

Stanley Grizzle: Interview with Frank Collins, Vancouver CPR Division, Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, 26th of October, 1987. Your name, please?

Frank Collins: Collins. Frank Collins.

Stanley: Frank, uh, where were you born?

Frank: Uh, Vancouver.

Stanley: Uh, What-what's your date of birth?

Frank: [clears throat] August 11th, 1915.

Stanley: Mm-hmm. When did you become a sleeping car porter?

Frank: Oh, uh, I think June, in June 1933, I think it was.

Stanley: On which railway?

Frank: Canadian Pacific.

Stanley: Right. Why did you take the job of sleeping car porter?

Frank: Well, there was nothing else here for us to do. [chuckles]

Stanley: All right.

Frank: And that was the only job that would give you a halfway reasonable amount of money so that you could raise a family.

Stanley: How long were you a sleeping car porter?

Frank: Uh, 22 years.

Stanley: Mm-hmm. Did you enjoy the job or--

Frank: To a point, you know? There was some enjoyable moments.

Stanley: Were you a member of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters?

Frank: Oh, yes. Yes, very much so.

Stanley: When did you join that organization?

Frank: I joined the organization when it first started, one of the first members. Uh, I think it was back in 1939.

Stanley: Uh, why did you join the Brotherhood of Sleeping...

Frank: Wow. We needed representation up until that time, we had no representation, the job was terrible, no conditions, wages were poor, no respect, and the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters gave us most of these things when we got the union going.

Stanley: Mm-hmm. How long were you a member of the union?

Frank: Up until the time I resigned, in 1956.

Stanley: What were the monthly dues, when you--?

Frank: I had \$2, every \$2 a month when I first joined. Well, first we had a \$2 joining fee and then it was a dollar a month, and then it went up to \$2 a month.

Stanley: Right. Well, 1939 was a long time before the Brotherhood was finally certified as a [crosstalk].

Frank: Oh yeah.

Stanley: Officially bargaining rights?

Frank: Yeah. That's quite-that's quite true there. The, uh, well we, uh, we sort of done an undercover in order to get the union to get the majority of the people-

Stanley: Mm-hmm.

Frank: -the porters in the Union, and we kinda had to do it on the QT.

Stanley: Mm-hmm.

Frank: And, um, when we did get enough, then we asked for certification, but that was, I think we got our certification in 1944 is when we got the charter.

Stanley: Mm-hmm.

Frank: And we didn't get the first contract negotiated in 1945.

Stanley: Mm-hmm. Now back in '39, uh, who were the organizers of the who, who were doing the organizing, uh, as you can recall?

Frank: Well, the organizing done here was, uh, Ernie Lawrence and myself. We were the two only-- the only two organizers here. We were the two fellas that worked on that.

Stanley: Was it difficult to sign the men up?

Frank: Oh yes, yeah, it was quite difficult.

Stanley: Mm-hmm.

Frank: It was a, [clears throat] there was always that, you know, the, uh, the fear from the management.

Stanley: Mm-hmm.

Frank: We didn't have labour laws covering things the way we have now. And there was always a fear for management that you'd be discharged. So, while the men were sympathetic to the union and wanted to join the union, they were afraid on account of their jobs.

Stanley: Right. Mm-hmm. So, you and Ernie Lawrence were the key organizers in Vancouver area.

Frank: Here, we were. Yes.

Stanley: How many profit-- Can you have any idea how many of the men signed up?

Frank: Uh, no, let's see. We, I don't know. I can't recall what the roster was at that time, but I do know we, on a percentage basis, we had, uh, a 90, I think it was 96% signed up in the union. The only other district that beat us was Calgary with a 99%.

Stanley: That's uh, as of the date of when, as of what date do you have 96?

Frank: That would be as of, uh, 44.

Stanley: I see. Uh, do you know who, can you recall, who were organizers in any, uh, any of the other areas of Canada?

Frank: Uh, yeah, there was, uh, there was, uh, Bob Jamieson in Winnipeg and he was very active down there and he worked hard down there. And, uh, in Calgary, uh, PT Clay, he worked pretty hard down there to get the Union organized. PT worked really hard in Calgary.

Stanley: Right.

Frank: Uh, that's all I knew in Western Canada. I didn't know too much about Eastern Canada.

Stanley: I'm under the impression that, um, that, uh, one or two, uh, porters, uh, from the Midwest and east, travelled across Canada to do some organizing. Can you recall?

Frank: They travel to do-- no I think that we-we traveled across Canada I recall, um, there was myself representing Vancouver.

Stanley: Mm-hmm.

Frank: And, uh, I've forgotten who it was out of Calgary, but there was a group of us went across to, uh, Toronto.

Stanley: Oh yeah.

Frank: And we went to Toronto there to see, uh, A Philip Randolph and Benny Smith. That was before we got organized.

Stanley: Oh.

Frank: To, uh, find out the possibilities of getting organized. We heard that they were interested in organizing us along with the Pullman people.

Stanley: Well, this is before you signed up?

Frank: Yeah. So, we went back there and-and investigated this.

Stanley: Who's 'we'?

Frank: Uh, well, there was, uh, I think it was Clay from Calgary and myself from Vancouver.

Stanley: And you went to [crosstalk]

Frank: And there was Joe Hudson from, uh, from, uh--

Stanley: Winnipeg.

Frank: Winnipeg.

Stanley: Oh.

Frank: And, uh, I think from Montreal or Toronto, there was Chev- Chevalier.

Stanley: Mm-hmm.

Frank: And, uh, Montreal I believe was, was uh Sammy Louis, I think was represented from Montreal.

Stanley: You can't recall any other names from Toronto and Montreal, other than Chevallier and Simon Louis?

Frank: Active in the union, well, Dave Clark was active in the union in Montreal and, uh, in, uh, in Chevalier and Toronto, there was, uh, Freeman, was it, in- in, um, Cromwell,

Stanley: Henry Freeman

Frank: In, Henry Freeman. And-and, uh, a fellow by the name of Cromwell.

