come to Cumberland next year, it's June the 27th. Now a final word: if you can't come, just send a carload.

RUTH REID<sup>10</sup>: Today, I'm going to talk about the wonderful women of Mine Mill, especially the Ladies' Auxiliary. I was a little upset at the booklet that was put out by someone associated with Mine Mill. It had pictures of our 25th celebration, and it said, "Goodnight Ladies." Well, it'll never be goodnight ladies to the Ladies' Auxiliary because the work they have done in this community is very important and I think that everybody here is aware of it. So I would like to just say that we were very unhappy about those pictures [in the Mine Mill booklet which did not

<sup>10</sup>Ruth Reid came to Sudbury from Hamilton in 1952. With her husband, Weir Reid, she was a volunteer and later co-director of Mine Mill's summer camp during the 1950s and 1960s. She was a leading figure in the Ladies' Auxiliary Local 117 and was the secretary-treasurer from 1975 until 1990, when the auxiliary ceased its activities.



identify auxiliary members while all other photos were captioned]. I think they came from Mike Solski's collection, and he has given me the names of some of the people who were in those pictures. So [for the future] it's not goodnight ladies.

When I say the wonderful women of Mine Mill, you know, I think that the women were the heart of the union. Mine Mill says, "a union is only half organized if it doesn't have the women." Now they [the auxiliary] were organized in 1943, and when I came to Sudbury in 1952, so many of the cultural activities were being run by the women — there were play schools and movie shows, and there was a day camp out at Richard Lake. As more cultural programs were developed by my husband when he became recreational director, more women became involved in these activities. When you think of the women who helped in the dance school and how popular it was, they not only took part in the dance school, but they helped plan the programs, they made costumes, they did the publicity. The same with the drama group — they were not only acting, but they were behind the scenes promoting it. And at the children's camp the women were there as mothers, cooks, and at the beginning of the summer, the parents and Ladies' Auxiliary always helped get the camp cleaned up for the new season. And really, Mine Mill was the heart of the community. It's kind of nice that here today we do have a few of our charter members — Anne Macks is here, and another charter member, Pearl Chytuk.

When I think of all the variety of things that the ladies' auxiliaries did! Do you know, when the halls were built<sup>11</sup> there were ladies' auxiliaries formed in each of the halls, and they had a central committee that would meet once a month with representatives from all the various auxiliaries, and I remember Pearl Moir was chairman of that committee. Remember the Murdockville strike in 1958? We put on a supper to support them. In 1961, of course, we had to meet down in the 902 hall.<sup>12</sup> There again, the women were catering, putting on their favourite suppers, always raising money for things in the community. They supported so many causes through these efforts. Someone once referred to the Ladies' Auxiliary as social workers because they supported so many things in the community. The auxiliary was active in the Red Feather campaign, in raising support for the people in the sanatorium, the plastic surgery ward at Sunnybrook Hospital, the Vietnam civilians, and also the welfare of our own members. During the strike in 1958 at INCO, our wonderful women looked after the clothing store downstairs in the union hall, and we also went out and visited people, seeing that no one went without during that time. Do you remember in 1954 when the Mine Mill theatre troupe put on the Joe Hill presentation? I was rather interested in going through some papers with Dieter Buse; I came across a letter from Barry Stavis, [playwright and author

<sup>11</sup>Mine Mill union dues went into building halls for union and community activities. In the 1950s the union built halls in Sudbury, Coniston, Lively, Garson, Richard Lake, Chelmsford, and Levack.

<sup>12</sup>During the raids by Steel the union met in the headquarters of Local 902, a general workers union organized by Mine Mill and chartered in 1949.

of the play "The Man Who Never Died") and also a letter from Paul Robeson saying how happy he was that we were going to present Joe Hill. And I mustn't forget to say that when all these exciting things were happening in the community Mike Solski was the president of Local 598, and that made quite a difference. Some other things too that my husband was interested in — remember the low-rental programs? A lot of the women were interested in that program. Women were also active in the efforts to extend the public library system. As soon as we had the halls in the outlying areas we were able to get libraries out there.

Of course after the merger in 1967, it was rather difficult, but I remember the women — I notice Lillian Mason here — how they struggled and worked and catered to earn money because there were still many things that we wanted to support in the community. I mustn't forget to mention the Christmas parties. Remember the Mine Mill Christmas parties; there were thousands of youngsters, weren't there? There were always the women there who were helping. In 1966 the auxiliary made its views known to the Select Committee on Mining, Taxation and Youth, and they also opposed the sales tax when it was first put in.

There were so many things that they did and these are just some of the things that I can remember. Now, I hope I haven't left out anything, but here again I'm going to go back again to the wonderful women of Mine Mill. I remember their concern for the children. A lot of the programs that the people participated in then were sponsored by the auxiliary, and the women were always around to help at these events.

I think too that it was fortunate for us that we were able to go to union meetings. We had a voice, we could always express our views. We couldn't always vote, but we were able to be there and express our views. I think that was very important. Now I hope I haven't left out anything about those wonderful women of Mine Mill.

MIKE SOLSKI<sup>13</sup>: I have a couple of words to say. Last night, the lady that spoke to us by the name of Laurell Ritchie was critical of the omissions in the 100th anniversary brochure. Ruth has expressed similar feelings, and all I want to say to anyone in the future is that if you're looking for pictures, there's plenty of them. There are 3,000 at the public library, the reference library here in Sudbury, and 95

<sup>13</sup>Mike Solski was chairman of the Mine Mill organizing committee at the Coniston plant between 1942 and 1944. Since that time he has served Mine Mill in a number of capacities including vice president in 1947, as secretary-treasurer in 1951, and as president of Local 598 from 1952 to 1959. He was also eastern Canadian director of District 2 during the Steelworker raids. He was secretary of the first Canadian Mine Mill Council in 1953, and secretary of the constitutional committee that established Canadian autonomy in 1955. Along with John Smaller, Mr. Solski has published a book on the history of Mine Mill. He has also been involved in local politics, including terms as Coniston mayor from 1963 to 1973 and mayor of Nickel Centre from 1973 to 1979.

per cent of them have names and dates on them. So no more goofs like you've committed this time. Now can I start?

We've been asked to review the past. I have some difficulty selecting what to talk about in the past. There are so many good things and so many things that are not so good. I guess I can feel fortunate that I've had the opportunity to record some of that past, and I was very happy to see here last night both Liz and Harry Smaller, Jack's children, who helped me to put the history of Mine Mill together. I know there's a lot of detail in that book that I could refer to in speaking here this evening, but as much as there is in that book, there is still a lot more that could and should be written. I hope that with all the interviews being done by all these young people at the university, that you're not wasting our time, that you put the information into book form so that there will be more said about the history of this very important union, a union that has done so much for working people not only in this community, but throughout the United States and Canada.

Throughout this conference a number of people have referred to the subject of political action — independent political action. Well, this union of the Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers was a pioneer in that field. Many, many years ago we took independent political actions, or our predecessors did, and as a result of those actions we were able to establish legislation setting out the eight-hour day, compensation legislation. We elected people of all political stripes, as long as they were committed to doing a job for the miners and the smeltermen. How ironic it is, at least to me, to see those big badges that some of you people are carrying around. [The reference is to the "Pink Slip" Floyd badges that represented the fight against the social contract legislation in Ontario]. We were criticized for our independent stand. Well my God, those of you that tied yourself to the tail of one party have sure been getting a whacking from that tail in the last couple of months. There are lessons to be learned, even at this late stage.

This union was a pioneer in many fields. We look around here, we've been spoiled in the Sudbury area, we had so much [working class] culture. Half of it now has disappeared. But you go back to the early days, both in the United States and Canada, we pioneered in those fields. We looked after our own sick, we looked after our own widows, and some of that even rubbed off at Mine Mill in Falconbridge. Not too long ago, Jim Tester and his group of pensioners took on the cause of fighting for the widows in Falconbridge. And they attained, I think, a \$150 pension for the women that never had a cent. Unfortunately, that didn't happen in the company that I worked for; at INCO, all they got was \$125 in one lump sum, and nothing else since that time.

When we were completing the manuscript for the book, a lot of new information surfaced. We were not able to include too much of it in our book, but for the benefit of the future generation, I hope somebody else will. We accidentally came across the Professor Boudreau files at the Sudbury university.<sup>14</sup> There were only

<sup>14</sup>This material is now accessible in the Laurentian University Archives, Laurentian University, Extension Division Papers, Workers Educational Association files, 1958 to 1962.

seven files at the university, but it sure exposed some of the dirty work that went on in the early 1960s. Another booklet that some of you in academic fields have no doubt seen was put out by Father Hogan.<sup>15</sup> He revealed the connections that went on in the clerical society to help to do us in. You can even learn something from *The Unfinished Journey*, the story that was written about the Lewis family.<sup>16</sup> It may not be in all the stories, but look into the references and you'll find a lot of material there. I recall one at this time: Oliver Hodges [Organizational Director of the CCF trade union committee] admitted how they were boring from within to do this union in. So, despite all the good things that we did — we had established the highest wages and conditions anywhere in Canada — that wasn't enough. The mining companies were out to get us, at least they wanted to weaken us, the other unions wanted our membership, the politicians certainly wanted to control us, and the church certainly wanted to influence us. So it's no wonder we had difficulty in surviving. But the things that this union did, as Clint said in his comments, will never die.

When we look to the future — I've heard a lot today and yesterday about globalization. You want everything to be big — unions to be big, and the bigger you are, the bigger match you're going to be for the employers. Well, I think it's a lot of hogwash because all I've got to do is look back at some of those radio programs,<sup>17</sup> and the literature, that's the story they gave us all the time. Be big and you're going to get everything. Well, we didn't get too damn much. Because after the raid here was finished and the smoke cleared, it took three or four years and about seven strikes to get back on your feet. So be very careful of the moves that you make. You're better off to be small and have the membership understand what the heck you're doing and what you're fighting for instead of being big and somebody on top dictating the terms that you're going to work under.

<sup>15</sup>The reference is the paper presented by Brian Hogan, "Hard Rock and Hard Decisions: Catholics, Communists and the IUMMSW — Sudbury confrontations," paper presented to the Canadian Historical Association in May 1985. The paper is based on interviews with Steelworkers and Catholic priests active against Mine Mill during the late 1950s and early 1960s.

<sup>16</sup>Cameron Smith, *The Unfinished Journey: The Lewis Family* (Toronto 1989), esp. 306ff and Appendix O.

<sup>17</sup>Steelworker radio broadcasts during the raids argued that increased pay and benefits would ensue if Steel represented miners and smelter workers.

RAY STEVENSON<sup>18</sup>: Sister chair and fellow panellists, I want to say to Clint Jencks, el palomino, that if he can start off by singing Joe Hill, by golly, I'm going to go right along with him and I'm going to read the contract miner's poem which I wrote for the 100th anniversary Sullivan celebration in Kimberley, BC. I'm not going to read it all, it's too long. But this is the way the contract miner starts his day:

We'll all go below when they ring the shaft bells;  
And stumble along to the company hells.  
Hard hats on top and our feet in wet boots,  
Rock dust and smoke invading our snoots.  
We're more sick than healthy but it can be said  
We're strong and quite virile and only half dead.

So I'll leave it at that. If you get the Mine Mill anniversary magazine you'll see the whole thing in there, if you want to read it.<sup>19</sup> I want to disassociate myself from the production of this magazine. I had something to say in it, I'm even listed as a contributing writer here or something, but I'll be gall-darned if I'm going to accept responsibility for the fact that the names of the Ladies' Auxiliary members were not there. That's not my fault. Neither am I going to accept responsibility for the errata we had to insert which got those cutlines back in their proper place.

