

This is Anne Marshall.

SD: Can you talk about when you were born and where you were born and whether you're from B.C. or another place in Canada and why you ended up living in Vancouver.

AM: I was born in Saskatchewan and raised in Regina, 1907, and came from a working family. We weren't well off, but we had a large family in those days. I was always interested in doing for people, even as a kid it was always said at home, "Oh, you'll do it for them but you won't do it around here". So, as I said, I was always interested in that way. But, oh, it was just family trouble, my father dying early during 1918 and then the stepfather came into the picture, so I left early, I left when I was fourteen. And I stayed around for awhile and then one of my sisters decided to come out here, so I came with her. And it was hard to get a job. I wasn't very big, and I looked younger than I was and I worked in some pretty sleazy places, but at least it was work, you know. And there was where I saw, exactly at that time, there was a big longshoreman strike on and that was when I first heard the word 'scab'. And the first time that I ever knew that there could be conflicts between working people. That's where I learnt, and it was in a Chinese restaurant on Main Street. The policemen used to walk me up to the bus, the last streetcar because I used to work late at night, that was all I could get. But anyway

AM: (cont) they were good to me. The longshoremen gave me my first insight, that's when I first got interested, when I was about 19 I guess.

SD: Which strike was that?

AM: Oh I can't remember, that would be about '24, it was a nasty strike. That was the first time, as I said, that I heard the word 'scab'. And they told me, some of them, when I was serving them, "It was the first time I ever knew you'd associate with scabs." And I didn't even know what they meant. Until I inquired what scab means. But anyways, I worked around at odd jobs and then I babysat for Mr. Raffle who used to own Sweet 16, up on Granville, and then as the children got a bit older, and I'd been there about 3 years I guess, he asked me if I'd like to learn to sew. I said sure. So that's where I first got interested in sewing. That'd be about 1925.

SD: So you had your first job in . . .

AM: A ladies' ready-to-wear, it was. He had the store in the front and he made special orders in the back. It was already-made stock. Also, if you know what I mean.

SD: So it was almost like a small shop where all the work was done in it.

AM: Yes, that's right.

SD: Those places were all non-union in those days, weren't they?

AM: Oh, yes, there wasn't any unions, garment unions, at that time, here, in Vancouver. And then, of course, I got married in '28. I worked in garment shops right up to '28. No. Not even then I can't even recall the union being very active, in '28, because I worked at Standard Garments, and . . . so then I got married and I stayed home, until the children were 7 or 8 . . . and the war. And during the war.

SD: So you began to work again during World War II?

AM: That's right.

SD: And was that when there was unionization?

AM: In the meantime, that I had been home, I think it was Fit-well Garments and Reliable and a few shops had been organized. A few shops had been organized. And then I went to work at Jantzen's and I had never worked in a shop with piece work, that's like you do one operation and you get so much for that operation. But in Jantzen's

that was the first I'd ever seen this business of you had to put a zipper in in two seconds, or something like this, you know, what I mean, it's not, ^{that's} a little exaggerated, but . . .

They, at that time, they had a system in there, that was called a Bedot system, it came from France, in fact, I think somebody said later on after a few years of it someone murdered him because he introduced this system, The price was set by the company, they timed you, and if you didn't make your pay, you just got what you made. But if you made over your pay, like ^I say I was to make 50¢ an hour, and at that time it was about 25¢ an hour but let's say I was to make 25¢ an hour, I just got -- and I didn't make 25¢ an hour -- I just got 25, the bare minimum. But if for three or four days I made 50¢ an hour, they didn't give me 50¢ an hour, they averaged my pay out so I came out to, like, what I could get about 25¢. You see what I mean. You didn't get, like I didn't get one day, I didn't get paid for eight hours of 50¢, I ^{got} paid at eight hours at an average. Which they took off my 50¢ an hour ^{to make up} where I hadn't made my pay two days before. This was how it worked. And of course naturally I got to thinking about it, you know, and I thought, "God, that's a miserable way to . . ." By this