Stanley: Oh, yeah. Which Cromwell? Lester?

Frank: Uh, Frank.

Stanley: Frank. Oh yeah.

Frank: I think Frank Cromwell.

Stanley: Right, right.

Frank: They were quite active in Toronto.

Stanley: You talkin' about the original organizing.

Frank: Yeah. This was in the early days.

Stanley: Mm-hmm. What about, uh, Charlie Baldwin? You ever heard?

Frank: Charlie?

Stanley: Baldwin.

Frank: Baldwin, yeah, Charlie was quite active too. I-I didn't know too much about Charlie, but I heard that he was quite active in that, too. He was-- We had our hands full out here, you know? Trying to get them organized out here and keep their jobs.

Stanley: How about Harry Gairey, when you came here?

Frank: Harry Gairey. I didn't hear too much about Gairey in-in the way of union. I-I heard like when he was, uh, the, uh, Porter Instructor down there, but I never heard him-- his name coupled with the union, worked too much in the beginning.

Stanley: What was the attitude of the union towards the Porters' Instructors, in the Union?

Frank: Uh, it wasn't very good. It wasn't, uh, I don't know about back east, but it wasn't that good out here.

Stanley: Mm-hmm.

Frank: It uh, a Porter Instructor was, uh, actually, I-I don't think it was just more or less a glorified informer's job.

Stanley: Mm-hmm.

Frank: That's the way it was here. I'm sure you realize what the-the conditions we worked under out here before we got the union.

Stanley: Right. Well, speaking of conditions, uh, can you give me some idea what the working conditions were, uh, before the Brotherhood arrived on the property of the CPR?

Frank: Oh, sure. There was the such conditions as that you would be, uh, required to report in the morning at ten o'clock. So, you would report at ten o'clock and you'd be told that there was nothing doing that you would have to come back at two o'clock. So, you came-- come back at two o'clock and, uh, and probability, some probabilities you'd get a standby job for that night. Then you'd have to report at ten o'clock the following morning. [clears throat] So you reported ten o'clock the following morning. And then, uh, of course when those days they had you lined up fella by the name of Fred Jinx, who was the platform inspector, and he was a roarin' hell, too. And you had him down there and, uh, if you, uh-- He would keep you down there and-and, uh, discuss things. Ah, ah, ah, We, I don't know if you, if you realize what it was like, you must realize what it was like. It was-- the thing is if you would talk about your friend or your neighbor or whatever it was, and carry tales on him, you got the work. So, Jinx would always ask you, you know what, uh, for instance,

what, uh, "What does Grizzle do on his day off?" Well, if I didn't feel like telling him what Grizzle done on his day off, I wasn't put on that car that night, that's all there was to that. So, ah, seniority didn't mean nothing. You just had to kinda butter up to the old guy, and if you was one of his lackeys you got work, and if you weren't, you didn't get work.

Stanley: What was his position?

Frank: He was Platform Inspector and Assistant Superintendent.

Stanley: Oh yeah.

Frank: DS Fraser was the, uh, Superintendent and such as when I first went in there, I-I-I got in there and I was kind of a, I-I didn't think that this was right.

Stanley: Yeah.

Frank: I remember my first confrontation. I went down there and, uh, a fellow by name of Cliff Taylor that worked down here. Cliff and I worked together and we were hired at about the same time. I was ahead of Cliff in seniority. So, we kinda set up our own rules. So, Cliff was assigned to a car that night, in our car to Montreal. And we'd like to get those cars to Montreal 'cause that meant 13 days' pay.

Stanley: Right.

Frank: And I went up to ah-- went home. And after we went home, Cliff phoned me and told me, he said that I'm signed out in our car in Montreal, you see. So, I said, "Well, that-that's not right. I'm ahead of you." He said, "Sure. That's why I'm calling you." So of course, I went down to Jinx and told him that I was next in line. I had to go out to Montreal. He told me that he was running the CPR, he was the CPR. So, I hadn't until-- I felt I had a grievance. So, Rutledge was the Porter Instructor. And I wrote this grievance up, and I wrote him up to the DS Fraser. I-I didn't know what to do with this grievance, so I said to Rutledge, "What do I do with the grievance?" So, he said, "Well, you hand it to me and I'll take it to the man see," so I said, "Okay, so I want to get it to the Superintendent." Well, he took the grievance and he read the grievance, and he took it to Jinx. I think you know I didn't work that summer. That's the kind of conditions you had, and then of course you had what, you know as well as I do, you got a bit of that, but 3 hours down to 24 hours, cuffing boots. And those days we didn't have no air conditioning, you had to pull screens, keep those cars clean and then those old tourist cars with those flat burst, had to push up, those things are pretty rough, conditions were bad. And if you didn't do what the man told you to do, or what he asked you, if you didn't answer them what he asked, you didn't work.

Stanley: All right.

Frank: I'm sure you remember that. And like Warmington, out of Winnipeg was another one, Bill Warmington. He replied for Inspector in Winnipeg, he was the same thing we were in Winnipeg one time and Benny Pope, I don't know whether you remember Benny Pope.

Stanley: Oh yeah. Oh yeah.

Frank: Ben and I were in Winnipeg and we had two days layover in Winnipeg. So, we went in there and just took our two days' layover. So the next day, I don't know if you recall, Winnipeg how they used to take you down the yards in that little schoolroom down there and set you up like a bunch of kids.

[laughter]

Frank: So, we sat down there and listened. So, he was in there ridiculing everybody. "[unintelligible 00:12:19], I heard you were down to Lazar Jones last night. What were you doin' down there and all the rest of you guys [unintelligible 00:12:24]?"

