

[Pause 00:00:00]

**Stanley Grizzle:** Continuation of interview with William C. Kingfish Wright.

**William C. Kingfish Wright:** Yes. Now I might clear up a little point. When I started on- on the railroad, as I said, I was playing in the orchestra, as I said. And I was also workin' at- at the racetrack and I was a messenger boy for the president of the-- of-of Dufferin, Dufferin and Long-Range Racetrack, Mr. A Borpin. I was his messenger b-

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm.

**William:** -boy.

**Stanley:** Yeah.

**William:** Through that- through that job, I- I got- got to meet- meet and- and know, uh, very, uh- uh, important people, like the President of the CPR, he used to come up there.

**Stanley:** Yeah. Because that's not relevant to this- to this.

**William:** Yeah.

**Stanley:** I don't want to get into this unless it has some relationship to the Porter's Union, I'm not interested. Yeah.

**William:** Yeah.

**Stanley:** Um, but, um, getting-- the reason you had to work two jobs is because there was not full-time work on CPR, right?

**William:** No- no, I-- well, I was- I was-- when I started in '36, I never did get, uh, laid off in-- They used to lay- lay you-- lay you off in the- in the wintertime or in the fall of the year, they would-- you'd have to go, uh, as they say, "Go to the Linen Room and turn your keys in." So, I didn't have to do that because I- I was running on the observation car to Vancouver. They- they had trained me on that, and I really enjoyed that. I really enjoyed that observation car and I, and- and I had some real- real good times on there, which the fellows in those days, uh, would come back and, uh, when the train would hook- hook up with the Montreal train and- and we would get-- and their fellas would- would be-- would come back and take over the kitchen- the kitchen of- of the thing and- and cook their meals. So- so--and, uh, and my-- 'cause my father told me to be sure and get along with the fellas on- on the- on the railroad. And he- he really- he really-- My father really wanted me to 'cause my--

So anyway, um, that the first time that I- I tasted- tasted rice, bought rice and gravy. I had never had, the only time I had rice at home, was with milk and sugar- sugar. [chuckles] And uh, so the first time I ever tasted rice as a vegetable and- and I got to like it so much and we used to have- have ones like Jimmy Downs, they'd come back there and they'd cook up a dish called cuckoo. And, uh, and- and these, these different West Indian, uh, dishes. And I got to, like- I got to like it, but I can remember I got home. And when my mother-- I got home from Vancouver one time and my mother come up there and said she was going to have rice and- and put milk and sugar on it. I said, no- no, I wanted a gravy. My mother said, "There's no gravy. You have gravy and you have potatoes and gravy. That's what you have. Potatoes are gravy. You don't have no rice and gravy." See, and my mothers, "I don't care what they have on, on the train there. You're getting potatoes and gravy," maybe, you know, and--

**Stanley:** All right uh. Have you any idea who the chief organizers of the Brotherhood were in Montreal?

**William:** Well, I- I- I- I would- I would, uh, see, uh, I would-- I'm the reason why I'm hesitating is because I-- the period of-- I didn't wanna get mixed up with-- see Blanchette was-- when I first knew Blanchette, Blanchette was in Winnipeg and then he went down to Montreal. And I would say that when he was down there in Montreal, they, uh-- the, uh, uh, he leaned towards the- the- the, the Brotherhood. He leaned toward... And I would think he would, he was foremost in Montreal of all those Montreal guys, but you couldn't really call Blanchette a Montreal guy, 'cause he was-- I still-- I would look at him as a Winnipeg, as a Winnipegger. And, uh, so- so Blanchette, sure had a- had a- had a, uh, I would say a position in the U- in the union, I would say he'd be one of the organizers, in my opinion. Now I don't know exactly what...

**Stanley:** Right.

**William:** But Blanchette certainly was. And, uh, and another one on there with Blanchette was, was, uh, uh, Marcus Dash.

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm. He did, huh?

**William:** Yes. I hear that. And Rolly Dash, she did too. Yeah.

**Stanley:** His wife just died recently.

**William:** Who you mean? Uh, Rolly died. Oh, his wife, she just died?

**Stanley:** I heard that, when I was in Montreal, and they told me...

**William:** Oh. Oh, very. She kind of a stout lady, very pleasant. Oh, very pleasant. She was a member of the Eastern Star. She used to come to Grand Lodge all the time.

**Stanley:** Oh yeah.

**William:** Yeah, her husband was in the Lodge down there, in Montreal. Yeah. Yeah.

**Stanley:** All right. Uh, so organizing the Brotherhood, how about out west, other than Blanchette from Winnipeg, anybody else?