What I would like to do in the few minutes I have here is to discuss the character of the problems that confront the metal mining workers of Sudbury, of Canada, of North America, of the world. And I may find myself in disagreement with my old president here, Brother Solski, but that's not a new thing. We had a couple before, Mike. Not serious, but some. I believe that we now confront a situation nationally, internationally, on a world scale that goes like this: 3,500 workers were laid off at a van plant in Scarborough, Ontario last week. In the meantime, General Motors, Ford, and I don't know who else are setting up consortiums of capital to invest in Russia under a capitalist regime to produce what? Quality motor cars. Who's competing with who? If you want to turn to the question of metal producers of nickel, in the Kola peninsula in Russia today they are producing primary nickel at an unprecedented rate, sneaking it onto the international metals market at scrap-rate prices, undercutting the price of nickel generally. This is happening in the whole world metals market. What the downfall of the Soviet Union has created is some of the biggest appetites that ever came down the pipe, and they are looking for new

<sup>18</sup>Ray Stevenson became involved in Mine Mill in 1938 in Kirkland Lake before coming to Sudbury in 1950. He was on the executive of Local 598 and edited the *Mine Mill Herald* for many years. He was elected to the Canadian Mine Mill Council in 1953, and was on the national executive board from 1955 to 1961. Mr. Stevenson then worked for the Steelworkers between 1967 and 1978 in public relations and educational programs. In 1978, he became the first Canadian on the secretariat of the World Peace Council in Helsinki.

<sup>19</sup>"The Western Federation of Miners and Canadian Union of Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers," (Winnipeg 1993).

areas of investment to make more money under Mr. Yeltsin. That's why they gave him all the money to run his Tammany Hall campaign over there and make sure that he stayed there to look after American capital interests. That's what it was all about. Don't let the media kid you.

This situation confronts the working people with a new necessity. It's not new, exactly, but it's even more urgent now than it was in my day. The fact of the matter is, unless the workers of Russia who are working for this new capitalist bunch over there, whoever they may be, and unless the nickel workers of Canada working for INCO, Falconbridge, and so on can begin to discuss with each other, "How are you going to meet the see-saw whiplash that they're going to put upon you?" then the strength of your organized labour movement will go down. And I think it's vitally important at this stage of history to understand that, because it's across the board. And I'm not here trying to rejuvenate the Soviet Union or anything of that nature; that's a little bit beyond even my powers. But I will say that the organization of organized contact between workers of Canada, the United States, and Mexico and so on, to deal with the new world order of George Bush and his capitalist friends, is something that you must now understand and undertake.

I want you to understand, and I want all of us to understand, when we're talking about the Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers' Union or the Western Federation and the 100th anniversary, we're not talking about some little peanut outfit. Precisely because we were the workers involved in the production of the metals that made capitalism work in North America, it gave us power. They fought us from day one, it goes back to 1863, not just '93, when the workers, the gold miners of Gold Hill and Virginia City in Nevada had this notion that they would find a way, as we did here in Sudbury and all over the place in the metal-mining industry, through collective action to be able to put a price on the only thing we have to sell: our ability to work. And if the companies didn't buy our ability to work, we were down the chute. So the history of this union is a struggle for that collective strength. Last night we heard a man from the government talking about all the terrible things that are happening in the bargaining field.<sup>20</sup> I'm not here to tell you [how to do things] — I'm too old for that — but I am here to say this: when the ideology and the understanding of the production of wealth, of values, commodities, that can be put into the marketplace depends only on entrepreneurship, the new religion of entrepreneurship, they have switched attention from the fact that people still work to produce goods that you can eat, that you can sleep in, that you can live in and so on. [Entrepreneurship] is what the new religion is, and you'll get it from every angle. The media claims that only entrepreneurship produces anything in this world anymore, while the sweat that you people who worked underground or in the smelter put into this thing doesn't amount to a hill of beans. That's all bloody nonsense, and it is designed to take you away from the notion of collective action

<sup>20</sup>Presentation by John O'Grady, "Reasons for the decline of collective bargaining in the private sector," 13 May 1993.

to achieve the minimum programs of agreement amongst workers. You know unions weren't established to decide what church you went to or what you did in your spare Sundays, or where you were born, or your colour or creed, or anything else. None of this was part of the union mandate. The unions were designed to define and establish minimum programs, if you please, upon which people could agree. And I say that as an old organizer. And Mike [Solski] will agree with me and all the people will. When you went in to organize a plant, what did you do? You found the thing that everybody could agree with, not what they could disagree about, not some alternative program that would cause them to divide and split. You found the thing they could agree upon. When you got that, you had that place organized and there is no place, no place, where a boss, a corporation, can beat workers who are united, organized, know their union program, and know where they stand.

Let me conclude with one thing. I read some of the press here and I see it is doing nothing new. I can recall how over 50 years, how *The Sudbury Star* and Bill Mason, who founded *The Sudbury Star* and was the most fearless publisher that the world ever saw, he'd fight anybody at the drop of a hat over any issue except one. Never in those 50 years did there ever appear a critical note about International Nickel. That's the truth. At the same time as they were not criticizing INCO, they were finding ways and means to split Mine Mill unionists like Tom Taylor away from me and Mike Solski and to split the women and so on — to create the divisions amongst us that made it impossible for us to act collectively. That's what the Steel raids were about, that's what all this nonsense of the Cold War was about, because they feared, like the devil feared holy water, the notion that the nickel miners of North America would stand shoulder to shoulder, understanding their own programs, carrying out union activities, because that reality was going to cost them money. That was going to cost the boss money.

Finally, when we talk about Mine Mill and the formation of the CIO, please understand I'm not doing this out of any great notion that I'm going to run for office or something like that; at my age it's too late. Fifty years ago, in the proceedings of the 40th convention of the International Union of Mine Mill held in Butte, Montana, what do I see? Let me read it:

Dear Mr. Robinson [that was Reid Robinson, he was our president]; American miners are doing their full share in the all-out effort of the American people and their allies to overthrow the Axis power [you remember the fascists were around] and to overcome all the evil for which they stand. The metal miners and their associates, like patriotic Americans in all walks of life, will continue to give their best in the months ahead, and thus speed up the ultimate victory which every day draws nearer [that was dated August the 30, 1943]. Yours very sincerely, with hearty greetings to all of your members, Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

Over here — everybody wanted to get into the act at that time — Henry Wallace, the vice-president. Over there, Dwight D. Eisenhower, commanding

general, allied forces in North Africa. I can go back to 1939 and I find the same thing. My God, how respectable we were Clint, eh? But we were in the game, we were in the game and they bloody well knew it. And they had to pay attention to us. And the Cold War, which was instituted over international politics, political problems, came down on our union, on Mine Mill, because we were the target union that said regardless of what you say, we are going to stand for a world at peace, and the production of goods and things for a decent future for all humanity. That was our program and we preached it from the treetops, and we went into the field and organized on that basis. And we won support, and by God, I'm proud of it, and I'm proud of you, and I'm proud of all of us here.

PEARL CHYTUK<sup>21</sup>: Hello everybody. Nice to see some of my old friends that I hadn't seen for so many years. I'm getting emotional about it. I came to Sudbury in 1941 from Regina, Saskatchewan and I never lived in a company town before arriving here. I found it so very different, people were always whispering [when talking about organizing], even your friends. The war was already on and INCO was hiring people. The reason we came out here was that my late husband came to get a job. The conditions were very bad so I got a job as well, worked with people and I was a bit surprised because out west we were talking unions for beauty salons and restaurant workers, but in Sudbury, people were reluctant to talk about it. One lady took me aside — we were working in the Red Cross at some lady's home — and the woman said to me, "You be careful. Don't talk union because in Sudbury if you talk union and if your husband is working for INCO he isn't going to be there very long." I couldn't believe it, that things were happening like that, but apparently they were. And by 1942 I got a call from INCO. INCO was declared [a war industry] — I don't know the right word; they were producing nickel for armaments and the women got to work in the smelter. Some got to work in the mines; I was lucky, I got a job at Copper Cliff smelter. I worked at the nickel reverberator. I weighed at that time 116 pounds and when I went on the job my instructor give me a bar. I don't know what you'd call a bar, it's not your fireplace stick. It was about four times as long and it weighed fourteen pounds. And he says, "You want to keep your job, with this you tap the arms as the nickel turns around in the roaster so it doesn't pile up and break the machinery."

So I learned fast and it was very interesting to work as a manual labourer because you have something in common with others and you become very close with the people. It didn't matter whether you were a man or a woman. You had this

<sup>21</sup>Pearl Chytuk was a member of Local 598 when she worked at the Copper Cliff smelter during World War II. She is a founding member of the Ladies' Auxiliary Local 117 and has remained active in the auxiliary for about 30 years. After her retirement from active employment at INCO she worked at several different jobs. She has been a leading member of the left-wing Ukrainian movement in Sudbury.



respect for each other because we were there to do a job and before very long we used to meet in little groups. Different people were talking. There was talk about the unions. I also heard it from my husband. He used to go to some meetings at night. At first they were meeting in houses, then when the meeting got too big, they would rent some place. They were very secretive about it. But by then it was getting big and people were less afraid to talk about the union. It was really getting great, it got so great that they rented a place on Lisgar Street, a pretty big building. The first time I attended a meeting the whole building was full. They explained to us how to organize, but we still had to be very careful. We had a piece of paper and a pencil, and then you got your friend's name. He gave you a dollar, you got his name and address, and once a month when we went to the union meeting you turned these slips in, and your friend got a union book with a stamp, initiation stamps, and they got called to the meeting and got sworn in as members. Those were the days when your dues were not deducted from the company. When I think back on it now, how dedicated these union people were; each one every month brought a dollar to the Mine Mill Hall. I think that was a terrific union because I think there's a difference in trade union commitment when the workers are so dedicated that they voluntarily pay their union dues each month. Years after that when I worked under a different union and the dues were deducted from their pay checks, the workers said, "You know, just deduct it. I'm doing my thing for the union. Why do you want me to go to the meeting?"

So it was a great experience for somebody coming from out west and thrown into this great big dirty smelter with lotta, lotta smoke. It's clean now, you wouldn't know it's the same place it was in '42. I worked at the smelter until '53. The war had ended, that is, the actual war ended, and then the Cold War began. So we were all laid off. It was the same thing, there wasn't too many places to work but more workers worked, and they start opening other places. Then there were jobs for women but there was no factory or anything for women to work in. In the meantime there was a Ladies' Auxiliary being organized. I knew that when I was no longer in the labour force, the best thing I could do was to be with the women. Because we had a terrific Mine Mill Local 598, they wanted us to be there. Mine Mill husbands and sons wanted their mothers, their wives, or their girlfriends to know where they worked, to know what conditions were like where they worked. So Local 117, the Ladies' Auxiliary was a very nice organization to belong to. When we applied for a charter for our local, the constitution required that we have 25 women members to be able to get our charter. The first night we went to sign up women, I am sure we must have had over 68 women, never mind the 25 required. Women just lined up to join up and that was a great feeling. Since then I have worked in other jobs, but no matter what other jobs I did, I tried to see that we had a union in the place, but some big companies were rather difficult to organize. So I stayed in the Ladies' Auxiliary for many years, 25 years. I got a pin from the union and after that I think I stayed on another few years. You'll not know my age. But it was a very informative, very good organization. We worked hand in hand with

our brothers in the locals and we had the right to sit in Local 598 membership meetings. We had a voice. We had no vote, but we had autonomous power as the Ladies' Auxiliary, and our requests were never refused by Mine Mill. We attended their conventions. We had a voice at Mine Mill conventions, no matter where they were held and that was great.

So you get older and you think you're not needed anymore. Then we have this conference today. Even last night, the people I met again and it started coming back to me. My goodness, it's not over. We're still here. One thing I want to say is that people should be always organized no matter what job they work at, because without being in a union organization you're going to be divided, no matter who you work for. Your management, they are very clever. Remember, we are the working people who've taught them a lot of things. They didn't know too many things, but now we're getting clever and they're learning from us, so they monopolize us. All I have to say to the future generation, wherever they are, is that you must organize and work together, because if you don't work together you will always be divided and it's very hard to come to a [correct] decision when you're only one person. You might work in a place where they sort of make you a head of department or you're the head of this, or you're the head of that, and they are working you to your bones. They just give you a name, there's nothing else [to the position because] you still have no say in the corporation or whatever it might be. But they just make you feel you're somebody a little bit better and that the guy who's behind you, he isn't as good as you are. This is put up to divide the working people. I had so much to say and now when I have my chance to say it then I'm stuck.

FRANCIS "BUDDY" DEVITO<sup>22</sup>: I can't boast of any record of working in the industry. I was born in Trail, lived there most of my life, and therefore I am very familiar with the mining and smelting industry. As you know, Trail is the centre of that activity in British Columbia, and in fact at one time the Trail smelter was the largest non-ferrous smelter in the world and employed close to 5,000 people. My trade is as a shoemaker; however, I also am a student of history and I've been involved in community activities on every level, including provincial politics, so I'm well aware of the kinds of things that help develop a community and hold us together.