[laughter]

Frank: So, Ben and I sit there. So, he called out all the names, then he asked, is there anybody else there that he hadn't called out. So we say, "Yeah, BH Pope and FC Commons from Vancouver." Well, they wanted to know where we were. So, we said we had two days' layover, so we took our layover. So he said "You're-you're supposed to report here." We had to report there every two-two- two days on your layover, you see at ten o'clock in the morning, you had to report and be ridiculed.

Stanley: But you weren't paid for reporting?

Frank: Oh, no. No, no, you weren't paid. And-

Stanley: How long, how much time would you spend on CPR premises?

Frank: At that time, you would spend maybe about-- well, you'd be down there from about 10:00 in the morning until 12:00.

Stanley: And no pay?

Frank: And no pay. And you had to be there every day on the day that you were supposed to be laid over you see. So, when he asked us about that, we told him we had our layovers, well he fired us, he fired both of us, told us we're both fired. So, we went out of there that night and they wouldn't give us passes to get back to- to get back to Vancouver.

Stanley: You were where?

Frank: In Winnipeg.

Stanley: All right, okay. You had to get back...

Frank: Yeah. He wouldn't give us no passes to get back. Actually, I don't think we were fired so he wanted to bring us around his way of thinking but we were pretty hot headed. So, we just got on the train and say, "We're gonna ride the train whether we had passes or not." So, the train conductor said, "Well, he didn't see us getting on train." He didn't know nothing about it. So, we came all the way across Canada with no passes. [laughs] And we, you know, we slept and ate and got in so when we got down in here, they were recalling them the carpet down here, and then, you know, we were reprimanded for doing this down in here

and gave us what 10 brownies a piece and then we were back on the roster again. But we have to be good people.

Stanley: To clarify the-the record, a brownie is--?

Frank: Brownie, a demerit system, merit, and demerit system, we called them brownies.

Stanley: And how many brownies would you get that'd be allowed to accumulate before dismissal.

Frank: Sixty.

Stanley: Sixty, right.

Frank: If you get 60 brownies, you were just about-- Benny Pope had about- about 59. [laughs] Yeah, this brownie system, the merit, demerit system.

Stanley: Was there any intimidation on the part-on the part-part of the CPR officials when the-- during the organizing period of the Brotherhood?

Frank: Oh, yes, for sure. There was-- always-- it was subtle. And in some senses, it was subtle in other senses, it was quite outright. I remember when I went to Montreal, Jack Stewart, who was a superintendent here, yeah, it wasn't Stuart DS Fraser, who was superintendent here, said to me "Well, where were you going?" I had to get a pass to go to Montreal. Asks me where I was going. "I was goin' down to Montreal." "Goin' down for the union?" And I said, "Yep, going down to see if we can get a union." He said, "If you don't get a union, you ain't got no job, you know that." And I said, "Well, the way I look at it, if I don't get you in, I didn't have a job in the first place, so I've got nothing to lose." And away we went.

Stanley: Who is this conversation with?

Frank: Jack-- DS Fraser.

Stanley: What was his position?

Frank: Superintendent.

Stanley: Of?

Frank: Vancouver.

Stanley: Oh yeah, right, right, yeah.

Frank: Yeah, he was superintendent here. Although there was- there was lots of intimidation among the sleeping car conductors, it was subtle. They would put the pressure on you, you know?

Stanley: Mm-hmm. What kind of pressure?

Frank: Oh, like, you know, yeah, little things like you know? You had the dust-up your vestibule, [take your linen out of this, get your stepping box in the corner. It shouldn't be sittin' where it is sittin'.

Stanley: I suspect that you were involved in the-

Frank: Oh yeah. Yeah, there was always that, you know that the-- with the union, it was, I-I firmly believe that they tried to buck the union as much as they could.

Stanley: Before the Brotherhood came on the scene, that's the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, there was a committee, wasn't there? The Porters' Welfare Committee.

Frank: Yes, mm-hmm.

Stanley: You know much about that?

Frank: Yeah, yeah, I knew about the-

Stanley: Were you on that committee?

Frank: No, I never was on the Welfare Committee, because the Welfare Committee, it was just a-- was a grievance committee, they called it. And it was a more or less management committee, that's the reason I wasn't on. You-you took grievances, and then you went and talked over with the management and the management told you what they thought, and you'd come back and convince the man that that was right, so you'd have no case. And then where were you to go? You didn't go anywhere anyhow. If you went to-- we-- out here we had Jinx who was the assistant superintendent of the platform inspector, most of your grievances with-- we were with him. So, you went to him with him, and then, so he'd refer him to DS Fraser, was the Superintendent, you go to Fraser and he'd ask you what Jinx said, and Jinx would say so and so. And the Jinx had said this, and then they'd ask you what Rutledge, who was a porters instructor. So, while you were advised of that in the first place, so you got no place else to go. The only place we started to get some headway is when Gail Sugden came out here. Sugden was the-the superintendent. He was kind of a fair man. And he will-- if you had a grievance, you took it to Jinx, and if it didn't work with Jinx, you took it to the Sugden then he investigated it. Then, of course, he got to be general manager when we got to be organized.

Stanley: All right. What was- what was the structure of the wel- Porter's Welfare Committee? How-how many representatives did the porters have on that committee? Like Vancouver say?

Frank: Well, there was three in Vancouver, three, there was the three members of the Porters' Welfare Committee. It was Roy Scott, Dempsey Baker, the E, EW Rutledge were the representatives here. And then there was Baker, Rutledge, and Bill McLaughlin. They were the reps here. And Bill McLaughlin got to be the chairman of the committee.

Stanley: Well, with the Vancouver set up, what about the members in the other divisions?

Frank: Well, they had to set it-- set up similar-- similar to that, I imagine. I didn't know too much about their- their-their grievance committees the same as we did.

Stanley: You don't know the names of the members to the committee?

Frank: No, I don't. No, I don't know. I don't know any of them, of those committees down there.

Stanley: What were the big changes which took place once the CPR signed a-a contract with the Brotherhood of Sleeping Cars Porters? What would you say was the big-- the biggest changes and conditions?

