

Transcription of interview with Earl Paul, Amherst

Q>Your name is...A.Earl Paul.

Q.You were born when? A.I was born in 1895. November.

Q>Your present address is? A.Amherst. No.1 Lamy Street, Amherst.

Q.You were born in Springhill? A.Yes.

Q>Your father was E.B.Paul? A.Yes.

Q.Can you tell me a bit about your father, what you can remember of him?

A.Well, I remember of him as...he was a miner, he worked in the mines of Springhill from the time he was twelve years old. The mine that he started in had no association with the present mining operations, it was what was known as the Anderson level, he went as a boy driving a horse, the gin that hoisted the coal.

Q.It must have been a pretty small mine. A.Oh yes, just a few men. He lived at Anderson's home, while he drove the gin. His family wasn't in Springhill-- there was no town of Springhill then.

Q.This must be way, way back. A.This was when he was about twelve years old...

A.He was born when? Q.My son, who is a dentist over in Sackville, he has the family bible, and he's researching this the same as you are. He has it..My father was born in the town of Amherst. I did know the date of his birth. I couldn't quote it now because I wouldn't be sure. But when he went to Springhill the railroad wasn't there at all--the coal used to be hauled over to what was known as Saltspring siding by horses--there was little coal produced.

Q.Could this be in the days before 1872? Was he there in the early 1870s? A.

If he was alive now, he'd be 122 years old, so... it would be in that vicinity.

Q.That's amazing. First he worked at the Anderson mine as a twelve-year-old boy His father was working on the railway, was he? A.No, his father was at that time a miner in Chignecto. Chignecto Mines were sunk long previous to the Springhill mines, and the family lived in Chignecto. After he got established there and the new mines were opened in Springhill, his family moved up, to work in Springhill. His father did work in the mines, but he was 66 years old when he was killed, and he was working at that time loading coal at Springhill Junction, loading coal for the locomotives.

Q.So for most of his life your grandfather was a miner too. A.Oh yes.

Q.Does it go back any further than that? A.Well, you know what Paul means. In the Gaelic. A pool or a pit. A paul in Scotland was a quarry works. That's where they got their name.

Q.When did your family come from Scotland? A.Oh, I don't know.

Q.Would it be back further than your grandfather? A. Oh, yes. My grandfather lived in Truro. My great-grandfather lived in Truro, and some of them lived in Halifax before that. I don't know. That's what my son is looking for. I never go back too far, because if you go back too far you find your skeletons.

Q.That's what's interesting. Your father worked at this Anderson mine in the early 1870s and then, I suppose, he switched over to the Springhill Mining Company when it came in. A.Yes.

Q.Did he know any of the people involved in that? A.Well...there was one man from Saint John, Lackie, that was Lackie street in Springhill. Then there were the Drummonds too. [Makes mention of Robert Drummond and his newspaper.]...

Q.What did your father think of Robert Drummond? A.He liked him. They were friends.

Q.They were? A.Yeah.

Q.Can you tell me anything more? A.No, that's all I know. I just remember him talking of "Bobby". He liked him.

Q.You would never have met Robert Drummond? A.No, no.

...

A..My father was a very active man in the labour organizations in Nova Scotia. He never belonged to the United Mine Workers because he had retired from active work before that, but he was in the P.W.A., they used to call it.

...

Q.After he worked in the Anderson mine, what did he do in the mine? A.When they developed the Springhill Mining Association, he went to work for them, in the mine.

Q.Was this just ordinary coal cutting or what? A.Yes. He was working in a sinking at the time of the big explosion in Springhill, only he wasn't on that shift.

Q.He was lucky then. A.He was an active miner until he got to be, oh, about fifty years old, then he got interested in politics.

A.That's right. Q.He never worked any more.

Q.Well...do you have any idea what kind of house he lived in in Springhill? A.I lived in it. At first he and his father-in-law built houses out at what is known as the Herritt Road. And he had a store in what later became the Orange Hall at Herritt Road.

Q.There was an Orange Hall There? And your father built this store? A.No, he built the two houses, he and his father-in-law, Mr. Shields. My mother's name was Shields. An Irish name. And there was one of the numerous strikes, you know, they used to have strikes, and at that time, they only had a local mining organization, and he was one of these foolish people that believe his money should be where his heart was,

and he gave out a lot of credit and impoverished himself that way. So he sold the two houses and bought a farm, put his family on the farm and he went out to British Columbia for about four years, until he paid off all his debts.

Q. Was he working as a coal miner in British Columbia? A. Yeah.

Q. Did he ever tell you what that was like? A. Yes, he told me what it was like. He didn't take his family out there. He told me about coming home on pay night and walking over the--he called them--"bohunks", that wouldn't be a polite name today--I suppose they were Russian and Italian labourers on the CPR. At that time the CPR was building out there. And if you happened to step on their hand they'd use a knife on you. You had to be careful, they were all drunk. Oh yes, he told me what it was like out there. But he.

Q. Was he working on Vancouver Island? ^{In} the coal mines there? Or whereabouts? A. Nanaimo? Is there a place called... That's where he worked. He learned things there that were an advantage to him after he become mine inspector in his later life. Out there they used to have what they call "gas bumps." Well, he was the inspector of mines at Springhill when the first bumps occurred. They were getting bad, in room and pillar work. And there had been a fellow by the name of Rice that had been out in British Columbia investigating these from the American Department of Mines investigating these gas bumps where the gas used to shift the coal out you know. And he persuaded the provincial government to bring this man Rice to study the Springhill bumps. But it turned out that there were pressure bumps instead of gas bumps. And they shifted to longwall--that's when they shifted to longwall. So he learned that much out in B.C. anyway.

Q. Do you have any idea of the dates? There was a big strike in 1879?...A.

Well, he went out there about 96 or 97, and he came back around 1901 or 1902.

Q. He was very active in the Provincial Workmen's Association. A. Oh yes.

Q. Did he ever describe to you how the lodge worked? A. No, no. I couldn't truthfully say he did. I understood it was more like a fraternal organization than it was a labour organization.

Q. Did he ever describe the first strike that established the P.W.A. in 1879? A. No....

Q.A.... I've heard him talk about one strike that he got blacklisted in in Springhill and he had to go down to Pennsylvania. My older sister, who was --she would be 15, 14 years older than me--she was born in Pennsylvania. He was blacklisted at that time and he had to go down there, until there was a change of management, when he came back and went to work in Springhill.

Q. Oh. So that pinpoints it, doesn't it, because the change in management occurs around 1884, when the new company from Montreal comes in. A. Well, that's when he came back.

Q. Did he ever talk about the people who were in that company, like Mr. Cowans? A. Oh yes.

Q. What did he think of Mr. Cowans? A. Well, I think they were friendly enemies. In fact Mr. Cowans told me that.

Q. You've met Mr. Cowans? A. Oh yes.

Q. So you have your own impression of him? A. Well, all I know, when I was deputy minister of labour, I happened to be in Ottawa and coming back we stopped in Montreal, and I was at the Ritz-Carlton hotel. And I come down from my room and the clerk said, there's a gentleman here who would like to speak to you. And I went over and there was this old elderly gentleman was there--this would be in the very early thirties. And he introduced himself and told me who he was. Of course I was only a youngster when J.R. Cowans left Springhill. I'd be about 14, because I was only 15 when I started to work. And he introduced himself and told me who he was. And just wanted to talk. And we talked about one thing and another, and he mentioned my father, and I said, you weren't too good friends, Mr. Cowans. He had blacklisted my father too, you know.... And my father was checkweighman when the big 1909 strike started. And of course Cowans period had run out during the strike, and Cowans said, no more for him, he doesn't get hired here any more. But of course Cowans didn't get hired himself after that. But he done alright. Anyway, we talked pleasantly. I had no hard feelings.

Q. By that point it was ancient history, I suppose. A. Not that--my father wouldn't have had any hard feelings either. He wasn't that kind of a man. And anyway, he said Bud and I got along not too bad, you might say we were friendly enemies. And that was true.

...Q. [Re "Bud".]...A... My father's name was Elisha Bud. He was named after a Baptist minister here in Amherst, Elisha Bud. But my name is Earl Barrington....

Q. Your father came back to Springhill, then, in 1886 when the company was reorganized. And then he was very active in the union, wasn't he? A. He was.

Q. Do you remember anything about the other people involved--Malcolm Blue, for instance?

A. Malcolm Blue was an uncle of mine. By marriage. His first wife was my father's sister.

Q. Malcolm Blue was also involved in the early P.W.A., wasn't he? A. And Joe Moss.

Q. What did you father think of those two? A. Well, of course, he and Malcolm were friendly because they were relatives, and Joe Moss and he always were friendly --Joe Moss was a fine man.