I'd like to just outline briefly the history of Mine Mill from our point of view in the west, and that history is a little more extensive than it is in the east. At one time Trail was the centre of an organizing effort by the Western Federation of Miners, and in 1895 there were ten local unions around Trail that were organized

<sup>22</sup>Francis E. "Buddy" DeVito was a legionnaire and Mine Mill organizer and executive member in Trail, British Columbia. He worked in Sudbury in the early 1960s as a national union representative, and on public relations during the Steelworker raids. He was also active in municipal politics and was elected mayor of Trail.

by the Western Federation of Miners. Many of the communities no longer exist; however, the record is very clear, if you read Mike Solski's book, about the involvement of the Western Federation of Miners in those communities. At that time the Western Federation of Miners were also organizing coal miners on Vancouver Island and in the Crow's Nest Pass. Of course I don't imagine there were any jurisdictional regulations at that time. The miners in Rossland were successful in electing an MLA to the legislature, and in 1899 the BC legislature passed the first eight-hour day legislation in Canada on behalf of those miners. The Western Federation of Miners was active until 1910 and then it petered out.

At the same time the One Big Union, the OBU, and the Industrial Workers of the World, the IWW, were also active. In 1917 there was a strike in Trail led by Ginger Goodwin. At that time the war was going rather badly for the Allies and the strike — which of course affected very much the supply of lead and zinc for the war effort — caused considerable consternation amongst the generals of the allies and their governments. Ginger Goodwin, who left Trail to escape being inducted in the army after he had been classified unfit to serve in the services, was then hounded down on Vancouver Island and was subsequently shot by a hired policeman. To this day that event is hotly controversial because there seems to be no question with the evidence that's accumulating that there was an order placed against Ginger Goodwin's life. Following the 1917 strike — for any number of reasons the strike only lasted one month — there was very little union activity in Trail until the 1930s. Then a workers' committee, a workman's committee was formed, which was largely a company union. I think you had something similar to that in Sudbury, it was called the Nickel Rush, wasn't it? Until that time of course there had been no success in organizing a union. In 1938 Art Evans came to Trail working for the Mine Mill union and tried to organize a union but he was run out of town. It wasn't till 1944, during the war, when the government relaxed the regulations regarding union organizing that Local 480 was organized. It held the certification from then until 1964 when Mine Mill merged with Steel. You know of course the famous Harvey Murphy, or some say infamous Harvey Murphy, who spent a lot of time in Sudbury during that period. He was very active in the organizing of not only Local 480 in Trail, but Local 951 in Kimberley. Mines all over the province were under the certification of Mine Mill. It was the best period for Mine Mill, and I think that was the best period for smelter workers and miners right up until 1950 when the union raids started.

In 1950 Steel raided Trail, and I became involved in the union. I had served in the services for four years, had been radicalized because of the experience that I had in our own community and which I had during the war. I came out of the war very much an admirer of the Soviet Union and therefore considerably attracted to communism. My admiration for the Soviet Union, which I still have today, is based upon my knowledge that it was a sacrifice of the people of the Soviet Union that saved my life as a serviceman. If the Soviet people hadn't undertaken the sacrifice and the casualties that they had during the war, I'm sure that the allies would have

lost the war. Of course that might be debated but that's how I feel about it. Following the war in 1950 — or was it, 1947 — I was the first young veteran of the Second World War to be elected President of the Canadian Legion in that community, a position which I held for two years. In 1950 I was charged with being a communist because I was a member of the Canadian Peace Movement and we were objecting to the war in Korea and Truman's threat to drop the atomic bomb on China. However, I turned up at the trial and the chap, the comrade that charged me, didn't turn up at the trial. Just a few months ago I received a life membership in the Canadian Legion in Trail. Some of what I stood for seems to have been vindicated.

Then following the 1950 raid in Trail, after Steel lost the final vote, I left the union and went into municipal politics. I stayed as an alderman on the city council until 1960, until the raids started in Sudbury. Al King and Harvey Murphy, and other friends of mine asked if I'd like to go to Sudbury, and I said, "Well, why not?" And so I left my job and came here to work for the union for three years. I left in 1963 after Steel won the vote at INCO. I came back in 1965 for a couple of weeks for the second ballot and they lost the vote again there, and the merger of Mine Mill and Steel took place.

So I've always had a very close tie with the Mine Mill union, and I view my time in it with a great deal of satisfaction. I see nothing to apologize for in that period [of our history]. Certainly the three years in Sudbury were amongst the happiest years of my life because in many ways Sudbury is just Trail with the same kind of cosmopolitan community, with the same kind of social, economic and ethnic tensions, and so I felt very much at home here. However, I must say to the people who have driven through Trail and through Sudbury — and there's a lot of Canadians who seem to have driven through Sudbury and Trail — and they say, "My God! You lived in two of the worst cities in Canada." Well, I admit that sometimes these communities were very blighted but I certainly am very happy to be back here today.

Following my return to Trail, I ran for city council again and was eventually elected to the council as mayor and held that position for six years from 1967 to 1973. Something like that. I was a great mayor. I just couldn't add, that's all. I retained my interest in politics. I haven't recanted very much or very little and I haven't changed very much except some of my feelings about the trends in our country are stronger now than they were in those early years. After leaving the city council — I quit after six years, I felt that was long enough for people to listen to me and I also felt that I was wearing out, that my energy was diminishing — so I decided to try something else. Then at the beginning of the Vietnam war I became involved in the peace movement, and I was instrumental in forming a peace group which was active until two or three years ago when apparently or supposedly the Cold War ended. Since then I have become active in the mental health field and I'm now president of the local Canadian Mental Health Association and I serve on the provincial board of that group.

Rosa Luxemburg is reported to have said — you know she was the German Social Democrat who was murdered [in 1919] — that the German people at that time had a choice between barbarism or socialism. Now I know there are a lot of arguments about what's socialism or what isn't, but there seems to be fewer and fewer arguments about barbarism, and we're living in a time of barbarism if I've ever seen it in my 73 years. You've heard a great deal about this today and so I won't pursue that. There are some better able to speak about that than I am, but I think that as Pearl has said, and as will be said by others here today at this table again, and for the next two days of this conference, that the future depends on us learning to live together [and] to band together in unions, and I prefer to see the unions band together. The form that the unions will take as we've heard will probably be dictated by circumstances, but there is no question about the importance of unity amongst the working people. I believe there is a class struggle in this country. I believe there always has been one, and we see some manifestation of that when even the politicians and the newspapers are talking about the middle class in this country disappearing. Well, I guess there was a middle class, but I'm certainly sure that there is a ruling class and I think that I made my choice early in my life to join Mine Mill and chose that way to join the class struggle, and I see that the struggle continues. That is what I think, and I don't want to admonish you, you all know much more about working in industry than I do, but when I was in my business as a shoe repair man one of the things I learned to do very well is save soles and nail heels and I'm still doing that.

LUKIN ROBINSON<sup>23</sup>: I would like to say a few words about the past, the present, and the future. My past with Mine Mill goes back to 1952, when I became Canadian Research Director and worked in this position until the end of 1962. They were eventful years.

One of the themes of this 100th anniversary celebration is the role and significance of alternative unions, which in the past has generally meant left-led unions. It is worth remembering that in the 1930s and early 1940s, all unions organized by the CIO and in Canada in the CCL were alternative unions, since they broke away from the AFL and TLC, and established themselves independently. These unions were largely built by the efforts of Communists and left-leaning people -- fellow travellers they used to be called -- and many of them were left. Mine Mill and other unions in Canada won bargaining rights and negotiated their first contracts during the Second World War. The war against the Axis powers, progress for labour, and plans for the post-war world went hand in hand; they were all part of the same historic struggle.

<sup>23</sup>Lukin Robinson has worked for the population division of the United Nations where he helped to organize and unionize people. He was research director of Mine Mill in the 1950s and early 1960s. He currently works for OPSEU in Toronto.

With the end of the war, a tidal wave of hope and determination to create a better world took hold and raised the spirits of millions of people throughout the United Nations. Fascism would be wiped out. There would be full employment, rising standards of living, and social security from the cradle to the grave. And there would be lasting peace based on friendship and cooperation with the Soviet Union, which had suffered the most and made the greatest sacrifices in the common cause. President Roosevelt proclaimed the Four Freedoms and said, "The way to have a friend is to be one."

A better world in those days meant that the capitalism of the 1920s and 1930s would have to be radically altered, the power of capital drastically curtailed, the claws and fangs of capitalism pulled out, clipped, or filed down. People had to have more power than they had before the war. But the capitalists and their governments, above all the United States, had other ideas. They saw the united strength of working people as a threat. They decided that the threat had to be broken. They also knew that their interests and the interests of the socialist countries were in conflict, so that the unity of the Big Three and their Allies, with the US and England on one side and the Soviet Union on the other, also had to be broken. All of a sudden, the Soviet Union became the enemy, the threat to peace and freedom, the evil Empire and insatiable aggressor, an ogre worse than Nazi Germany. This was the origin of the Cold War, which served both an international and a domestic purpose, which was to divide and sow distrust, and to cast the Left as subversives and as enemy agents. Anti-communism became almost a religion and a crusade. Also, the arms race was enormously profitable and helped to sustain the long post-war boom. The so-called mainstream of labour, Liberal as well as Social Democrat, endorsed and joined in this boss-inspired disruption. Some labour leaders sounded like McCarthy, years before the Senator became known. But the left-led unions refused to join despite being embattled and ostracized, or branded Communist-dominated -- a badge of honour to some but intended as a mark of infamy by those who used it. In spite of everything, the left-led unions refused to surrender. In their fight to survive, they relied on the support of their members and were a lot more democratic than many of the right-wing unions attacking them. Isolated, raided and defeated one by one, they nevertheless continued to uphold the post-war vision of progress through labour unity, disarmament, and peace, to oppose imperialism abroad and reaction at home. That was their historic merit and their significance for today. Some of them nevertheless survived and are back or getting back into the so-called mainstream of labour.

Personally, I am very glad to have been with Mine Mill for 10 years and to have taken part in some memorable battles. I love a good fight, and the companies, not to mention the Quislings and turncoats in the labour movement, gave us plenty to keep busy. I cherish the memory of the many good friends and union brothers and sisters with whom I worked. Except for the mistakes, which everyone makes, I regret nothing and apologize for nothing. For me, and I am sure for all of us at this anniversary celebration, they were good and fruitful years, among the best in

our lives. Today, everywhere we look in the world, capital is on the offensive and the gains working people made in earlier years are under attack. All reports agree that efforts to replace socialism with capitalism in the countries of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union have been accompanied by a disastrous fall in production and people's living standards. There is appalling poverty, galloping inflation, and the health system is in a shambles. Corruption and organized crime, as well as racist prejudices, are rising and there are bloody wars between some of the smaller nations and ethnic groups living side by side or intermingled in disputed territory. The budding capitalists and the so-called Liberals and reformers insist that the workers have to give up their socialist ideas, their attachment to collective ownership, job security, and social welfare. Naturally, the workers are organizing and fighting back. Contacts, exchanges, and solidarity between unions there and here are beginning to develop.

Conditions in Third World countries are just as bad and mostly worse. Ever since the debt crisis of 1980, countries which owe billions in loans have been forced to adapt their economies and turn their policies upside down and inside out on orders from the lending countries and the banks. It's a combination of Michael Wilson, Mazankowski, Bob Rae, and Roy Romanow on a grand and tragic scale. But the process began years before. In Iran, the CIA ousted Mossadegh in 1953, Guatemala was invaded and Arbenz overthrown in 1954, Allende was assassinated in 1973. National liberation and independence have been made a sham and a delusion. Billions of dollars a year flow from Third World countries, where most people are poor, to the industrially developed countries, where quite a few people are rich. Misery, disease, starvation, violence and corruption, and rampant abuses of human rights are the result. Imperialism is riding high, and everywhere the gap between wealth and poverty is growing wider.