AM: (cont) time I'd married and I'd got the experience of being in the world, you know what I mean, and I thought, "That's sort of something, isn't it now." So, I talked some and my girlfriend that even before I was married worked there and had worked there for a long time, she - I said to her, I said, "This is crummy." I says, "My gosh, you work hard as you can work and you don't make your pay, and then when you make it, they take it away from you." And they used to show it every day on the board, you could see, a hundred girls and boys -- men -- working there, you could see exactly what you made and what you didn't make. You were in the red and you were in the black, and they were posted every day, every day. we got laid off, So anyways, it got slack and we got laid off and I went to work in the Detention Home. First I went to work in another crummy place, uniform place, she was really cheap. And then I got a chance to work as a matron in the Detention Home. So I worked there and while I was working there they put on a drive for unionizing. So I was called back to Jantzen's then, when it got busy, and in the meantime they had spoke to me about, Rolie Gervin, he used to be head of the council here, and he said, "Anne, how about organizing Jantzen's?" And I said, "Oh, I can't do that," I says, "I can't talk to people like that." He says, "Well, you're there, why don't you see?" So, anyways, I said,

AM: (cont) "Well, I'll try. That's all I can do." Cause I was a married woman, and my husband was working so's to be fired didn't mean anything to me. Actually. Itell you in those days, we had younger girls like, that were on their own, this is what burnt me up, they were on their own, and they couldn't make their pay, and when we'd clip our coupons, my girlfriend that was married and her husband was working and I and one or two others, we used to give them some of our tickets so they could keep their pay up.

SD: Were many of the women who worked there single and self-supporting?
time

AM: At that^v there were quite a few, quite a few young ones that were coming along, and, that's how, I mean it was just a bad situation at that time. So anyways, I got talking to them, and I talked to this one and I talked to that one, and they said, "Yes." So then I said to Roley, "Well,^{do} I have to have cards, give me cards and I'll get them signed." And just the same as you do now, you have to get a majority, you see. And I was very friendly with the boss, I was very friendly, he was^a really, a nice person, he really was, even to the end he was a real gentleman. I was quite friendly with him 'cause he knew a lot of people that I knew.

SD: Did that help you to organize?

AM: No, oh no! He didn't like it at all. When he found out I

AM: (cont) was organizing it still didn't really affect our friendship, but it wasn't there, you know what I mean. The coolness was there. And of course I couldn't do it during working hours because they practically timed you when you went to the washroom, never mind anything else. They'd say "Well, you went to the washroom four times, and you stayed down there 10 minutes so you're losing time," you know what I mean. Everything was time, time, time. You just had to keep your nose under the needle. So, anyways, I managed it (laughs). And there was a bit of combustion for a while, but, just like you said. So we went into the United Garments because we didn't know where to go, I didn't know about the other ones, and, of course, then as soon as they knew we were organized, they came after us, to come into the ILGWU.

SD: What was the difference?

AM: The, United Garment is strictly a label, if you know what I mean. They sell their label, you'll see it on, in those days it was Galt's and Campbell's, up in the GWG up in Edmonton? And at that time we went in there. So then of course the head guy he come out from Winnipeg, a Mr. Herpst, and he was looking at, he was a real organizer he'd come from New York, from out of the trade. And he had organized a lot, a lot of the shops in Winnipeg. He had really helped them in Winnipeg. So he came and he, we

AM: (cont) called a meeting. And he said his little piece, you know, about why we should be with them and not with the others. We'd already paid our initiation fee into the others. And so we let him talk and that, so then he says, "Well now, we'll take a vote," I says, "No, we won't." I says, "You'll go out of the room, all of you will go out of the room," like all their executive and that was there, a lot of their executive was there, and they were saying what they'd done in . . . they said, well in their label garments and everything, and I said, "No, we won't." And of course he says, "Why won't we?" I says, "Because," I says, "We want to talk about it first." I says, "So you all go out of the room and we'll talk about it." Well, it nearly floored him that someone would get up and tell him what to do, I think. Well, he said, after, he said, "I'm tellin' you. I just couldn't believe my ears, you know that anybody'd have the nerve to get up and tell you to go out, you know." So anyways, they went out, and I told 'em, now, I says, "This is what it is in one, and this is what it could be by the sound ^{of it} in this." And they are the better shops, they're not overalls and stuff and jeans and stuff like that, and they're not tailored garments, like the United. "But," I says, "I feel that the ILGWU," 'cause I had listened and read a little bit, "would be maybe the stronger of the two." Well, I knew the other lady that ran the GWU, I forget her name now, and she didn't

AM: (cont) have the gist or the finesse as far as she was friendly with the boss.^{es} That's fine to be friendly with the boss, but you still have to have your principles, set in the right direction. And so anyways, we said, I said, "Now, decide now, what you think." So a few got up and said what they thought and that and I said, ^{OK} "We'll take a vote." I says, "Now don't be bashful about your hands cause we have no paper to make a ballot on. Don't be bashful, if you don't like it, just say so." Well they were way, they were all practically for it, you know.

