

Narrator: Herb Daniher (HD)

Company Affiliations: United Steelworkers (USW), Transportation Communications Union (TCU), Saskatchewan Wheat Pool

Interview Date: 2016

Interviewer: Ernie Epp (EE)

Recorder: Owen Marks (OM)

Transcriber: Sarah Lorenowich

Summary: In his second interview, United Steelworkers Union staff representative Herb Daniher expands more on his time working with grain handlers through the union. He recounts getting elected into a full-time union position and servicing multiple industries, not just grain. He describes the union's interactions with the media, their attempts to dispel misinformation, and the evolution of the union's negotiations with an ever-changing industry. Daniher then surveys the terminals of the Thunder Bay waterfront, sharing major events and memorable moments at the elevators. He tells the story of the Prairie Pools amalgamating, the Canadian Wheat Board becoming a private, commercial entity, and the Canadian Grain Commission being deregulated. He explains the hardships grain handlers have endured due to the uncertainty within the industry, and the problems they have faced with the privatization and cutbacks to government assistance services. Other topics discussed include the closure of the Thunder Bay Labour Centre, the port of Churchill, the loss of other industries in Thunder Bay, and his memories of work prompted by old Steelworker documents.

Keywords: United Steelworkers Union (USW); Transportation Communications Union (TCU); Labour unions' Labour relations; Downsizing; Terminal grain elevators—Thunder Bay; Labour strikes; Grain elevator demolition; Amalgamation; Saskatchewan Wheat Pool; Alberta Wheat Pool; Manitoba Wheat Pool; United Grain Growers; Agricore; Viterra; Glencore; Grain handlers; Employment Insurance; Port Arthur Shipyards; Privatization; Churchill; UGG A; AWP Pool 9; SWP Pool 4A & B; MPE Pool 2; SWP Pool 6; SWP Pool 7a & B; MPE Pool 3; Canada Malting Elevator; UGG M; Mission Terminal (Searle Elevator)

Time, Speaker, Narrative
EE: Well, Herb, it's a great pleasure to have you with us this afternoon to do a follow up to the sort of standard interview that you did earlier this year with Nancy Perozzo. Maybe just for identification purposes, I should have you at least give your name, put it on the card, and what your position is, and then we'll take it from there.

HD: My name's Herbert Daniher and I'm currently a United Steelworkers [USW] staff representative, regional representative. Started in Saskatchewan Wheat Pool back in 1975. So, I've been doing the servicing work since 1986, but I spent a good part of my youth in the industry and still service the grain properties today. Certainly, they've evolved into something much different than when I was first starting—cut my teeth on the younger days.

EE: So, looking back then, it's almost 30 years that you've been doing the service work—from '86 to 2015. You took over from Frank Mazur, I guess? You were assisting him, actually, earlier, right?

HD: Yeah. I originally got elected to a position in 1986 with Transportation Communications Union [TCU]—we used to [inaudible] BRAC.

EE: We know TCU and BRAC—The Brotherhood of Railway, Airline, et cetera, and clerks.

HD: Steamships, freight handler, express station employees, and everything else under the kitchen sink.

EE: Grain handlers, lodge 650.

HD: Yeah. Joe Dziergo was actually the assistant to Mazur. We were in the railway structure at the time, so it was an assistant to the general chairman's position. Assistant to the general chairperson—of course you called them chairman at that time—in a typical railway structure, system boards. I ran. I was interested and active, and I became an executive officer. Then ran for the fulltime position because it became available. Nothing wrong with the incumbent, but just there's a lot of younger people on the waterfront, and I was working and going to school at the time—taking industrial relations at the college—and I had become active in union education and whatnot. So, I put my hat in the ring, and lo and behold, more of my supporters came out that day and Joe's supporters stayed home. So, I really inherited the position by a stroke of, I guess, luck or fortune.

EE: The voice of the people. As I lost mine a few years later by the voice of the people, and then the party members in '93 treated me in the very same way. The vice-warden didn't come out, and—what's his name—David, who ran against me, got his people out. Anyways, so that was--.

HD: So, just to finish that part of the story--.

EE: By all means.

HD: Frank Mazur then transcended to 1987. The national president for our organization stepped down so Frank Mazur filled that position in the interim, and then ran for election and was elected. So, he served in the national president's capacity from '86 until '91. So, I didn't really get a chance to work directly with Frank as an assistant, but I did work with him as a recording secretary for a significant period of time. He was quite familiar. He sort of took me under his wing as a bit of a mentor, but Richard McFarlane actually took over for Mazur. I moved from the assistant's position and ran for the actual general chairman's position against Richard McFarlane. And again, another incumbent that had been a long activist and was a steward at the site when I first got hired onto the elevators and whatnot. But again, it was sort of a natural progression.

Democracy promotes this type of competitive nature. There was three or four—I think there was four—people vying for the position, and a couple people that were good candidates stepped aside so that I would have an opportunity to get in there. They recognized some potential, I presume, and they were somewhat friends of mine. So, we ended up, again, there was some dissatisfaction—be it valid or not—of Richard. It happens in this business. Sometimes you make tough decisions, you alienate people, and you sort of create a hoard of people that come out and vote against you because they didn't like you, had the tough decision to make, and whatnot. So, I ended up taking over for him, and then in '98 we merged with Steel. Then in '99 formally sort of closed that deal, and then I became a staff representative. Prior to that, I was always in an elected position. But the grain industry had sort of already started to evolve, and what was happening was that I started to become sort of servicing multiple industries.

EE: As a Steel rep?

HD: Yeah. Actually, even as a TCU rep at the time because the grain industry had already started shrinking. I remember membership had dropped to about 1,200, probably about 900 people actively working down from about approximately 2,000 or 1,800, I think, was our peak in--.

EE: And that's what Frank talked about in 1984, what I read.

HD: Exactly. So, as this thing was transitioning, we had a starch and gluten plant—Ogilvie starch and gluten plant at the time—we had CP Rail express, we had Canpar, we had Interlink, another long haul trucking company. So, I got involved with those particular properties and become multidimensional. Of course, because there was so much insight into the grain, it was a high-profile type industry. When things were happening in the waterfront, it always garnered national attention. But the other work, which was just equally as important, sort of went unnoticed, and that was okay by me. We were more involved with sort of senior

members and doing what we do on a daily basis. We don't do this for the accolades or the press coverage. A lot of the press coverage was sort of forced upon us, and we reacted.

[0:05:39]

When the downsizing started, we had a real negative persona, especially in some of the western papers, like the *Western Producer* and whatnot. So, when I got involved and got elected, we sort of had a strategic action plan, and we learned very quickly that complaining about what was happening with the restructuring of the industry wasn't doing us any good. Nobody was going to listen to a woe-is-me story. So, what we did is we started to come at it from a business perspective and utilize some of my background and my education and took a different approach. We talked the business lingo, and then we profiled what an actual grain handler makes in the course of a year, and the seasonal layoffs, and the type of downsizing. People with six, ten, fifteen--. It got to a point where people--.

EE: Years? That's seniority?

HD: Yeah, service and seniority, were losing their jobs. So, we totally changed the persona. Of course, for some, they didn't like that because we were a good focus. We were the enemy to many and if they didn't blame railway—if the farmers couldn't blame the railways—they would blame the grain handlers for their ill wills. But, in actual fact, we were equal partners with the farmers, and what they did was paramount to whether we worked or not. With the Wheat Board among others, where they were shipping their grain, and of course the dynamic with the Russians becoming self-sufficient, the whole dynamic of the industry--. And we were destined to be a residual port.

EE: As against the West Coast?

HD: Yeah. And as we were advised that our numbers were going to drop substantively to 50 percent. Well, that was a misnomer because our numbers actually dropped down to, well, from 2,000 to 200. So, we were a tenth. We were a shadow of our former self. So, it was much more devastating. Then we started to see the consolidation of the waterfront. You talked about walking the waterfront, well--.

EE: Could I stop for just a moment, and go back? You mentioned the media, in particular the *Western Producer*. I'd love to know something about the *Producer* and maybe the *Manitoba Co-operator*, and any other media with whom you interacted. What was going on in their editorial policy, perhaps? What kind of stance they had?

HD: Well, in actual fact, I give them full marks because when we got a hold of them and really challenged them on what the misinformation was, they actually sent a reporter down here and did a full profile—three- or four-page article—on what was happening in the grain industry.

EE: This was what, the *Western Producer*?

HD: The *Western Producer*. The *Manitoba Cooperator* was a little bit more friendly, but same thing. We contacted them and some of the magazines as well, although their editorial staff was somewhat a little more hostile. I remember the one—I can't remember the name of the publication—but I wrote the person a letter and said that basically he was misrepresenting the facts, and that I welcomed an opportunity to do an interview with him if he could send me the questions ahead of time. If he continued with his nonsense, we were looking at a libel suit. I had talked to our legal department about what exactly how he was profiling. It was like a harsh editorial. I remember the next editorial was "Make my day" was using the old Arnold Schwarzenegger scenario, which I got this guy from Thunder Bay contacting us. Well, it made its point is that we're not going to stand around and get beat up.