**William:** Now out west, but see, I didn't- I didn't know-- see, I didn't know those fellas out west so much then because see, I was on the train, cause I was running through Winnipeg, you see.

**Stanley:** Well, that's fine. You answered the question. Yeah. You didn't know who they were apart.

**William:** Yeah. No.

**Stanley:** Um, did any of your family belong to the Brotherhood?

**William:** No.

**Stanley:** Or the Auxiliary? Didn't you when your mother acted? What the Auxiliary?

**William:** Know? No. Well, not your mother, right? No. No.

**Stanley:** So, you were the only member of the family?

**William:** Yeah, sure. I see. Mm-hmm.

**Stanley:** What did, uh, you think of the, uh, um, having a Ladies' Auxiliary to the Brotherhood? Do you think that was a good idea? It was a Ladies' Auxiliary, do you think it was a good idea to have a Ladys' Auxiliary?

**William:** Auxiliary? Well, looking back on it, I would tell you so, but I didn't, you know, I didn't have any thoughts along that. Mm-hmm long that yeah.

**Stanley:** I see. Um, no thoughts on it, eh?

**William:** No.

**Stanley:** Um, what do you think of the leadership provided by Randolph?

**William:** Well, I felt that, that it was quite a-- it- it was quite a- quite a- quite a thing for us.

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm.

**William:** To have a man like Randolph.

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm.

**William:** As our leader, I looked on it like that. And, uh, as I said, I was very, um, gullible anyway. And, uh, I--s

**Stanley:** So, in conclusion, in conclusion, what good-- uh, what would you, how would you evaluate the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters? Did it do anything for the porters, for the porters? Did it do anything for the Black community in Canada?

**William:** Yes. Uh. Okay. Gee, I get mixed when I say I get-- I'm not exactly confused or-or mixed up, I-- w-with the Brotherhood. And you see, and it was around in that time when I joined Eureka Lodge. And uh, so-so, and-and uh, I was-I was told- I was told, I think, I was told or I-I understood that-that A Philip Randolph was amazing. And-and so I would use that as a- as a-- to, uh, as a younger, as a younger member when I was trying to influence, s-somebody to come, to-to come into the Brotherhood. If he's in, if he's in the Lodge, I'd try to get him in the Brotherhood.

**Stanley:** Well, did he-- Was Randolph a good leader in-in your opinion?

**William:** Yes, he was- he was- he-he- he sure was. He was the first, I shouldn't say, he was the- he was the- he was the first, um, uh, uh, ah, real good speaker that I've heard because I've listened to-- in those days that we used to have uh, at the-- This-- We had a rabbi here, a famous rabbi here by the name of Rabbi Eisendrath, Eisendrath. And he used to have in-in the, in the, uh-- What's the name of the-the-the famous synagogue here in-in-in Toronto? And he'd have these-these--

**Stanley:** Holy Blossom.

**William:** The Holy Blossom, the Holy Blossom syna..., and he would have these-these civil rights, uh, leaders come up, like fellas. Like, I've listened to him, can remember listening to Jane Farmer. I can remember listenin' to Martin Luther King.

**Stanley:** Well, that-that wasn't Eisendrath. That was Rabbi Gunther Plaut had them.

**William:** Who?

**Stanley:** Plaut. No?

**William:** I don't even, I don't even-- I didn't even know Plaut. I mean, I didn't even-- I didn't, don't even strike a [unintelligible 00:12:21]

**Stanley:** Eisendrath? Okay, go ahead then. Yeah.

**William:** So Eisendrath was the first one to start with that. And uh, they-- I know you had a couple of fe- fellas come along after, and they- they continued that- that uh, that uh--

**Stanley:** Feinberg, did too, yes.

**William:** Feinberg, yes. It was-- They were-- He was well after-- He was well after Eisendrath.

**Stanley:** All right. Um, what did you think of the practice of tipping? Did you think it was, uh, degrading, or did you [crosstalk]

**William:** No, I didn't find it degrading.

**Stanley:** No?

**William:** No, I didn't. Um, uh, in fact, I got into-- In my limited way, I got into many discussions about that because, I'd say well, 'cause I would say, "Okay, if you don't want to hold out your hand, you just let me know, and I'll come up there and hold up my hand." [laughter]

**Stanley:** That sounds like you. [laughter]

**Stanley:** I see. Did you find the tips helped to supplement your wages? [unintelligible 00:13:25]

**William:** Oh, you could. No doubt about it, you could, you couldn't-- Our-our salary was, our salary was, uh, well, if you worked on the observation cars, as I did, the top salary in those days, then was-was- was \$85. It's either \$85 or \$90 dollars a month. That was the top. Now, the only way you could get more than that is if you ran in charge. And I think you got \$10 much more to run in charge.