SD: Because the ILGWU offered a stronger union?

AM: Yeah, stronger, it had more backing to it.

SD: Were their contracts^s better, do you know?

AM: Oh, yes, they had done real well for the other factories, and that. Because I had talked to some of them before, too, and I knew quite a few of them because I had been in that trade, previously, that was before I was married, you know. Like I knew a lot of them from the years back. And I had talked to them, you know. And they were saying how much better they had been off with ^{them} ~~V~~and, I didn't tell that to the people, I just said, "Well, from what I can understand they are the stronger of the two." So anyways we went ILGWU. And we negotiated a contract with Jantzen's and it was a hard one. Because management was against it and they had a lawyer arguing. But Mr. Herbst was a very good

AM: (cont) negotiator, do you know what I mean. He'd look and he could talk and he'd bring you up, they'd think, "oh, well he's weakening", and all of a sudden he'd put a bomb-shell in there that would make them stop and think. So as I said, that's how I started, really organizing.

SD: When you were first approached by . . .

AM: Roley Gervin, yeah.

SD: Who was he? How did you meet him?

AM: He was the president of the Vancouver labor council. I knew him from on the streetcars. My husband, at that time, 1939, my husband managed to get on the streetcars, cause he had tried several times before but you had to have a university education to drive a streetcar in those days. Oh, they didn't take, yeah, they didn't take everybody and anybody. But he had ^{only} grade eight, and he had worked in a dairy all his life, although mind you he'd drove the truck a lot in the dairy. He'd delivered milk, he was just an ordinary Joe. And he managed to get on, he'd always wanted to get on, but he never could make it because his education wasn't there, and he got on, of course, during the beginning of the war. That's how I met Roley Gervin. He knew that Billy--and he knew that I was working at Jantzen's so that's why they approached me.

SD: And you were pro-union at the time, you were already thoroughly convinced?

AM: Oh, yes, I already, I had the feeling, "This is a nasty way to have to work." If you can't have a bit of a say, you know. But they used to, I'm telling you, you don't know a day unless you been through that system of timing. They didn't just time you now, today, it's a lot different. They let a girl do it and she says, "I can do so many in an hour." Well, you can tell by her pay, if she isn't honest or if she is honest, you know what I mean. But there, they just, if you stopped to breathe, they stopped the clock and that was a minute wasted.

SD: So there was very heavy supervision?

AM: The timing? Oh, yes, particularly in Jantzen's they had it right down to the tenth of a second, or a tenth of a minute, you know. Oh, yeah, they . . . now its not, far years it hasn't been nearly as bad as that, even in Jantzen's.

SD: How did production work? Would you work on pieces of garments?

AM: Either you'd, like you put in all zippers. You'd get a bundle of maybe 30, 45 garments, it'd all depend. That was another thing, if you had only five garments in a bag, you untied, this they timed too, how long it took you to untie and tie it up again. And so if you had four or five garments in a bundle it took you longer than if you had twenty garments in one bundle. Because you only opened once and tied up once, you see. But, anyways,

AM: (cont) piece work is, I tell you, it's good training for housework. Because you can time yourself, you get this room done in 15 minutes or you'll get that room done and you know how long it's going to take you to get your house in shape. Then we threw out the Bedot system. That was the one thing . . .

SD: Was that through negotiation?

AM: Yeah, that was no more of that. There would be timing, right? But no more of this if you made 50¢ all day today and you only made 25¢ tomorrow, you didn't lose. You got the minimum for not making your pay and you got the 50¢ for that day that you made your pay. It was just straight -- what you did, you earned. And it was left up to you, how hard you worked you got it. If you didn't work hard you didn't get it. And that was honest. I mean, it's not a bad system, because production must go out and they priced their articles on production they don't price it on what you can do and what I can do, and two things, there's no average.

SD: How did they determine the speed at which people should work?

AM: Well, if you have to make, let's say, 60¢ an hour, well, you got to have a price on each garment, or that, to do, to make that 60¢. So if it took you five minutes to , or say six minutes to do one garment -- so you knew you had to

AM: (cont) make ten garments in an hour to make that 60¢, right?