EE: This wasn't the *Country Guide* by any chance?

HD: I can't remember the name of it. I have it in the office.

EE: Because there aren't many magazines, to my--. Of course, I've been away from Manitoba for 50 years, myself. What I find interesting is that when I read the *Western Producer* years and years ago, the letters to the editor were full of radical stuff. In fact, given my own quite conservative upbringing, I found them just wild letters very often. So, clearly the *Western Producer* itself changed. Of course, the radicals may have died out and the next generation of farmer was very different, especially those in the Pools who let the leadership take them the way they did, which can take us too.

HD: It's ironic. The *Western Producer*, once we got them the information, of course they wanted to report the facts as they were. And certainly, that became sort of a benchmark. Instead of being fat cats and whatnot, strike-happy grain handlers, we changed the whole persona. That was important from a community structure, and our members. Then we used the press quite a bit. We kept going back to the press with our message to make sure people understood what the fights were about. It wasn't about more or greed or anything like that, it was about structurally looking at what's an appropriate corporate response to the downsizing in the industry. And to be quite frank, there was no appropriate corporate response unless we forced them to the table.

[0:10:18]

We had the strike in '91 when I first got involved, that was because we wanted to discuss pensions and getting some type of indexation, a two percent protection, or capped at two percent. Then dealing with the whole thing about earlier retirement or enhanced retirement packages, so we can transition people that were ready to leave the industry and salvage some of the jobs. This wasn't about new hires. This was about people with 10- or 12-years' seniority that already had a third of their life's work in the grain industry being displaced.

EE: But when you were into a reduction by 90 percent, which you couldn't know about yet in 1991, already in your bones you feared what was happening.

HD: We were reacting. At that stage there was about 1,200, I think, is what we had at the time. About 900 were working. So, we were taking appropriate measures in that particular regard. But it's interesting the press—Rick Smith, dearly departed—it's all sensationalism. I've been interviewed, I would daresay, thousands of times—but hundreds of times for sure—and at the end of an interview, ironically, it was if you didn't say you were going to go on strike, they would say, "But if the worst-case scenario was you're going to have some type of labour dispute--."

EE: We probably should put on the record here a conversation I had once with Rick Smith, probably when I was MP. After the conversation he's just becoming his amiable self—whatever he had been a few moments earlier. He was telling me about his NDP relative—I'm not sure, he hadn't run for the party—in Nova Scotia. Fraser Dougall, another dear departed, wouldn't tolerate that kind of stuff on the air.

HD: No, he was kind of radical. But I remember we had this strike, and he was still reporting it as something that it wasn't. Of course, the odd time I would call up and basically try to set the record straight, or send a letter to the editor, whatever. But I remember the next time we negotiated, it was very quiet, and we didn't even end up using the federal conciliation process, which was very unusual in the grain industry at that stage. We basically butted heads a bit, and we ended up making an agreement because we didn't want to go to the interest arbitration with the things we had seen last time.

So, he had made this big to-do about strike-happy grain handlers, which is as far from the truth as one can imagine. So, I sent him a letter and said, "Hey Rick, guess what? We just settled a contract without any assistance. Amicable settlement to move the industry forward." And do you think he would say one word about it? No. And that's just how it was. It was always this sensationalism type aspect.

EE: One might as well moralize about this. The farmers who had pooled together in order to enhance their economic wellbeing had to employ grain handlers in Thunder Bay in order to move their product. Here they found themselves, or fought themselves

into, a conflict of interest between people who want to make a living here—and need to make a living in Thunder Bay—and the industry that is attacking that. And the farmers--.

HD: There is a lot of similarities. Like the National Farmers Unions [NFU], they used to come to town on a regular basis, read our records. Frank--. We had some degree of relationship with them, and they were sort of a user-friendly farmer group. There were some people that we knew from the Pools—all three Pools—that were a little bit more labour-friendly. But the hierarchies were at war all the time. I remember sitting on the Senior Grain Transportation Committee, and again, talk about ironic, the Conservatives were in power, and--.

EE: Yes, during the Mulroney government.

HD: Yes. And the minister was from Crosby, I think it was. Richard McFarlane, who I daresay was right-leaning in his political views, struck up an accord—we did some lobbying in Ottawa—and struck up an accord with this individual and ended up then, instead of appointed a CLC [Canadian Labour Congress] representative, which would normally be the case from one of the bigger affiliates, they appointed Richard McFarlane to the Senior Grain Transportation Committee. When I displaced Richard in the electoral process, I ended up assuming into that role and that responsibility. So, in any case, they used to have all kinds of representatives—farmer representatives—and you could really understand the wide variant. Some people were just day to day, mouth to mouth, small farm, and some farmers were very big, very efficient, very established, and basically millionaires. And yet, everybody was sort of all flying the same banner.

One thing I remember meeting with some of the senior executives, and like a vice-president. I think Leroy Larson the fellow's name was if I recollect correctly. But anyway, it was a senior official from Sask Wheat Pool. I got one of their--. I figured he was like a volunteer, like our vice-president of the local union. I checked his salary—it was reported in their circulars and whatnot—and he was a \$500 000 a year person. So, that to me was not indicative of representing farmers.

EE: Another executive.

HD: Yeah. He wasn't the grassroots person who the Pool was really formulated on. It became big business.

[0:15:22]

EE: We might say—put on the record as well here—I was reading the *Atlantic Monthly* two or three years ago now, I guess, and there was this article on the family farm survival. And when I glanced at who had written it, she was the daughter with the

Bloomberg business news organization. Her father was a farmer in the Peace River country of Canada, out in Alberta. Well, it was Chrystia Freeland, who is now a minister in the Trudeau government. The family farm was doing a \$3 million business each year. Well, I'm half a century and more away from my father's family farm in Manitoba, but \$3 million struck me as not exactly the usual of the old family farm.

HD: No. And I guess the way that the whole business evolved is that it becomes more mechanized, and you have to create efficiencies and size and everything that goes with it. But again, I think the persona of a typical profile of a farmer—not that—. Without the farmers, there's no grain industry, without a doubt. But like you said, it's evolved, and it's still a tough business to be in, but definitely the whole persona and the business—. That's why I think in part you've seen the \$500 000-a-year persons making determinations for the membership that I'm not sure that was in their best interest if now the Pools have basically all but disappeared, or disappeared off the face of the earth, right?

EE: I was doing research on fiscal history earlier this year. I'm looking at the national accounts of the country income—wages and salaries, supplementary labour income, corporate profits, the income of an unincorporated farm operations. And of course, that series is a horror. Whereas labour income has only fallen once from one year to the next, that was in '09 because of the crisis we've gone through. The farm income just went up and down, rises and falls. I mean, the lesson there for the finance ministers would be don't trust resource industries as the base for fiscal policy. You want to focus on labour income first of all and corporation profits. So, the farmers have had their ups and downs, and that will continue, I'm sure. Anyway, I interrupted you when you were going to walk the waterfront—virtually speaking, of course.

HD: Yeah, it's an interesting analogy. And of course, we represent the shipyard which just recently closed due to bankruptcy. We're just winding up the proceedings there.

EE: Done the ship repairs for decades.

HD: And actually, the mills further down were cornerstone. But when you walk the waterfront and really take a look for what was there—. Even a friend of mine ends up he bought—I think on east Greenpoint Road—he bought the property at the end of that. It was like a fishing outfitters location there, and he had some old buildings there. Some of the old buildings still exist on that. But when you really look at how the industry on the waterfront, what it was, where we've been, and where we're at, it's quite dramatic. But nowadays, if you start from the Current River end and walk your way through—. I remember at 17 years old riding my bicycle down to Pool 4, applying for work, and starting in the grain industry at the age of 17. The nature is that the other Current River terminals was really shut down for all extents and purposes, until this recent sort of acquisition and switching out

with Richardson's through the competition bureau, and selling off some of the assets or whatnot, because it had run its course and had been, more or less, mothballed. So, it sort of resurrected itself to a new life. So, that's percolating.

EE: Richardson's have resurrected?

HD: Yeah. And then, of course, Richardson's has the sort of cornerstones, and then you got the old Pool 4 A and B—that has quite a history. That's where the explosions occurred in, I think, '45 and '52. That's where I started. It was two really separate operating entities there that would sort of ship out to one side of the building, but it was really two terminals combined with a single shipping process out the side. So, that's derelict. There are some people that go into these industries that are shut down, you can find them on the net, and they've gone through at taken a bunch of pictures and you can actually go inside and see what's left of it. But it's pretty horrific. And as you go down, you're looking at where the sawmills were, and these are all sort of kiddy-corner to each other.

EE: Northern—not Northern—Great West Timber, and then on past Marina Park.

HD: Great West Timber, yeah. Then there's Manitoba Pool 2, I think, is the old elevator that's still there's some structure left on that site. I remember there used to be a Pool 9 between United Gran Growers [UGG] and Pool 4. I mean, the activity for the summer, the entertainment, was to watch they had a big crane and a wrecking ball, and basically knocked down the Pool 9. It took them a couple of years to do it.

[0:20:22]

EE: Or was it 6?