Q. You remember him as well? A. Oh yes, oh yes, he was checkweighman there long after I was

superintendent of the mine. Joe Moss was a sincere labour man all the days of his life. He was just as strong a U.M.W. as he was a P.W.A. And there was an element in the P.W.A. that stayed with the company during the strike. But Joe Moss wasn't one of those.

Q.Now the P.W.A.--I'd like to get your feelings on this--really stopped in 1909--it wasn't like Cape Breton where you had a split in the union. In Springhill it was much more unanimous, against the P.W.A. A.It was unanimous, but there was a little group--a fellow by the name of Piggott, John Piggott, Tom Piggott, Billy Lowther, survived and called themselves the P.W.A. and elected themselves officers when there got to be only about five or six of them. And they--for a long time--they held up the ownership of the hall, P.W.A. hall, and the funds of the P.W.A.

Q.There was a law case about it, wasn't there? A.And then the government passed a special act giving the ownership of the hall and the grounds to the miners of Springhill--not to any labour organization. That's how the U.M.W. doesn't own the hall now. Because that present hall, built by the miners of Springhill, with a percentage levy on their wages. I was working in the machine shop at the time and I was one of the fellows that signed the --we each had to sign for \$2000 to get the bank loan to build that hall.

Q.That was in 1927, right? A.That was the year before--I was president of the union at that time. I signed, and Joe Moss was another one, he was an old, old man then. But we signed up. We financed the building of that hall--the loan of that--and it was a per capita deduction from our wages. And the property belonged to the miners of Springhill. And if there was a mine started up in Springhill tomorrow, those mine workers would own that hall. Unless they pass a law to change it.

Q.Well, now, your father got interested in politics, didn't he, after he returned from British Columbia? A.Yes, he got interested in politics.

Q.He was a town councillor, wasn't he? A.Oh, he was, when he was a young man, and then my uncle--Andrew--was a town councillor for years and years and years, I don't know how many. I was on the town council too.

Q.You were a very civic-minded family. A.Oh, quarrelsome, troublesome family. Thank God my children aren't that way.

Q.So your father was a Liberal, wasn't he? A.Yes.

Q.But he was a sort of workingman's liberal? A.That's all, there was no labour party or anything that you could belong to then, and the Conservative Party of those days, my grandfather Paul was a Tory, and I've heard my father tell about the first time he voted Liberal, he had four brothers, and they had to go with him to protect him while he voted. It was an open vote.

Q.In Cumberland Co. you needed to be protected. A. In Springhill, you had your bullies there, and the company was Conservative. And it wasn't too easy to vote Liberal.

Q.I hear Chris Hargreaves was interested in making everyone who worked for the company a Conservative. A.Oh, Cowans was a Conservative.

Q.Did he blacklist people who voted Liberal? A.Oh, yes. My father's brothers all voted Conservative, but they went with him to see that he could vote the way he wanted to. I've heard him tell about that but, you know, just jokingly about it. They all being so friendly but voting the other side of the fence.

Q.Of course when your father ran in 1908--what year was it that he ran? 1907? The miners of Springhill voted for him. A.Yeah. My son is digging into this stuff and he come up with a summary of the election results that my father run, that time. And it said they had used no liquor on agreement and told about a piece in the paper It's all on record at Mount Allison university.

...Q.Tell me about your father as a member of the legislature. I can't figure out how he could have been checkweighman and member of the legislature at the same time. A.They were both elective offices.

Q.But how could you do both jobs at once? A.Well, you must remember that the legislature only set a month to six weeks in those days. It wasn't like it is today. The highway department in practice didn't exist. The government until ...after that, didn't start building highways. The county authorities built them. And each farmer had to go and work so many days on the road. That's how they built their highways. It was a very simple affair.

Q.So it didn't take up an awful lot of his time? A.No. I remember the legislature always used to sit during the winter time. And it only lasted for a month to six weeks. I remember that myself, when I was young.

Q.Did your father have any stories to tell about being a checkweighman? Was that a pretty difficult job? A.Well, that's where he and Mr. Cowans become friendly enemies. There used to be a system, you see, the coal was all dug on contract, and there was a system of what they called docks and fines, perhaps you've heard of it. And if you got a dock that took so much off the price of your coal, if you got a fine you lost the whole thing. And it depended on how many pounds of rock was in a box of coal. And it was up to the checkweighman to see that the rock was there, in that particular box. Not in two or three different boxes, but in that particular box. And there was a continual quarrel about it. And there was strike after strike over the same thing. Until finally they done away with the docks and fines and they said they would suspend a man who loads dirty coal, which was the system that I worked under.

- Q. Was that a better system? A. Oh yes.
- Q. How could you avoid loading dirty coal if the stone is mixed right in with it?
- A. You throw it back.
- Q. You have to screen it right at the coal face, rather than at the bankhead? A. You wouldn't have to clean it, but you had to keep it within certain limits.
- Q. So your father got into quite a number of arguments with Mr. Cowans, over this issue? A. Oh yes, that was a continual... Not only Cowans, but all the mine managers and everything else. And it was a condition brought from the old country that never should have come to a new country like this, you know.
- Q. Was Cowans English in background? A. No, Cowans was from Cowansville, just outside of Montreal.
- Q. Named after his family? A. No, Cowansville was named after the Cowans's--it is between Montreal and Sherbrooke, if you ever drive up there. And it's a country district just the same as Fenwick is if you drive between here and Springhill.
- Q. When did he die, do you know? A. I knew at the time, you know, but I... I really don't know.
- Q. Your father was checkweighman, and he was also active in the Liberal Party. The Liberal Party at that time was made up of Hance J. Logan, who was the federal member, and I can remember... A. My father resigned to let the late Layton Rawlston run, when he finally left politics. Layton Rawlston was wanting --they wanted him to represent Cumberland in the provincial house and my father resigned.
- Q. Rawlston had run federally before, hadn't he? A. No, he ran federally after.
- Q. So when did your father resign? A. Oh, I don't know--it must have been sometime around 1910 or 1911.
- Q. He was there long enough to represent the miners during the big strike. A. Oh yes, he was very friendly with Dr.--the doctor that was elected from Sydney or Glace Bay--what was his name?--the old doctor that went over to England and come back with the design for the Compensation. My father was very interested in that. Dr. Kendall.
- Q. He was the architect of Workmen's Compensation here? A. Kendall was. He went to London. He was a member at the same time my father was a member....
- Q. What issues was your father most interested in? Mine safety and that sort of thing? A. Oh yes, he was inspector of mines for quite a few years, for a long time, I don't know just how long. Up until 1926, when the government changed. Then his political record caught up with him. But he was an old man then anyway.
- Q. They couldn't do too much to him? A. He was about ready to retire then anyway.
- Q. To my mind he is one of the people that reshaped Liberalism, in a sense, in Nova Scotia, isn't he? A. Well, he always give the credit to Murray. See, Murray was from North Sydney, he had a brother, a doctor, in Springhill, Dr. Murray. And he understood something about what the miners had to put up with. But when Murray left the government and handed it over to Armstrong, Armstrong was a lawyer from down in the valley, and he had no idea what industrial labour had to put up with and everything. And nobody could tell him. He always blamed Armstrong for upsetting the trend of improvement in working conditions in Nova Scotia because Armstrong just set back and said, "No."
- Q. So your father was a great admirer of Mr. Murray's? A. Well, he believed Murray had the interests of the people at heart. But, mind you, politicians of those days--as I say--they didn't have the influence on things that they have today. Even in the mines they didn't. In the first place, the government wasn't wealthy enough to tell a mining company what it could do and what it couldn't do. They depended a great deal on these companies that people would get a bite to eat.
- Q. And they also depended on the companies for royalties. A. You can't realise how tough things were. You know that I worked ten hours a day for a dollar when I started to work? And a married man on the bankhead was getting a dollar ten for a ten-hour day? It wasn't until things begin to straighten up until they had one of the mines closed down. When would that be--that would be in about--between '17 and '18. When No. 3 mine burned and caught fire. That would be about 1913.... When I started working ten hours --ten cents an hour, eleven cents an hour if you had a family, and you were a full-grown man.
- Q. How many children did your father have? A. There were six of us.
- Q. Was it a fairly comfortable family to grow up in? Were you reasonably well-off or were you quite poor? A. I had one brother went to Acadia University and took education and later went back and took theology; I had another brother who was killed in the First War in the air force who was a civil engineer; I had a sister who was a school teacher; I only went through high school--I was a black sheep of the family.
- Q. But in a way you went as far as any of them, didn't you? A. I made more money, I made more money.
- Q. There seems to have been something about the Pauls that made them push up a bit or fight a bit harder than other people. A. No, there was not... There were a lot of athletes in our family. Charlie Paul was an excellent ball player. Johnnie Paul was one of the best runners that ever turned out in Nova Scotia.
- Q. Did Charlie play for Springhill? A. Charlie played professional ball in Cape Breton, he played up in Maine and up there and so on.