SD: Right.

AM: So it made it easier for them, that way, because they knew I had to get ten out. So if you worked hard in the morning when you were rested, you could make over your pay, so if you weren't so, if you were tired in the afternoon you would still make your pay, or make your 60¢ or whatever you wanted to make, what you'd based yourself on. Because you knew that you had done extra in the morning and in the afternoon sometimes it would be hot or that, you know, you couldn't produce as much. And then of course you get tired. Oh, it was a lot, alot, lot better. Everybody was much happier. And the time workers didn't get too much, even the cutting was on piece^{work}, they got so much for cutting, well, you know what I mean. It's hard unless you see it or know what it is.

SD: Did that affect the quality of the garments produced?

AM: Not in those days, but I would say, as the years went on it began to. It really did. And then the type of people that we got in the trade, got in the trade because shipyards and other things, and women working in shipyards, the money was good, and so you didn't get the good people, the workers in the trade, you got people that didn't know, for one thing, and then didn't care. It was just, "Oh, I'll make that much, and that's

AM: (cont) okay," maybe some women would come in so if they made a few dollars that's okay. But the quality of work suffered. This is what suffered, was piece work. But then time work, it could kill a shop, ^{if} you know what I mean, because somebody ^{would} take all day to do one seam or two or three seams, you know what I mean.

SD: In terms of productivity.

AM: Yeah, that's right, it would lower the profit. Not only in our trade, and even today it's the same thing. There's no pride in the work. And the people don't care, all they think of is, "I'll get it out and get it away and get the money." And this you'll see, just look at the garments, just look at some of the garments, and you'll see it. There's not the pride that we used to have back in the '20's, you know and the '30's. There's not the pride in the work, in the quality of the work. Now there's the odd shop, yet that turns out the real nice garment and that, but they're all back east. Of course, they have much better workers back east than they have out here. Now, there's ^a few of our newcomers -- And some of the newcomers that came -- but, a lot of our newcomers that came ^{as} displaced persons, you know, after the war, they weren't in the garment trade, they were everything else. Some were practically lawyers or dentists or chemists, or something like this,

AM: (cont) but what else could they do, you see. Our union went over there, and you had to be able to make a buckle, pocket or a buttonhole, and I could tell you, even today, one of my very best friends, [] his brother-in-law couldn't sew at all. So when they called the name, he went up cause he could sew, his dad had been a tailor. But he had been just a little boy when his dad and them were taken to the concentration camps, but he had known enough, and his mother knew how to sew. And he, when his brother-in-law, and his sister was too young, when she went to the concentration camps, to know anything. But they all came out here as garment workers. Because when they called Tony's name, Tony made the button pocket. When they called Sam's name, Sam couldn't make it, so Tony went up. And it was vice-versa: the mother could sew and she got in, she was able to come, and the daughter didn't go up because . . . this is what I know. And you couldn't blame them. God knows, just to get out of that camp, just to get out of that camp. And that's why we got a lot of them. Then, of course, they were money-hungry when they got here, and it was just, a lot of them. There was still some good ones mind you. There's always some good ones amongst the bad ones and vice-versa. That you'll find I think in life all through. And of course the bosses used to yell at us, and yell at me and tell me, "Why ^{do} you send me people like that

AM: (cont) for," and I say, "They come in the office and they say they can do it, how do I know, I haven't got a machine here and I haven't got anything here to help sew," but I tell you many a time I turned my own garments inside out to show them what to do when they went in. Like finishing, particularly hand finishers. "This is the way you do it," you know, so that when they went in they would have some knowledge of what to expect.

SD: Did the companies hire through the union, then?

AM: Pretty well, yeah, they could advertise, we never stopped that. And this is another thing, this thing today, them trying to get rid of the union shop. Now, we used to give people maybe two months, and all our contracts called for was a union shop. Not a closed shop, but a union shop, "would maintain a union shop." And it was up to us to decide how long you could work before you would join the union. Now those people that had gone before you, had suffered to get your eight-hour day and your dollar an hour and a few other things, a nice place to eat, and different things like this. And your nose isn't at the needle all the time. I felt that it was only fair that our people, and some of our newcomers at that time, and they were the hardest to get into the union, they just felt that was wasted money -- and our dues were never high.

SD: Was this around '45 or '46?