HD: No, it was 9. It was actually a terminal that was between the two terminals. There was actually another Alberta Pool 9.

EE: Okay. Further north?

HD: No, no. It was UGG, the Current River Richardson's terminal, and then there was the Alberta Pool one—and it was a narrow, smaller elevator—and then you had Pool 4 A and B, and then you had Richardson's.

EE: So, at the far north end.

HD: Yeah. So, then as you proceed down, and you have the old Pool 2. I wasn't familiar. I'm not exactly sure what year that one closed. Nancy would know that. Then as you go and look at what's happening at Manitoba Pools, well, we've actually gone in there. We did a tour through the Friends of the Grain Elevators, and they're salvaging, and they've taken out steel tanks. They have a vision to open up some condos and do a restaurant in that particular location. Now, whether it ever comes to fruition, who knows, right? Anything's possible over time. But these things have sort of been bought and sold. Then you've got Canada--.

EE: So, this is in the north end of the Intercity group?

HD: Exactly. First--.

EE: Because Pool 6, we've just slid by, which also got smashed down. That's the one I feel so sad about. I think we should have left it at the midway point to demonstrate how strong those walls were.

HD: [Laughs] Well, they imploded it at the end, right? It was a \$2 million venture that the city ended up paying for because what was happening is that they would be selling these terminals to the scrap dealers. The scrap dealers would salvage whatever they could out of it. That's my understanding of how it went. Then they would go derelict in their taxes, and then the taxpayers, the community, ends up taking back the elevator. I think it was a \$2 million bill that was left. But I remember one of the locals got to press the button—one of the local politicians—Mr. Scully. I think he was a businessman in the community. I remember he was in tears. Funny thing is I think he should have been in tears about the \$2 million they just spent imploding the thing, and then being saddled with it. But really, his sort of expression—he never worked there as far as I knew, but I did—and I watched the thing and it was a sad event, if I can put it that way. No different than going down to the shipyards for the last times or the closure of the labour centre.

EE: Yeah. Another very sad event.

HD: Yeah. I mean these things, it's an evolution and times don't stand still—and everybody understands—but when you're part of a living history, and you go out and turn the lights out of a building, it preys on you. Especially when you've been there and you're part of the history, and you were participating in part of the history of people, and characters, and events that are long probably forgotten. A few people, like yourself, might drag this up from time to time, or a book writer, but the new generation has no clue about where we've been or what we've done. And you don't experience--. It's no different than I wasn't aware of what my forefathers or foremothers did, and it really goes the same way.

EE: Port Arthur Labour Association 100 years ago and so on, there's a rich history. Steel and what? The carpenters, and United Food and Commercial were the last unions left?

HD: And CUPE. CUPE was there as well.

EE: CUPE, yes, of course. Were you all leaving at the same time?

HD: Basically, within a month of one another, right, because we had sort of a sunset date. So, we've dispersed. The memberships are smaller, the memberships are more dynamic, the memberships are more technologically savvy. There's different ways to communicate. You don't necessarily have to have the type of presence. I'm not sure. It really lost it's--.

EE: The labour centre?

HD: Yeah. I think the people that have a view about the labour centre that we lost our identity, I don't think it was really that way because so many of the other industries had dispersed—all the trades and Unifor, CAW, CP—they'd long left the building, right?

EE: Well, that's the one judgement I would make, that it was the spreading out of the unions in the city rather than clustering there that actually doomed the labour centre.

HD: I think what happens is the building, the facility itself—I don't know if people really understand this--. I think we're digressing a bit, but the facility--.

EE: It's all relevant.

HD: The facility itself was built with a different purpose in mind. Although there was bringing the labour bodies together, but it was too small for--.

EE: Well, it became too small, for sure.

HD: Yeah. Then people needed more space, and it was fully booked, and over time the limitations of the size of the structure itself became detrimental, right?

[0:25:03]

EE: If an office section had been built on the south end of the building—so an H shape had been developed perhaps, the letter H—with enough space for all of them. But certainly CAP's moving over to that, what was that, a hall, once upon a time, where they still are, where Unifor now is, was certainly maybe-- Well, I don't want to hang it on them in terms of the death fell of the labour centre, but--.

HD: A lot of it was due to the modernization and just infrastructure. So, it's much different than what people might think. It's not necessarily negative, it's actually positive because people need to go. We have a building. We have a train. We bought a building, one of the locals bought a building, and the district is renting an office there. We have room for a training facility there, so we're doing different things.

EE: Where are you now?

HD: We're on May Street. 231 North May Street.

EE: North May.

HD: So, it's an old Cow Palace, the Funeral Northwest building. So, we're just doing some--.

EE: Oh! The Northwest Alternatives is the buildings you've taken over?

HD: Alternatives, yeah. We inherited it.

EE: Whereas they've moved to, was it, the OSSTF that was in the building they're now in. Ah, the changes in real estate.

HD: Exactly. So anyhow, just going down the waterfront. You've got the Canada Malt, and then you've got 7A and B, which is Viterra. Viterra is really Glencore. Glencore is a huge multinational company--.

EE: In Switzerland. That fellow—what was his name—who created Glencore--.

HD: We've got representation through that company with a number of our mining sites and whatnot.

EE: What, Viterra owns mining?

HD: Not Viterra.

EE: Oh, Glencore.

HD: Glencore. I mean, Glencore continues to carry out business at Viterra. So they say. We're in a bit of a legal fight about this. But they basically have care and control, and the bottom line is they're dictating. They kept the same people in place because it made sense to do so, but for all extents and purposes, Glencore--. And right now, they're in a little bit of a, the way the grain industry is right now, they're in a little bit of a peak and it's not going to stay that way forever. Over time, the reality will set in for the remaining of the competitors in the waterfront.

EE: Why don't you talk about Viterra a bit because that's the end result of a number of mergers which took out companies, organizations, that we were referring to earlier.

HD: Well, I remember sitting--. I came back from my holidays early—it was July 31st or July 30th, one of the two dates—and I remember waiting for a call. We had it from good sources that Cargill was purchasing Manitoba Pool. I got the call, and it was a representative from Manitoba Pool, and we were advised that UGG had purchased. So, whatever, you have a good source or a reliable source, well, it was not worth a hill of beans until the actual deal is pinned.

EE: So, UGG bought Manitoba Pool?

HD: Yeah.

EE: Because the United Grain Growers is, of course, turn of the--. More than 100 years ago, they were the first farmer's organization. So, they were the ones then who got Manitoba Pool? Okay.

HD: In actual fact, Manitoba Pool was aggressively pursuing UGG at one point. They had a pile of money because when the whole thing was over because they guaranteed them some kind of, I guess--. When you do these business deals, if the deal falls through, and you're a serious buyer, they pay some kind of a penalty. So, I know that they made millions of dollars off of the potential sale. But ironically--.

EE: UGG did?

HD: Yeah. Well, no, Manitoba Pool did before they sold to UGG. And then when UGG resurrected itself—not resurrected itself but--.

EE: Asserted itself.

HD: Yeah, asserted itself. It ended up being a reverse sort of scenario.

EE: Did they get the money that they had paid to Manitoba Pool, or had it been dispersed I wonder?

HD: Well, I mean, it was all part and parcel. Manitoba Pool was an old-school type of company, at least from my experience in the waterfront, and they were--. We didn't have much dealing with Alberta Wheat Pool, of course, but between Saskatchewan Wheat Pool and Manitoba Pool there was a huge difference in philosophies, I think. One was more old co-op, and one was a modern, evolving, progressive, aggressive type scenario. So, we always got along much better with Manitoba Pool. They had core values that were closer to our own. They're all businesses when you get down to the end of it, but I think they legitimately cared about people and farmers and communities, and these types of things.

EE: Co-ops and credit unions have to be businesses, obviously, but the spirit in which the business is carried on can vary quite a bit.

HD: Yeah. The people in charge had a different perspective and different core values than maybe some others.

EE: What happened to Sask Pool? As a Manitoba farmer's son, I appreciate Manitoba Pool, but Sask Pool--.

[0:30:00]

HD: So, UGG ended up buying the Manitoba Pool. Then Alberta Wheat Pool at that stage had already sort of assimilated. They ended up this Agricore, right? So, Manitoba Pool and Alberta Pool scenario had sort of evolved.

EE: Came together, as I recall.

HD: Yeah. UGG bought what was left of the pools and they ended up as Viterra, who was really in financial duress—the weaker of the sisters. Because UGG had created--.

EE: Sask Pool was?

HD: Yeah. Because UGG had created the biggest grain company in Canada now because of the acquisition.

EE: Those other two pools, spanning--.

HD: Yeah, so then it ended up that--. So, then you had the tail wagging the dog. You had the weakest of the sisters buying the mighty UGG. It just didn't make any sense. It was counterintuitive, but that's exactly what happened.

EE: And Sask Wheat took over Agricore.

HD: Then they had to divest some of the assets to Cargill—some of the country assets. They had to divest some of the port facilities because of the competition bureaus and whatnot, these rulings. So, it was all sorts of divestiture that was happening with that particular restructuring. Then you ended up with a situation where Glencore came in and basically did a \$6 billion deal and basically bought out a good section or good portion of the Canadian grain industry.