Having won so much abroad, capital is now attacking labour and the gains of earlier years in the fortress countries of the system, which means here in Canada, the US, England, and all of Western and southern Europe from the Scandinavian countries to Greece, Portugal, and Spain. We have had recession for three years and restructuring for many more. We have had free trade, John Crow, and the GST. Even if there is a recovery, it will be without jobs, and unemployment will remain above 10 per cent for many years. Concession bargaining, which no one had ever heard of a few years ago, threatens wages and working conditions. According to *Business Week*, employers and governments must "hammer away at high wages and corporate taxes, short working hours and [what it calls] luxurious social programs." This is all in the sacred name of being competitive. Governments are therefore cutting back in education, health, and welfare. The Tories in Ottawa have for years focused on reducing the deficit, and provincial governments from coast to coast are now joining in. The significance of the deficit is not that it's large or small, but that it's used as a reason and an excuse to attack social spending on medicare, education, unemployment insurance, welfare, and to freeze public sector wages and to cripple public sector collective bargaining. The NDP government in

Ontario has gone overboard in surrendering to this drum beat campaign. Public sector workers are offered only reductions, with \$2 billion more to go. The result is that the public sector unions, representing 950,000 workers - one in five in Ontario - have come together in a common front, the Public Service Coalition, never before seen. Three months ago some of them didn't even know each other. No government of Ontario in the last 50 years, not even Colonel Drew, has cut public services and social programs and has attacked public sector workers the way this government has.

What is the conclusion of all this? My conclusion is that capitalism is as bad as it always was, and boasting that it has won the Cold War and freed itself of the enemy, it is now on the rampage. If left to its own devices, it cannot and will not serve the interests of working people. So the job of the trade union movement, and above all of the left, is the same as it has always been — to tell the workers the truth about the system they are up against; to help them organize, build alliances, and fight back; to curb the power of capital; to help them understand and draw the necessary lessons from their experience; to help them get a government which is not wholly the servant and instrument of business, and to give them confidence in their own strength and ability, in the long-run if not tomorrow, to build a better society than the one we have now. In my opinion, that means socialism in one form or another.

Socialism is for the time being in eclipse. But sooner or later, after we have assimilated the achievements, the mistakes, and the shortcomings of the past, it will revive and again inspire millions of people as it did in earlier years. Why? Because it grows organically and inevitably out of the struggle against capitalism. And, given the worldwide capitalist offensive, that struggle itself is as necessary and inevitable as it was when the Western Federation of Miners was founded 100 Years ago.

ROY SANTA CRUZ<sup>24</sup>: The first thing, as you say, is servicing the local union, but there's a lot of things that you can service and help. I remember when I was a full-time business agent, the membership thought that I had to just sit there and service. But I said, "Look, I gotta go out there and move into political action. I gotta move into many things in the community that would benefit you, not just service you."

Well, I just gotta tell you some history of my three generations of being miners; we go back as far as my grandfather. I married a Bisbee girl and my father-in-law was one of the deportees in the deportation of the Wobblies, you call them the Western Federation, but I think it was the Wobblies — IWW. They were trying to

<sup>24</sup>Roy Santa Cruz Jr. is a third-generation Mine Mill organizer, and he is a charter member of Mine Mill Local 938. He has held many different positions in the union and he has worked many years with Mexican-Americans. He also worked with the Steelworkers.



get that area [of Arizona] organized where 1,200 were put into bull pens. Bull pens, you've heard of in your history book, your history of Mine Mill, with our president under the Western Federation, Big Bill Hayward. Let me just let you know some of these things that were told to me when I was a young whippersnapper, a young guy, and then I'll give you the years that I spent in the Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers' Union. My grandfather was with the Western Federation. I think they had a strike in 1917 as he told me. And my mother — I don't know why I got so emotional, but I am emotional, but my mother who passed away two years ago was in the picket line with my grandfather.... I got involved with the Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers in the 1930s and 1940s, before the war. I worked as a teenager and I worked in the summers in the smelter where they had an extra board list that you could work, like an unknown worker... The first experience I had with one of the local unions, with the Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers, was Local 586 in the Globe-Miami area where there's a lot of history about which I was talking to Clinton Jencks. He asked me whether that local in Globe, Arizona is still intact. I told him no. The [company sold the property rights] and that's where the Western Federation started to get in to organize that particular area. The Morenci area, which is part of the Bisbee group, was also organized in the late 1930s — I think it organized in 1938 — and it took about two, three years to get a contract negotiated with Phelps Dodge. That local no longer exists. That local was one of the locals that was on strike against Phelps Dodge and yes, all the workers were replaced. We had a big struggle, big fight there in that area and all of the Phelps Dodge local unions went under. In that particular strike I was the sub-district director of the state of New Mexico and Arizona. There's no local unions in the Phelps Dodge copper industry.... They have been the most arrogant adversaries that we've had in negotiating collective bargaining agreements. I negotiated as a chairperson with the Dumont Copper Corporation, which is now Magma Copper, which is one of the biggest producers in Arizona. I negotiated agreements until 1987 prior to my retirement. I was one of the staff representatives from the Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers to have come in 1967 to Winnipeg to try to get all the workers in Canada to merge with the United Steelworkers of America. We also took a vote in some of the local unions that I serviced in Arizona and New Mexico. But most of the voters were very reluctant to say that we have to get into the mainstream of labour. I know that this local remained to carry the name of the Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers, and I have to say that you should be commended.... I know that some of the delegates that you sent to the convention in Winnipeg at that time were very adamantly against the merger.

A problem of raiding is that we become a target for every company and we are used as tools, and trying to use one against the other. It's like the raids we had by the United Steelworkers of America, which raided the Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers. We were trying to protect our local union at the same time we try to negotiate with the copper companies to try to get a contract. But we were so busy watching and seeing that we were not being raided that we couldn't actually do the

job that we supposed to do which was to get better wages and benefits for the working members of our organization....I still believe very strongly that the unions should develop a bigger group with few unions. I can remember a vice-president of this Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers, Charlie Wilson, who was out of Bessemer, Alabama. Charlie passed away about four years ago in Tennessee, but he used to tell me all the time that we have too many unions and we should have no more than five so that we can really develop a united front against management. And I still believe that very strongly. That's one of the reasons why I felt at that time that we should get into the mainstream, and we should merge with the United Steelworkers of America. I think that we ought to set our differences aside because we need to get together. Look at what's happened to labour in the United States. The United Steelworkers of America came from a million and a half members down to about 500,000. The other unions, it's the same thing. In the mining district that I used to represent, I had over 20,000 miners in Arizona, and we had another 8,000 in the New Mexico area. We have dwindled to approximately half of that amount. You can see that they have been able to lay off a lot of miners and so the thing that we must do is start organizing. I know that the entire atmosphere about disks, computers, things of this nature, and the industry has changed very much from the smelting and the milling process that we've headed into a different type of mining. I don't know how to explain it to you, but you have to go and see it yourself. They can make copper by pumping out water from underground into different sections, and with electrodes they make copper bars, pure copper balls and all that. You got only 24 people working in that process alone. So they have automated, oh they have really done some real work in trying to get as much money out [as possible]...

I want to say in conclusion... the Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers was the only union that really helped the struggle that Cesar Chavez had. Cesar Chavez organized the farm workers. He just passed away here about two and a half weeks ago. We, as Mine Millers, were the first union to recognize his movement, and financially we helped him....

JIM TESTER<sup>25</sup>: Well, I'm going to start by making a comment. There was a booklet put out on the hundredth anniversary of Mine Mill and for some reason the last 30 years in Mine Mill's history was missing from the booklet. In other words, only

<sup>25</sup>Jim Tester has been involved in the labour movement for over 60 years. He was in Kirkland Lake during the many important struggles there. Later, in Sudbury, he served as a steward and then as a member of the executive board. He became president of Local 598 in 1969 and served in that capacity until 1974. He is currently secretary-treasurer of Local 598 Falconbridge pensioners' organization and has been active in that organization since its inception six years ago. He is also a columnist for the local paper *Northern Life*. His analysis of conditions in the workplace and his critiques of political events have won him provincial journalism awards.

the first 70 years were dealt with. And as a matter of fact I think the last 30 years in the history of Mine Mill are just as important, and perhaps more important, than the first 70 in telling us who we are, what we are, and where we're going. So I'd like to give some of the highlights of the last 30 years to give some indication of how Mine Mill has functioned as a union and virtually just as a local union. That history starts with the wildcat strike in 1960 at Falconbridge. In my view and in the view of most labour analysts, it was provoked by the company and was assisted by the Gillis executive which had taken over Local 598. The wildcat resulted in the firing of 12 of our brothers who were very ably defended by Lukin Robinson. But unfortunately, it appears when you read the evidence and read the testimony that all these men were guilty of was not doing something, not of doing something, and what they didn't do was to advise the workers to go back to work, and for that they were discharged and that discharge was upheld. And I would state categorically that somehow the chairman of that board was influenced to make such a decision because in subsequent years that kind of a premise has been overruled and been changed, and no such liability exists on shop stewards at the risk of losing their jobs. In any event, I believe it was Lukin who had a conversation with the general manager of Falconbridge when they happened to be travelling together by train to Sudbury, and the general manager said to Lukin something to the effect, "Are these guys going to behave themselves now?" Lukin perhaps can tell you of that incident if he so wishes. But in any event, the idea was to destroy the militancy and the determination of the steward body at Falconbridge. And what I'm indicating is that the Gillis executive which we accused at that time of laying the groundwork for a Steelworkers' raid proved to be very much the fact of life. The Steel raids began in 1962 — that was two years later. Prior to the Steel raid, we at Falconbridge had attempted to separate ourselves from Local 598 by setting up an independent union at Falconbridge, a separate union for the Falconbridge workers under the banner of Local 1025 in 1961, and we were denied a separation by the Ontario Labour Board. That has to be one of the greatest ironies of history, because the Gillis executive strongly opposed us, the management opposed us, everyone opposed us and we were defeated. And if we hadn't been defeated we would have never have fallen into Local 598 and that is one of the twists of history that sometimes when you are defeated you actually win. But it isn't given to us to know the tortuous course of all history.

The Steel raids began in '62 and a vote took place at INCO and our union was declared defeated by 15 votes. At Falconbridge it was proven before the labour board that there were a number of forged cards among the Steelworkers' applications and it became so embarrassing for the Steelworkers when the numbers dropped down to less than 40 per cent that they withdrew their application. Following that, Local 598 carried on negotiations with Falconbridge in 1963 and it was precisely at that time — I guess it was the year before the negotiations — that the contract with the American government for nickel had ended. Falconbridge was enjoying a premium price for nickel in order to build up the American strategic

stockpile, and they had done that for ten years and they were able to expand their smelter and build their operations out at Onaping on the basis of that American finance, and that's the only money that I have ever known that came as a gift from the United States to Canada. I don't know of any other such occasion. But the financing essentially of the expansion of Falconbridge was paid for by the American taxpayers through the premium price that they paid for nickel. Thank you, Uncle Sam.

Negotiations were extremely difficult that year and Ken Smith, who was the national president of Mine Mill, was negotiating on behalf of our local union at Falconbridge. The strategy was to call for a strike mandate in order to force the company to give some concessions. An 85 per cent strike mandate was given, but the company refused to make any further concessions and at a union meeting that followed, the membership, which was largely packed by the Steelworker dissidents within our local, were insisting that the strike mandate be put into force. The national executive officers believed at that time that they had no alternative, but it so happened that Buddy DeVito was there as the public relations officer for Mine Mill and he and I had a serious discussion about the question, and he said to me, "Jim, what do you think about a strike at Falconbridge?" And we discussed the ramifications of it, and I said, in essence, "Buddy, we'll be chopped to pieces. There is a stockpile waiting there and they'll kill us." And Buddy went back to a meeting of the national officers and convinced them that a strike should not take place regardless of the strike mandate, and Ken Smith then ordered a vote of the membership on the last company offer. The number of people who were prepared to stand up at the union meeting and advocate accepting the contract because it was a poor one, their numbers were very small, but in fact the contract was accepted by a half of one per cent majority. Fifty and a half per cent voted to accept the contract and it was accepted. And I can say with some degree of pride that among all of the officers of the union I was the only one that was prepared to stand at the gate and hand out the contract proposition. Anyway, there was a great deal of discontent on the job because of having accepted this inferior agreement, but only for a month. A month later one third of the work force was laid off, back to 10 years seniority in virtually all the mine, mill, and the smelter, and then it was clear to the membership that if they had gone on strike they would have been walking into a trap. And I think that the respect of the membership for the leadership that they were given then helped to solidify their support for Mine Mill. We attempted to convince the company to accept a plan of sharing the work which they refused to do, and we had even got an agreement with the Unemployment Insurance Commission to allow workers to work for three weeks and go one week on unemployment insurance, but the company refused to accept this. We pointed out to them that they would have maintained their whole work force. The result was that they lost their best young miners and their best young smeltermen. And it was only a matter of six weeks to two months after they had laid them off, which they thought was going to last at least a year, in a month to two months they were trying to get

them back, but they had lost them irretrievably. They had gone elsewhere to get work. And I might say that the company never liked to be reminded of that mistake that they had made when they refused to listen to the union's proposition about sharing the work.