Frank: Well, I would say the biggest change to conditions you got respect, that's number one. And then you're- you're treated, like Many Smith said, when you sign the contract, you've been wearing short pants all along and today you put your first pair of long pants on. [laughter] And that's about the way I-- that's about the way I've summed it up. You got it. It was tough. It was tough on the company. I recall a case, we had a case filed by Tommy Morris. And he was one of these chaps that came up from Memphis to work out of Vancouver and, uh, minor thing, linen he had miscalculated his linen or something rather and Brown who was assistant, the chief clerk there, called him in on this was raked over the coals and I happened to be there. Morris was a union man. So I stopped Brown from doing it, and so they had hearing. And I recall that Jinx was the guy that was acting as superintendent. I love this. And we went in there this day and committee says come in Collins and sit down. So, I said, the first thing, right off the bat, "Mr. Collins." So he says, uh, "Well ok, come in and sit down." "Well, what are we here for?" But now mind you, he still hasn't called me Mr. Collins. So, I said, uh, "Well, we're to hear this hearing about Mr. Morris." He: "You mean, Morris?" I said, "Mr. Morris." I said, "Now Jinx, let's get goin' here." Well, he said: "My name's Mr. Jinx." "That's what I've been trying to tell you. My name's Mr. Collins." Well, you know, he didn't wanna call me Mr. Collins. So, I just adjourned the hearing and walked out.

Stanley: Mm-hmm.

Frank: And of course, we'd had instructions on how to conduct ourselves. We got them in Toronto at the Home Federation in Toronto and you know, that the Home Federation-- is it the Home Federation, we had those seminars over there on, is it Bathurst Street?

Stanley: Oh, the Home Service Association.

Frank: Home Service Association, yeah.

Stanley: Oh, yes.

Frank: Yeah.

Stanley: What happened there?

Frank: Well, we had-- we were instructed as to how to handle grievances and the union procedures and stuff.

Stanley: Oh, that's where the Brotherhood had their meetings.

Frank: Oh yeah, yeah.

Stanley: Oh, yes, yes.

Frank: Yeah. We spent what, six weeks down there.

Stanley: Oh yes. Oh yes. When was this?

Frank: Oh, this was, uh, before-- I would say before we got, uh, before we got our first contract. It was around in '44- '43, '44.

Stanley: So, it was sort of a leadership training concept.

Frank: Yes. That's what it was, exactly.

Stanley: Oh, yes.

Frank: And, uh, we got-- so we-we adjourned the hearing. I just adjourned the hearing. The next time went in there, we had our own secretary. We could take our own secretary. Well, he wanted to know what all this was about. Well, we-we had some rough times, but, uh, we come through it and it got out to the end and done my heart real good because, uh, he was referring to Tommy Morris as Mr. Morris. And he eventually came around to calling me Mr. Collins. So, I felt that that was-- you know, we got some- some degree of-of respect and he got-- So now that the inspectors couldn't ride you, you know how inspectors used to ride you all the time.

Stanley: Right.

Frank: And, uh, sleeping car, even the dining car stewards sometimes: "What do you got for the porters?"

Stanley: Mm-hmm.

Frank: I don't know whether you've ever noticed that or not.

Stanley: Yes, yes. Oh, yes. [laughs] Leftovers.

Frank: Yeah.

Stanley: Yes, indeed. Well, we talked about the non-monetary changes, uh, uh, in conditions once the CPR, uh, uh, was burdened with the Brotherhood on its property. Uh, can you touch on, uh, some of the tangible, uh, the material changes?

Frank: Oh yeah. The material changes. The first thing that we got, we did get a raise from wages.

Stanley: Right?

Frank: I can't recall exactly what we did get. Now secondly, is that, [coughs] pardon me, you got compensation for loss of layover. Uh, your compensation prior to union, you-you came in and if you had two days layover and the man wanted to send you out the next day, you got one day, I think you called it LOC, which is layover at, loss of layover compensation. Well, the union rectified all that. If you come in and-and the man used you the next day, and you had six days layover, you got six days double pay for your loss of your layover. So that prohibited them from doing that and keeping other people out of work. Another thing about the union was is that you were signed out in your seniority order. Yeah, there was none of this hanky-panky going on because he was nice to the man that you could go out. You had to take your proper stance in your seniority order.

Stanley: Right, right.

Frank: So, there was, uh, and another thing was, is that, uh, you reported once a day. Now, if you reported at two o'clock and you weren't used at two o'clock, then you got paid for it. You got paid a certain amount of hours for reporting the two-- the four hours for the report for the day. Prior to that, they could have you reportin' three times a day and pay you nothing.

Stanley: What did they pay you for actually reporting and not being [unintelligible 00:23:47]?

Frank: Oh, no, we didn't- we didn't get paid for reporting prior to the union.

Stanley: No, but after the union.

Frank: After the union, if you reported ten o'clock in the morning-

Stanley: Mm-hmm.

Frank: -and then you reported two o'clock in the afternoon, you got four hours pay.

Stanley: Nice, right, mm-hmm.

Frank: Because at that time, you weren't on pay. So, you were reporting for work. [coughs] I don't know whether they'd done that back east or not, but I wasn't too versed with the conditions back east.

Stanley: It was a national contract. It had to be.

Frank: Yeah, it was the same back east, yeah.

Stanley: Um, all right. Uh, can you think of any other changes at the moment?

Frank: Oh, yes, we had, uh-- we didn't get a whole lot of guff from porters' quarters. We used the-- CPR used to furnish us with porters' quarters. Well, that was another hullabaloo. Used to go to Winnipeg and if you weren't in by twelve o'clock, you're locked out. Uh, I don't know if you recall that or not. And then we came in there one night on the freight train and they used to deadhead you on the freight train.

Stanley: Mm-hmm.