EE: Well, Sask Pool rather had gone public, sold stock, had they not, on the Toronto stock exchange. When did that take place? Was that already in the mid-nineties or a little later?

HD: Yeah, maybe even a little earlier.

EE: It had been a cooperative. It had been a kind of a mutual company of the farmers. To go to the market, you weren't at the Sask Pool conventions where that was approved, but the farmers--.

HD: It was a political hot potato. At the end of the day, the majority rule is what it boiled down to. Then it's a matter of how you get fair value. Everybody, of course, got shares. The members, we could buy shares. I think the shares were listed at \$10. I think they went up to \$24, \$27. I think in the end, it got down as low as 18 cents. So, the mighty Pool, something had gone terribly wrong for that type of disaster. And they became international players, and they had really expanded beyond what was comfortable. They had deals in Poland and Australia, and these types of things that went awry, I think, some of them.

EE: And these were deals not selling grain now, but operating facilities.

HD: Purchasing terminals or partnerships, and a lot of this stuff went awry. I think they got themselves into--. They were way bigger than the vision that they needed to be.

EE: Because the guys in the Regina headquarters were the ones who were making these deals, first of all. Got themselves in debt over their ears, I suppose.

HD: Yeah. And become a leverage company. Surprisingly when Sask Pool was doing about a million-five, a million-seven, Grain Growers was doing a million-seven, so you figure you'd merge two companies—two competitors at the waterfront—that are doing about three-five a year. That's about half the handle for the year. The grain evaporated. You had Sask Pool doing one-four at the end of the merged entity. There became more diversification and more specialized grain--.

EE: Are we talking dollars or tonnes?

HD: Tonnes.

EE: Tonnes. Tonnes of grain.

HD: It became more diversified. There was more GMO-type products. There was more specific type of speciality grains than we'd even seen. So, it actually necessitated that they run the UGG plant, otherwise those plants never would have operated again. Certainly, Manitoba Pool 3 never operated to any great degree, and then the Grain Growers' plant basically ended up being mothballed because the 7A and 7B could handle it. It's got a huge volume of being able to handle.

EE: Down there in the Intercity area.

HD: Yeah. But overall, like I said, these specialty grains and they had some barley products, so this sort of artificially created a business presence that sort of maintained the facilities, but in actual fact the actual handle had dropped.

EE: I guess one can put Western Grain on that same list, isn't it, because if it weren't for specialty grains, they probably wouldn't operate either.

HD: No. And, of course, because they weren't going to be able to handle the Wheat Board grains and whatnot. And then, of course, the wildcard in the last ten years was the Mission Terminal, who now is owned by the Wheat Board, which is a story all in itself. Why would the--.

EE: Do you want to tell it? Or try to tell it?

HD: Well, I don't know all the gory details. What I do know is that if you're going to put the stake through the heart, then why would you allow some type of a five-year transition? And why would you allow a government entity—for all extents and purposes—to become an active participant, a competitor, in the marketplace that's already over-capacitized [sic]? I don't know if that's a proper word or not, but I mean, there's--.

EE: It conveys the sense.

[0:35:16]

HD: Yeah. It's just ridiculous, right? And now they've bought ships. They own infrastructure, and they're not a valid grain company. They're what's left of a government entity that the government has allowed to resurrect itself and skew the marketplace.

EE: Let me just toss out a bystander's thoughts about all of this. With Viterra combining so much of what the farmers had built almost 100 years ago, and some of it even earlier actually, and under the control of this speculative firm out of Switzerland—Glencore—what was left for farmers who were unhappy about that was conceivably the turning of the Wheat Board into the Pool today, although they had to do it voluntarily. They no longer had the government control. So, I had some hopes—with interest that a left-winger in all of this, I suppose—that the Wheat Board might become that new operating entity that farmers could contract with and so on. And then to have the Harper Government, shortly before they were defeated at the polls, selling it off—or beginning to sell it off—I guess it's still just partial. What's your reaction to all of that?

HD: The thing is, I think, the persona for the Wheat Board--. It does create jobs within the community, right? So, there's a lot of ex-grain handlers going to work at that plant. It's a busy plant. I think that the marketplace through the Wheat Board--. They were getting what I would call an unfair advantage, and getting first dibs on Wheat Board grain because, of course, the Pools and the bigger grain companies tried to put the Wheat Board out of business. There was a lot of payback going on, if I can put it that way. When you look at how this sort of thing transitioned to the privatization, the Wheat Board senior officer ended up becoming the senior officer of the new competition.

EE: This G3 entity.

HD: But the thing with the farmers and, I think, people still sort of reminiscing about what happened 100 years ago, if you look at the Prairies nowadays—and I don't profess to be an expert on Prairie grain handling—but I mean, it's huge terminals, in some cases bigger than the P&H that we had in Thunder Bay. They're these big, centralized draw points where you're doing 100-car lots. The face of the industry isn't this tens of thousands, or whatever it was the number—I forget the numbers—from what--.

EE: Well, I might tell a little story in this context. I'm a farmer's son, of course, from Manitoba—although I have to say that my father always sold to Paterson's rather than to the co-ops, Manitoba Pool, for probably ideological reasons. After all, refugees from Bolshevism in 1926, coming out of the Soviet Union, I think there was definitely that kind of attitude. But I remember driving the Trans Canada past Sintaluta, which was where one of the pioneers of the farmer's movement, E. A. Partridge, farmed at Sintaluta, and seeing one of the elevators owned by Cargill. I was chatting with the chair of the history department at the University of Saskatchewan, where I would teach in '77-8, saying it was the first time in my life I had ever been tempted to arson. It just seemed an abomination to have Cargill owning an elevator in Sintaluta. Well, Cargill rather, eventually built one of these big throughput elevators in Elm Creek where I went to high school. The thing sits there. And I think it may have been the first of these major elevators on the Prairies.

The last time I was through Sintaluta, I don't know that there's any elevators left. Certainly, Cargill pulled out because they had this big facility. And, of course, these days you see these big trailers, highway tractors, moving grain, and so on. Anyway, back to what you were saying.

HD: It's a different world. They're not bringing the grain there with wagons anymore, let's put it that way.

EE: Oh, you bet they aren't. [Laughing]

HD: So, really, and the railways, of course, it was costly to have branch lines and whatnot, and this was a big thing about the Senior Grain Transportation Act. I remember--.

EE: The Western Grain Transportation Act and the committee you were--?

HD: Yeah. Yeah, the Western Grain Transportation Act. So, there was a lot of evolution happening during that whole particular process. The railways really wanted to divest themselves. They just wanted to catch the grain on the mainline, and that's the most efficient way. Or go to a grain elevator that would have a lot of--. Producer cars was a big issue at the time, where you'd put it in the siding and then the farmers could go and load their own cars.

EE: That's a throwback to the very beginning!

HD: Yeah, history sometimes has a way of repeating itself. But anyway, to continue the tour, then you had UGG M, which of course was sold to, I think, the Harbour Commission right now. Viterra owned that property because UGG had still owned it. Then you had the other Manitoba Pool property. Of course, again, owned by UGG, so it technically was Viterra's property. Then you had the P&H plant, who's now shut down, and those companies have created a single entity, and they work out of the Cargill facility, which is now Superior Grain. Then you've got the Mission Terminal, which goes by a different name now because of the Wheat Board purchase. And, of course, that was a grain elevator that was derelict. They had been making wood pellets out there, and there was an explosion and it got shut down. Sask Pool didn't have enforceable caveats.

[0:40:39]

It was a never-ending story. Every six months you'd get a call to say that place is going to be shut down. They're not going to be handling grain too much longer. Well, it never occurred. It was a never-never proposition. It went from 2 or 300,000 tonne speciality house, similar to Pool 10, and all of a sudden it became one of the biggest handlers of grain in the waterfront, taking about a sixth or more of the business in the course of a year. They get first dibs on the grain, so the other ones would sit dormant, and they would have cars stacked right out the end of it.

EE: This was the Mission Terminal?

HD: Yeah, the Mission Terminal. And see, they did all sorts of things, like these central agencies, the grain transportation group in town, that would sort of coordinate the car distribution and whatnot.

EE: Tony Kaplanis' organization?

HD: Yeah, exactly. It just became a free-for-all. It's still that way. It's very competitive now on the waterfront. Like I said, you sort of have the five operating facilities. Pool 10 just seems to be a survivor—specialty and whatnot. They run a pretty efficient operation out there; it's kind of a unique plant. Then you've got the two Richardson's facilities. In certain respects, that business is operating as a single entity, and they maximize utilization of the two plants—when there's logistics, there's a lot of certain times of the year. It's more busier than others, so you need more capacity. There's specialty crops, something you have to hold onto because the boat hasn't arrived. So, the capacity and whatnot.

7A and 7B at the Viterra, Glencore, facility, that sort of operates in the same vein. So, there's a lot of traffic and there's a lot of grain. The throughput still remains high. They can probably still do ten million a year in the waterfront, if the stars all align.

EE: Ten million tonnes?