Q.They took their baseball very seriously in Springhill, didn't they? A.They did in those days.

Q.Where was your mother from? A.My mother was from--she was born in Oxford but her parents lived in Springhill. Her mother was a Tate who was born in Scotland and her father was an Irish emigrant that come in, name of Shields. They haven't been in Nova Scotia as long as my father's people. His people have been here for five or six generations, I don't know. But they were...on both sides, one from Ireland, one from Scotland.

Q.You must remember your father going off to British Columbia, do you, when you were growing up? A.No, I don't remember him going. I remember him coming back. About five years afterwards. I was about six or seven years old when he come back.

Q.That must be the first you can remember of him. A.Yeah.

Q.Things must have been rather tough for your family. A.No, no, not in light of what it was for everybody.

Q.You were doing better? A.Everybody didn't have a bathroom in those days because you couldn't have a bathroom. See, there was no sewerage. There was no water. I remember when the water was put in Springhill. I was--I suppose I was ten years old when it was put in. And they--the people that were comparatively well-to-do-- I remember my father having an awful argument with an uncle of my mother's who was fairly wealthy man--a storekeeper, a fellow by the name of Rogers. And my father was advocating a water system in Springhill, and as you know it's eight miles out of town, and it goes down in a valley and goes up a hill. And this old fellow says, "You can't tell me, Bud, that water will run uphill." And he tried--my father, most of his education he got at night school, but being in mining he had to study some--he tried to explain to him that water confined in a pipe would go down and up hill. "Oh, you can't tell me..." They had a devil of a time before they could get--men like that, to agree to put the water system in Springhill.

Q.Where in the town did you live? A.Up on Victoria Street, just below where the high school is. I haven't seen the old house for...my grandfather lived on what is known as McFarland Street. You know where the old Presbyterian church is? Up that street.

Q.You owned your own home, did you? A.Oh yes.

Q.Most of the miners in Springhill did, didn't they? A.Yeah.

Q.Which makes it different from Cape Breton, where you have much more company housing? But the companies here seem to go for much less of that. A.Well, in Springhill they started on the Main Street and they built up the hill. And to get away from the sewerage from the other fellow. But the other fellow leapfrogged and built up the hill further, till they got to the top of the hill. Then when they got up to the flat they had to put in the sewers. I was in the town council when we put in the sewers. Oh, what an argument we used to have. Couldn't be done. But it was.

Q. Do you remember the strike of 1909-11? A.Yes, I remember it. The company policemen riding around like cowboys on horses and the rest of the men kettle mining. Yes, I remember it.

Q.You would be pretty young still? A.Well, I was born in '95, I was between twelve and fourteen....watching the policemen with guns, rifles...Oh yeah, I remember the soldiers when they were there. And they took the soldiers away and put in the provincial police.

Q.They arrested quite a few people for kettle mining, didn't they?

A.Oh yeah, the jail was full of people. They had a waiting list down there.

Q...Have you ever read the book by Peachie...Carroll. Have you ever heard of him?

A.Peachie Carroll? Damndest rogue.

Q.You're not a great fan of his? A.You see that thing [dog] is barking because I swore there. Yeah, Peachie Carroll was a...well, he was a detective in the Halifax Police Force and he was a corrupt man. All I can say. He was very much over-estimated. But he used to ride a horse and go back...I used to see him many times.

Q.The children went on strike too, didn't they? A.I don't recall the children going on strike. It was pitiful, you know. Half the people of Springhill left--that was the big thing. Half the people of Springhill left during that strike and went out west. I had one of my uncles--Jack McLeod--he was killed in that mountain slide in Frank, working in the mine there when the mountain slid down and covered it up. One of my aunt's husbands, Janet's husband.

Q.So a lot of people left town during the strike? A.Oh yes, yes.

Q.But the strike wasn't a complete failure, was it? Although the UMW wasn't established, it also wasn't completely wiped out. A.Well, I think...the thing would have come about in some other way, if it hadn't been a strike. The problems were getting too big for the old company. They didn't have the organization, they didn't have the engineering skills, they didn't have the organizing--the finances---to carry on. And it was a good thing that the Dominion Coal Company took it over. Because there comes a point in a family concern--and it was a family concern--the Cowans's and the McDougall's controlled it, you know--Cowans himself knew no more about mining than a child. He was just...Old McDougall, of Montreal. his brother-in-law, that was all. And he used to have a racetrack there--a bunch of people looking after race-horses. Boy, if you'd done the same thing today...And the company was paying for it all, you know.

Q.The company paid for the race-track and everything? A.Oh yes, built the race-track, paid for the horses, paid for the men and everything else, yeah.

Q.I talked to a man whose first job in the mine was getting the red ash out of the mine for the race track....You talk to people in Springhill now about Cowans and that's what they remember--his racing horses. A.And a great big house, you know. I moved into that house in 1938 and I tore half of it down. Room after room, linen closets, servants' quarters, and all that...

Q.It was a mansion, wasn't it? A.Well, oddly enough, it wasn't a well-built house. It had a lot of stained glass windows but it didn't have a foundation under it, a real good foundation. That was Cowans--that was their way of doing business.

Q.Was that house kind of symbolic of Mr. Cowans himself? A.Yeah.

Q.He also had the house in Parrsboro--the Ottawa house? A.That was another one. They used to run special trains back and forth to take him back and forth to Parrsboro. Those were the things that made the strikes.

Q.The miners didn't think this was funny, did they--the show of wealth? A.They didn't like that.

Q.There was a socialist movement in Springhill, was there not--Seaman Terris, Jules Lavenne....Did you know of them at all? A.Yeah.

Q.What do you remember about them? A.Well, I think if it's the fellow you're talking about, he was a Belgian.

Q.Yes. A.Well, he was one of Cowans's mistakes. Cowans was a big-shot around about Parrsboro, you know, and company coal used to be shipped out of Parrsboro. They used to barge it down to New Haven. In fact their biggest coal sales under the old company was to the New Haven and Hartford Railway. They used to take coal from Parrsboro down there and barge it. And this fellow come in on a --I think it was a--Belgian boat, I think he was a Belgian. And he fell, off a [?] some way and he broke his leg very badly. I know all about it because I worked with him in the machine shop. And Cowans happened to be there and heard about it and everything and being the big-shot, he had him taken up to the Springhill hospital. And they took his leg off, and nursed him back. And Cowans gave him a job in the machine shop, doing practically nothing. And it turned out that he had learned something about this...Red Brigade or something in Belgium before he left there and he tried to organize in Springhill. It was one of Cowans's mistakes.

Q.And you worked beside Mr. Lavenne when he was in the machine shop? A.Oh yes. You know what he used to do? The only job he used to do? He used to cut squares of galvanized iron and he used to stamp the tally number on them, you know, that the miner used to put on his coal. That's all he did. Once he got in that job they couldn't get rid of him.

Q.Do you remember the Terris family very well? A.I knew them, I know them--they're there yet. Don't generalize about the Terris's--because some of the nicest people that ever were in Springhill were Terris's. Most dependable people. Archie Terris was a member--first he was a Farmer-Labour member, and then he was Conservative member of the legislature. And a good man, too. A good man. I think sometimes he was led astray because he didn't have too much education, or too much ability, but a fine man just the same. I don't know any Terris that was real bad, or troublesome either.

Q.There was Seaman, I guess--would that be Archie's brother? A.No, Seaman wasn't Archie's brother--Seaman was Herb's brother, but Seaman wasn't a...wasn't a socialist. He was a man that was very anxious to get ahead, but not a socialist, no.

Q.Was he more interested in himself than others? A.Yes. Great worker. I worked with Seaman Terris in the old Fenwick Mine between here and Springhill in 1920. And he was working there at that time. He had a farm down in the country. He was a great worker. Very anxious to get ahead. Greedy.

Q.Greedy? A.That was Seaman's trouble. But not bad, not bad. Not one to hurt anybody.

Q.In the 1909-11 strike, when you read the letters that Seaman Terris was writing, he was writing some pretty radical material. A.Oh well, that--Seaman was easily led.

Q.So who was leading these radicals that we see popping up in Springhill? Was there a guiding force behind it? Or were they just enthused about the strike? A.Oh, they were mostly coming in from outside. That Foster spent some time in Springhill--do you remember Foster of the O.B.U. in Calgary? They had representatives come to Springhill.