Frank: Come in on a freight train one night and we didn't get in there until a little quarter one, and then couldn't get into the porters' quarters 'cause you're locked out. You had to go and get a room. These sort of things-

Stanley: At your own expense?

Frank: At your own expense.

Stanley: Oh yeah.

Frank: And then, uh,

Stanley: At a hotel.

Frank: When you're deadheaded, uh, sometimes I-I I'm sure you're acquainted with the deadheading system that if you're-- we deadheaded out of Montreal. Bob Ware and I deadheaded out of Montreal one time, and they had told we were gonna pick cars up at Sudbury, deadheading to Vancouver. Well, they gave us a whole lot of supplies, bacon and eggs and ham and eggs and all this sort of stuff, bread, thinking-- we thought we were picking up tourist cars with stoves on them and we got standard sleepers. Here we got all this food and nothing and we're deadheadin' on a freight train.

Stanley: All right, um, let's see, I wanna touch on the, uh, do you know who- who were the key organizers, uh, of the Ladies' Auxiliary to the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters?

Frank: Here in Vancouver?

Stanley: Right?

Frank: Um, no, I-I can't recall who were the key organizers. I do- McLaughlin's wife was in it. I don't know whether she had any, anything to do with the organizing of it. There was, uh, Patrick's wife. She was very active in it. Darryl Patrick's wife.

Stanley: He's dead, isn't he?

Frank: [coughs] Yeah, he's dead and so is she.

Stanley: Oh.

Frank: And, uh, Gordon Fields' wife was active in it too. He was in it too.

Stanley: I see.

Frank: Maude Fields, she was active in the Ladies' Auxiliary.

Stanley: Maude Fields?

Frank: Yeah.

Stanley: Oh yeah.

Frank: She was active in the Ladies' Auxiliary. Those were the-- some of the original members of the-

Stanley: What was the role of the Ladies' Auxiliary to the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters?

Frank: Oh, well the role, it was more or less a morale builder. The thing we had to organize the women in order to get the support for the men because after all, uh, with the men working, bringing in the money if there was any disruption in that money coming in, the women had to understand what the system was. So, it was-- it's morale, I think, primarily. Now, they gave functions and there were social functions.

Stanley: Mm-hmm. [silence] I guess the spirit of-of- of, uh, having the women in the organization through the auxiliary was, uh, that, uh, the philosophy was that, uh-- to have a strong Brotherhood at home meant a stronger union.

Frank: Oh, definitely. Yeah, and-and you had to have the women behind you before you had a strong union because if you didn't have them working with you, you were nowhere.

Stanley: Mm-hmm. Yeah.

Frank: And we had women. I remember some of the ladies, some of the women that used to be down there at the station on payday. And, uh, they were getting after these guys that didn't join the union.

Stanley: Is that right?

Frank: And we had some diehards. We-we had some diehards that-that took all the advantages that the union got for ya. Like, I guess, like guys like Buskins.

Stanley: Oh yeah.

Frank: And all them guys that, uh, took all advantages the unions got for you but wouldn't join the union. The only space, the face-saving thing we had is-is when we got the checkoff system.

Stanley: Mm-hmm.

Frank: I was glad to see that checkoff system.

Stanley: Mm-hmm. Um, [silence], just a second. What did you think of tipping? The practice of tipping? Did you have any feelings about-

Frank: Yeah, I didn't. Uh, I-I had to go along with-- was it, Brother Randolph? One man has no jurisdiction over what another man has in his pocket. So, I-I-I think that-- I think tipping was a further humiliating thing. I think that they should have given you a decent living wage so it wasn't necessary to tip.

Stanley: Right.

Frank: You worked at a- at a tourist car, you were workin' with working-class people that didn't have money to tip. They had families and they-- you had to give. And then they used to have-- I got in trouble with the CPR because I refused to take letters on special people. I would take no letters on special people and I got in trouble with that.

Stanley: What do you mean letters?

Frank: Well, I don't know if they had it back east, but they had to hear that if-if somebody was going out and you're running in our car or a room car, or an observation car, which had the compartments and the drawing-room, so on forth-- so forth, um, they had people going out, so, their- their families would be going on, maybe a man, his wife, his two kids, who was a very prominent business, man.

Stanley: Yeah.

Frank: So, the-- they would-- when you went out to take your car out, Jinx would be down there with this letter that "Mr. So-and-So was traveling in the compartment and you will afford him every courtesy that you possibly can" and you have to sign this letter.

Stanley: Oh, yes. Yes, I get it.

Frank: And-and if you, uh, signed this letter, you're obligated yourself to lookin' in. And my- my argument was that everybody in my car gets the same kind of service and I don't care who they are and that's it and I'm not signing any letters.

Stanley: Was, um, Arthur Blanchette one of the early, um, members and organizers in Winnipeg-

Frank: Oh, yeah, yeah.

Stanley: -organizers- in Winnipeg?

Frank: Blanchette was one of the pioneers-- he was one of the pioneers and he worked hard. He really worked hard.

Stanley: You didn't mention his name earlier, that's why--

Frank: Yeah. Blanchette was, um, and he come out several times and they took him, the union took him off of his job and made him field organizer. And then towards the end of, um, his term, I'd say it was in 19-- I retired in 1956, I think in 1952, um, pardon me, I think it was '52 or '53, I was Blanchette's assistant. They had taken me off the roads.

Stanley: Oh, yes.

Frank: And maybe it was at Western, field organizer for the Western district.

Stanley: Was that right. How long were you in that job?

Frank: Oh, about four or five months.

Stanley: What month did you quit the road in '59?

Frank: '56, um, I think it was about August, I guess.

Stanley: Why did you quit?

Frank: A better job.

Stanley: You wanted to see your job disappearing because of--?

Frank: Not really. I felt that the railroads would see me out as far as work was concerned but, um, here again, um, I had an opportunity and it was a challenge. We didn't have no Black bus drivers here.

Stanley: Mm-hmm.