HD: Yeah. So, it's just a matter of making sure that the boats are here at the time that the grain that's been ordered is there. And, of course, the whole thing about grain, and grain cleaning, and specialty crops, and the whole deregulation, it's a lot different sort of beast than what you've seen in the past. I mean, when the grain comes in, when it used to come in dirty—I forget what the percentage of—but it's a high, high percentage that comes in pretty clean now.

EE: The screenings are on the Prairies rather than here.

HD: I remember seeing some documentation at one of the rounds of bargaining we were at, and the audit earnings for a grain handling facility in Thunder Bay was about a third of their revenue. They make a whole lot of money by taking the grains and cleaning and blending the tolerances back in. Of course, the tolerances became tighter. The grain coming in clean, you don't get those by-products, so you cut a lot of the revenue stream out of it. In one sense, we always used to do what we called envisioning. Before bargaining, we had a pretty sophisticated process, I like to think—it wasn't that sophisticated. It was about getting information--.

EE: You were getting information, sure.

HD: Empowering yourselves to make informed choices, and that's what we did when we bargained the collective agreements. Our job was to empower the membership to make an informed choice.

EE: And the company has every reason to have you be, in a sense, be informed.

HD: We would invite the company representatives. We would invite the Wheat Board, the Harbour Commission—whoever we could get to come to the sessions—and they would give us an overview of what was happening in the industry.

EE: This is kind of like the process of discovery in courts, where the lawyers on both sides have a chance to scan the evidence and shorten the trial by focusing on the real issues.

HD: And we would try to get a flavour for what we were up against as well, and then try to build relationships and build bridges as well. It ended up that we would do an envision. You'd have a one-, and three-, and five-year vision, and it would be the same thing—there would be a lot less grain companies at some point in time. But what would happen is we would end up, it would start to really tighten, we'd see significant people laid off for significant periods of time, and next thing you know we'd have a good year. We did nine million. Then we'd be good for about six years after that, and it happened again. We'd always sort of get a reprieve somehow. From our perspective, the more companies operating meant more employees, more employment, and once they started to assimilate--.

EE: The richer the competition, the better.

HD: The numbers dwindled. So, every time there was a merger, or when they would shut down Manitoba Pool, we lost 100 members. When they shut down Grain Growers, we lost 100 members.

[0:45:00]

EE: Was the seniority peculiar to each company? Or could guys move--?

HD: No, it was particular to each company. At certain times, over history, when things started to shrink at one company somebody had worked there for three or four years, the other company ended up hiring. So, some people would go over, but sometimes it would end up that you have to pick your poison in a sense. You had this type of established--. Would the industry kick back here? Or should you go over there? At some points people that made choices to go to the smaller facility had less turnover. Say if you got on a steady dayshift there, you pretty much had employment for life. On the other side, you needed to have two terminals operating on a two-shift basis, so there was a lot of--.

EE: It's been a tough life for the guys over the years.

HD: And some people, there's still grain handlers I see them walking the streets. I see one fellow at the Shelter House on a daily basis. He was a functional person in our society, and he basically was on some type of a disability wage, I'm sure, and frequents the Simpson Street Shelter House area.

EE: The single saddest call I think I ever made in the '88 campaign, canvassing, was a fellow Italian fellow who'd lost his job at the elevators. I didn't know a word I could say to him. He was just the saddest looking guy.

HD: I've seen-- Well, I experienced it myself, right? When I started in '75, I grew up in a generation and something you never lose. Your sort of people that you have the fortune to work with at the same sort of grouping and age demographic. Then by 15 years after the fact, we got wiped off the face of the map. These people dispersed wherever. So, you lose that commonality, you lose that compatriotism. These are just your long-term friends. As you go through life, you have life experiences and whatnot, well you lose that. You can never recapture that. You can't go to another job at age 32 or 30 and have the same experience you did by being a 17-year-old.

EE: That you did starting at 17.

HD: It's just not the same. But that's life. Life's experiences. So, you get to one door closes another door opens type thing, but it was still a sad series of events. The thing with grain is that it was always a slow kill. It always looked like it was going to get a little rosier. You always hoped for the best.

EE: Next-year country, in another way.

HD: Yeah. And in some cases, you just dragged on and on. Or you got back for a brief reprieve instead of cutting yourself loose. Some people that did cut themselves loose. They became nurses and worked in different industries. They've done quite well and experienced things. Nothing wrong with working in industrial establishments, but people really probably have a lot of potential that they never get to exude because they never have the opportunity. Where in some cases, some of these people did. Some people have just been stuck in lower-paid occupations, and that's fine too, but you need to care out a niche and you become a survivor.

EE: How did UI, EI, operate for the guys over the years?

HD: EI was always, really it became--

EE: Post-'95.

HD: It became a crutch, right? So then, you can continue. You'd try to get your weeks in for EI.

EE: Similarly, for UI earlier? Distinguishing between the two—or is there any point?

HD: There's no distinguishing.

EE: As far as your people were concerned?

HD: Yeah. That whole EI system, of course, over time was eroded in how to qualify for it. But for a typical grain handler, if you got seasonal work, you'd likely qualify for EI. There's only one time that I remember that I didn't, and I hung my hat on--. I had some other weeks where I was working elsewhere. But in any case, long story short, I got back for a week in the fall and that was it. Then I didn't have enough weeks to qualify. So, it was extremely important to get on the EI, so you could survive for another season.

EE: A little bit like the East Coast fishermen, I guess, in its way. I mean they had real support systems in addition, but there is some results.

HD: Yeah. We were appealing for some reprieve one time for EI. I remember when Iain Angus was an MP at the time, and he hooked me up with an office in--. I remember I was in Ottawa, and I went across to the Quebec side, and that's where the office was. I met with a high-ranking official over there, and basically what they told me was that grain handlers, there was X amount of people at the time—500 at the time, or something like that, I don't know what the actual numbers were—but their answer to me was, "You're not the East Coast fishermen."

EE: You're not large enough, yeah.

HD: No. Or you don't have the political clout that they have. So, we can't make these particular types of changes, which was some extension to the benefit period to try to get through the period. I remember when EI--. I remember we had a big fight one time, so what they would do is they just sort of hang around, and you think you're going to get called back and you didn't. A year would pass. We had three years of recall rights, which that would get you through two bad seasons, but it didn't get you through a restructuring of the industry. That failsafe was there more if you had a drought or something; you wouldn't lose your recall rights. Then you had a skilled labour pool to pull from. But it ended up at the end of the three-year period, some people you could access a small portion of your severance pay in the interim. So, if you went off your poge, you'd be able to draw on some severance pay and still retain your recall rights. And then poge, or EI, they basically went back and they wanted to then deduct--. The third year you finally got the rest of your severance pay--.

[0:50:33]

EE: Take the severance pay back. Or on EI they would--.

HD: They wanted to claw it back. So, in those days—of course they don't have this anymore because it's Service Canada and it's a different beast—but they used to have specialists, and you could go and talk to somebody and talk sense to them. So, what they did was the expectation was that there was still going to be bonified work, and it only crystalized over the last part of it. So then, we didn't have any EI benefits, so they'd let us keep our severance. It was a sensible decision at the time, somewhat prejudicial to somebody in that particular environment. Nowadays, because I know we had the closures at Terrace Bay and Marathon and the shipyards, and the whole thing about how the EI system works now, it's bastardized. It's terrible.

EE: When did that happen? Could you date the change?

HD: Well, I'm not sure. It's evolved through the ten years of the Harper government where there was just no---. The rules seemed to be forever changing.

EE: And the local capacity was disappearing, I guess. As you say, the specialists were gone.

HD: Yeah. It's a story all in and of itself. I'll just relate one thing that perturbs me to no end. You get these bankruptcy type proceedings and, "We'll put the workers first," or whatever. So, lo and behold, I'd never been in a bankruptcy proceeding yet that somebody actually got money.

EE: The worker?

HD: There's money left that a worker could actually make a claim. Well, the shipyards is a situation where we're going to get 80 cents on the dollar. So, lo and behold, they get this payment, and the government has a surcharge. The government charges you through the bankruptcy act, like three and a half percent on the first million and a half—don't quote the numbers, but it's something like that—and anything above that it's like three percent. So, they actually, when our people got their cheque back---. They have a WEPP, which is a Wage Earner's Protection Program. They deduct that off the claim. You've got to pay back all your EI—and you can extend your claim. So, you could get it back depending on what your work situation is. Then to just basically kick you one more time, now the government has a surcharge. They take three and a half percent of your money--.

EE: Of the initial gross, or what remains?

HD: Gross, yeah, the gross. And they basically take that away from the workers. So, when you get a settlement cheque, the government's taking three and a half percent for nothing. It's just outrageous. These types of complexities or whatever, it just

doesn't make any sense. You see a lot of downsizing like I've seen in my career, if you want to put it that way, or my involvement in the labour movement. There has been some absolute travesties of justice. This just puts the icing on the cake. Not only do you kick them when they're down--. And usually they get nothing out of this, and the governance is such that the same companies can be operating everywhere else in the country. You're utilizing the trees, like in Marathon, at another site a few hundred miles away and not a penny--. And they leave an environmental mess. And to top it off, when you get into a situation where there is some kind of funds and the workers get at least some semblance of justice while they've lost their jobs, you have all these claw backs. But I mean, the three and a half percent, or whatever it is, penalty that the government charges on the bankruptcy act? Taking workers' money? It just doesn't make any sense.