In 1965, we attempted a comeback at INCO. We had a sign-up campaign and we actually signed up something like 50 per cent of the INCO workers, and the main recruiting force for INCO workers was Falconbridge stewards and Falconbridge captains. We as a team were the greatest assistants that the INCO workers had in their sign-up campaign. We went from door to door in assisting them, while at the same time taking on a raid by the Steelworkers at Falconbridge. The Steel raid at Falconbridge was just as dismal in 1965 as it was in 1962, with them not being able to get 45 per cent of the vote. When it came before the labour board their vote was somewhere around the 40 per cent mark, 40 per cent of the sign up. As well, we were not able to win the vote at INCO for a large number of reasons, the main reason of which I think was because the workers wanted things to settle down. They were not prepared for another raiding campaign because they figured that if Mine Mill were to come back at INCO the Steelworkers had pledged that they would not give up, that they would continue to harass us. And I think the majority of workers at INCO accepted that. In any event that's what happened.

By 1967, the merger agreement was on the agenda and as you know the majority of Falconbridge workers were opposed to the merger. At the merger convention in Winnipeg we voted strongly against it and spoke against it. I know I spoke against it and said that as far as I was concerned, and as far as the Falconbridge members were concerned, this was not a merger agreement that was a victory for the trade union movement as they were claiming, that this merger with the Steelworkers was a treaty, if you like; [actually it] was the terms of surrender of Mine Mill. And I was not prepared, and I think if they had characterized it in that way that I would have accepted it, but by trying to characterize it as a victory, I certainly wouldn't accept it. I said as a terms of surrender they were generous terms, but as a terms of victory it was not acceptable.

In 1969, we got an opinion from the court which legally justified our existence as Mine Mill, that up until then it was questionable whether or not we were Mine Mill, but in Justice King's decision it was declared that we hadn't gone anywhere, that we were like the continuing Presbyterians who were entitled to their church even although the United Church combined the Presbyterians and the Methodists and the Congregationalists. But we were staying where we were, and the others had moved out so we were entitled to all the properties and everything that belonged to Mine Mill and the Mine Mill legacy, and that's how we happened to be here as an independent union. We didn't go anywhere, it's that the others left us. So if you want to say that we chose to be an independent union, that's how we chose it. The others left us. It's like a man whose wife has left him and you say he chose to be a single man.

I think this is a very important point and it does point to the future. In 1969 the Steelworkers were on strike at INCO. They were on strike about a month and a half, and the question came up, "What are the Falconbridge workers going to do? They are now going into negotiations." The company offered us 25 cents an hour down payment on our wages, which in those days was a fair amount of money, plus whatever the Steelworkers get you guys are guaranteed if you will continue working. Now, what did we decide to do? As Bill Walsh says, we did the honourable thing. We did the completely unexpected thing. Nobody would have anticipated we would have done what we did. Over 80 per cent of the workers voted to go on strike in support of the battle against the two nickel giants, and to strike shoulder to shoulder with the INCO workers. And we for the first and last time engaged in a joint Labour Day parade down the streets of Sudbury in 1969.

ANDY FLESCH: I have this question for Buddy DeVito. You were telling us some of the past history. You mentioned the 1917 strike in Trail, BC that lasted one month. You didn't elaborate on that. I just want to ask you was it successful or not?

FRANCIS "BUDDY" DEVITO: Oh, I'd say it wasn't successful. The workers there had no experience and there was, because of the war, great pressure put on them to resume work. And after Ginger Goodwin left, of course, and after he was executed as I said, the trade union movement in the community collapsed for a number of years.

JIM TESTER: I'd just like to make an observation. I think that we're all pretty impressed by what Lukin said, and I think most of the old left is pretty well coming to the same conclusion based on their own experience and based on their own knowledge, but Lukin is a rather unique person in many ways. He came to Mine Mill from the United Nations, having had a running battle with the Secretariat of the United Nations and as the organizer of one of the unions within the United Nations, one of the many battles which he won. We were very fortunate in being able to secure him as our Research Director. He served us very well and gave us many, many directions as far as the development of our union is concerned. Lukin Robinson, our friend and ally.

SPEAKER (UNKNOWN): I wanted to ask Pearl a couple of questions. I had the sense when you were talking that you were reluctant to go out of the industry at the end of the war and I wanted to know what had happened to the women who had been

working. What was your experience in that period? Did women want to continue working in industry and weren't able to, or exactly how did things happen? And I also wondered if you could say something about what the Women's Auxiliary did, the kind of work you did and what kind of priorities the Women's Auxiliary had?

PEARL CHYTUK: I think all the women liked to be recognized as human beings and really when they went to work in industry they had freedom, like the first time you have your own pay cheque you don't have to say, "Honey, leave me seven dollars for groceries" or something. We all felt that way. We got stronger, but there were no jobs for us to go to from there, outside of clerking jobs that is.

SPEAKER: You see, you skip over a lot when you say that. You weren't able to continue in the industry, you weren't allowed to?

PEARL CHYTUK: Oh, I must have forgotten it. The government let the women go because the war finished, and the soldiers who returned had the priority to get a job. That was the reason why the women were let go. And your second question about the auxiliary; it felt pretty good working together and it gave women something to do and allowed them to help their fellow men because we must understand that with great big corporations, not only the husbands went to work. His wife or mother was tied to the corporation too. She had to do the shopping. She had to prepare his lunch. We're the world's biggest lunch bucket carrying district here. She has to prepare lunch. There was no refrigeration on the job or wherever. So I always said INCO should be honouring the wives of the miners because the whole family works for INCO, or Falconbridge as far as that goes.

Yes, when the war finished, prices were going up and women took initiative — writing letters to their member of parliament, groups met and had a meeting with local MPs, with federal MPs, the women did it in an organized way. Then when the Cold War started, the auxiliary was very good about belonging to peace groups and in being active in peace work. They were active in protests that there should be no more war because the Cold War was really going, advancing pretty fast. And there was other things that the auxiliary did. You know, it's so long ago that I keep on forgetting it. I suppose I'll go home and then I'll remember and kick myself for not being able to say it now.

RICHARD MARCOTTE: I'd like to introduce myself, Richard Marcotte, Mine, Mill and Smelter Local 598; I'm a chief steward. I was a steward prior to becoming a

chief steward and I've also been elected as a trustee to the board of Mine Mill and it gives me a great honour to be here and I feel moved inside to be so close to labour activists with such insurmountable experience and knowledge that they have let me have by listening to them.

But the question that I have is this: as a young activist I felt that I took advantage of a system that was given to me where everything was running so smoothly that I didn't play a more extensive role and now I feel a little bit sorry about that but I can't correct that. I can only correct what is here, now. When I heard you speaking about the future, the situation you describe is one that also confuses the young people I have on the job. We have young people coming on the job and my job as a steward is to try to police the collective agreement and to try to keep the unity in the union and I've been trying to do this. What I would like to know is from your knowledge for the future how do we hold the union [Mine Mill] together? Do we need strength from a bigger union or do we need to bring the knowledge [from the past] and try to bring the union together? I'm confused. It seems to me that we're drifting apart rather than coming together. We're getting big in magnitude and we're getting lost in a whole chain of democracies, and we're not getting united enough within and working with the same common denominator, if you know what I mean. Could you answer that for me, please, if you may?

JIM TESTER: Well, the question that was asked is the one that I'm going to partially answer. I think it has to be understood that it would be a miracle if the younger generation was able to pick up from where we left off because they didn't come through the same experiences that we did. They didn't come from the same place that we did. They didn't come through the 30s. They didn't come through all the tough days. There was virtually 30 years of prosperity after the Second World War, as far as INCO and Falconbridge were concerned. And to expect the younger workers to have the same understanding and knowledge of that experience would be almost to expect a miracle. I feel rather deficient myself inasmuch as I wasn't able to pass on as much as I would have liked to have passed on to the younger workers. But certainly a large part of the educational experience is experiencing life itself and drawing conclusions from life itself. I know I was raised in the 1920s and my father, who had been very much influenced by the Western Federation of Miners and had heard Big Bill Haywood speak many times, used to talk about him in such admiring terms, but I really didn't know what my father was talking about until the depression began in 1929. And then the lessons began to come home. And it was much easier for me to draw conclusions than it was for the average person because I had that kind of a labour background. It wasn't until my actual experiences required answers to many of the problems that I really discovered that there really is a class struggle going on out there. So I wouldn't feel too badly about that as long as you are prepared to pick up the banner now and understand the struggles



that we are currently faced with (and they are considerable) and take it on from there. There are no easy answers. It's a tough road, but I'm sure that if you have confidence in yourself and your fellow workers, that you can achieve what we achieved in the years gone by.

**LUKINROBINSON:** One thing that you'll never be successful at, for you cannot teach, you cannot help younger workers to struggle by telling them that they have to read about the past and learn from the past. Once you realize from your experience that struggle is necessary, history may help you to deal with today's problems, but they are never the same in detail in each individual's life. You have to understand capitalism or what the boss is up to, not in terms of what the boss may have done in 1930 or in 1950, but what the son of a bitch is doing today. And if you can understand that, and if you can make your fellow workers draw the conclusion from experience that capitalism is in fact what is happening. That is how the unions grew in the 1930s, that is how Jim and I came to struggle, and all of us up here came to struggle. And your experience is different from our experience, and our experience is different from our parents' experience. So don't start telling them, "Yes, there were great heroes of labour in the past and we have to imitate them," because that's the wrong way. It's not only putting the cart before the horse, but it's shooting the horse and letting the cart run downhill.

**ROY SANTA CRUZ:** Like Lukin says, today you're confronted with a worker but don't tell him, "Here, you know, this is the way we did it in the 1930s and 1940s and 1950s." But I have a different observation. My observation about the labour movement here in Canada and the United States is that you got too many unions, and too many guys thinking all kinds of things. I always said, and Mine Mill said it in the 1940s, "You need one big union in the labour movement." In the 150 international unions down in the United States they all go in different directions. How in the hell are they going to pull you together? Do you tell a worker that this is the union, this is the way we're supposed to do it, and this is the way we did it in the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s? Amalgamation is one of the biggest challenges that I think the labour movement in Canada, and in America has to face, to see if they can get five big unions and that's all you need. You don't need anybody else. You got so many little groupies going here and there. This is one of the biggest things. If you put that together, and then you become political activists like we were in the early 40s and 50s and 60s. We were activists, in all of the mining community, this I know because I have been through it and I have service as an international union representative and I am a miner. We used to elect the mayor, the councilmen, and the sheriff of that particular community. That's the way you start to change things around. It's very true, we've gone through recessions, we've gone through all kinds

of things, and I'm very, very interested in what Lukin said with regards to the capitalism versus socialism, and that we have to fight back. It's not easy. You just have to get out there and do it....

I think the biggest task you should have, in my own opinion, is to get five big unions here in Canada and start from there, and start taking the capitalists, as Lukin says, on. You can't do it in all separate little sections. Unite. Unite into two, three, or maybe five big unions in Canada.

**KATHY BRANKLEY:** My name's Kathy Brankley, and for the past couple of years I've been fortunate enough to work with Mercedes Steedman researching the Women's Auxiliary, and if I could just add that you were asked the question about the other activities of the auxiliary. Two things come to mind. Pearl, you probably took it so much for granted about the fundraising that you did and this is part of the generosity I think that John Lang spoke of last night with the Mine Mill. The fundraising that was done on the international level — you were sending money, raising funds on your own as the Women's Auxiliaries, and sending them to labour communities around the world and supporting strikes in small communities in many different countries. That was one thing that struck me. You also did fundraising on the local level — certainly the strike funds that you contributed to, and the sustaining work that you did during the strikes, through all manner of fundraising, and also working to help needy families within the community and within the labour movement, which you did on an ongoing way, which you probably don't think of very much because it was second nature. The other point I want to make is about the nature of the convention resolutions that were passed by the local groups, and then went nationally, and to the North American level. These resolutions that were coming out of the Women's Auxiliaries dealt with issues in the 50s such as day care, preventative women's health, housing, and you mentioned peace, political issues — a very wide spectrum of resolutions. Things that were achieved 20, sometimes 30 years later, so I do want you to take the credit that you deserve on those points.