AM: Yeah, around that time. But we always had in our contracts, "Maintain a union shop." So that when I'd say, "Well, so and so's been there two or three months, she must be doing all right or you wouldn't've kept her, so she has to come in the union now." And Jantzen's was, particularly for a big shop, it was a big shop, and it still is I would say.

SD: How many people would work there?

AM: Well, at the height of a season you could have two or three hundred in there, you know, because they had shifts. Because they have to get everything out by the 24th of May, that is swim stuff ^{out} by the 24th, sweaters are a little different. But swim stuff if it's not finished and ready and shipped by the 24th of May there's no use sending it. So, as I say, when the government and them are talking about getting rid of a union shop, I think it's very unfair to other people that worked to get the conditions that that man's working for now. Sure he likes the \$10 an hour that a lot of them are getting today, but he didn't work for it, a lot of them didn't work for it. So why shouldn't they -- and our union has a pension plan, we had a sick benefit and we had a pension plan and today, I just asked Connie, "How many is on," she said, "About 42 or 43," and they get a raise on their pension plan at a whadyacallit. Now the boss paid ^{much} so ^{much} percentage of the payroll into that pension plan, that was, we didn't get a raise, much of a raise that year, but we did get our pension plan. And

AM: (cont) we had a health and welfare and like eyes was in there, because that's one thing in that trade they used was their eyes. Their eyes. So when we said, we said, "We got to have eye examinations and everybody should go," and we had to build that fund up so that 3 hundred people could go once a year. And nowadays maybe its only five dollars or something to have an eye examination. Then when the fund built up we gave them so much toward glasses, you see. Now why shouldn't you join the union? Why shouldn't you? You get those benefits, even if you don't belong. Why should you get it?

SD: Right, and that was the principle . . .

AM: That was the principle behind it. So, as I said, it burns me up, when I hear them say, you shouldn't have a union, you shouldn't be forced to join the union. I say, "If you're good enough to work for that company, you should belong to the union, because the union has fought for the principles of health, welfare and so on." Right?

SD: Right.

AM: Yeah. And I think that is one thing very bad today when you hear government people say that they shouldn't have that. --Have some cereal Dad.-- And make some toast for yourself.--

SD: How about lead women? Did they have people on the ^{shop} floor that they used to pace the work of other people?

AM: You mean the company?

SD: Yes.

AM: Some. There would be like what we called the forelady, or the foreman, the forelady either one, it could be either one, and we had lots of good women, lots of good men. The foreman was supposed to be capable of showing you, how to do the job, and then when you had worked on a certain length of time, you would be timed, maybe, or they'd say to you, "Well, what price do you need," you know. You'd say, "Well, I can do ten an hour," so. . . how much it would be, whatever the price.

SD: Was it competitive on the shop floor?

AM: Oh, yes. You mean the foreman and the . . . or the worker?

SD: Between the foreman and the worker.

AM: Not with the foreman and the workers. Just amongst the workers themselves, it was competitive. Well, that made it good, cause that's production. You see. But it isn't compared to when they do a bad job. This is what I'm getting at, it became. It's the same way you see them working on the streets. I watch, and my God it takes them - they lift their darn little dirt and then throw it. Get in and get it done, you know. Now shut that off a minute and I'll just tell you something. (Pause.) And when the garment was finished, the samples was finished, well then the union and the boss, company, would sit down and we'd get a price, and then that price would be set, for that

AM: (cont) garment. But we both worked together on that. We never always agreed and sometimes we had to give, sometimes he had to give.

SD: So you'd negotiate each . . .

AM: That's right, each garment had a price, and each operation. Because we had to put down, so much for collars, cuffs, body or something or so on. It got so that after a while I got a body for like a coat or something, you couldn't for a dress cause no body's too . . . you know, but a body is ^{two} side seams, a pair of sleeves and a ^{so on and} facing and things like that. And that simplified that. Both company and union used to sit down and that was that for the season until the next samples were made, or if they made a sample in between and they were going to try something, then they'd say, "Price it for us."

SD: That would really require you knowing the trade really well.

AM: That's right. You had to know. And you had to know approximately how fast a person could work on it, or how long it would take, and like, it's alright to say, well, "That's just a plain pocket," "but you forget that you have to sew that pocket around first before you put it on, then it has to turn properly, like a patch pocket, you know. And things like this. And it's a lot of . . .

SD: Would you make each new garment, would you go through the . . . production?