EE: May I ask if you're contemplating approaching the new government to change that retroactively?

HD: [Laughs] I mean, we've made known about the outrages of it. So we've already talked about it internally.

EE: Opened the door, in a sense.

HD: Yeah. But whether that can actually change or not, I don't know. It's definitely something to pursue because this government is much different than the other one. These are the types of things--.

EE: These are the kinds of tests of a new government. Do you have any sense of a change on the Wheat Board? The privatization of the Wheat Board from this new government? Any hint at all in the--?

HD: I've not heard. It's a done deal, right? They're done. The Wheat Board is basically an operating entity, competitor, on the waterfront.

EE: But could it remain domestically owned? Could the farmers remain the owners of it? Because they voted against the changes on the Wheat Board.

HD: Well, some of the farmers did.

EE: I gather a majority did. [Laughs]

HD: The government, the structure of it, anything's possible. But I mean, this is not a co-op. [Phone chimes] I'm just going to shut this off. It's not a co-op. It's a big business agency, and that's that. So, don't fool yourself. This thing about aligning farmers

with some type of concept, that somehow you'd grasp onto this new entity as some type of a semblance of a--. It's just a marketing question. It's 101 marketing. It's about whether you want to sell it to the market here, or whether you want to conclude your assets and basically sell them in a different way. Nobody's even doing that anymore on the waterfront.

[0:55:34]

EE: Well, the Wheat Board, was of course a marketing entity also, contracting with farmers. Or, actually had legislated monopoly of certain grains, and was able, as a result, to obtain the best return for the farmer as possible in the global market. Could the Wheat Board do that now with farmers contracting with them rather than selling to Cargill or--?

HD: But it's a competitive business environment now. They don't--.

EE: It always was, though, on a global basis.

HD: No, it wasn't because--. Well, on a global basis, but it wasn't competitive because the Wheat Board had the monopoly.

EE: Well, in Canada they certainly did, but they faced the big American companies--.

HD: But as far as farmers selling into the marketplace, the monopoly was with the Wheat Board. So, you had no choice. That's where the grain had to go.

EE: That's right. But the question, I suppose, that will gradually be answered by the farmers, or experienced by them, is whether under the Wheat Board they did better when that was the Canadian monopoly in the global market, or whether in the more fragmented situation now, without any power—no Canadian company has anything like that kind of power any longer—whether they'll do as well. I actually belong to the NFU. I receive their newsletter—pure sentiment on my part, on almost just sentiment—and the latest newsletter had some numbers in it that made me suspect farmers might begin to see that the present situation is not to their advantage.

HD: It'd be an interesting question to see how it does evolve. But the thing is that the way the industries have with canola crushing plants, it's not a snapshot in time. This thing has evolved, the whole industry itself. The farmer that's closer to the delivery point is not pooled anymore. He's going to have a geographical advantage potentially. There's all sorts of things that are happening out there, so it's not a fair comparison anymore because it's probably a win-loss type proposition. What would you grade? Would you grade on the old structure, you have this, and then you're going the grade this as a return to the farmers, and

then somehow you're going to have a comparator. But the comparator doesn't exist anymore. It's a totally different dynamic out on the Prairies, right, the business structure. They diversify. They have more livestock, whatever the case might be, and whatever they did to address the competitive environment, you can never get a true comparator anymore about what the outcome--.

EE: Well, even in the kinds of grain. Do you have any thoughts about the Canadian Grain Commission [CGC] and its disappearance?

HD: Well, I mean, it's this whole thing about the whole structure in the Canadian grain industry for what it was, and the governance of it, that basically this is what happens when you deregulate. I guess people are willing to go to the marketplace and stamp it in a different colour. At one time, we prided ourselves on being able to--. The stamp on our product.

EE: The quality of the grain. Known quality.

HD: Yeah. Now we just had a case—I'm not going to say which company—but we had a case where somebody substituted something, and it had some GMO context to it, and the whole boatload got turned down. There's lots of these things happening.

EE: That was actually in the news, was it not?

HD: I'm not sure if that was public domain. This might be an internal thing.

EE: Well, I'm not pressing you to name it either.

HD: [Laughs] So, these things sort of evolve. So I'm not sure. Those services are still being maintained on the waterfront by a privatized company.

EE: What's the company doing it here?

HD: Well, SGS. There's two companies.

EE: There's two companies actually doing it?

HD: Yeah. Some of it's done inhouse. Some of the companies geared up and some of them didn't.

EE: Our very last interview tomorrow is going to be with our son who is happily back in Thunder Bay, but he was in Manitoba in '06. He ended up working for SGS Canada at the time when they were beginning to try sampling on the farms. So, that's going to be an interesting complement to the new era we are now in.

HD: Well, they're advertising on Facebook. They're looking for inspectors right now, so. [Laughs]

EE: Are they?

HD: Yeah.

EE: And the other company, did you name it already?

HD: I can't remember the name of it actually. It slipped my mind for the moment.

EE: Grain grading Thunder Bay might bring it up.

HD: Yeah. There's two of them there, so.

EE: Well, that's been quite a ride, and continues. Incidentally, what about Paterson's? They were knocking their elevator down on the Kam in '78 when my family moved to Thunder Bay. It was a bit heart-wrenching because my father had always sold to the Paterson elevator in Culross.

[1:00:01]

HD: They still have a presence on the Prairies, and Richardson's handles a lot of Paterson's grain. I think there's a business relationship there.

EE: So, Paterson Global Foods has related itself to Richardson's here?

HD: I'm not sure about the name of the entity himself.

EE: I think that's the name of it on the Prairies.

HD: I know that we handle a lot of their product. Interestingly, when we sat on the Senior Grain Transportation Committee, which is going back some time now again, the two advocates for the east, there was one Seaway person and then there was one of the Patersons—not the local, it was a Paterson that lived out west—and then myself. Thunder Bay wouldn't even enter into the dialogue for the most part unless one of the three of us said, "What about us?" right? Or we would, from time to time, chastise them to no degree, and they would get their chance to chastise the labour side from time to time too.

EE: Because they were focussed on the West Coast?

HD: Yeah, exactly.

EE: What about Churchill?

HD: Well, interesting, Churchill was just in an article again in the news recently where they're going to divest it to the Natives.

EE: The First Nations organizations.

HD: The First Nations are looking at--.

EE: Buying the rail line and the port.

HD: Ironically, I mean I think about how much--. I think they pumped \$50 million into that port before they sold it to the company that's selling it now. I'm not sure whether the global warming whether you're going to be shipping grain out of--. The word was, as things warmed up, you'd be able to ship out of Churchill, but I think the permafrost, you have more and more issues with the infrastructure getting up to--.

EE: The rail line, keeping the rail line up will be the challenge.

HD: It's a political question. It's always been a political question. It will always be a political question.

EE: Out of the Carrot River Valley in the 1920s.

HD: So, if the First Nations end up acquiring, well, First Nations have a lot of leverage, and rightfully so. It'll certainly turn out a different dynamic. But this is a big company that got it for nothing, got it all fixed up. Who wouldn't want to buy a car that just

had a full retro on it, right? And it would be guaranteed so much product in the course of a year. In the long run if they can't sustain the model and they got it for nothing, then how is it that somebody else that's going to take over the infrastructure be able to operate it in a reasonable and feasible way? So, that'll be interesting to see how it goes. From my perspective, it never did handle enough grain to put a huge dent, but as our capacity and throughput went through--.

EE: Went down.

HD: Yeah. If they're handling 500,000 tonnes, and we're handling 6, that's a pretty big percentage. That grain would likely go through Thunder Bay. So, from my perspective is that, not that I wish any ill will—there's jobs in the community and structure, and I've seen enough hurt from industries that closed down different facilities—hopefully it'll be busy enough so everybody could prosper. But in actual fact, it's like the Wheat Board being transcended into another competitor—it's a competitor that ought not to exist.

EE: That's the Thunder Bay view.

HD: Thunder Bay has taken its lumps, right? We've had our closures, we've lost our jobs, thousands of jobs. And that's not an exaggeration, when you get right down to it with inspectors--.

EE: Over the years. Thousands of different people.

HD: Yeah, over the years, secondary industries and whatnot. I mean, you talk to the groups that used to go in and do maintenance on the facilities, or paint the facilities, or do fumigation of the facilities—all these things are part and parcel. So, we've taken our lumps, and yet you have these artificial groups that are sort of existing and they ought not to exist. So, if you're going to have any type of semblance of some pure market-driven system, then let's compete on an equal playing field. Really, that's what we have now. We have a deregulated industry. It's every person for themselves, and everybody's chasing the same market.

EE: This is where the grain industry began 130 years ago, give or take.

HD: The dynamic that you might--. I'm not sure how it's going to play out. But if you look at the weather patterns as well, who knows? Nobody can predict. I'm a firm believer, though some aren't, about global warming.