**LUKINROBINSON:** One of the figures that you'll certainly hear a lot about and should hear a lot about in connection with the history of Mine Mill here in Sudbury is Weir Reid. Now, Weir Reid was the cultural personification of the working class struggle to gain their own culture. When culture is under the domination of the capitalist class it weakens the working class, and his role was to try to give the working class a little bit of their own culture. If a worker is a militant worker on the job and goes home and watches three or four or five hours of TV, whether it's a woman or a man makes no difference, TV is one of the most insidious and powerful instruments for the dissemination of capitalist culture. It's not didactic. It's not overt. It's not

explicit, but it's there if you become aware of it. Let me put a different thing to you: how many kids ever learn anything about trade unionism in school? Why is it that there is no course of trade unionism in the school where the majority of children are children of working people? Who dictates the contents of what is taught at school? The working class? Hell, no. So, if you're an active unionist and especially if you're involved in some struggle which takes you away from your family, from your kids, that's rough on the kids and you have to explain to the kids what the significance for them is of why you're not there. And if Sudbury, which is a union town, could organize so as to have a school board that was represented, that was composed entirely of workers, and workers said, "We want the curriculum to be this and the hell with that," that would be a tremendous advance, so that you don't have to read it in the Sudbury "Dirty" Star, as we used to call it, or listen to the CBC news in the evening.

JIM TESTER: I hate to do this, but I think Lukin oversimplified the question of history, and he says of course, but the old saying I think is true, the lessons of history unlearned are doomed to be repeated. That's a truism, and the fact is that we do want to know where our own roots are. We do want to know where we're coming from, and we do want to draw some inspiration and courage from what our fathers did and from the battles that they engaged in to give us assurance that we can cope with the enemy in the same way. As far as I'm concerned, it's true that you have to deal with each experience on the basis of its merits. That's true, but you nevertheless use the knowledge that you have learned about other experiences in order to cope with this new one. And if you don't do that then you're flying blind. I don't know any tactic, not a single tactic, that's used by the bosses today that weren't used fifty years ago. The only thing was fifty years ago they never smiled. Today they're always smiling.

UNKNOWN: That's right.

UNKNOWN: That's a tactic.

JIM TESTER: That's a tactic. That's right. They're always your buddy. They're always your friend. They always want to cooperate, today, and that's the big transition, but the tricks are all the same. Every trick they pull off, every deal they pull off, is exactly the same as it was before. Now, in reading the history of the miners' union, for example, I read from the United Mineworkers' history that a coal miner never strikes against the stockpile. I learned that 40, 50 years ago, until it was ground into my consciousness. Never strike against a stockpile. If you have

to get laid off, get laid off. Don't take up your grievances, don't take up any causes. Wait until that stockpile's gone. Wait until you get back on the job, and then if you have to strike, strike because there's no stockpile left and he needs you. You don't strike when he doesn't need you and that's a basic rule. Now, is that out of date, is that old fashioned? Maybe it is, but I think it still holds. It still holds. I learned from my friend Bill Walsh,<sup>26</sup> that it's a question of who is the more uncomfortable, you or the boss. It's a battle of being uncomfortable. No worker ever feels comfortable in times of strike. He's suffering, and if the boss is not suffering you're in trouble. Maybe we should have Bill give another lecture on that question of comfort? So what I'm saying is that yes, Lukin's rhetoric is great stuff and it's important, but it's a part of the theatrics of organization. And while it's great to listen to, but nevertheless we have to — I think we have to — know our history because it sheds some light on the future. It doesn't solve the problems but it lights up what lies before us, and gives us encouragement to be able to tackle it.

**LUKIN ROBINSON:** I have to defend myself against that one. I never have thought that you shouldn't learn from history. The point that I want to make is that when you're talking to someone whom you're trying to organize and who is not yet a union man, if you start by telling him the history you turn him off. Once he's with you then you can tell him about the history and he'll be interested. And you have to know about the history in order to help him understand what he's going through and what's happening today. So it's a question of whether A comes before B or B comes before A, but they're both necessary. You have to walk on two legs, but you have to start putting the right foot forward, or the left foot forward, if you prefer it.

**ROY SANTA CRUZ:** You talk about history, you know, in the Mine Mill unions that I come from we were taught how to lecture in the high schools. In any school we could possibly get into or lecture to we would get on the pedestal and start talking about the union, our history. That's one thing I would like to ask, is that going on here, if not, start it. Ask the schools, tell them that you want to get a little history of your organization or of the labour movement in the schools. We did it back as far as the early 40s, going to high schools and universities and lecturing about the labour movement, and how the labour movement started. We were taught and we were instructed by people that knew that, and that's when we started as young teenagers and started talking about this in school. It's not too late to do it now, and that's one of the things that you must do, rather than trying to sell the union to a

<sup>26</sup>Bill Walsh was a United Electrical Workers organizer for about 30 years before becoming a labour consultant. He worked with Mine Mill for many years during negotiations and arbitrations.

guy beginning with the history, start telling him that history when he was a young guy in high school or in grammar school.

**ROLLY GAUTHIER:** My name is Rolly Gauthier, I'm a staff rep for Mine Mill. The question I was going to ask earlier today is that at least in my humble opinion, a lot of unions are somewhat introverted with regards to their actions. In other words, they're satisfied and content with just servicing the members and their full and only goal is to service the members. I would like to ask the panelists how important is it for unions to look at external forces or be an extrovert in their actions to be effective for their members?

**FRANCIS "BUDDY" DEVITO:** It was mentioned here today about moving out into the community. I know what happens with trade unions, and that is that the officers usually have plenty to do and the activists have plenty to do, and there are large numbers of the membership who do not participate in union activity even though they may be active in other areas in the community. But I think moving out into the community is absolutely vital, and I don't know what the experience here has been, but I was a bit of a political fluke in Trail in being elected to council and then being elected mayor. Considering my involvement in the union and my political reputation, I guess, as often with a lot of things in our lives, it's the right place at the right time and that happened to me. But, we in Trail have not elected a union member to public office in the city council. Right now, Doug Swanson who's president of Local 480 is chairman of the regional board, but he wasn't elected to the council in Trail or in the community in which he lives. That's a different kind of an election. But, in saying that, and the same thing applies to the school board, we have only one recognized trade unionist on the school board. The hospital board, of course, is appointed by the government and the difficulty even during that period when I was mayor, when I had the authority to appoint people to various boards, was to get the active people in the union to take positions on these local boards. Saying all that, I think that that's the route that has to be taken because it does two things. First of all, it places in the community people who have a direct and distinct orientation. Don't let people bullshit you saying you can't sit on the city council if you're a trade unionist because you're a one-issue member or something. Well, of course, the businessmen sit in the council and they don't make apologies for being one-issue representatives. The second thing that it does, and that's really important in anything we do, is that if the trade unions can only realize that the power that they have through asserting that power in electing people to certain parts of the community, then their feelings are reinforced, their philosophies are reinforced. They gain strength from that kind of activity and that kind of success. Of course there's a third thing that happens which I see is happening in British Columbia and

in Saskatchewan and in Ontario now: the difficulty is to tie some of these scoundrels down after they get to Queen's Park or to Victoria or to Saskatoon. But then, even out of this activity one has to have some kind of way of getting at these representatives and insisting that they do what they promise to do, if nothing else.

**JIM TESTER:** I think that from the very beginning of Mine Mill as a union, and even prior to the Western Federation of Miners, the local unions in the mid-west United States discovered very early that you couldn't separate the union from political action, that political action was as much tied to it as economic action was and that political action flowed out of economic action. There's no way that you could avoid political questions. The problem was, how do you unite the membership around political questions with the realization that you have a membership that's composed of people with all kinds of ideologies? And the fact is that essentially — and the union members understood this from the very earliest days, and in the constitution of Mine Mill it talks about no discrimination because of race, colour, creed, or politics — and they've understood that you have to be prepared to accept everyone on the basis of working in the same place that you happen to be working in, and what you have to do is unite people on the basis of their common needs. And you have to be able to go into a political action based on the politics that they all have in common, not on the basis of any particular political party or political group. Essentially, this is what Mine Mill discovered; in order to make progress there should not be any partisan politics within the union structure itself. What the union had to do was have its own political agenda which it was prepared to present to any political party and in that way influence the political process. When it happened, as it did happen in Cobalt, the first socialist to be elected to the federal parliament was elected in Cobalt in 1917, I believe, or it could have been '18. Long Angus McDonald, but he didn't run on a union ticket. He ran on a Labour Farmer ticket, but he was supported by the union on the basis of his program. I think that sort of distinction has to be made and I think also that it has to be said that the basic purpose of the union is serving the members on the job, and that in order to do that properly you have to enter into political action of one kind or another, and you have to see that the two are tied together.

**CLINTON JENCKS:** I'd like to address myself to Ruth Reid's remarks in a very positive way. I'm very grateful to the committee for having her on the panel. I'm very grateful for her courage in expressing on behalf of all people, all women and all men, the need for greater participation in the union movement. Actually that is what this conference is all about, it's what Mine Mill has always been about. But I remember in New Mexico when we were struggling to involve the women in the union — this is long before *Salt of the Earth* — I wondered how come the Canadian

women were so courageous and making the international officers so uncomfortable and demanding the right to attend international union conventions and demanding the right to say something on the floor and not just to be the auxiliary that serves the coffee and the cookies. Lil and Ray Stevenson gave me a little bit of an answer to that question. "Well," they said, "it didn't happen by accident." There were many women and there were a few men who realized that we were fighting with one hand tied behind our backs. [Because] for many women, the union was an enemy, they had to provide for the kids, and they didn't know what was going on in the mines. And all they heard about the union was when the men came home full of fire, piss and vinegar, and a little bit of beer, saying, "We're not going to go to work tomorrow." And here's this woman wondering, "How am I going to take care of these kids?" Well, we ran into the same thing in New Mexico. And the first time I brought it up that we should invite the women to the union hall to hear what our plans were, I got voted down by a bunch of men who were scared of giving up some of their power and privilege. So like my friend Barney said about his community work, if you can't go in the front door, go in the back door. So we got into the union hall by making the hall a community centre, where all the family had a right to be, where we could have fun together and where we could learn together too.

Back in those days, and it's something we've got to recreate again, we had this thing called Brandon Films. It used to have 16 millimetre documentaries on other unions and other countries. So I'm very grateful for having been pushed by the women. I'm very grateful that I was one of the ones that saw that we wouldn't be the losers, that we'd all be a whole lot stronger when we had all of our allies. Thanks, Ruth.

**BARNEY MCGUIRE:** Brothers and sisters, I want to say something that in my haste I didn't say when I was speaking about our Miners' Memorial Days in Cumberland. I'm sure you all realize if we didn't have the support of the membership of Mine Mill 598, all that happened in Cumberland just wouldn't have happened. And I want to tell you that the people of Cumberland are very grateful to you, the membership of Local 598. You have no bigger booster than the people of Cumberland, and particularly the mayor of Cumberland, Bronco Moncrief, who was your guest here several years ago.

Now on the question of the eight-hour day, I think we have a lesson placed before us. I would like to comment upon the fact that back in the early 1900s, it was the Western Federation of Miners that won the eight-hour day upon the basis from collar-to-collar or portal-to-portal, which is very important.<sup>27</sup> The struggle for an eight hour day tells us what to do. If we don't get together as workers, as unions

<sup>27</sup>The reference is to how a shift was timed — when a miner arrived at the company door or at the place where he worked.

in the mining industry, our conditions are going to be eroded and there's going to be a continuation of some things that have recently happened in western Canada. And that is this: the employers, by devious means, got employees to sign petitions for permission to work 10 hours a day, and they have sent them to the appropriate government body. The government granted their request. This was also done in isolated unionized camps where the representatives couldn't get to them. And just recently the scabs in Yellowknife signed a petition to get the 10-hour day and my understanding is underground workers got it. Now I think this is something that we all have to guard against in the future....