**Stanley:** All right, Willy, uh, let me see if I have anything else to ask you here. Uh, you had a nickname with Kingfish?

**William:** Yes.

**Stanley:** Were there any other nicknames of interest, other than Pussy Hill?

**William:** No. [both laugh] Well, let's see. Jeez. Oh, well there's, the names and, uh, like Pretty Boy Schmidt.

**Stanley:** Oh, yeah.

**William:** Um, Sleepy Eyed Johnson. [chuckles] Who else was there? Texas Brown.

**Stanley:** Right. Why was he called Texas Brown? He's born in Texas?

**William:** Yes, Texas.

**Stanley:** Right.

**William:** Mm-hmm.

**Stanley:** Now there were some White porters on the railroad.

**William:** Yes.

**Stanley:** Do you think that the White porter supported the-the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters being an all Black-led union?

**William:** Uh, uh, my-my-my opinion, uh, uh, there was two that was very good, very good. And-and-and-and-and you would, you wouldn't, uh, you-you could. The-they would support, they would. And-and the names were Buckley-Buckley-

**Stanley:** Oh, yes. Oh, yes.

**William:** -and-and uh, and-and another that there was another one.

**Stanley:** Crehan?

**William:** No.

**Stanley:** You remember Crehan? He's a quiet fella.

**William:** Yeah. No, I can't remember there.

**Stanley:** Pat Schulock?

**William:** Pat-- No, Pat Schulock, no. Pat-- No, no, no. No, Pat Schulock. No, no. He was a White porter but he-he didn't associate with Pat Schulock, no, no. But Buckley, in fact, Buckley was Percy Jules one Pe-- Percy Ju-Jule regarded him as one of his best friends.

**Stanley:** Good. Good, right, right.

**William:** So, there was nothing prejudice about Buckley. Then there was that other guy that, remember, he used to eat the peanuts all the time? You must remember that guy.

**Stanley:** Well, uh, you see, you're saying that most of the White porters, uh, did not support the union too well?

**William:** No, no.

**Stanley:** But they-- Did they fight against the union? Did--

**William:** Well, no, I would because there was so much in the minority. You must remember. There's, there's no more-- We're talking of no more than about five or six, maybe uh, half a dozen employees.

**Stanley:** Good. All right, Willy he uh--

**William:** It's, uh, they were so--

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm.

**William:** They were so, you know, like um, in-in the, um--

**Stanley:** Have you anything that you'd like to say? Uh, this is the last question. Anything you'd like to say about the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters which is my main, uh, theme in this interview? Any comments you'd like to say about the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters to conclude this interview?

**William:** Well, uh, when the Brotherhood started, uh, you know, got going in Toronto, I'd like to-to-to- to mention when the Brotherhood started going in-in Toronto and having regular meetings and so on, like that, I can remember-I can remember when, uh, when-when they used to-- There was a couple of cases. I remember one case in particular which was of great interest in Toronto. And it was quite a victory for the Brotherhood, 'cause that never could have happened without the Brotherhood, that was the case of Clarence Carter-

Carter. Carter was a fellow that had been pulled out of service, uh, for- for something he was alleged to have done. And, uh, and they kept him off. And the Brotherhood took a [unintelligible 00:18:25] okay, yes. And Norman Smith was one of the ones that were thinking or did saying that he'd never work for the CPR again. He said he'd never work for the CPR again. And the Brotherhood kept. And that case ran on for quite a while. So, when the settlement came, I think it was for over six months or-or more. And-and-and-and-and-and Carter, uh, Clarence Carter. I think it was. Yes, it was Clarence Carter. That would be in your time, wouldn't it?