Frank: There was none at all and they said that there is no Black men in the Transit Union here. So, I felt that this was a challenge, I'd take a whack at this. So, I went on into the-- made application to drive the bus-

Stanley: Oh.

Frank: -and I was the only Black bus driver here and then eventually got to be the only Black business agent for the Amalgamated Transit Union.

Stanley: Okay, I see. Was the Vancouver CPR division of the BSCP active in Labour Council?

Frank: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. We were a member of the Trades and Labour Council with the Canadian Congress of Labour.

Stanley: Mm-hmm.

Frank: Yeah, we were active in that.

Stanley: Do they have an office here in Vancouver?

Frank: Yeah, uh-huh.

Stanley: They do? I have to get their address.

Stanley: Yeah, they have an office here.

Stanley: I have to get some records that I want to use.

Frank: Federation of Labour, yeah, they- they have--

Stanley: Where is their office?

Frank: Ken Georgetti. It's on Boundary Road. I don't know exactly where it's at, but it's on Boundary Road.

Stanley: Oh I see. Um, to change the subject a little bit here, um, would you like to make any concluding comments or observations about the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters in Canada?

Frank: Oh, I think it's one of the best things that happened. I think until-- up until the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters in Canada, I don't know if whether you paid any attention to it or not, but we had no national Black organization. None. There was a-- the Black people in Toronto and Montreal were far more aggressive than we were out here because you had more in numbers and ah, you're doing very good. You had some good organizations in Toronto and Montreal that was fighting for equality and positions of employment and so on and so forth. Where out here, we didn't. And with the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, that brought us all together. It was the first solid Black organization, something along the lines of what Marcus Garvey had tried to do-

Stanley: Mm-hmm.

Frank: -only with the exception that it was limited to Canada. Because we did have an affiliation with the Pullman Company. But another thing that was gotten out of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters came the Canadian Society for-- Canadian Society for Coloured People.

Stanley: Advancement of Coloured People. CSACP

Frank: Advancement of Coloured People, that's it. Yeah, that was a subsidiary of the-- well, that was started and that was doing good here too.

Stanley: For how many years?

Frank: Oh, I guess for a good, um, six or seven years, I'd imagine.

Stanley: Were you active with that?

Frank: Yes, I was very-very active in that. I was chairman of that for a while too.

Stanley: Who else was in there?

Frank: Oh, there was Duke Cromwell was in it-

Stanley: Who?

Frank: Duke Cromwell.

Stanley: Duke?

Frank: Yeah.

Stanley: Oh.

Frank: Do you know Duke Cromwell?

Stanley: No.

Frank: There was Duke Cromwell and Charlie Howard, Al Ford, and, um, Jimmy Cole. These were all members of this organization. They were the founding members, the very-- Emmett Holmes-

Stanley: And they were all sleeping car porters in the CPR?

Frank: Not all of them.

Stanley: Oh. [coughs]

Frank: No, most of them were—but that was the beauty of the thing that it had drawn the people together.

Stanley: Okay. [coughs]

Frank: No, I think it was a wonderful thing, that the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters was the first, as far as I am concerned, the first major step that the Black people made in the Dominion of Canada to band together.

Stanley: Mm-hmm. Do you have any photographs of the Brotherhood-

Frank: Not too many.

Stanley: -or of the CPR porters in uniform?

Frank: Oh, no I don't think so.

Stanley: No?

Frank: I'll look and see--see if I've got some, but I doubt it, doubt it very much.

Stanley: I'd like to have some look at that.

Frank: Yeah.

Stanley: I am encouraged to get some photographs-- they will attract-- the book, you know? Um, here's one for you. What, what-- before we get into this one. Getting past the original organizing of the union, um, who would you name as- as strong supporters of the union over the years?

Frank: Who of them-- strong representatives of the union over the years?

Stanley: That's right.

Frank: Well, one that I know unequivocally, Ernie Lawrence. He was the first secretary-treasurer we had here, and the only secretary we had here and he was a 100% and a strong

union man. I've been on several cases with Lawrence, and some of the things we had to do was under the table.

Stanley: Yeah. Do you have any records of past cases you were on?

Frank: No, but I think Lawrence would probably have some if you can find out who has Lawrence's records.

Stanley: You wouldn't know?

Frank: No, I don't know. You see Mims would probably be able to tell you because-- or Holmes. Holmes and Mims.

Stanley: Was Lawrence married?

Frank: No.

Stanley: He wasn't married?

Frank: No, he was married, and then-- it disintegrated. But Ernie Lawrence was one of the strongest union members that I know of-

Stanley: Um mm.

Frank: -if not the strongest, and that's here.

Stanley: Right.

Frank: And, of course, in Calgary-- we had several men in Calgary, John King, and Roy Williams. Roy was one of the powerful men down there. [coughs]

Stanley: John King was Teddy King's father?

Frank: Yeah. Ted King and Ted King was down there too. He was in the union. He was 100% union man.

Stanley: Mm-hmm.

Frank: Hard worker.

Stanley: In Winnipeg?

Frank: In Winnipeg was Jamerson, Bob Jamerson, and Lockhart.

Stanley: Joel Lockhart?

Frank: Little Lockhart.

Stanley: So, I guess this wasn't Jo?

Frank: Little Lockhart, there were two Lockharts, there was little guy. And, who else in Winnipeg? There was somebody else in Winnipeg. Arthur Blanchette, he was- he was the stalwart, he was the model. He was out of Winnipeg. He was pioneering for union long before the union came out here.

Stanley: All right.

Frank: And Bob Jamerson, of course, Bob Jamerson was a real union man, and I don't think you would find anybody more dedicated than Bob Jamerson.

Stanley: Oh Gilberry?

Frank: Gilberry, he worked hard, yes, he was-was--

Stanley: There's another fellow who used to smoke cigars, uh, what's his name again, Tumbler--

Frank: Alan Tumbler?