**RUTH REID:** You know, now there is some talk of a monument to the miners being built in Bell Park. I want to remind you that in 1967, the Ladies' Auxiliary decided to put a monument in Bell Park, and then the men got involved. We were going to have a mother and child sculpture done by Paul Affetio of Toronto, but then the men got going and they wanted to get involved in it, and then they decided it should be something like this. Now remember this was in 1967, and it was called "Man and His Work." But then you know what happened in 1967, we didn't have any money, and despite all our efforts we couldn't raise enough money to build this. So I just wanted to inform you that now it's going to be built, finally.<sup>24</sup>

**MIKE SOLSKI:** I got a few disjointed cracks that I'd like to make. First of all, this one is directed to the militant trade union women and men in the professional and white-collar groups. I say to you, you owe our organization a vote of thanks. The reason I say that is because I sat through a session — a bilingual session, and my French is not too great — where we reviewed what the Local 902 had organized. I recall the days when you people were ashamed to walk on the same street as myself and Ray and other officers of this union for fear of being seen by their employer or getting contaminated by what we were doing. So I say to you thank us, and we certainly will thank you, because you finally grew up and are militant and standing up and doing a job.

Another point I would like to make: I'm a little puzzled — you know, pensioners have a lot of time to think and sometimes we talk out loud — about all the union negotiations that have gone on for a number of years now. It's happening with the small unions and it's happening with the big unions. And all I can see is you keep negotiating for severance pay to put more and more people out of work. Somebody else said this morning — when are you going to start fighting to stop plant closures in this province and this country? There are enough big unions here,

<sup>24</sup>The site of the Mining Workers Memorial has now been selected. The monument will be placed at Bell Park.



and if the small ones can't do it, the big ones should do it. And Ray, you say they're sneaking nickel from the Soviet Union, I don't know where, to Europe. Well, I don't think they're sneaking anything, they're doing it wide open.

RAY STEVENSON: I haven't said they were sneaking, I said they were dumping it.

MIKE SOLSKI: Well I apologize if I'm not using the right word. But they're not only sneaking nickel from over there, they're sneaking technology from here. The government gave grants to the International Nickel Company to do research back in the 1940s, and what are they doing now? They're taking that research — and all due respect, Clint — they're moving it down to the southern states. I mean, it's our government and it's our taxpayers' money, it's the research of our resources here in these mines, so why are they moving down to Tennessee or wherever else they're talking about going to put up a plant there instead of here? So I say to the trade unions big or small and to the local politicians who seem to concentrate on getting money out of the taxpayers instead of the mining companies, you better do something about that. And then maybe we will get somewhere.

RAY STEVENSON: I want to tell you a little story that happened to me. One of the great experiences of my life was being involved in the Kirkland Lake strike of 1941-42. It was the first mass action of working people that I had been involved in. I was a pretty young fellow at that time, but I learned a great many things. And one of the things I learned I was taught by the Ladies' Auxiliary. During that strike, the women and the wives of the miners upholding that strike were running the clothing shop, patching pants, looking after food vouchers, making sure that we guys were out in the bush cutting wood to get to the people in the houses so that you'd be able to heat the house, making sure that people got the wood, the women looked after that.

But finally — that strike went on from November until mid-February in 1942 — about ten days before the end of the strike, the issue that was at risk or that had to be resolved was with the federal government. Because Mackenzie King would not utter a statement to the effect that gold was either essential or non-essential for the war effort. Mackenzie King, in his usual style, rode right down the middle and he wouldn't say anything. And we repeatedly sent delegations there usually lead by Bill Simpson, who was the president of the local at that time, to get King to make a declaration about whether or not he wanted gold produced for the war effort. Because we said as miners, "If you need the damn stuff, make the company bargain with us, and by God, we'll give you enough gold it'll bury you. If you don't want

it, get us the hell out of here, put us in base metals or wherever it should be and we will produce base metals for the war effort. (That did happen eventually wherever it was necessary). We're not unpatriotic and we want to support the war effort against fascism." So this delegation went down to Ottawa. They sent a wire back: "King has refused to meet us." By God, the strike was over. We had to go into this big theatre, all of us, and we went in there, and we stood up there, and they said, "Guys, this is the situation." And we cried, literally. We went out of that meeting; another wire came from Ottawa: "King has agreed to meet us." By God, the strike was on still. You know what happened? The Ladies' Auxiliary — and I get emotional talking about it even yet — you know what they did? They went out on the street and they snake-danced up and down Government Road and Duncan Avenue, and I don't know where they got it because there was no money around, but bottles of wine, a little beer and whisky was passed around and we had a hell of a celebration. The Ladies' Auxiliary taught us a lesson. They taught all us young guys. They were there, not just in our minds, but their hearts were in that fight, and it was a real fight for the miners of this country.

The final thing that I had to say is related to this question Mike has raised, and certainly I'm in agreement with him. What the devil is wrong when we have a situation in Ontario where Bob Rae, an avowed socialist leading a government of the left, is compelled into the positions he's taking at the present time? I feel sorry for him because I know who's doing it. It's just like you and your mortgage. If you don't pay your mortgage, the bank will foreclose. And you remember a few weeks ago, when the Standard and Poor's, or the bank ratings in Montréal, said that Ontario's ratings were down. You're not triple A, you're double A plus. What did that mean for our government? It meant that they had taken out loans and loans and loans, not just the Rae government [but the governments before them as well], the NDP wasn't chiefly responsible. The people who were chiefly responsible were the previous governments who spent money; like Mulroney, who is spending money like it went out of style. So now we have a national debt of \$500 billion. The banks are calling in those debts. That is why we now confront the near crisis that we do in the province of Ontario and nationally. Unless the people are mobilized and get to understand this and begin to move collectively, the banks may well have their way, and our governments will be reduced to the level of a second- or third-world country operating in a vacuum where they have no credit with the financial institutions. That's what we face. I'm sorry, I didn't do it.

**MIKE FARRELL:** I'd like to be permitted to make one 30-second comment, Mike Solski brought it into perspective. You know, sometimes we forget if INCO or Falconbridge could take that ore body out of the ground and move it some place else where the wages are much, much cheaper, I think we all know, or should know, they would do it. Fortunately, they haven't found a way to do that yet. Never will.

**TRUDY UPCHAN:** I'm one of your born-and-bred-and-weaned-and-fed Mine Mill union babies. I was raised in a home where I can remember the trauma, I can remember the tears of the men that died in that war. To me, [the inter-union fights] it was a war. I was just a child, but I knew that there was a war. And I heard the men in my home talking with my father, Nick Upchan, one of your founders, and all I remember is the terror. And I remember being screamed at that I was a communist, so yes, we were affected, very much affected. I just wanted to say that some of us children were and some of us are still fighting. I'm a political activist.

But on another issue, I'm sick and tired of the company putting the men out to work at starvation wages for the six and seven months for 17 cents an hour, and there's no compensation for the industrial diseases. I'm born with brain damage from sulphuric acid from the shit that my father sucked in. And he lives with the disease and there's never any compensation for that. What we have is this wonderful multi-trillion dollar sick-care system that was paid for off your backs, and the women sit behind and paid for, and the children are inheriting, but it's not getting any better.

Personally, I just want to say that I hope in hell you do not join with any major global union. This union, as far as I know, because I also worked in the executive offices in Falconbridge, in 1970, I watched them take a \$60 million loss when they shut down their pollution-free plant in Falconbridge. INCO, thanks to Trudeau, was allowed to put up that goddamned superstack that just increased the sulphuric acid throughout the world, and everybody is sitting back and nobody cares about what is going on. Even Greenpeace and David Suzuki and all the rest of them, nobody's looking at what's happening to the children of these men and to these men themselves. I know the union in this town, Mine Mill, is responsible for whatever has happened in this country that's good. The Mine Mill men have made more money, they've got more benefits, they don't have the safety requirements, but they fought for them. And whatever the Steelworkers got at INCO, they got it after Mine Mill fought the fight with Falconbridge. I want to see that continue. You're the finest union that I know of, and I've been all across North America, and I don't want to see it change.

**CATHY WALKER:** I was with CAIMAW, now with the CAW. I just want to really acknowledge the very hard work that Barney McGuire has done. As a result of the June 20 disaster here in Falconbridge, the Workers' Memorial Day has become popularized in the mining locals, certainly within the former CAIMAW group, now, of course, as the CAW mining council. But due to the kind of work and dedication that a former Mine Miller like Barney McGuire has given not just to the CAIMAW miners, now CAW miners, but all miners in the country, there is a kind of a higher profile of health and safety issues in the province of British Columbia as a result

of Barney's work at Cumberland. I just think it is very important for us to acknowledge his hard work. It's really appreciated.

**RON MROCHEK:** I'm an executive board member of Mine Mill, I'm very proud to be a member. And I want to thank these older people that gave us what we have today. And I'm a confirmed believer in Mine Mill, that Mine Mill will stay here forever.

**TOM TAYLOR<sup>29</sup>:** I'd like to welcome those visitors here today, and if I wax a little sentimental, it is because some of the statements that were made really hit home. And to be in this hall on a day like today brings back a lot of memories. It's a fibre, it's a movement, it's a feeling, it's an electricity that no one can understand unless they've found it too. It's a strange, strange thing, a union, and when we have it and lose it, it is only then we understand how important it is. I stood in this union hall with my hand up when Mike Solski was our chairman, and those days there was an crater down this hall; there was a left side and a right side. And I, through my inexperience, was on the right side. And all these magic people who were doing things for people, their actions were twisted out of shape, and I, as a young influenceable person, was misguided. I make no apology for that. But it's the kind of poison that can be fed to young people to misunderstand the ambitions of the unity idea. And when I see my good friend from Toronto, Ray Stevenson, and Mike Farrell, it brings back ideas of a 1948 picture, in which these laminated beams<sup>30</sup> were set up in a scouted-up form when that picture was taken.

This was the largest union hall built on an old sand hole. McLeods had a great garage here, a ramshackle thing made out of lumber that looked like a great big stable. This was almost the extremities of the city of Sudbury. The hall started as a basement, Nick Skakoon was looking after the bar. What a joy it was. And the Ladies' Auxiliary who made the meals. Oh my God, and dinners, and a plate that was overloaded; and the gladness and tears. Oh my God. What people. I remember Jack Wendall during the 1958 strike, when the hydro would go and cut off the power, he was up the pole two minutes later poking the guy up. Oh yes. That picture that stands at the back of the hall<sup>31</sup> demonstrates so realistically what people are all

<sup>29</sup>Tom Taylor served as an officer and steward with Mine Mill Local 598 for about 10 years and was elected president in 1962. After the merger, he worked with the United Steelworkers of America.

<sup>30</sup>The beams of the central Mine Mill hall had been set up but only part of the building was constructed.

<sup>31</sup>He is referring to the mural painted by Canadian painter Henry Orenstein in 1951-52. The mural, commissioned by Mine Mill, is on display at the back of the central hall in Mine Mill's Regent Street headquarters. The mural is reprinted in Rosemary Donegan, *Industrial*

about. In the Sudbury situation where the Finnish guy lived in Lockerby, and the Italian guy lived behind the brewery, and the French guy lived in the Flour Mill, and the ethnic groups were up in the Donovan, it wasn't by chance that they were divided. It was better for the company; they liked it that way. And they had terminologies for all those people which I don't expect you know, but if you hear it, be offended. They called an Italian a dago, they called a Hungarian fellow a honky, they called a Finlander a swimliner, and they had them all. And they were lesser people when they trod on them. So we've had our struggles. But God bless the Frood miners. I couldn't go another day past the 100th birthday without recognizing those beautiful, wonderful, wonderful men. Along with the help of the leaders, they made this union and the city of Sudbury. When the stories go around about that, you know, they were using the old shop there, old Fred there who was in the mine at the time. And if Joe Smallwood was the boss, they said Smallwood was a p-r-i-c-k, and it was on the wall. And that's the way they did the job — they did the job on the boss. Forty-nine guys sitting in the cage, or standing in the cage, and Mr. Brown at the front of the cage checking that nobody gets on the cage before their time. And somebody's in the back of the cage and saying to the fellow three guys from him, "What colour is your asshole, George?" "Brown!" he says. And that's the way they built the union.