**Stanley:** Yes, it would be.

**William:** Wasn't that, wasn't that Clarence Carter? It was not real. That was one-- That was the big, that was a real big, that was a real big, uh, shall I say, score for the- for the-- And that never could have happened before. And-and I think, I think that-that was responsible for getting many ones because even fellows like, um, I can remember, [chuckles] it was like Headley. Headley would never-- He said, he swore he'd never go in that Brotherhood and all like that. And I, and I can remember catching Headley and telling him, I said, "Now, what-- You-you-you heard, you heard what happened to Clarence Carter, eh?" [laughs] And-and-and-and Headley said, "Yeah, you were right. You were right." He says, "Yeah, I gotta hand it to 'em. I gotta hand it to him, I had to hand it to him." Yes, he's, "Oh, yes. Um, yeah, that was good." And that really connects with-with some response. I could say for sure did I know that was from-- for Headley coming in there in-in the- in the, but I mean, there was others, but I can remember that real, real good.

**Stanley:** Well, I think when Headley left the railroad, he was on financial [unintelligible], wasn't he? We had to check off, but he wouldn't pay the taxes or something, wasn't it?

**William:** Yes, he wouldn't. Uh, yeah. Yeah. Well, he was, uh, he was, uh, an in and outer really. And, uh--

**Stanley:** Have you any comments to make about this, the conductor issue, the Black conductors, uh, that the CPR refused to hire? Have you anything you'd like to say about that?

**William:** Well--

**Stanley:** You know much about it?

**William:** Yes. As a matter of fact- as a matter of fact, uh, I didn't know whether you knew this or not, but- but when-when Cyril's, Cryil, Cyril, um, Woods, uh, I see, what did, what happened? Did he-- I know he died, but what I'm tryin' to say is, did-did he retire and then he died?

**Stanley:** Yeah, yeah.

**William:** Yeah. Then he died. Okay.

**Stanley:** All better than here. Yeah.

**William:** All right. Okay. I'm fine. Well, all right, well then, uh, I was- I was approached- I was approached to-- you know if I wanted to be a conductor and I-- to be- to be the Porter Instructor- to be the Porter Instructor. And I was asked actually, it was my suggestion. I was the one that suggested Harry Gairey to, uh, to, uh-- there was-- I'm trying to think of who was the-- I tell you who the-the superintendent was. It was- it was, um, uh, uh, Graham.

Graham was the superintendent and-and-and he called me up one morning and asked me, would I- would I be interested in-in- in, um, being the Sleeping Car, uh, Porter Instructor. And-and I remember, I-I it came at such a shock to me [laughs] that he would consider me, and I-- and-and I went and I told, uh, I think it was Shirley Jackson or some-some of the ones there. I-I told someone, to try to get some advice on it, and-and, uh, and, uh, so they, so-so I-I I still had to, uh, I turned it down because I was, uh, uh, at that time then I-I was-- I had pretty good seniority. And, um, and, and I was thinking about my job at the- at the race track. And I couldn't, see, I had enough seniority, I could pick my runs to work it in- work it in with, uh, in, with the, um, with the, uh, with a, uh, racetrack, 'cause what I would do is-is book off, book.

**Stanley:** Don't go into all that.

**William:** Yeah. All right.

**Stanley:** I'm not interested in that.

**William:** Mm.

**Stanley:** I just want to-- if you knew anything about the conductors, and had any feelings about it.

**William:** Yeah. And, uh, yes. Uh, I-I was asked to be one.

**Stanley:** That's all, eh?

**William:** Yeah. But then I turned it down because of my other job on the race- the race track.

**Stanley:** Okay. Thanks very much, Willy.

**William:** Yeah. Okay.

**Stanley:** End of interview with, uh, William C. Wright. Interview of Leonard O. Johnston, Toronto on this 11th day of March, 1988. Give me your full name please. Full name.

**Leonard Oscar Johnston:** Leonard Oscar Johnston.

**Stanley:** All right. And, uh, where were you born Leonard?

**Leonard:** Toronto.

**Stanley:** Uh-huh. What date?

**Leonard:** 1918.

**Stanley:** Oh, yeah.

**Leonard:** May 7th.

**Stanley:** All right. And, uh, what was your first full-time job or part-time job as a young fella?

**Leonard:** How old?

**Stanley:** When you get started, when did you start at work?

**Leonard:** When I was six.

**Stanley:** I see. What did you do at that time, sir?

**Leonard:** Delivered papers, shined brass at the Toronto, CIBC, right down here at Bathurst and Queen, delivered morning papers, then go to the bank, shine the brass in the bank, wash the windows, wash the floors. Then do my papers. No, I did my papers first. Then I'd go to school and fall asleep. Then after school, I'd go deliver evening papers.