AM: Yeah, the whole line, yeah. And every day, if they changed anything, every day we had to set a different price for something new that they would come up with.

SD: And who would do that, would that be a chairperson for the union, on the shop floor?

AM: They could, yes, but if they got stuck well I generally sat in on the first bunch of samples. But the shop chairman could help set prices, or the finishers could set prices like they'd go in and think, "Well, I think this." But a lot of the shops were never hard-and-fast, the companies weren't hard-and-fast. If we had made a mistake, we'd been able to go back and ask for more money, or say, well, "This here one was easier we'd rather have less here and more here, because, . . ." and this and that.

SD: So did that process happen outside of the contracts?

AM: Yes.

SD: So what did the contract cover, then?

AM: It just said that, the thing used to read, like, "A committee of the union and the company, or the shop . . ." no, it didn't say shop, "A committee from the union^{and...} will negotiate the prices for all operations," or something like that, I can't just remember how, that was pricing that. And then when we'd got started paid for statutory holidays, a lot

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AM: (cont) of our people were angry because I agreed with the, Mr. Herpst and the company that you had to be there the day before and the day after, or you didn't get paid for the statutory holiday. Unless you were sick.

SD: What year did they come_in?

AM: Statutory-holidays? Well, each year when we'd negotiate we'd try to get a few more, so we got them all, you know. But you didn't get them all at once, we negotiated a few each time till we got them all. But in Jantzen's and in the other shops we had that you had to be there the day before and the day after, which I think is good. Because someone, when its the long weekend or something, they'll take off Friday, or no, they'd take off Thursday and they'd get paid for Friday and they're off Saturday and Sunday. You see what I mean. But mostly it was that you had to be there at least the day before. It was flexible, but if the company wanted to pay that was . . . and that. But any statutory holiday you had to be there the day before and the day after. And I think that's fair.

SD: And that was in the contract?

AM: That was in the contract.

SD: What other things would be in the contract? As opposed to the prices which were negotiated: Pensions?

AM: Well, I really think they should be affordable pensions, you know, because, when I think of how nice it is that,

AM: (cont) some of those were widows, and some of them were women that hadn't got . . . mostly for the women, but now the men are benefiting from it too, you see. They get their pension. And the women, we didn't have a 65 or anything like that. All you had to be was a member in good standing for 20 years, approximately, and be 60 years old, and that was a long time ago we had 60, now I think it's 50 or 55. We didn't have the money. So we couldn't have people quitting, the old-timers quitting, it was unfortunate some of them didn't get it, you know, because we didn't have the money, and we couldn't start to pay it out because we'd never have got the money, but now there's enough money that they can, it's very flexible.

SD: Were there mostly women in the shop?

AM: Uh, yes, mostly women.

SD: Were there differences between what the men did and what the women did?

AM: No, they would do different jobs, but each job was priced on what it was, particularly in the pressing, you see. You had a piece of presser, an under-presser and then you had a presser. And you had a machine presser and different things like that, you know. And a finishing press like he touched the garment up the last thing. So they were all done.

SD: Were their wages similar to the women's, or were they higher, or . . .

AM: No it didn't matter. That was the job and you did it. It wasn't because you were a woman or that. That job paid that . . .

SD: Was there a principle of equal pay in the union?

AM: Yes, definitely, most definitely. Because I was working on a garment that paid me 10¢ for the operation, my husband could be working on the same garment, the same operation, and he'd only get 10¢.

SD: Right. Did men and women work on the same shop floor?

AM: Oh, yes, oh yes. It was real together.

SD: You talked a bit about one influx of ^{immigrants} coming in. Was there different ethnic groups within . . .

AM: Oh, yes, . . . I said if you only had been able to talk . . . deaf and dumb people too, and we had some good workers in them. But boy I'm telling you, you do a lot of writing.

SD: Was that a problem in terms of the union?

AM: No, it wasn't a problem, no.

SD: Did you learn a lot of languages?

AM: Oh, I wished I could have, oh my gosh. But there were so many, I mean it was impossible, and that. But no, I used to take and get someone who could speak Italian, and we had one or two of our newcomers that was very knowledgeable, and they could speak two or three languages.

AM: (cont) Like Russian and, may be German, or something like this, you know, two or three different languages, the European people. And I got real friendly with quite a few of them. There were a lot of fine people that came, you know. That was the only way we could do it, we had like interpreters, certain ones in each shop that could listen to it in their own language and convey it.