But I'm so very happy that these men and women have come and said their piece so that you the young people can understand what our union is all about and where it came from. And I'm old enough to remember the freight trains travelling across this country with fellows on the top of them travelling from one coast to the other looking for work. Don't look too far away, young people. The freight trains are going to be calling men and women looking for work again. It is amazing the apathy of this country when they stand back and look at it, young people and old as well, because as you know, those of you who know me know I'm an activist in this area, whatever that means. But needless to say, what happiness is there when young people accept somebody reaching into their pocket and taking 70 cents of every dollar they earn? My God, you must get angry. Politicians have to be made accountable and they're only being made accountable by men and women like you. You only get what you're prepared to fight for. There, I have made my overture, but I'm not short of words, as everyone will tell you. I'm the gabbiest guy in town, but I'm happy to be here. I'm so happy you came, and God bless you all.

ANNE MACKS: I'm a charter member of the Ladies' Auxiliary 117. I'm very proud to be here today, and I'm happy I am still alive. I would like to pay tribute to Ray because when my late husband Rhodie Macks died, he sent me the most beautiful

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*Images/Images Industrielles* (Hamilton 1987), 77-8. The panorama shows the mix of dwellings, mine headframes, smelters, suburbs, workers' rallies, the city core of Sudbury, and lakes and playgrounds.

letter which I didn't know would come to me. But Rhodie Macks was a very big union builder for Mine Mill, and although we were in business, he really knew what the term "a working man" meant [after a few years in the industry and activity in Mine Mill the Macks opened a general store on Kathleen Street]. He worked in Frood Mine, and then he got into business with his mother and opened the store. But when the union was first going to be building — and I was one that they called a peasant and a good worker — and I knew what the union and the Ladies' Auxiliary would mean to Mine Mill. And of course, they said you can't join the union unless you have a relative in the union because if you're in business you can't belong to a union. But I have a brother that was a union man, so this is how I came to join the Ladies' Auxiliary with the strength of all these years I've given to it. But getting back to Ray. Ray wrote a letter and said [at the time] no one would give him any credit. When he came into our store and Rhodie of course knew Ray, and he said, "Just come downstairs and take what you want. We have miners' clothes." So Ray went downstairs, picked what he wanted, and he says, "Well, Rhodie, I can't pay you." And Rhodie says, "That's OK Ray, whenever you have it, you can pay me. It doesn't matter." He trusted all the workers and he really supported the Mine Mill.

Getting back to my situation, I worked from the bottom of my heart building the Ladies' Auxiliary, and helping them like they mentioned in different situations. So I greet the panel, thank you very much for having me here today, and I'm sure I'll enjoy all the people tonight and tomorrow at the banquets.

LIL GREENE<sup>32</sup>: I'm proud that Ray Stevenson is my husband, and I think that I've been his support all the way along. I was his secretary, and Bill Longridge's secretary, and Ken Smith's secretary in the national office of the Mine Mill in Toronto for thirteen years until the merger with Steel. I'm also proud, talking about unions, that I was a secretary in the dressmakers union, together with Esther Walsh who's right here, Bill Walsh's wife, in the 1930s. During those days, and in all working-class, real working-class unions, you not only did the typing and the cleaning of the desks, but you went out on the picket lines, and you got up early and you helped to distribute the leaflets to organize the workers. Then I had the privilege of being the secretary in the Workers Unity League, and that goes back a long, long time. I was Tom McEwen's secretary. I was Annie Buller's secretary. I was Charlie Sims' secretary, all in the office. There, too, we went out and helped organize. And I also had the privilege of going on the great unemployed trek in Ottawa. It's true I didn't walk, but I sat in the old boxcar trains and went as the secretary of the Workers Unity League, and I sat at the desk of R. B. Bennett taking notes. So I guess when you get old, you have a lot of memories. I also had the privilege of working for the Workers Educational Association that maybe some of

<sup>32</sup>Lil Greene was also secretary for the Industrial Union of Needle Trades Workers in the 1930s.

you were associated with, and I was Drummond Wren's secretary. So I guess you can say, and Ray will agree, I still try to help him in being his secretary. And when he gets tired of banging away at his little old typewriter downstairs, I go upstairs to my old Mine Mill union typewriter. When the union merged, I bought the typewriter, I bought the Mine Mill desk, I bought some of the office furniture. I paid for it. Ray has, in our home, the original desk belonging to Nels Thibault, who was president of Local 598 at one time. He has Nels Thibault's swinging armchair which we recently had renovated so that he could invite people as they came to interview him about this conference, to sit in Nels Thibault's old chair. So I just felt I had to say something. I am absolutely delighted here. It's made my year of 1993, and it's been just wonderful and I'm sure that as long as there's unity amongst the workers, that we'll gain in our lives.

DIETER BUSE: I want to make a remark regarding what Mike Solski spoke about, and that is the delicate relationship between the university and this union. That history, in 1959, was the beginning of a tragedy. The university — some of us at least — feel a responsibility to history about that. And we want to emphasize that we hope that you realize that we know — and some of our students are here collecting your history — that you have something to offer us. We intend to take up this torch, to make your history come alive again. But we want you also to realize that we have something to offer you. That we have some expertise that will help you, the union movement, and I hope that's seen in the sessions. It's in that way that I want to suggest how we see this conference: that we see this conference not as an end of a 100 years, but the beginning of another hundred of Mine Mill.

RAY STEVENSON: Since Lil took the microphone and told you all those things, now you understand why I stand straight and narrow. You understand also, I hope, that she's the person in the family who really has the seniority. Because I never was a member of the Workers Unity League. But I have here a lot of material from the Workers Unity League that I'll show to anyone who's interested in it. And I want to make this point: the Workers Unity League, which was organized as part of the Red International of Trade Unions in 1929, led and organized by people like Harvey Murphy, Tom McEwen, Becky Buhay, Annie Buller, Sam Scarlett, and on and on in a long period where they were organizing in the teeth of the depression. And I think it's important to make that point, because in 1936, when Mine Mill was revived in the United States, well they'd revived there actually prior to that in 1933, but in '36 they chartered Local 239 Sudbury, 240 Kirkland Lake, 241 Timmins. I might also tell you that in Noranda in 1934, there was a strike led by Jeanne Corbin. Jeanne Corbin was a French-Canadian woman who went in there and organized as a Communist organizer in the Workers Unity League to establish and to lead a

strike in Noranda in that year. That was the basis upon which Mine Mill came into being in eastern Canada. Because the instructions and the decisions of the Workers Unity League were that in every instance where they had managed to organize locals, whether they were bargaining or whether they conducted strikes or whatever, the instructions that were given finally after all of the discussions that had gone on, were that the Workers Unity League locals would become and adhere to the Committee of Industrial Organizations (CIO) in the United States led by John L. Lewis. And I think it's important to know that because in fact, whether you like it, or whether you like communists or you hate them, whatever you think about them, the fact is that the Workers Unity League was one of the building blocks of the modern labour movement.

One short story now. You see all these beautiful beams [points to the ceiling in the main hall] that have been referred to up here? I remember poor Mike here, I shouldn't say poor Mike, but he was sweating in those days because those darn things were late in delivery, you remember that? And there was the whole business that went on [about] were we going to have this thing open on time or not. Eventually we got it open and we brought from the United States a black stately man of immense integrity by the name of Asbury Howard, who was the elected vice-president of the International Union of Mine Mill, and he spoke in this hall. When this part of the hall wasn't quite open, we had the meeting for him downstairs. But he walked around here and we took him on a grand tour, and as Mike [Solski] was showing him all this beautiful stuff, Asbury didn't say very much. He kept looking and looking and looking, he had his hands behind his back, and he didn't say very much. Finally Mike kind of poked him a bit, and he said, "Well, what do you think of it?" And he spoke in that southern drawl, and he said, "Well, it's sure a beautiful building, I've got to say that. It's a beautiful building. I just hope it don't take your mind off the union." I never forgot that.

RUTH REID: He sent his daughter to the Mine Mill Camp.

RAY STEVENSON: Yes, he did. We had very close relationships. Weir and Ruth Reid looked after her — I forget her name — but she was here for a whole summer at the Mine Mill Camp. And I have to tell you with great regret that Asbury passed on not too long ago. But before he died, after he retired from all union activity, he was elected a councilman, I think, in Alabama to the state legislature. And that was a tremendous victory because when he came here he'd just finished doing six months on the chain gang for registering black voters in Alabama...

JAN LONGRIDGE: I'm the son of Bill Longridge, former secretary-treasurer of the union. I'm a former camper at the Mine Mill children's camp, former Councillor in Training, and presently a branch president in the OSSTF, Ontario Secondary



Schools Teachers Federation. Now my memories of Mine Mill, of course, go back as far back as I can remember. As a child growing up, in the earliest years the thing that really stuck out was the camaraderie of everyone, how everyone pulled together. I remember at the children's camp when we had people up from the Buffalo area, from the Mine Mill in the States, there wasn't any anti-US feeling towards those people. They were all part of the union, they were all children of workers. And that's what's important: the unity of the working class. That is why a conference like this that reminds people of the history of the union is important because when people see the history, they can see there's a continuation of the strength and it can be built upon. Nothing scares employers more than seeing workers unified. One of the things that right now is scaring the provincial government is they want to break everybody into little sectors so the unions can pick on each other, and say, "No, no, don't cut us, cut them." Well, the unions aren't going for it, and the government doesn't know how to handle it any more than the employers — INCO and Falconbridge — know how to handle it when the workers are united. And that's why things like this conference are important. And again, I'm really happy to be here, and I'm happy this whole thing is going on.

CLINTON JENCKS: All right. We've been talking so much about memory, and I think memories are important because they're our treasure, our precious stuff, and they contain the lessons of our hurts and our wounds, and they contain the mistakes we've made and the achievements that we've gained. But memories can be a prison unless they challenge us to build an even better future. One of the very challenging requests that the organizers of this conference gave to us to do was to address the present and the future. What are the issues that are the key ones now and for the future of trade unionism and political activists? This is a pretty important question when everybody is moaning and groaning about the sad condition of the labour movement, and when those islands of democracy are sinking. Mike gave voice to the fears we have that if we grow bigger, we're going to lose the personal touch. And I'm reminded of the gift to us from the environmentalists and from the civil rights movement — and a lot of people are picking it up now — that I think contains an answer for us, and these are the words: think globally, act locally. And in a few words I want to say that for the future: I think that we will not survive unless we reach out to every natural ally we have in every country in the world. We will not survive if we turn our power as men and women locally over to some giant labour cabal sitting in Geneva or anywhere else. We will not survive unless we value and respect one another. Really value and listen to each other; like Barney here's been talking about, taking the issues that people understand and building monuments to those, and then telling other people about them and connecting them up with their issues. There are many ways that we tried to do that in New Mexico, and there's not time to go into it, but what I'm saying is I think the whole key to the future is

extending the hand of friendship and support to workers of whatever industry, whatever colour, whatever gender, whatever nation, retaining local responsibility for what we do here, not surrendering our power to anybody, but not denying our responsibilities so that we have work and you have none. I'm tired of hearing about workers scabbing on my sisters and brothers, of producing copper in New Mexico when the workers in Chile are on strike. And what I say about copper is true of everything else, isn't it? So those are my words, and they contain a lot of meaning for me of practical day-to-day work like Barney's been talking about, and Ray, and everyone else here. Think globally, but act locally.

MIKE SOLSKI: Well, Brother Clinton Jencks represented us old folks in the Mine Mill union by singing "Joe Hill," and I think it's time that you young people got up and let us know if you can sing "Solidarity Forever" so that we can close this session off. I'm waiting for you young people.

[audience rises and sings]

Solidarity Forever

Solidarity Forever

Solidarity Forever

For the union makes us strong

When the union's inspiration through the workers' blood shall run

There can be no power greater anywhere beneath the sun

Yet what force on earth is weaker than the feeble strengths of one

For the union makes us strong

Solidarity Forever

Solidarity Forever

Solidarity Forever

For the union makes us strong

They have taken untold millions that they've never toiled to earn

But without our brain and muscle not a single wheel can turn

We can break their haughty power gain our freedom when we learn

That the union makes us strong

Solidarity Forever

Solidarity Forever

Solidarity Forever

For the union makes us strong

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