Q.That would be later, wouldn't it? A.Yes, but these people used to wander in like that, you know. I don't know any native Springhillers who were socialistic inclined or anything like that. But I do know--now, Seaman Terris, his brother run a big store, Herb Terris, in Springhill. His son-in-law runs an insurance business in Springhill now.

Q.His son-in-law? A...Don't go with the idea...See, Terris's came up from Dover in New Brunswick, there. Billy B. Terris was one of the Terris's--a very, very fine man, in fact they all were. If there was a black sheep it was Seaman. But Seaman was a schemer, but his schemes never turned out. He tried to wheeze in on Herb's business, and they got bad friends about it. I don't know just the particulars. But I know he tried to wheeze in on it. But Seaman wasn't what you would call a socialist by any means. He was just a greedy man--that's all.

Q.The Terris's go back almost as far as the Pauls do in Springhill, don't they? A. Pretty near, pretty near. They came from New Brunswick. Up in Albert County there

was a little mine there where they used to mine that albertite. Ship it to Boston. And these people got associated with mining there, then they came to Springhill, when Springhill boomed. Same as the people from Pictou, who were associated with Stellarton--the Wilsons and the Murrays from Pictou. They had been in Pictou Co. associated with mining and they came to Springhill. Mr. Murray--old Mr. Murray--came as a blacksmith, he had been a mine blacksmith in Pictou Co. The Wilsons were miners--of course the Wilsons are pretty well gone from Springhill now. You'll see their names as mayors and town councillors., and one thing and another. And the Murrays--they're pretty well died out, they've gone away, you know--the young people go away. Same with my family. My father had Andrew, Arthur, Charles, and John--all brothers--raise families in Springhill. I think there's only one Paul family in Springhill now--his father was a cousin of mine. That's all. They're all gone. It's the same with the Murrays, it's the same with the Wilsons. Their children grew up, they went to university--there is nothing for them in Springhill, and they went away. That's what happened with our family, I know that.

Q. Was there a fairly sharp class distinction in Springhill between the old families and the new? A. No. No. No, that was one difference. Now, Amherst here, there always was a very distinct class distinction. And in Truro there's a class distinction. But in Springhill there wasn't. Mind you, I don't say there wasn't people that thought themselves a little better. My dad used to call them the Grocery Store Aristocracy. I've heard him use that term. But, no, no, there was no class distinction. Men that worked together, died together, they don't begin to think they're better than others. That's what I can't understand about these people talking about coloured people. Hell, I worked in mines with coloured people, I've seen them die, help carry them out and everything--what better am I than they?

Q. Were there many coloured people in Springhill in the mines? A. There was a couple of families--old established families, the Gabriels, the [Cains?]. There's some of the Gabriel boys here--they're fine people, too. They're all friends of mine. At least I think they are....

Q. What about at school--I've heard some people say they felt they were looked down upon by teachers because they came from a coal-mining family... A. No.

Q. What do you remember about going to school? A. Well, I was telling the lady across the street--her husband is a principal in St. Charles's school down here. And we were talking--she introduced herself to me, and we were talking--they're building that new house there... And she said, I'd like to bring my husband over to see you. She's interested in furniture and I build it... And I said, I don't know, I've been allergic to school principals ever since I was in Grade 11. She laughed about it. I wouldn't say, I wouldn't say there was any great distinction between [people] until you come to principal--between the average teacher and the miners. They were mostly miners' daughters. My cousin was a school-teacher, my sister was a school-teacher, in fact I have two cousins who are school-teachers--I don't.... I remember most of my teachers. There was one Murray girl who was a school teacher, but her father had been a miner in his youth. All the merchants were miners before they were merchants. ... And after all when the principal came to work in Springhill, all the people he worked for were miners on the town council. He wasn't any better than they were, and they wouldn't let him think he was. I don't think there was anything. To tell you the truth, there were odd families that the men wouldn't work, that were considered perhaps not as good as they should be, but on the average I don't think there was any class distinction. I don't think so. There was a few of the English supervisors who came over who tried to introduce that [class distinction]--that man Hargreaves you mentioned.

Q. He's not too fondly remembered. A. No. He was inclined to be that way.

And in the early history of Springhill it was very very hard for a Catholic to be a mine official, because Cowans was a Presbyterian, Hargreaves was a Presbyterian, Muirhead--the mechanical superintendent--was a Presbyterian, and naturally it was hard--but with the coming in of the Dominion Coal Company, that disappeared.

... My grandmother was a Baptist and my grandfather was a Presbyterian, and the girls in my father's family, half of the girls were Presbyterian and the boys were all Baptists. I have a brother, a Baptist clergyman. But we never were taught anything about Catholics--my cousins were Catholics, it didn't make any difference to me.

Q. There was quite an Orange Order in Springhill, wasn't there? A. My father was an Orangeman at one time.

Q. People say that it wasn't a very strong anti-Catholic order. A. No, no, I don't think so.... Well, as I remember it, everybody took a holiday on the 12th of July in the early days, when the Orangemen had a parade, and the Catholics took a holiday and watched the parade too. I don't remember anything like that [riots &c.] You see, we never had separate schools in Springhill. That is the basis of division.... That's the same as the coloured boys, we never had any separation in school. Of course, principally because there wasn't enough of them, I suppose, but there never was any separation, they played ball, they went to school, and everything....

Q. In the long run, education wasn't much use to the mining children, because so many of the boys would just be sent down into the pit. A. Well, when I went to school, it was an awful temptation at Grade Six to go to the pit. At Grade Six you were allowed

to go to the pit.

Q.At about 14? A.12. There used to be the fan, you know, that you used to turn in the pit--the boys used to turn the fan. There used to be all these little jobs that later become mechanized, like what they call pulling the rag. In the low coal they used to load the coal on a canvas and pull it out.And then tending the chute when the coal was steep, the boys would tend the chute. There were so many little jobs in the pit.

Q.And trapping door, too. A.And mind you, they used to get 62 cents a day for that. And that was quite a bit in the family's budget.

Q.Do you remember any of the boys' strikes in Springhill? There were a number of strikes between 1902 and 1906? They weren't big strikes, but the mine would be held up three or four days over boys going out. Did that make any impression on you?

A.No....An awful lot of boys drove horses in the pit in the early days, you know. Not actually boys--about 14 to 17, drove horses, you know.

Q.So you started work at the age of...A.I started work between 1911 and 1912.

Q.So you came in right at the end of the strike? A.I started right at the end of the strike. I was fifteen past--sixteen.

Q.Did your father want you to work in the mine? A.I didn't--I worked in the machine shop.

Q.And you were taken on as an apprentice? A.I served my time as a machinist and come up here to Amherst and worked at toolmaking.

Q.Where? A.Canada Car. And then I went up to Upper Canada for awhile, and I come back to Springhill and went in the mine and how I got into mining was going into the mine to fix the machinery up. And I got used to being in the mine.

Q.So you started working in the machine shop in 1911, then you came to Amherst--about what time? A.About 19--around 1915.

Q.So it would be right in the middle of the wartime boom in Amherst. And then when did you leave Amherst? Oh, I only stayed there about a year and a half. Then I went up to--I don't know if you'd know the place, place on the Georgian Bay, they call it Collingwood. There was a shipbuilding plant there. I went there, working on marine engines....The time I was up there they were building oil tankers--what they called oil tankers, you wouldn't call them oil tankers now.

Q.And where did you go from Collingwood? A.Well, I come back to Springhill.

Q.This was...A.I worked in the machine shop and in the colliery underground, at the machinery, until 1928. In 1928 I went to Thorburn as colliery engineer.

Q.So you came back to Springhill in 1920? A.Yeah, it would be about 1919, or 1920.

Q.Do you remember the strikes in 1920? A.Well, I remember them pretty miserable. Most of them lasted three or four months, you know--never seemed to achieve very much.

Q.What were the men really concerned about? A.Well, there was a period there after the war when the company tried to cut wages. And some of them were about that. And sometimes we did get cuts. It's hard to believe now that wages could be cut, but they did cut them, after the war. And some of them [the strikes] were about that, you know.

Q.This would be when the company was controlled by Besco, and Besco was cutting wages in Cape Breton. A.Yeah, they had that...Well, you see, you have to remember that there was a different philosophy. In those days, if a company --that changed after the government put in subventions, which was really something to make up company losses--it was paid on the transportation of coal but it really boosted the company's financial position--but previous to that, if the company wasn't making money, it failed or it cut wages. And since the wage bill was the big item, they used to cut wages. And this doesn't happen now. If a company starts to lose money on account of a strike, and the government don't want the strike, they find a way to reimburse the company, to the extent in England that they've ruined pretty near every industry in England. But it's a different thing altogether, And then, after all, you have an affluent society now and you can sell anything, and you couldn't in those days. People in those days had to do without even coal if they didn't have the money for it.