**Stanley:** What school did you attend?

**Leonard:** Grey Street.

**Stanley:** Grey Street Public School and--

**Leonard:** Public School and Central Tech.

**Stanley:** Central Tech. Did you complete school?

**Leonard:** No.

**Stanley:** No?

**Leonard:** Didn't complete anything.

**Stanley:** What did you take at Central Tech?

**Leonard:** Well, a general course- general courses, but I ended up attempting to, um, be a machinist. But in those days, you had to have five years of no pay of apprenticeship, they called it, but it was really slavery.

**Stanley:** All right? Uh, you worked as a sleeping car porter for the Canadian Pacific Railway company.

**Leonard:** Yeah.

**Stanley:** When did you start there?

**Leonard:** 1940.

**Stanley:** What date?

**Leonard:** May.

**Stanley:** Do you- do you remember any names of any other porters who started at the same time you did?

**Leonard:** No, not me. I don't remember many, Robins maybe.

**Stanley:** Laverne Robins.

**Leonard:** Laverne Robins. No, I try to forget the railroad. It was- it was a good job, but I didn't like it. You know, I didn't like it. It wasn't my kind of a thing.

**Stanley:** Well, I was getting to that. I just wanted, I'm trying to put something together, so I'm asking names. You can't remember anybody else besides Leonard Johnston, besides the Laverne Robins, right?

**Leonard:** Oh yeah. I could, if I could take time to think. Stanley Grizzle, down at he wasn't there very much though. So, uh--

**Stanley:** What do mean he wasn't there very much? Did you start June 40? Were we in the same class?

**Leonard:** You weren't there that very long. I was there 37 years. How many years did you have now?

**Stanley:** Twenty years.

**Leonard:** Twenty. Wow. But it was [unintelligible 00:27:03]. Well, it was Willie Wright. Oh, Turner, Ted Turner, a good friend, Ted Turner. Nobody liked him, but he- I liked him, uh, Ted Turner, Robins. Who else? All those guys from up at Chatham. Brown. Les Brown. Ed Brown.

**Stanley:** How long were you a sleeping car porter?

**Leonard:** Thirty-seven years.

**Stanley:** Right. And, um, did you, uh, are you pension off? Do you receive your pension?

**Leonard:** No, I-I got a disability pension. I-I, uh, I quit in, uh, '77.

**Stanley:** I see. The disability pension is, uh, how much less than a regular pension?

**Leonard:** Half.

**Stanley:** Half. I see.

**Leonard:** Yeah.

**Stanley:** May I ask you what-what it is?

**Leonard:** Well, it was backdrop nerves.

**Stanley:** No, I don't mean that, I mean the pension, I--

**Leonard:** How much it is?

**Stanley:** Yes.

**Leonard:** [laughs]. Hey, how much is yours?

**Stanley:** Well, you don't have to ask. I said- I said, may I ask, you know, this is--

**Leonard:** [chuckles] it's uh--

**Stanley:** You don't wanna ask, you don't have to, it's the implication.

**Leonard:** It's \$511 and 85 cents.

**Stanley:** I'm just tryin' to compare the days when there was no pension to the days that there is a pension, changing conditions since, uh, we started as a railroad porter. All right. Now, um, you already said you did not enjoy the job of sleeping car porter. Can you tell me why you did not enjoy the job?

**Leonard:** Well, I didn't like the-the confinement, 'cause you-you were confined for days, and then when you were starting out, sometimes you'd work a whole month without being home. And that would add up to maybe 632 hours, 21 hours a day, four hour's sleep, uh, and confined with being confined with strangers all the time. Uh--

[phone rings]

**Stanley:** Okay. All right?

**Leonard:** Yeah. You got to-- it was- it was too, uh, intimate. You were too close to people all the time. You spent 21 hours a day with 'em and then on your layover, out in Vancouver or

wherever, you were confined with 'em and, uh, I'm- I wasn't-- uh, I didn't like that kind of, uh, surroundings, but I'm not puttin' the job down. I'm just saying that I didn't like it.

**Stanley:** Didn't you find it more-more enjoyable when you started, when you— then when you ended?

**Leonard:** No, it was worse because I used to get very sick. I used to throw up- I used to throw up on the railroad, you know? I-I'm not a good sailor and the motion of the train would make me sick. In fact, I think it was-- that's what caused my back problems. So, I had to quit. You see?

**Stanley:** So, you had a long period of suffering.

**Leonard:** Long period of suffering, sure.

**Stanley:** All right, um. Before the, um, Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters arrived on the property of the CPR, there was a--what was called a Porters' Welfare Committee.