EE: The science of global warming? I think you've got believers around the table here. Carry on. [Laughs]

HD: So, I mean, my view is you look at what's happening where you have areas that were traditionally dry that now have wet, and now you've got the moisture that you get in certain areas. It's just a dog's breakfast out there. I have no idea what the industry really looks at as far as what can be grown where and when, and how much natural catastrophes you're going to have, and how that will affect in the long run the reliability and the type of product that we're able to grow, and the issues that you start to see that face you, right? Different quality of products.

[1:05:02]

EE: Our own grain handlers moving grain on the waterfront here, all members of your union?

HD: No. The Mission--.

EE: The Mission is not organized?

HD: Yeah, it's not organized. But it's all ex-grain handlers for all extents and purposes, right? And then Pool 10 is a small group, so they're not organized either.

EE: So, you're representing--.

HD: You've got UFCW that still represents the group at Canada Malt. The malt plant, that's UFCW facility.

EE: So, you've got Richardson, Viterra, and Cargill?

HD: Yeah, Superior Grain.

EE: Superior Grain, those are the three.

HD: Yeah.

EE: About 200--?

HD: 220 members right now.

EE: 220 members. Boy. Someone from the Prairies would say, “Oh, how are the mighty fallen,” but that’s not the phrase I’d want to put on it here. Very sad in terms of-- Well, one can put it beside, you mentioned, the Marathon American Can to the Terrace Bay plants and the paper mills. The kinds of jobs that were available to someone coming out of high school for a long time are pretty well all gone, aren’t they? The way in which the workforce in this city has had to change.

HD: Well, I went to Lakeview high school, which is now a horse of a different name now—St. Ignatius, I believe. You could look out the window and you could see the mill or smell the mill, and there was one further down Lakeshore Drive, but we’re talking about the fine paper. Then you had the shipyards, and then you had the grain elevators, and then you had the wood sawmills. So, I mean, where you could see from one side to the other, any one of those entities that you went and worked at, except Richardson’s, is now closed. It didn’t matter what you picked; it was only a matter of time.

Even the shipyards in its heyday was 600 people. We had about, in the end, we were employing about 80 on a seasonal basis and probably 20 on an annual basis depending on what type of work. It would gear up sometimes even a bit more than 80 depending on how much work they had there. The sad part about the shipyards, it was still a viable entity. It was a matter that the ownership group was getting a little bit older and, I think, part of the family didn’t want to take it over is my understanding. Because when you really look at how it got divested, I mean, it needed some capitalization to extend the drydock, but that could’ve still been a feasible operating entity. It’s sad that it got closed down because if somebody with some foresight and a little bit of assistance-- But the boat companies, there was other yards, and the shipping companies couldn’t guarantee somebody X amount of work. Again, consolidation of the shipping industry—if you didn’t have one of the main three competitors guaranteeing that they were going to use your facility for--.

EE: That used to be CSL for a long time, wasn’t it?

HD: And Upper Great Lakes. So then, you couldn’t take the risk that you could open it and invest the money. So, sad part about that is that how do you resurrect that infrastructure? It’s impossible. The machinery, the expertise—you talk to someone like a friend Tommy Chauvin if--.

EE: We have interviewed Tom.

HD: The stuff he talks about there, you wouldn’t even believe that they can make that kind of stuff there.

EE: Cabinet building, steelwork. It was quite the shop in its day and deserves to be remembered for that. Well, Herb, this has been a quite terrific scan of all sorts of things, and I'm sure most of this is supplementary to what you gave in the narration earlier this year. Any concluding thoughts? You're still in the business yourself for some decades?

HD: Yeah. Like I said, I started in 1975, I was 17 years old--.

EE: Well, that's 40 years ago. You're not a young man any longer. [Laughing]

HD: I'm coming to the end of my tenure, and there's a new breed of people in the waterfront now. Although, when we did the last ratification vote, we had an issue with temporary workers that was on the table. I think I rattled a few of their cages because trying to get them to understand that if this comes into being, that they'll replace you with temporary workers. You've got a collective agreement, you need to protect it, and you need to protect it with all your might.

EE: And they saw that?

HD: Yeah. Like I said, I think somebody suggested I was becoming a little soft. So I think I shook the foundations on that one particular day. But people, they're new, and they're naïve, and to be quite frank, they're a little bit inexperienced in certain aspects of life. If you come somewhere and there's sort of a silver spoon when you come in--. It's like when we started in the grain elevators. It was all the work you wanted, all the overtime you wanted. Life was grand. You could buy anything you wanted. I remember Mazur at a ratification vote years ago, and I was the recording secretary. Frank Mazur used to have a reel-to-reel. And there's a reel-to-reel tapes of all Frank's Mazur's stuff. Must be at his house at home. He recorded all of his major speeches.

EE: Mary would have that?

HD: Yeah, Mary would have that, I believe.

EE: There's an artifact.

HD: I remember him saying one time, "Make sure you save some money because it's not always going to be this way." I'm thinking, "What the hell is this guy talking about?" But, sure enough, it came into being. Self-fulfilling prophecy or whatever else, they kind of knew it. And I think that the new group they have hired—because we have an age demographic—so we've had a complete turnover at a couple of the sites for all extents and purposes. And I mean like there's six old school grain handlers left at the one company and the other 70 have all started in the last six or seven years. Some of them are what I call, they've come

back—they'd left the industry and came back. They have some of that experience, but they're going to have to live what we lived through in the new era, whatever that brings for them, and those types of challenges.

[1:10:55]

EE: And learn the lessons?

HD: Yep. And they'll bring those issues to the table. So, we see some issues that we fought for and then relinquished coming to the forefront again, and they'll end up fighting the fights. My days, I'm at the end of my tenure, so I mean I'm going to be passing the torch in not too much longer. These are the fights and there'll be new people to step up to fight the fight, and hopefully maintain the integrity of what we've accomplished over the years.

EE: Are your collective agreements gathered anywhere? Are they public documents or--?

HD: Well, we've got a bunch of copies in the office. I've got the full sets from as far as back as '45, I think.

EE: Would you be up to depositing them somewhere sometime?

HD: Yeah, we got the whole grain archive. So, we've kept some of the bargaining—we just culled them a little bit—but Nancy has gone through some of it. Yeah, we're going to find a home. I was hoping that Friends of the Grain Elevators would come up with some type of a more permanent setting and they could go somewhere where they weren't going to get damaged or--. [Phone rings]

EE: The--. We'll shut that down for a minute.

[Audio pauses]

OM: Okay, I'm going to try and set this up here. Let's see if that works.

EE: Well, we were just talking, I think, about documentation and the possibility--. To the extent that I was asking questions of the archives, it was certainly in terms of acquisition. The other place, I suppose, could be the Museum, but if the university is going to be serious about an archive, I think that would be the place to put it.

HD: Repository of, yeah. That's what we want to find. We want to find a good home.

EE: We'll guard it carefully for a little while longer, and maybe come midwinter maybe things are established.

HD: Yeah. I've been pretty fortunate overall, and I often think about this. When you come to the end of your tenure you sort of think about, I don't know if you'd call it your life's work, your life's involvement--.

EE: You do! I'll vouch for it. [Laughs]

HD: So then, like you said, you forget--. We were cleaning out the office and we went back, because we moved out of the labour centre, of course there was hundreds of boxes back there. So, I had a former president, Tom Hamilton of the grain--. Because he was an executive officer in 1976. So, he knew they had a property. I used to talk to him at great length about different things. He was really informed about labour relations and what we were doing, so we went to cull the documents back there. It was like trying to throw out your life's work. I couldn't do it, so I got him to do it. He went through it, and we picked out certain stuff, and then you start reading different things you had done. "I wrote this? Holy smoke! We made it this--? Holy smokes, I forgot!"

EE: That's one of the shocks with documents, seeing something from 30 years earlier you don't remember. [Laughing]

HD: I remember the grain--. We were already on strike for about a week, and I was a nominee for an IM case pertaining to a lady that was terminated. So, Lewis was a Minister of Transport at the time. I forget who the Minister of Labour was. But in any case, they ordered us to the table. Back to work legislation was pending, so they got a hold of us. Wally Dubinsky was the IM lawyer. But anyhow, he said, "Well, what are we going to do about this case? You're the nominee." And I said, "Well, we waited already like seven months to get the case established, so they can frickin' well wait." So, we basically went ahead, and we did the case that day. We resolved it about 2:00, and then I went to the grain negotiations.

So, the whole country's on standby waiting for us to get there, but by the time we got there, Lewis—who I think was transportation minister—and the farmers were having a rally in front of the legislature in Manitoba. So, I guess he had to throw them a bone, and the bone was that he let loose that the grain handlers were going to be ordered back to work. Of course, then we got that from the local press because that hit the news wire. All hell broke loose. Then of course the company, nobody was going to bargain after that because they were just pending legislation.

EE: No, why should they?

HD: But in any case, we had the file there and the nominee, and we were looking at that as we went to discard it, right? So, that's a piece of history that I kind of only know about. I says, "You know what?" I actually put it in another folder, just for reference.

[1:15:03]

EE: And you should put a memorandum on top of it to explain it.