Q.When you came back to Springhill, did you come back to live in your father's house? A.Oh yes.

Q.When did he die? A.He died in British Columbia. He moved out to Vancouver in 1932 and he lived there until he died. My sister and brother were there--he was pastor of the First Baptist Church in Vancouver, and he was alone--my sister went out to keep house for him and my father went too. That's how he happened to go out there.

Q>Your father was inspector of mines when you came back to Springhill, I suppose? A.Oh yes,

Q.What did he tell you about that job?

A.He never talked work, I never talked work in my home....I was brought up to believe white men shouldn't work underground. My father said white men shouldn't work underground, shouldn't have to. We were kind of ashamed of being miners.

Q.Why? A lot of people are very proud of being miners? A.I don't know. They used to talk a lot about their work among themselves, but I never remembered my father talking much about work. Of course, when he was inspector of mines, most

of the things he would be talking about would be things that he shouldn't talk about in public, you know. But--and of course my life was spent mostly as a supervisor and an executive--I never talked company business at home. That wasn't the way to do it. You know, we lived in Glace Bay for fourteen years--and my wife didn't know one mine from the other? People would ask her about it--she didn't know. Of course, her people weren't miners--you know. I never talked about it at home.... I wouldn't want my boys to do it [become miners], and my father was the same way. He didn't want me to have anything to do with the mine.

Q.How strongly did he feel that way? A.Oh, quite strongly.

Q.He tried to stop you? A.See, you have to remember, my grandfather was killed in the coal....and then one of my cousins was killed, and another cousin was killed--so you don't think about it....when the No.3 mine was on fire, that would be in 1913, I was in the machine shop, I was between seventeen and eighteen years old, I was tall and big for my age--as big as I am now--weighed as much, about 180 lbs., and the boss called up about two o'clock in the morning, --my father had a telephone, there wasn't too many telephones then--wanted me to go out to work at No.3 mine. My father got word and told my mother that he was going out and the mine was on fire. So they all knew that the mine was on fire and that's where I was going. Well, I went down to the machine shop, and there was me and another chap, who was young--Campbell--they asked us to go up and lay pipe into the fire. We didn't have electric lamps in those days--we just had the Davy lamps. And Danny and I went up and we laid water pipes down the mine and the ventilation was shut off because the fire was in the fan slope and they didn't want to spread it and it placed [?]-you know how--you ever work in a mine? you never saw the steam coming up? literally billows up? just looks like fog, you know, drifts like fog--and there was just enough smoke, and if ever a place looked like Hell, that look was there. And I was seventeen years old, and I was pretty scared at first. And we got in and we got busy, and got working, and laid the pipe, and finally they had given up and they pulled us all out. But when I was in there that day, my father was there, I had three uncles there, and I was there myself. Finally my father said to my youngest brother, you get out of here and you stay out of here. But he didn't say it to me. But anyway, it was a great experience, you know--I've never been scared of a fire after, and I've been in a dozen in mines since. I was never scared of a fire afterwards. They finally decided to pull down the brow--covered it all over, just enough for the men to get out--covered it over with clay, and they took us out. And about half an hour afterwards the whole top blew off her. We weren't out of there half an hour when it blew up. I never was scared of a fire in the pit again.

Q.You'd think it would have the opposite effect on you. A.No, it didn't.

Q.Did you like mining? Some people talk of being fascinated with mining--and really enjoying it. A.Well, you always had problems, you know. But I hear people talk about retiring--it's no problem to me, I've had the best years of my life in the last fourteen years, since I've retired....[Before] there never was a time when I could go away, with my mind clear and free....

Q.How much machinery was there in the mine? A.Well, there was compressed air haulages, all through my lifetime in the mines, and as they took the horses out they put in more haulages all the time. In the early days there were steam pumps, later there were electric pumps, but I remember when the steam pumps you couldn't get two rooms big enough...where you could sit down inside the cylinder.

... They were tremendous pumps, you know....There wasn't cutting machines or they didn't have radial machines, all that work was done by hand, with picks. But ...And the boring was done with hand, augurs that bored like that, you know. The jackhammer--I was --I would say it was around '21 or '22 or '23 when the jackhammer come. That was the first. Then the radial machines come, that you cut with. And after that came the chain-running machines. But even without that you had the haulages and that sort of thing--and in the early days they were operating with steam and comparatively handy to the surface, but that's what started that fire that I was telling you about--the steam-pipes going down to No.3 Mine, is what started the fire. Somebody permitted coal to fall in the steam-pipe, and though the steam wasn't hot enough to set a fire, if you closed it in, it would start combustion. And that's what started it. So after that they continued to put in more...compressors and then they got to using turbine compressors, the thing just grew.

Q.Was it an efficiently run mine, in terms of technology? A.I would say so, yes.

Q.Was it better after Dominion Coal took it over? A.Oh, I think so, yes.

...They had a better engineering supervision and one thing and another. They were more capable of carrying on large operations. You know, you grow up like Topsy, but you don't change things.

Q.Were you in the union all along?

A.Well, the UMW wasn't recognized in Springhill until 1918...1919 or so. When I started to work there was no union....

Q.When did you become president? A.1926 or 1927.

Q.So in between 1920 and 1926 were you pretty active in union affairs? A.Oh, not awfully active. Before that...You've heard of the McAdoo Award, possibly, if you study union matters. Well, that--up until that a machinist got about \$3.00 a

day, and I was a representative of the machine shop employees and railroad shop employees at that time, and we got --well, it was about 100% of an increase. That's when I got in the union....

Q.I thought the McAdoo Award was a railroad award...A.I know, it was a railroad award, but you see we got it because we were attached...attached to our mine shop we had a railroad shop, Cumberland Railway and Coal Company.

Q.So you insisted you got parity...A.The men were interchangeable, that's the way I got it.

Q.And you negotiated this? A.Yeah....It was from \$3.00 something to around \$6.00 a day, for an eight-hour day.

...Q.That would instantly make you the best-paid workmen in the mine, wouldn't it? A.It did....Oh, the miners made more than that.

Q.So you negotiated that...through the U.M.W.? A.Yeah. They appointed a negotiating committee and I happened to be the one representing the machine shop, the men in the machine shop.I never was crazy about unions, you know, but it meant dollars.

...

...The superintendent, who was then the superintendent, Malcolm Blue, my uncle, he wasn't very friendly with me for awhile afterwards. But his son was in the shop, he was one of the fellows that was backing me. It was a funny incident. It was a good life.

Q.You were negotiating with Malcolm Blue, then? A.There was a Conciliation Board we presented our case to to the Conciliation Board, you see. They decided it. If the Company accepted the general programme, they had to accept that out of the Conciliation Board, and they did. They accepted our argument that these men were ...because the railroad was getting all the railroad subsidies, that the CNR was getting. And the CNR paid the McAdoo award, why shouldn't that railroad? It was a logical argument. I think that's why the company appointed me as superintendent there at a later date--It wasn't too long after that that they offered me a job as colliery engineer in Pictou Co.... It was during a period, 28 to 30, that the mine was only working two or three days. And I...it was...I don't think if things had been normal I'd have ever went to Pictou Co. But I was--it happened--I had taken a course in Scranton in steam engineering. And I had my first-class papers, steam engineering, and I had taken up turbine work, and they had a turbine in Springhill. And gradually--you know how you acquire these things--it become my duty every weekend to check that turbine over, do the work that was necessary on it. Well, when it came down to two or three days, here I was, president of the union, and working full-time because of this turbine work, mostly you know. And the rest of the boys didn't take to that very kindly, you know, they... And I saw what was coming up, that it was going to become an issue, and here was a monthly paid job available and offered to me, so I took it.

Q.You were president of the union from 1926 to 1928? A.About that.

Q.What was that tenure like? A.It was very good. I enjoyed it.

Q.Any big issues come up? I suppose you built the miners' hall...A.Well, I participated in that. The main strength behind that was men like Joe Moss. They were the prime movers. There was a fellow by the name of Danny Ross, I don't know if anyone mentioned his name to you. He wasn't a very aggressive man, but he was a consistent union man. One of these fellows...And Archie Terris, the man you mentioned, he was secretary-treasurer of the union when I was president....He was a very honest man, and that was what was needed. And he was an honest man, he kept his books in good order, and he had a daughter Jane who was quite a student and a very capable person, she helped him a great deal. And Archie Terris was...Don't let anybody kid you and say that Terris men aren't good men, they were, they were good men. They can talk about Seaman and perhaps he wrote some foolish letters and one thing and the other, but...I think at one time Seaman had political ambitions, but people had more confidence in Archie and instead of picking Seaman, they picked Archie.