**Leonard:** Yeah.

**Stanley:** Do you know much about that?

**Leonard:** Yeah. It was a company- it was a company association that started and they-they had, uh, I forget who it has, who was, uh, who asked me to join. In fact, I belonged to it. It was a sort of benevolent thing it's like for--they paid for your funeral.

**Stanley:** Well, that's PMBA you're talking about-

**Leonard:** Yeah.

**Stanley:** Porters' Mutual Benefit Association.

**Leonard:** Yeah.

**Stanley:** That's different to the Welfare Committee.

**Leonard:** The Welfare Committee. Well, the, no-no, wait, the benevolent--well, that was-- there was one that paid--you paid \$2 a month and you got, uh, and it was kind of an insurance. But I didn't know much about the association, 'cause you mean like the ones that looked after the porters? Yeah. Well, I didn't--I never trusted that. I always thought that it was, you know, anything that the company--

**Stanley:** I think Ray Lewis was the head of it at the time.

**Leonard:** Ray Lewis and Stinson and-and uh, Stinson and Shirley Jackson, you know?

**Stanley:** All right, uh. Then the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters came along, and uh, did you, um, join that organization?

**Leonard:** Oh, yeah. Sure.

**Stanley:** When did you join?

**Leonard:** Joined the very first day they started with the-- when they started getting the initiation, they paid a dollar.

**Stanley:** Who signed you up?

**Leonard:** Who signed me up? It was um, Fontana.

**Stanley:** Oh yeah.

**Leonard:** Fontana. Mr. Gairey.

**Stanley:** Mr. who?

**Leonard:** Mr. Gairey, he was active. Yeah, he was active. Gairey, Baldwin, I forget who actually handed me the initiation, but all those, uh, old-timers were-were involved in it. Even with the threat of, uh, losin' their job, you know, they were-- Yeah.

**Stanley:** Uh, huh. Um why did you join the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters?

**Leonard:** Well, I was a political person all my life, um, joined the Communist Party when I was 20. I joined the Communist Party the same time that I-- did I-- Can I help you, sir?

**Speaker:** [unintelligible 00:32:29]

**Leonard:** I joined the Communist Party the same day, almost the same day that I joined the CPR. Um, the-the-the railroad porter was the only job that I could get. I applied for jobs, but it was refused because of colour. Well, actually they called me nigger. And I remember one day, I walked from Jane and Bloor to River Street, along King Street, lookin' for a job as a-- I was a machinist. I had a couple of years machine shop, and I was told to shine shoes. Yeah. Now that's 50, 60 years ago, but-- and I decided, "Okay, all shine shoes." So, I went down the CPR.

**Stanley:** Can you talk about why you joined the Brotherhood?

**Leonard:** Why did I join a Brotherhood?

**Stanley:** Yes. That's the question.

**Leonard:** Well, oh, I see. Well, I joined a Brotherhood because I said I'm a political person. I and unions, I've known the history of the unions and, uh, studied the history in unions. I know that unions was the backbone of any country. And so, I wanted to be part of it, but, uh, I couldn't take an active part in it because the men shied away from me because of my communist affiliations. So, I-I just backed away from it because didn't want it to be-- become a communist union.

**Stanley:** What was the joining fee? Do you remember the joining fee was then?

**Leonard:** Joining fee was a dollar. Well, the initiation was a dollar and it was, uh, \$5 a month I think, then it went up to \$10.

**Stanley:** And how long were you a member of the union?

**Leonard:** Well-well right up until it folded.

**Stanley:** Oh, you mentioned who some of the organizers were, um, in the Toronto area. Uh, I'm looking for more information about the-the origins of the union in Canada. Uh, do you know whether, uh, the union started in Toronto, Montreal, or which district would...

**Leonard:** It started simultaneously. What that-that word? It started, well, I think it-I think Montreal was, uh, was the initiation it-- and then it came to Toronto, then it went out West.

**Stanley:** Who were the key men in the Montreal, do you remember? Key organizers?

**Leonard:** Oh, Bino, CA Bino. Um, I think of Blanchette. I think he was. I don't know when Blanchette came along.

**Stanley:** He was in Winnipeg at the time.

**Leonard:** But, uh, no, he was in Winnipeg. No, he Blanchette she, no, not Blanchette, Bino, uh, CA Bino. I don't think Lord was-- but the only one I can think of right now is CA Bino. There was--there was that--that young guy that, uh, had problems with the hockey-- Montreal Hockey Team. And he sued them and guy, remember? A bald-headed guy, clean. He worked on the club cars. He got beat up by the ho- by the Montreal Hockey Team. I forget who the hockey player was. But, uh, and well, he was a--he was an instigator. But it started in Montreal and went east and west from there.