HD: But, you know that stuff that's not known. The back to work or whatever, after the strike, they sent me a—I'm not sure what you would call it—but it's a waxed, sealed proclamation of the legislation that was passed that was sent to my house, like my home address. I didn't have a mailbox, so it was left out. Because we had a community mailbox, so it was left out laying against my door. I opened up this package and it was this sealed whatever it was, proclamation.

EE: That would be the order in council. Or the royal proclamation of the legislation, they probably proclaimed it right after it passed.

HD: So, I have that, right?

OM: You should have that framed.

HD: Yeah. So, it's like this kind of stuff. If somebody else looked at that, "What the heck is this?" But anyhow, not to go on about it, but lived the history and we read a lot of different experiences. With this whole downsizing and everything, all the advocacy that we've done, we've tried to do the best we could for the membership, right? To some degree, I like to think we did the best we could. You couldn't stop the travesty and the hardship; that was just the nature of the beast. It was business. But we were on the people's side of it, and we did. We did as much as we could to assist people as time when on, and I'm pretty proud of that work in the grain industry.

EE: You should think seriously about writing memoirs after you retire. If it's, say, 45 years—I'm not wanting to guess or pre-judge or anything—but even at 40 years now in the industry, you've seen the industry change enormously. To have a union official's experience, presentation of that, memorialization of it, would be of invaluable interest. To be put in the archive or published for that matter.

HD: The uniqueness of it is that I had access to all six companies behind the scenes. There were six different dynamics there. No two companies were the same at all. And, of course, I was the most informed person on the Thunder Bay waterfront about grain

issues because I was dealing with them on a daily basis, right? I was hands on. We were down at the site, right? It's your worst nightmare, the bottom surfacing to the top. [Laughing] The companies, I'm sure--. I'm not sure they have a hate on me, but.

EE: They didn't love you.

HD: No, they didn't love me. [Laughing] But I was doing what I thought I had to do. Maybe at first a little more zealous than I needed to be, but I sort of--.

EE: What's wrong with zealous? Zeal!

HD: Zeal, yeah. I mellowed a little bit over time, but you can't lose your values. I am who I am, and I have my philosophies. As I say a lot of times at the bargaining now, "It's not going to happen on my watch." You'll have to deal with the next generation on this one because--.

EE: You became a Steelworkers rep. Did you succeed Moe Shepherd?

HD: Technically, yeah.

EE: Technically.

HD: We worked together for a bit, and then I took some of his properties. Then Moe retired and I assimilated the rest of it. So, we sort of worked together.

EE: It's a shame Moe hasn't done a memoir as well.

HD: He has a lot. He has a lot.

EE: Out at Timmins and whatnot. That's another industry, mining, so we won't get into that. Owen, any questions on your part?

OM: No, it was just a very interesting interview.

EE: We can interview you on the spot about the decline in Employment Canada.

OM: I used to be on the government side there, but I was more responsible for mines going down and paper mills. I stayed out of the elevators. I was fortunate that way.

EE: Was the Youth Employment Service the thin edge of the wedge for the decline? Privatization of employment services?

OM: Well, it didn't start off that way, but it certainly did end up that way.

EE: I mean, in a sense, it--. And I was involved at St. Paul's United as chair of the board in opening the youth centre for the first operation. Summer of '81?

OM: '81.

EE: '81 at Youth Employment Service. I felt a little bit rueful about it. It was a good service. It was a needed service. I'm sure it has to the present day served the youth well. But it's not part of the government directly.

HD: I think what happened in the evolution of what's happening in the government sector, is that it's more or less it's straight up-- . We used to have four Labour Canada representatives here, right? We have none. They're few and far between. We get serviced out of Sudbury. Maybe there's one rep, he works out of a virtual office, but I think that it's a matter of the EI section of the public service is going to be this big, and you'll provide whatever services you can. Then you go to Service Canada now. No disrespect to the presenter, very nice fellow, I knew--.

EE: Where was he based?

HD: Thunder Bay. But I knew more, through my experiences and what I read, I knew more than he did about the EI program. So, he comes to a meeting of laid off shipyard workers that have just got all this money clawed back from this severance payment.

OM: He wouldn't enjoy that.

[1:20:10]

HD: No. And he did his best. "If I can't answer the question, leave it with me and I'll try to find the answer for you. I'm not going to tell you something I don't know." He was very good, like he did all the right things.

EE: Honest, in that sense.

HD: But it was different than before. We had a specialist that used to come there, and they knew what was happening. You could ask them questions and they knew how the system operated. Again, this is when people we could approach on a common-sensical basis. Before the umpire system got turfed, we were at Terrace Bay. We must have had ten or a dozen cases. All this misinformation. So, the umpire, the one fellow there, he runs the different parks and that. What the heck's his name? Hartley is it, or--?

EE: Oh, Bob Hartley?

HD: Yeah. So, I think he was the chairman of--.

EE: The Conservation Authority?

OM: Bill. Bill Hartley.

HD: Bill, yeah. Bill Hartley, yeah. So, he would, if there was some question I was asking, "You know you've asked this five times?" So, he'd put the tape down and we'd call downstairs and get somebody upstairs. "What's Mr. Daniher talking about?" There was that type of an accountability. I don't even know. I've dealt with the new EI system, and it all seems to be electronic. It was paper filing and--.

OM: That was just somebody's idea that a lot of the work could be centralized, which gutted the local operations.

EE: The cuts that began under Martin, perhaps, in the '90s? Maybe even a bit--.

OM: That would have started with Martin and Chretien. The big layoffs happened under Chretien's watch.

EE: '95 and later. In fact, was Lewis the transport minister? Was the early '90s the Chretien government?

HD: Yeah. Yeah.

EE: Yeah. I mean, he has a lot to answer for under Chretien and Martin. [Laughing]

OM: But I was on the employment end of things for the most part. It was just less expensive to farm it out to not-for-profit organizations.

EE: Yeah, sure. Oh yeah.

OM: And it would cost them much less.

EE: I understand the rationale, but damn people's futures, pensions, livelihoods in between. Just damn all of that.

OM: I think the Service was better for many of the same reasons that Herb was referring to there because you had a group of people who actually had been there a while and knew the system.

EE: Sure. Inevitably.

OM: Most of your people that you've worked with were my colleagues. Probably Wendy--.

HD: Wendy Weir.

OM: Wendy Weir, and Hugh Hennessey—he was in Labour Canada way back when.

HD: Yeah, yeah.

OM: Good people. And that's 30-years of experience. You just don't replace that.

EE: No, no you don't.

OM: And I probably know the poor chap, the raw meat in the shark cage there, so. [Laughing] That's too bad.

HD: Just digress a bit, we had a system where you could get banked overtime. So, what you would do is you would get your banked overtime, and you would pay—I can't remember, we were over the threshold—so likely on your overtime you didn't end up paying an EI contribution. So, if you took the banked overtime, you either had to declare--. You could take it as a cash payout. You took it out of your bank account, or you could take it in a manner that was deducted from your EI. And if you did that, if you

got it deducted from your EI, then those hours would count as hours worked towards your claim. So, you had to be very careful about how you went about this, right? Because a lot of people just used it as a deferred account, an emergency fund.

So anyhow, we had to get a ruling. The EI couldn't quite figure this out. So, after it's going back with the liaison and then getting the ruling from down east about this. But lo and behold, that went on for ten years, so I had all the documentation and all the rulings we had in an information package, and then it kind of quieted it down. It wasn't an issue for a while. Then it resurrected itself. Revisiting the same story and trying to get somebody new to understand what had happened here. But again, when you change the system from weeks to hours, those 80 hours could mean the difference about getting on a claim or not getting on a claim. And you had to make your play now. You had to make your play when you took it because it had to be taken by the end of March. So, you had to make a decision today not knowing how much you might work in the following year, right?

OM: The other thing that you probably would remember at the beginning of your career is we also did all of the elevator recalls for the elevators here in town. And Eric Erickson—I don't know if you ever ran into Eric or not--.

HD: I don't recall the name.

OM: He was probably working with Frank Mazur, but he would have 2,000 recalls. It was almost as if the grain elevators, the union, and the government were all working as one big entity to keep the port running.

HD: I remember going to the EI office, and I wanted to get work. I was always looking for work, and it was hard. People wouldn't hire grain handlers because they knew you were going to leave. But I remember going there and he says, "You work in the grain business?" He says, "What do I have a name for ya? Just send me your cards and go away. You're going to get called back in the spring. Don't worry about it."

[1:25:19]

EE: There, of course, is what UI should be for in part, when you have a skilled workforce that is necessary, part of the year. Keep them in storage, on the shelf—whatever phrase you want to use—but have the UI. And that was, I think, the original leading intent.

Well, we could go on forever, I suspect. Don't want to brag about all the NDP MPs who represented port cities and so on and so forth. Two of us here in the Thunder Bay, Ron Murphy there, Jim Fulton up there, and two or three in Vancouver—not that we could change very much. Anyway, it's been a great pleasure to chat with you here, more than convinced this has been a very interesting survey of things, Herb. Thanks so--.

End of interview.