Q.Now, were those the big issues that came up when you were president of the union--building the hall? A.Oh, no, there was a continual struggle all the time, you know--cases, cases, cases. The union--it's not a matter like a war of something like that, it's a continual...

Q.It's a bit like trench warfare, I suppose. A.Well, something like guerilla warfare, made up of dozens of wage cases and everything, you get this much and you put it in your pocket, you get some more and you put that in your pocket..

Q.How did it work? Did you fight a lot of individual grievance procedures? Were there grievance procedures laid down? Was that a lot of your job as president? A. Well, no, the president was necessary, you'll remember the grievance committee. Now, when I was president, if it was a matter for the machine shop, I would go...Of course, the president of the union is always ex officio member of any committee of the union. It was a matter for the machine shop or something like that, I would have gone with them. But if it was the general wage scale, I wouldn't go on it. If it was a thing affecting mining or something like that, I wouldn't go on it, unless I was asked to. They would do that by motion, if they wanted you to.

Q. Was it a fairly contentious job? What about the problems of this other union trying to get established? A. Well, you always had somebody aspiring to office. Just the same as--you noticed in this new election here, the fellows that weren't appointed ministers of the crown in the federal election, they're all--Coates ditching out the rest of them because they're not paying enough attention to energy or anything, you have that continual boil in any organization like that, where there's an office to be aspired to.

Q. In most of them it's settled within the organization. A. Yeah, but they bring them out, the same as they're doing--or will be doing in a very short time--in Ottawa--in the caucus. Well, your union meeting is like a caucus meeting of a political party. And somebody wants to get attention or something, they'll be presenting cases and embarrassing the officials of the union as much as they can. That's part of the game.

Q. You think personal ambition had something to do with the more radical union members. A. Oh yes, yes.

Q. Didn't you mention before that it so much Harlan Pettigrew as other people who were behind him? A. Yeah. Jim Johnson was the man behind him, and behind Jim Johnson was Stewart.

Q. How about J.B. McLachlan? Was he at all involved in this? A. Oh, he was gone by that time. He went bad. J.B. McLachlan was a good man when I knew him. I was on wage-scale committees with him years ago, and he was a good man. But that time they arrested him and put him in jail, changed his whole nature. It was an insult that he couldn't stomach. And it was, it was a deliberate...and it did ruin him. Jimmy McLachlan.

Q. It was a ridiculous charge? A. It was so ridiculous, and it was so ridiculous to him, himself, because Jimmy McLachlan wasn't a Communist, he was a loyal man, but he was a Scotch radical, that's what he was. And I always had great respect for him. But I do know that he went wacky. But of course, mind you, all the time when the politicians were after him, also within his union were these people pulling at him, to pull him down.

Q. He wasn't too involved with this business in Springhill. And really, the events in Springhill were a lot less dramatic than the either what was going on in Cape Breton or what was happening in Pictou Co. In Pictou Co., it was much more hotly fought, strangely enough. A. Well, one of the active fellows in Pictou Co. in that same [?], later become a Board Member. That's one-legged Munro. Pascal. Oh my, he was a rascal, he was. The last time I saw him, he borrowed a book from me. No, it's not the last time I saw him, but not too long before he died. And I was living in the Glace Bay Hotel. My family was in Springhill and I was living there, and I had one of those books--reading it, down in the lobby. He picked it, I'd known him for years, you know, and he said--asked me what it was, and I told him what it was, one of the Dickens books, and I said, "You fellows think you're such labour men, such reformers, if you just read Dickens, you'll find he had more influence on changing working conditions than anybody else in the whole British empire." "I'd like to read that, if you lend it to me I'll bring it back to you the next time I come back," he said. Well, I had the set, you know. I didn't want to lose one of them. So I said "Alright, but remember I want it back, I value this set very highly. Can't get another one like it." "Oh, I'll bring it back, I'll bring it back." He took it away and I never saw the book again. He got drunk and sold it. That's what happened.

Q. So you weren't too impressed with Mr. Munro and his radical friends. A. No, but he was one, like Harlan you know, in Pictou Co.--but he was like Johnson, he made his peace with the U.M.W. and he ended up a board member.

Q. Of course, the U.M.W. did give the miners sort of a raw deal here, didn't they? By decertifying the union... A. Well, I don't know. It's the old Maritime problem.

Q. In what way? A. You can't mine coal as cheap in Nova Scotia as you can in Pennsylvania. You just can't do it. And the average miner thought he should get the same wage in Nova Scotia as he got in Pennsylvania. Well, in Pennsylvania, the average miner was producing--the mine worker--was producing seven-eight tons of coal a man-shift. In Nova Scotia he was producing two tons of coal a man-shift. And the U.M.W. couldn't get the wage in Nova Scotia they could get them in Pennsylvania. Now I was just up to Montreal. I have a daughter up there...

...

Q. So you came to Pictou Co. in 1928? A. At the beginning of 1929.

Q. And you settled in Thorburn? Were you married at this point? A. Yeah.

Q. You were married in Springhill? I got married in Springhill in 1919.

Q. Just after you got back from the West. A. From Ontario.

Q. You had a family by this point? A. Yes.

Q. You came up to Thorburn and settled there? And what was your position? A. Colliery engineer.

Q. What was the company? Acadia Coal Company.

Q. This had become a branch of Dosco? A. Oh yes.

Q. What was it like in comparison with Springhill--was it an advanced company? Oh, I would say it had limitations that Springhill didn't have. The town itself--well, if you've ever been through it, you'll know that it's falling to pieces. And it was at that time falling to pieces. It was a basin-type seam of coal that had a distinct

limit. You see, Springhill always went along with "There's coal ahead, coal ahead," for thousands of feet, but in Thorburn it wasn't, it went down just like a saucer, and when you got out a certain distance there was no coal. And they knew it was only good for a few years, which happened. They eventually had to shut it down, because the coal wasn't there. So it always worked under that condition, that they couldn't put new investment in because there wasn't the coal to warrant it. That was its disadvantage. But the advantage was that it was perhaps smaller, easier to handle.

Q. I have talked to someone else who worked in Thorburn, and he described the mine as being "all chopped up," it wasn't straight like Springhill. A. That's right, it went down to a basin, and then it went up. It didn't continue on the same way. Then it went in east and west, you would say, and then it took a little dip and went down again, and made a tremendous haulage problem. And the seams would just go so far, and then it would thin out....

...

Q. How did you feel, being a good union man, becoming an employer all of a sudden?

A. Oh, I didn't have any trouble, I'd always handled crews of men. When I was in the machine shop and there was a repair job, I had a crew of men. I'd always handled--all my life, well, after I graduated from night shift here..when I was...twenty years old...No, not over 19 years old....I was night foreman at the Canada Car, on the back shift. I'd always handled men. I never found men any problem to handle. I never asked a man to do anything I wouldn't do myself. And I never told him how to do something I couldn't do myself. If I couldn't do it myself, I let him do it his way. I never had any trouble handling men.

Q. In a way, your union experience paid off, because you had more of a common touch than other foremen might have had. A. I never had any difficulty with the men.

Q. What were some of the issues that came up when you were working at Thorburn?

A. Oh, it was mostly trying to get along on a shoe-string budget, that was the big thing. Making old stuff do...They hadn't opened the McBain then, and even when they opened the McBean it was very limited, they couldn't go deep.

Q. There were great hopes for the McBean. A. Oh, yes. There's always hopes about a mine that's been closed down. Like they talk about coal in Springhill. Well, there's coal in Springhill. Not the best coal. Oddly enough, the old people picked the best coal.

Q. You don't hold out much hope for the Cumberland coalfields as a future enterprise?

A. Within limitations, yes. There's places where, you could say, "I could work here for twenty years or so." But one thing, you know, you'll get into bumps, and that will drive you out.

Q. In Thorburn, I suppose, you'd have a declining workforce, you wouldn't be hiring too many people, and your workforce would be getting pretty old. A. It was a pretty regular (during my period there) workforce, there wasn't any change. But there was no hope of a long life.

Q. How would the wage rates have compared to Springhill? Roughly the same....

[Explains that there would be minor variations due to local conditions]...The Dominion Coal Company was fairly good that way, all through the organization it went by standards more than anything else.

Q. It must have been a fairly depressing place to live. A. We liked it.

Q. What did you like about it? A. Nice people, nice people. I've heard an awful lot about Scotch hospitality but the only time I ever experienced it was in Thorburn. Clan people. No better than Springhill. But, you know, people talk about Cape Breton and Springhill, but I've worked in all these mining fields--in Cape Breton, Springhill, Pictou County--as far as I can see, miners are the same everywhere. On an average. No different.