**Stanley:** What do you mean?

**Leonard:** Huh?

**Stanley:** What's the meaning? What do you remember, what do you mean?

**Leonard:** Mean?

**Stanley:** You had Sudbury in latter days.

**Leonard:** Yeah, it could be. I know who was the instigator out at Winnipeg was, uh, Trotsky.

**Stanley:** Right.

**Leonard:** You know? Uh, what was his name? Not Trot..

**Stanley:** Phillips.

**Leonard:** Phillips. Phillips was the instigator. Phillip? Yeah. WA Phillips. And then the guy out in Van-- out in Vancouver was, uh, the--the two brothers?

**Stanley:** Collins.

**Leonard:** Collins. Yeah. And then the..

**Stanley:** There were four brothers, but when you're talkin' about Frank is one...

**Leonard:** Yeah. Frank Collins. Yeah. And then the Walker brothers out in, out in, the Walkers out in Winnipeg. Yeah.

**Stanley:** The both of them?

**Leonard:** Yeah. Huh?

**Stanley:** Can you give me more information on the organization across Canada than almost anybody. [laughs] That's right. People can talk about the local district in which they live but they can't remember what the names of...

**Leonard:** Yeah. I'm an international member, you know?

**Stanley:** Right. Right. Rights.

**Leonard:** I'm a universal man. I'm not just a provincial person who worries about that the street you're living on. Right, right. The university of the mind.

**Stanley:** Okay. Now they also had a Ladies' Auxiliary. Uh, do you know if any women were involved?

**Leonard:** Oh yeah. There was Winnie, Willie. Oh yeah. Uh, Winnie, LAR-- Winnie Lawrence or, well, Winnie Greene, um--

**Stanley:** Who were active in the--there.

**Leonard:** Oh yeah. And, um-um,

**Stanley:** Winnie Greene?

**Leonard:** Ed Brown. Ed Brown's wife. What's her name?

**Stanley:** Geneva.

**Leonard:** Well, all the Brown's wife, the wife-- Brown's wife, the Robins. No. Well, the Robins who lived in Chatham, but the Browns were--were instigators. Um, uh, who, one wasn't too active in it, she didn't like organizations. But the--the Browns, I know were active. And who was that other woman, that was... I know the Browns worked hard.

**Stanley:** I'm gonna give you some names. You tell me which one of the names, uh, should be shown as the organizers of the women. There, there was Chevallier. Chevallier, Mrs. Willis--

**Leonard:** Chevallier, Mrs Willis. That's right. Oh yeah. Willis, uh, well, the wives of--of-- was Shirley Jackson's wife, yes, she was active. The prominent ones, uh, the prominent ones that--that initiated the union in Toronto, their wives all took part.

**Stanley:** Uh, Mrs. Gairey.

**Leonard:** Mrs. Gairey, well, I-I don't know. I don't know. I-I'm not too sure about that one. I imagine so, because at the--the--the-- at that time, the--the--the-- what do you call it? The--the community was so small and, uh, the segregation of most things, you know, that, uh, most people got along.

**Stanley:** All right, tell me now, was there any intimidation, uh, against the porters during the organizing period, to your knowledge?

**Leonard:** Well, the intimidation was-- was the historical intimidation goes with any union, you know. I don't say that I didn't-- I didn't notice anybody getting fired on account it.

**Stanley:** Uh-huh.

**Leonard:** You know, but there--there was always the fear of, of, uh, intimidation. Now, um, I never played any executive part in the unions, but, uh, the--the-- the Petgrave was a big, uh, pusher of the Petgrave. I mean, he was, um, that's another name, VI Petgrave that we should add in there. He was a--a good in, he was a hell of an instigator of the--of the union. Of course, all those names on the charter, every one of them, uh, but they all-- they all-- they all retired. Every one of them, you know, they stayed on the job till they retired. So, there was no intimidation.

**Stanley:** Right. All right. Um, was--was there a key organizer in the Toronto area? A man who sort of, uh--

**Leonard:** Yeah. Baldwin, yeah, CA Baldwin. He was a--he was a-- he was what you call a--a grassroot, you know, he was the guy that worked closest to the men.

**Stanley:** Right. All right. Um-um, now what were the, can you describe for me the working conditions, uh, prior to the Brotherhood?