Stanley: No, no, not Tumbler.

Frank: And Washington?

Stanley: Washington.

Frank: Yeah, Washington. There was Tumbler and Washington and Blanchette, the three of them worked together.

Stanley: There was Johnson there too.

Frank: Um, yes there's Johnson there too, yeah.

Stanley: Were they all strong men?

Frank: They were strong. Tumbler, Washington, and Blanchette, were three strong union members. They were strong union members.

Stanley: Simmons. How was Simmons?

Frank: Yeah, Bob, he was good.

Stanley: Simmons.

Frank: Fitz.

Stanley: No not Fitz Simmons. Simmons.

Frank: Oh, little Simmons, yeah.

Stanley: No, big fellow he was...friend...

Frank: Yeah, yeah, he was a good union man.

Stanley: What was his first name?

Frank: I don't know what his name was. Simmons, and I know is we used to call him Simmy.

Stanley: And then getting out to Montreal and Toronto?

Frank: Well, I don't know too much about Montreal. I remember old Doc Bartholomew.

Stanley: Oh, yes, yes.

Frank: He was a good union man and Sammy Lewis was one of the best.

Stanley: Mm-hmm.

Frank: And Dave Clark.

Stanley: Mm-hmm.

Frank: He was good. Who else was there in Montreal that I knew in the union there, there ah, kind of, the names kind of get-get away from me, you know? And the Toronto was the only ones I knew in Toronto was Shev and Freeman and um Cromwell.

Stanley: Mm-hmm.

Frank: And who else was there in Toronto? There was somebody else in Toronto too that was pretty strong union man, can't think of his name, but he was a strong man.

Stanley: Right.

Frank: And you yourself, pretty strong union man yourself.

Stanley: Mm. Oh, I just covered all the districts. There was also a local of the Brotherhood of Sleep Car Porters, um, in Edmonton, the Northern Alberta Railroad. Did you know much about that?

Frank: No, not too much. Roy and Richardson would know more about that than I. I don't know-- I don't know too much about that, no.

Stanley: Can you think of some of the nicknames of sleeping car porters?

Frank: Hmm.

Stanley: We had some interesting names. So, man.

Frank: Well, Yes. [laughter]

Stanley: I'm [inaudible 00:40:11] to have a few for--

Frank: I remember [laughs] standing by the car and they were standing by in Vancouver. I was- I was with Sammy Hayes and, uh, we were standing around there and this-this guy come down with his bags and, you know, how it was, they-they- they'd walk by the red cap, you know? I'd have four or five bags and just loaded down, but they'd get to the top of the stairs, they'd see the porter standing by there and they'd get weak. They drop the bags, come down the stairs, "Porter, I got lower five. You got my bags just at the top of the stairs." So, this guy come down the stairs and he come down there and he says, uh, "Say Joel or George?" he says, "My bags are at the top of the stairs." So, Sammy says, "Yeah, okay. I'll get his bags." When he come down, I said to Sam I said, "Hell." I said, "That guy calls you, George. You're not gonna let him get away with that." He said, "Well, what am I gonna do? Tell him my name is Sam." [laughs] Because that was a nickname too.

Stanley: Yeah.

Frank: So, but-but it was always George, you know, George and-and-and, uh, when I used to run to the States, I ran on that Mountaineer and what used to burn me up down there, as soon you get down there, you'd-- our talk was a little different than theirs and-and our annunciations. And I remember in the club car, and I'd get in the club car and they'd say, "Hey boy, where are you from?" I said, "Well, I'm from Canada." "I bet you're sure glad to be down-home again, aren't you?" They thought every Black face they saw was from the southern states. For sure.

Stanley: Yeah.

Frank: Yeah. They did, you know, and it- and there was Boy, George, Sam, and, of course, uh, some of the porters had names themselves. Like we used to call old Dewberry, Count Dewberry, and old Griff, King Kong Griff.

Stanley: Wha-wha- what's King Kong, uh?

Frank: I don't know why, he was just a big man.

Stanley: Oh, I see.

Frank: And we used to call him King Kong Griff.

Stanley: Mm-hmm.

Frank: And, uh, who else was there? Uh, Lightfoot. I don't know if you remember Lightfoot.

Stanley: Oh, out of Toronto?

Frank: Yeah.

Stanley: Oh, yeah.

Frank: And there-there was several of that, but, of course, I think that these were the ways that we had of-of having humour between ourselves.

Stanley: All right. Mm-hmm.

Frank: You know, those were hard days.

Stanley: That's right.

Frank: Real hard days. We were working a lot, we-we got \$72 and 50 cents a month and you have to work six months, six-- 180 consecutive days before you got the next raise. So, what they would do is that you'd work maybe five and a half months. You'd lay off for the next two weeks and then bring you back. And I was 12 years before I got to \$75 a month. And then when you get \$75 a month, you got \$2 and 50 cent raise every six months until you got to \$95 a month.

Stanley: Mm-hmm.

Frank: That was your maximum.

Stanley: This is before the union?

Frank: Oh yeah.

Stanley: Yeah.

Frank: And that was your maximum.

Stanley: Mm-hmm.

Frank: And then if you run in charge, you got an extra \$10. So that was \$105 a month.

Stanley: Right. Right.

Frank: So, you know, you had to raise a family, pay rent and all that sort of stuff on that kind of stuff.

Stanley: Mm-hmm. I think that, uh, concludes the interview with Frank. Anything else you'd like to say in conclusion, if not, uh--

Frank: No, not that I know of. That's about it.

Stanley: Thank you very much. **[inaudible 00:43:23]** He's not there. [crosstalk] Right, if they don't report right on time, he said, don't worry about 'em cause I'm- cause I'm gonna drive them down.

Unknown Speaker 2: The injuries that still kept in that [crosstalk] again. So basically [crosstalk]

Unknown Speaker 3: And this guy drove us down there..