Q. How would you say they're the same? A. I think because there's no class distinction. I think that's the reason...I think it's going to change. You see, the mines always developed--up till my day--developed their management from in their workforce. A man first to be a shotfirer had to be a miner, that was number one. To be an overman, he had to have all the qualifications of a shotfirer and a miner. To be an underground manager, he had to have all the qualifications of an overman, shotfirer and miner. To be a manager, he had to have all those in addition to the manager. Well, as a result, until they changed the law and made it possible for an engineer to take a manager's certificate, without having these other qualifications, as a result all their supervisory force, except the few Englishmen they imported from England, came from the workforce. That's the reason you didn't have any class barriers. You had one problem--every manager had a whole lot of cousins and uncles and aunts. That was one problem. But you could handle that. That is one of the differences between an ordinary factory of one kind and another where they can import foremen from here, there and schools, one thing and another, you just couldn't do that in the old set-up in the mine. But as I was leaving the mine, I could see indications of a change in that--they were going to put managers in who had been--in fact, I tried out some of them--engineering students. I didn't find them very satisfactory. Things were developing so that they had to have a little more knowledge than the miner had, and you had to get that, and they will have to come to that--as I told you how the machinery developed, so is the mining process developing....

Q. So you were in Thorburn for four years? Where did you go from there? A. I went back to Springhill to run in an election in 1933, and I lost it.

Q. As a Liberal candidate? A. Yes. I lost it against the Honorable Percy Black, and I lost it by 120 votes. And then they give me a job as deputy minister of labour, in Halifax.

Q. Why did you run in that election? I don't know. Perhaps I thought they hadn't treated my father as they should have treated him. Perhaps that was the reason. I don't know.

Q. He may have deserved a lot better than he got? A. But I...they persuaded me to run. I'd have done better if I'd never left Springhill, if I'd known I was going to run an election, and I had stayed in Springhill, I'd have done much better. But I wouldn't have been as well off in the end. Because I was better off being defeated, going into the Department of Labour, and coming back and going into the mines again.

Q. Well, what, as deputy minister, what did you do in the Department of Labour? How big was the department of labour, by the way? A. At that time, there was about four employees, I guess now there must be twenty.

Q. When did they organize the department of labour? A. Well, I was the first deputy minister. There was a clerical--what do they call them? before that--but I was the first deputy minister.

Q. So it was a pretty new idea. A. Yes, it was new. See, anybody with any sense--they had company unions in the steel plants and in Trenton, and they had the conflict in a dozen places over the country where people were trying to organize unions, and anybody with any sense--and Angus McDonald did have sense--knew something had to be done. And in addition to that, we had a depression on our hands. And the fishermen were starving. And Newfoundland cod was pushing Nova Scotia cod off of the market, we had to...we established a bonus of so much a quintal for cod, Fishermen Loan Board was part of the department of labour. We established a dollar a quintal...at that time cod sold at around six dollars for a 112 lbs., we paid them a dollar bonus, fifty cents for the fisherman, fifty cents for the vessel owner. And all these things were happening. Mind you, that was in the Depression.

Q. Were you quite a reformer in those days? A. I imagine I was, I imagine. I think the Nova Scotia Labour Act, that forced the companies to accept a labour union if the majority of its employees voted in favour of it, I think that was a reform.

Q. It was the first in Canada wasn't it? A. It was the first in Canada.

Q. How much responsibility do you have for that? A. Well, I had considerable. I was--the government took my advice. But I had a lot of good support. Joe McQuarrie, numerous members. Fortunately on Angus's caucus the vast majority of the members know a labour union from the temperature...they didn't know the difference. But there was one man who was always my supporter and I always appreciated it, and I don't think the people of Nova Scotia appreciate what a reformer he was, and that was old A.S. Macmillan. A.S. Macmillan was a very, very able man. And he was an employer and a contractor and all that, but still, he had worked with his hands, and there's a hell of a lot of difference between a man's who's earned his living with his hands and one whose never earned his living with his hands.

Q. Angus L. was more the intellectual? A. Well, Angus L. was one of the finest men I ever knew....

Q. Were you close to him? A. I think we were, I think we were friends. He lost me the best job opportunity I ever had in my life.

Q. How did he do that? A. Well, they had a strike in the fish industry in Halifax there, and there was a bunch of Commies were [there]...they had their connection in Boston where the National Fish then had its headquarters, as part of the National Food chain, you know,...

Q. 1937? A. This was about 1937, 1936... They had strikes and a riot. I helped them out as much as I could. With a lot of help from the sensible fellows in the union that wanted...There was a fellow by the name of Murray that was...I think...he really was a Commie alright, you know, foolish enough to think he could organize that. And there was a large element in the union that wanted wages, they didn't want to cause trouble, they wanted wages. So finally we worked it out and got them union-controlled [chain?] and one of the vice-presidents of the National Food chain come up to Halifax and come in to see me and asked me if I'd take a job in Toronto. Labour relations--vice-president of Labour Relations. I said, how much money was in it, and he said, ten thousand dollars a year. Well, ten thousand dollars a year was a lot of money in those days. About twice what I was getting. He said, "We'll have to go and see the Premier about it, He said, "You know, we're foreigners,"--this fellow was from Boston...He went over to see Angus, and Angus said, "Nothing doing." At that time they had just organized the apprenticeship programme, and it was the first in Canada. Down at the mine at Chester--

Q. What did they mine at Chester? A. We had a little mine there, and organized an apprenticeship programme, and taught ...young men hardrock mining, go up to Ontario and a lot of them did, too.

Q. What did you mine at Chester? A. Gold. We had about two hundred young fellows down there and they got three Cape Bretoners down there and they started a strike and I went down and talked them out of it and Angus was kind of worried for fear it would get out of hand, you know. And he

said, "No." So they come back and said, "he won't agree." Angus spoiled my change for the best job I ever had a chance to have.

Q. I suppose you could have left if you'd really wanted to. A. No, no, no. They wouldn't take me if he hadn't given permission.

Q. Sounds like it was a very busy time, as a deputy minister. A. I didn't blame him a bit for that, you know. He was depending on me and I didn't blame him a bit.

Q. You mentioned Communist activities in the unions--was that fairly widespread in the late thirties? A. It was there. To be honest with you, the only people I ever knew who were sincerely communistic in this country were people who brought over hatreds from another country, or people who were just a little unbalanced. And I've met a lot of them. But, you know, particularly Scottish labour men, they always have a feeling that the English are double-crossing them. And they're bitter people. Of course, Scottish people--my people a lot of them are Scottish but they're bitter people anyway-- Celts are always that way, that's why they don't own a lot of Europe now, they fought among themselves so until they got kicked out. And that's why they're having the trouble in Northern Ireland, because they're that way. And there's no question about it, they are. And I've known some very radical Scottish labour leaders, not too many English, the Englishmen are pretty solid people. But most of them that I knew that were really, truly Communistically-inclined were people that had brought hate from another country.

Q. Were there many in Nova Scotia at that time? A. No, no.

Q. There wasn't much your department could do about it one way or the other, was there? A. We had them there in Halifax in that fish plant but we couldn't have overcome it if the vast majority hadn't been. I don't know--mind you, if Communism were possible to operate, with human nature what it is, I would say, "A good thing." But it's not. Because the minute they form the Communist Party somebody wants to be the head of it, and he wants privileges. And how is he going to get them unless he keeps somebody down? That's the only thing I see against Communism-- is the fact that it doesn't fit into human nature. After all, you're always going to have the colonel if you have the regiment. If not the idea of Communism is as old as people are--but unfortunately human nature has never allowed it to work successfully anywhere. And particularly in this country...

Q. There's quite a difference, isn't there, between Springhill miners and Cape Breton miners that way. You would have thought Springhill miners would have been stronger for the CCF, say, which wasn't really a Communist Party, more a social-democratic party, and yet somehow that never worked in Springhill. A. Well, there was a time in Springhill when the Conservative Party could expect 80 per cent of the vote. Even after they had the secret ballot. I don't know why it was that way, but it was that way. Well, Cape Breton was just the opposite. The Dominion Coal Company tended to favour the Liberal Party, in Cape Breton, and for years when the Dominion Coal Company actually controlled things, Cape Breton was always Liberal. It was only after the UMW went in there that it went CCF and of course CCF strength in Cape Breton--at least I would say it was from what I learned when I was in Glace Bay--if it wasn't for St.F.X., they wouldn't be CCF.

Q. St.F.X. has had a radical influence? A. Well, you can't expect...well, you take Glace Bay. Sixty to seventy per cent of the people are Catholic people. You can't expect that they won't favour something that St.F.X. favours. You can't expect that....