**Leonard:** Well, it was-- it was pretty awful because you worked, you got \$2.10 cents a day and you-- you worked 21 hours a day. And, uh, if you started, when the new men had to be on call and that meant that if you got to Vancouver and--and sometimes you wouldn't even get a chance to lay down and you'd be going back out to Montreal.

I remember with specifically, one time I went-- I stayed there a whole month and I'd span the whole continent and then ended up in Sudbury, uh, laying over in Sudbury because they needed a man there and stayed there for a week. Uh, young man with a family, it's not good. And, uh, but that was the nature of things, and, uh, it was tough. Uh, you could, uh, you could be fired. You could, if the man you'd go down to- to report and if the man didn't like the look of you, he could send you home. That was just from the guy on the platform. And racism was high in the railroad. In fact, it was- it was to the point that the senior porters, uh, wouldn't have too much to do with the junior ones. That's well class, it was a class structure, you know, they- they would sit, I noticed that the senior porters would sit at one table and, uh, the junior ones would sit at another, but okay, well maybe that's the way it should be, but, uh, the racism was very high. And, uh.

**Stanley:** How about the working conditions, as it affected the porters' quarters, meals away from home?

**Leonard:** Well, sometimes we'd have to eat in the, we'd go to Calgary, for instance, and we'd have to eat in the basement with all the flies, where the garbage was, they wouldn't let us eat in the restaurants. Uh, we had certain times to go in, so we wouldn't be seen. In fact, they used to pull, on the train, they used to pull a curtain across, you know, when you sat.

**Stanley:** WC Wright said that wasn't so.

**Leonard:** Oh yeah, sure.

**Stanley:** But I thought I remembered that.

**Leonard:** Sure- sure. It was, they'd pull the curtains across.

**Stanley:** Sure- sure.

**Leonard:** And, um, it was depending on, if you were friends with the cooking, the quarters, porters' quarters were usually clean. I'll say that much. They were usually clean, but, uh, um, they were usually off close to the, to the-to the- to the rail, to the yards. And, um, you would get your-- you would get, um, if you were out on the railroad and if you were dead heading, or if you would, if you're going to a-a depot where you would wait for a car to pick up some passengers, then you'd get your meals free. But if you came in there with a load of passengers, you had to pay for your- your meals. And, um, if you're on layover out-out outside of your home base, you would, uh, get your meals free and your bed free.

**Stanley:** Did you pay full price for your meals?

**Leonard:** Yeah, at the time you did. Yeah. Wait a minute now. No, you, no, you got, didn't we get free meals in the beginning or was it half price we only got, see, we only paid half price after the union, but where we get, I-- don't not sure. I can't remember where we getting free -free meals. I think we got free meals. I'm not sure whether we paid half or whether we got them free. That's a question you'd have to have somebody else. 'Cause I--

**Stanley:** All right, um, so I, you described, uh, the conditions prior to the union. Now, with the arriving of the union did any of those conditions change?

**Leonard:** Oh, radically change. Sure. What? Sure. Well, the hours less hours we worked, it worked, the union worked down to-to 40 hour a week, which we were-we were working up to anywhere from 360 to-to 600 a month. And we got 160 got down to 40-hour week, which

160. And we got a pay raise, uh, from- from \$90. Your pay would be ordinary time. If you worked every day, that's three weeks. It was 14, 15 days, 11 days on, and five, four days off at that time. So that meant you did--

**Stanley:** That's running to Vancouver.

**Leonard:** Running to Vancouver. Well, every-every-- all young man run, ran to V- Vancouver. So, um, that meant you work three weeks, two and a half weeks, or three weeks a month. And you know, we got a week off and you would get for that, you would get, well, just multiply 210 by, uh, uh, by 30, and that was \$60. And if you worked time and a half, you got \$90. Of course, that was plus tips. Uh, but you could be on call anytime and then you'd end up sleeping in an upper, which no matter how old you were, you had to climb that upper.

**Stanley:** That brings- brings to mind, before the union, we didn't have a berth reserved for us as a porter- [crosstalk]

**Leonard:** No, you-you- you slept in a smoker, and your station was a chair beside the linen locker. It was a half seat. And that's where the rules said you're supposed to sit all day. And the rule also said that you, you, you had to sleep in an upper, was usually in the tourist car. That was, it was 13, there was 14 beds in a tourist car. And the number 13, you slept in, upper.

**Stanley:** All right, then.

**Leonard:** Time of the- the time of that time you had the tourist--

**[00:47:31] [END OF AUDIO]**