

Researcher: David Stevenson

V TAP 52 S. 1
Tape 53, S. 1 and
Tape 56, S. 1 & part of S2.

Interviewed: January 28, 1976

UNION ORGANIZER: Tom Parkin and
CANNLERY WORKER: Vera Parkin
757 Lombard Street,
Richmond, B. C. 274-1765

- Born in Vancouver, he has lived in the Richmond area for 20 years.
- Entered the fishing industry prior to the war.
- Immediately after the war he became an organizer for the U.F.A.W.U.
- He worked in cold storage on the Vancouver waterfront with Vancouver Ice & Cold Storage and Fisherman's Cooperative.
- Spent 7 years in the North as North Representative for the Union.
- Returned in late 50's to Vancouver as Public Relations Director to campaign against dams on the Fraser, specifically the Moran Dam.
- In early days, union improved income, vacation with pay, etc. but also the union dealt with the racial inequalities felt by Japanese, Chinese and Indians, regarding wages and working conditions.
- There were thousands of Chinese labourers working in the industries prior to mechanization, employed by "tyees", a Chinese contractors, whose income was derived from getting as much work for as little as possible.
- Working conditions for Chinese were abominable, frame bunk house, 3 & 4 high tiers of beds, cloth or sack partitions, in a cold barn like structure.
- Wages were bad and the "tyee" not being satisfied, used to employ gamblers to get more money from the workers.
- Indian quarters were poor as well, but White peoples' quarters were good.
- Indians had their whole families with them.
- Over a period of years, the union was able to stamp out this differential entirely and there is no reference to race in their contracts now: "They now employ people".
- Japanese played large role in fishing industry prior to the war, and had own fishing organizations.
- When the War broke, they were moved away from the Coast.
- There were strong antagonism against Japanese returning to the industry after the war.

- The Union saw that they had to be integrated into the industry.
- 1945, U.F.A.W.U. emerged from the amalgamation of the previous unions.
- 1946, they passed resolutions that Japanese would be accepted back into the Union.
- The Japanese newspaper urged the men to accept the Union.
- His work as provincial organizer took him all up and down the Coast and went coast of Vancouver Island.
- Many canneries the, today, not one.
- He recalls on the Fraser: ~~st~~ Mungo, Great West, Phoenix, Gulf of Georgia, Todds Cannery, Imperial, Glendale, one in New Westminster, and today only the Imperial, Nelson Bros., and Queen Charlotte, are the only ones that remain on the Fraser River.
- Two companies control the industry: B. C. Packers and Canadian Fish.
- Canneries all up and down the coast have disappeared.
- Up the coast only two remain: Sunnyside and Port Edwards.
- Overall effect of centralization on shoreworkers has been to reduce their numbers, especially with Indians who lost their livelihood especially in the central area and west coast of Vancouver Island.
- Organizing was difficult in the beginning: made contacts on the periphery of the plant, or in their homes, or some canneries, you could do it on lunch breaks, and because the working conditions were so bad, organizing wasn't that difficult.
- In the beginning, agreements were reached with each company on an individual basis.
- In 1950, he carried a binder of agreements/ one for each cannery.
- Gradually, it was agreements by company then finally, companies formed the Fisheries Association of B. C., then there was one contract for the whole industry.
- Union work was sometimes 7 days a week.
- Vera was one of the representatives on a trip to Soviet Union.
- Vera worked in fresh fish operation in Prince Rupert 1951 she was also active in the union, became president of the local in Prince Rupert and active in the Women's Auxiliary.
- Soviets are far more advanced and mechanized.
- They used mother-ship and trawlers, no independent fishermen, they still use traps to catch salmon for processes but the independent

- fishermen never existed, just huge plants situated by the rivers.
- Here traps would throw the fishermen out of work.
 - There were traps here in operation into the 20's, the one at Sooke operated up until the 50's.
 - The exchanges with the Soviet Union were to organize internationally regulations concerning fishing in North Pacific.
 - Huge factory ships are a threat to salmon species.
 - They are not selective and can seriously affect runs of salmon.
 - Japanese were main offenders for many years, union has carried on a campaign to protect the species from factory ships of other nations by a 200 mile limits.
 - There has been a failure to curtail bad logging and mining practises, pollution of streams by towns and industries like the removal of gravel from streams.
 - On the Fraser, steady encroachment by cities and towns, industries from Prince George down.
 - Two slides in 1913 and 1914 on the Fraser at Hell's Gate as a result of blasting for right of way for the railway and had a drastic effect on the fishery until the Hell's Gate Fish Ways were constructed in the late 1930's.
 - Native Brotherhood was not initially organized for negotiating contracts: when the U.F.A.W.U. happened, Native Brotherhood signed agreements also but usually less than U.F.A.W.U. contracts, so many Indians joined the U.F.A.W.U.
 - In late 1940's the two unions began to co-operate and negotiate together with the company.
 - Sometimes this has been a very shaky alliance.
 - Union organization began in the turn of the century, several different unions: trawlers, gillnetters, ^{seiners, halibut & deep sea} Japanese, organization, in the North and the South, very badly divided and this was to the advantage of the company.
 - He refers to the strike in which the militia was called out to break the strike and the union.

- In 1930's still had a seiners, union, gillnetters and trollers union.
- The formation of the U.F.A.W.U. is described.
- Indian children of cannery workders were cared for by other family members.
- In some canneries, children were left unattended and often children drowned.
- Eventually, the companies employed women to do day care.
- There was a lot of segregation between Whites and Indians and Japanese, even the toilets were segregated, but this was gradually overcome as the workers merged into the union.
- The Union also introduced welfare funds, based on production, sick pay, death benefits, life insurance, dental care, etc.
- He discusses the future of the industry: off-shore fishing, pollution, he's hopeful that these can be overcome.
- He describes how important the fishing industry is to the economy of the Province.
- Three times the number of workers in the industry are employed in ancilliary industries.
- The problem is international in scope and the Federal Government has been lax in working to solve it.