Q. Were you a lifelong Liberal or were you ever tempted by the CCF? A. No, my politics-- I believe democracy, true democracy, is self-interest, educated self-interest, reasoned self-interest, but what is in the interest of the individual. That's democracy. And I don't think the CCF, any more than the Communists, can have enough people who really believe in socialism and don't believe in the individual--because who were their prime supporters in Canada? The labour unions, and who are the labour unions? The people that are fighting for their own self-interest. For their interest. And same as in Britain, the Labour party. I would be a supporter of the Labour Party if they would really be in the interests of their country, everybody in their country instead of just the labour unions. Because, after all, a labour union is a very selfish organization. So selfish, sometimes, it destroyed itself. And that's the trouble with it.

Q. Were they pretty good years in Halifax--did you have a sense of getting things done? A. I thought they were. I thought Angus L. MacDonald--he was a man, a realist, in a way he reminded me of this man Trudeau, only I don't think he was as impatient and intolerant as Trudeau. But in a way he reminded me of him. That he wasn't looking at things from a personal viewpoint all the time. Angus didn't. He tried to reason things out. But all the time he was Scotch enough--though he was just half Scotch and half French--he was Scotch enough to not agree to something that wasn't possible. When he stuck out for that causeway, everybody thought he was unreasonable, when he stuck out for putting the causeway across the strait and held it up for five years-- he was right! he was right. If they'd have built their damn bridge, they'd be down their repairing it every day. But Angus was that way. That's the way I found him. That's why I respected him.

Q. When did you leave that position? A. I left that in 1938.

Q. And what did you go on to from there? A. I went to superintendent of the mine in Springhill. Mr. Kelly and Mr. Cross come down to Halifax, they had been down a

couple of years before, and I had refused to go. And they come down and said, "Would you like to go, and here's how much wages," and I had a bunch of children, about ready to go to college, some of them, they offered me the wages, and I said yes, but I told them what happened a year and a half ago, and they better clear it with the boss [Angus L.] They went over and told me, "Doesn't make any difference what he says if you're willing to go," well I said, "I'm willing to go if I give them reasonable notice," and that's all there was to it. They went over and told him that I was going. I was glad to go to Springhill, I didn't like politics.

Q. You weren't like your father. A. Well, he didn't care too much for it, either. You were on the verge all the time of doing things you shouldn't do, that your conscience wouldn't let you do. You see. You were on the verge of that. You either had to lose the interest of your friends, which was the government, or you had to do things that you shouldn't do.

Q. So you came back to Springhill and you were manager here until... A. I was superintendent here for... until 1951.

Q. What were the mines like then, coming back after all that time? Did you find them improved? A. Well, I went there in 1938 and I stayed there until 1951, that's 13 years, and there never was a year that I didn't make money. Even the year of the '47 strike, the mines made money.

Q. It was very busy during the war, wasn't it. A. Yes, but there never was a year that I didn't make money. From a million and a half down to about 200,000 in the year of the strike. That's a satisfaction, you know. It didn't make any money for me but...

Q. So it was a going concern, even that late. People tend to think of Springhill as sort of going downhill from 1911 on, but it was actually still profitable.

A. Well, I don't know how it done before that and I don't know how it done after. Because I wasn't in charge in Springhill--I went to Cape Breton. Haslam in New Glasgow was in charge of it. He was the vice-president and he was in charge of Pictou County and Cumberland County and I had nothing to do with them. I came up to the two disasters, and worked at the mines during the two disasters, I done that but I done it for Harold Gordon, who I always regarded as a special friend of mine, I done it to help him, not because it was any of my duty, it wasn't.

Q. It must have been ironic that you were back as superintendent--which was Mr. Cowans old position--I'm sure Mr. Cowans would have been a little amused to see you superintendent. A. He was, he was, I imagine. His grandson come to visit me in Springhill, when I was there. I think really my father and Cowans were friends, in their own way. They were both pretty much Scotch people and they liked to fight. I think they were friends. His grandsons were up to see me in Springhill --I lived in the house and they asked me if they could come by. So I took them in--they stopped and had lunch with us. Looked the house over.

Q. Were would their records be--the Cumberland Railway and Coal Company?

A. Well, they'd be in Montreal. I imagine it's wound up now. Because the Dominion Coal Company bought the thing and they, when they wound up Springhill they sold all their timber lands and everything. Previous to 1950 they didn't own it--they were just agents of the Cumberland Railway and Coal Company. Now, I don't know--as I say, after I left there, I had nothing more to do with it.

Q. When you were manager, did you have the feeling that the Cumberland Railway and Coal Company was a real company, or was it a paper concern? A. Oh, it was a paper concern--it owned the railroad and owned the coal areas and owned the timber lands.

Q. Who was drawing the profits from it--the same old families? A. Well, I don't know. Cumberland Railway and Coal Company was owned by McDougall, Cowans, Drummond--a bunch of people, I don't know who... The old Springhill Mining Company failed when they tried to build a railroad from Springhill to Pugwash, that railroad was built through to Oxford...

Q. When abouts was that? A. Oh, that would be way back in the 1900s (1800s). And they built the railway for fourteen miles--bridges and everything--and the government inspectors come along and condemned the whole thing. And the company failed. And then the Bank of Montreal, I think, was the one that took it over, and they had this mining property and everything, and that's where McDougall and Cowans--McDougall was a big foundry man in the city of Montreal, shipping and foundries., and he was married to a Cowans girl, who was Cowans's sister. And the bank gave it to them on credit. They made millions out of it.

Q. But not necessarily through good management. A. Well, they started a new mine, and they built the railroad to Parrsboro, they did a lot of things, mind you. And after awhile it got beyond their capacity. But they did do a lot of things. They modernized the mines, they put new--the new locomotives--instead of building the railway to the St. Lawrence market, they built it out to Parrsboro, and the New England market was good then. And they sold coal there, in New England, for \$2.25 cents a ton. And made money. And the mines--they started new mines, the West Slope and the North Slope, you see the old slope the old company had was known as the East Slope, the one the

No -
this is
mixed
up.

Explosion was in. And these people started the new slope, and it was better coal and cheaper coal for a long, long time. But finally when it got to--the bumps got so bad that they had to use longwall. They never could have operated longwall. They didn't have the skill.

Q. Some older miners allege that the longwall was a bad idea because in fact it didn't eliminate the bumps, it made them worse. Is that true? A. Oh, for a long time, it contained them. But after you got down 2000 feet, you either went to longwall or you stopped. Because I remember the last bumps that they had in room-and-pillar work. Remember a young fellow who was driving a horse, young Bobbie--what was his name now? it wasn't a Springhill name--Bobbie Weedon, he was driving a horse in one of the levels and they were working room and pillar and she bumped. She closed in ahead of him and closed in behind him. And he was in the front box, and the horse was kicking the box. And they were about two days getting him out. And of course by that time the horse had kicked itself so it was half dead, they had to destroy it. They got the young fellow out, he never was the same, though. He was only about 16 years old. He was always odd after that. You were talking about coloured fellows. There was a Gabriel fellow, he and his son were working in a room, a bump come in and caught the old man by the legs. And he begged his son to cut his legs off, so he could get out. And the boy wouldn't do it. Come in and killed him. Taddy Gabriel. Nobody knows anything about those bumps that wasn't in them. And a lot of those fellows that are talking to you, about bumps, they never were in the narrow work. See, I'm 84 years old, and hell, I remember the narrow works, but ...

Q. Some of them say that the narrow work is better. A. It is better up where it's safe. Better in Cape Breton. But when you get... See, what happens in a bump, and... I don't know if I can explain it to you or not...

[explains it...]

[its not the roof that comes down but the bottom that comes up.]

Q. Were you ever in a bump? A. Oh yes, dozens of times.

Q. One of the miners said that there were little bumps too, and you could almost use the bumps to get out your coal. Was that true? A. Oh yes. Oh yes, but you see, that's in the early days of the bumps--it made the mine easier. Well, I saw a place in a level where the whole level for 500 ft. had shifted uphill until it was closed in and there was a level on that end and a level on this end and we had to drive right through it. And sometimes after a bad bump, you could shove a board as far in as you wanted, the space between the roof and the coal, where it bounced on the coal and compressed it. That's how it would close up that level--it compressed the coal and closed the level up. I wouldn't want to see another one.

Q. You were never injured? A. Oh, yes. That's why I've got these boots--I just got through getting two pair of them. Paid \$185 for that pair of shoes. Moulded to my foot. I had that leg caught and they pulled me--I went in to get a man out. And I took two ropes in, one for myself and one for him, and while I was getting the rope on him and getting him clear, it slipped down and caught on my foot there....

END OF INTERVIEW.