Stanley: What, that's the guy, Cromwell. Oh Cromwell, well, that was really something.

Unknown Speaker 1: Well, Ralph fell back and I went to a meeting in Toronto when, uh, Blanchette, uh, when, uh, Randolph and Benny Smith was there and they was holding their first meeting. Now I can't remember the-the names of the guys we met. And we-we-we

walked and just discovered the address just by accident of where to go, you know, and we went there.

Stanley: Goodies.

Unknown Speaker 2: Goodies. Halloween. [laughs]

Unknown Speaker 1: Cheesies, cheesies.

Stanley: It was, uh, you know, the way they could manage it was, they were trying to fire everybody that was mixed up with the union.

Unknown Speaker 1: Well, they didn't- they didn't figure that we were gonna get anywhere.

Stanley: No.

Unknown Speaker 1: They never believed we was going to get organized [crosstalk]

Unknown Speaker 2: You didn't get organized, now.

Unknown Speaker 3: It was [crosstalk]

Stanley: The two or three said back.

Unknown Speaker 1: Cause you remember the-the-the election they had, you know, do you- do you wanna join the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porter- Porters or continue with the old system? That's the way they worded it.

Stanley: Yeah.

Unknown Speaker 1: And I looked and I thought why they have voted against themselves if they said the old system. And nobody wants the old system. Everybody wants a new system.

Stanley: Mm. [laughs] [crosstalk] We want something different.

Unknown Speaker 2: They could have something different.

Unknown Speaker 3: [crosstalk] depending on what we had [crosstalk].

Unknown Speaker 1: I guess, we [inaudible 00:44:55] porters 90% [crosstalk].

Unknown Speaker 2: PT Clay, that's who it was.

Stanley: I guess I thought it was PT Clay.

Unknown Speaker 2: Yeah. PT Clay.

Stanley: What about him? [crosstalk]

Unknown Speaker 5: No. He was the delegate.

Unknown Speaker 2: Yeah. He was.

Unknown Speaker 5: In the- in the- in the book.

Stanley: Yeah.

Unknown Speaker 2: Mm-hmm.

Unknown Speaker 5: He and Bill McLaughlin were, uh, well Bill. No. Bill, didn't get into the union in the beginning.

Unknown Speaker 2: No. But was his name in the book? Uh, something like that, in the first rule book?

Unknown Speaker 1: No, I don't think it was.

Stanley: Might have been. Bill was a holdback. You know, he--

Unknown Speaker 3: Yeah, i had a.

Unknown Speaker 1: And how-how did he get to go down there to represent the men?

Unknown Speaker 3: Yeah. Look-look in the back of that book then.

Stanley: I don't know how he did it. He was- he was a holdback.

Unknown Speaker 1: I know he was, [inaudible 00:45:35] for him but I'm surprised him going down there.

Unknown Speaker 2: You can get along [crosstalk].

Stanley: Look in book [crosstalk].

Unknown Speaker 2: With my doctor was as far as the union was concerned.

Stanley: No, when he- when he went down there [crosstalk].

Unknown Speaker 2: No. No. That's, uh.

Unknown Speaker 3: That first meeting [crosstalk].

Stanley : I didn't understand that.

Unknown Speaker 2: Oh.

Stanley: I don't know how he got down there either, but he got down there. I know that.

Unknown Speaker 1: I don't understand it.

Stanley: But, uh, he was one of our big buckers out here.

Unknown Speaker 1: I know. I know.

Stanley: Yeah. He was- he was.

Unknown Speaker 5: Who? Buskin?

Unknown Speaker 2: No. McLaughlin.

Stanley: Bill McLaughlin

Unknown Speaker 5: Buskin was all right as long as he didn't have to pay nothing.

Unknown Speaker 2: Yeah. Buskin was all right. Yeah.

Unknown Speaker 5: If it was free...

Stanley: Yeah. Yeah.

Unknown Speaker 5: ...He was there, but he didn't wanna pay nothing.

Unknown Speaker 2: Yeah.

Unknown Speaker 5: But McLaughlin was kind of a yes, man. And you know.

Stanley: He was a company, man.

Unknown Speaker 5: Yeah. He was a company man, in here.

Unknown Speaker 1 : No McLaughlin was the type of guy-- He talked on your side when he was with you, talking on the company side when he was with them. And some guy out on the street, he talked on his side when he was with him. I-I discovered that McLaughlin was always on the side-

Stanley: Yeah.

Unknown Speaker 5: Whoever he was talking to.

Unknown Speaker 1: Yeah, uh, whoever he was talking to.

Stanley: What do you call those little animals, chameleons? [crosstalk]. That changes colour?

Unknown Speaker 1: I think- I think he considered himself [crosstalk]. He was being agreeable.

Unknown Speaker 3: He just talked.

Stanley: Yeah.

Unknown Speaker 2: Well, Rutledge was the same. Rutledge was [crosstalk]

Stanley: Well, he wasn't too- he wasn't too steady.

Unknown Speaker [?]: [crosstalk] The only thing about Rutledge was hH was a little smarter than McLaughlin.

Stanley: Well, yeah. And he didn't try to pu-pu-- pretend, you know?

Unknown Speaker [?]: Oh no, no. He let you know on front.

Stanley: Yeah. But Bill, he wanted to pretend that everything was.

Unknown Speaker [?]: Well, Bill wanted to be on both sides fence.

Stanley: Yeah. And he wanted to be- he wanted to be as smart to **[inaudible 00:46:57]**

Unknown Speaker 1: Bill was on all sides of the track.

Unknown Speaker 5: Yeah.

Unknown Speaker 1: Whoever he was talking to, he was on their side.

Unknown Speaker 2: Oh yeah.

Unknown Speaker 1: So, I discovered that the best thing to do is to never talk about to Bill anything-anything but the weather.

Unknown Speaker 2: Yeah. [laughs]

Stanley: If you wanted the men.

[00:47:15] [END OF AUDIO]