SD: Were there any conflicts between workers from different ethnic groups?

AM: Oh, a little bit, sometimes.

SD: Did the union intervene in some of them?

AM: Sometimes, yeah. Oh's many times I . . .

SD: What kind of things would you do? Just get together, or . . .

AM: Yeah, I'd just get them up to the office, and I'd just say. . . like even one time, one girl caused a big commotion because the forelady was a newcomer, a misplaced person, but she was a very good forelady and she knew the work and she was very good, and she was very fair. But this one girl, her husband had been in the war or something, or her father had or something, I don't know, and she was, she wouldn't take orders from her. She says, "I'm not taking orders from her," she tells the boss. So the boss phones me up and says, "So and so, is causing commotion in the shop, she isn't going to take orders from Hilda," and I says, "Why?" She says, "Well, she says she's not

AM: (cont) going to take orders from a foreigner. They come to this country and she was born here and that," and I says, "Well, send her up to the office." So she came up and I talked to her for a while, about how wrong she was. And she says, "Well, I don't care, we fought the war and then they come over here and take all the . . . " Same old story, you've heard it a hundred times. And, she says, "I'm not going to take orders from her." I says, "Well, you take orders from me," she says, "That's different." I says, "No, I'm an Indian," I says, "How do you like that?" And she says, "Well," she says, "Anyways." I says, "No, it's not anyways. Either you take orders or you'll have to quit." I says, "And you cannot call people names," I says, "You know it. It's always been our rule, you do not call people names, just because they're not your type of people." She was very English, you know.

SD: Yeah.

AM: So she says, "Well, I'll quit," I says, "Fine." So I phoned up the boss and I says, "She's quitting." See, because the boss was Jewish, the forelady was, I don't know what she was, I can't remember, but she was foreign, she'd come over, one of the misplaced people from one of those countries. That's how I used to do it, I used to just bring them up and talk to them, and just tell em, "Hey you don't do these things, that's not the way to live together." The best I could.

SD: Were there differences in the attitudes of older~~and~~ younger workers towards the work and towards the union?

AM: Well, yes, we had to watch, that the younger ones that had the more stamina to do and last longer, that they didn't get too short a price for the older ones. We had to watch that, that the older ones could still make a decent wage. Now many a time I had to say to an older person, "Well, you take the lesser job. You won't get any less pay." But you know some of them didn't want to take the lesser job, but they were getting too old, I mean, there was arthritis, would come in for the pressers I've seen their hands like that. And some of them with the sores from sewing their hands would just be . . .

SD: Sort of clenched up.

AM: Yeah, it's arthritis, it^o tighten'sem all up. But you know it was hard to tell them not to keep on doing the jobs that they had. To ask, "What do you care? What do~~y~~ou care if you sweep the floor?" As long as you can stay there till you get your pension, you've only got a few more years." But you know it was hard to make them see it.

SD: I guess it was a question of pride.

AM: Pride, that was right, that was right. And then automation came in too.

SD: Oh, right, I wanted to ask you~~y~~about that. What was the effect of automation?

AM: Ah, well, gradually, the older ones got out and so naturally they didn't have to worry so much. It was hard for a little while, but it straightened itself out. Because, as I said, as the older ones went out, the new ones weren't brought in to fill those jobs, and therefore it went. It was the buttonhole and the hand finishers, began to be very few hand finishers, because you look at anything you buy the bottom is done up by a machine and down here's done by the machine, and they don't tack the cuffs up anymore, things like this, and that's automation. And the buttonhole machine was a big thing. It was a big thing. Because, they may even have had the two kinds, they had the cloth kind and this kind, but not made like this, but a really, good buttonhole. And they used to always be done by hand and to have a coat done by hand it was really something, with a good buttonhole, you know. So there you are, the machine made the buttonhole . . . and sewing buttons on.

SD: So rather than laying people off, they just didn't hire.

AM: Well, no, they would train a few and that, and train a few who were in the shop, and naturally you'd get them coming from back east and that, and they would have the training. So gradually it straightened itself out.

SD: Who would do the training? Did the union train people?

AM: No, the shop did. That's where, like today you don't see many apprentices, companies have apprentices, not

AM: (cont) ^{many} today At one time you went to the apprentice board and you could get a job as a mechanic or a painter or something and go in as a mechanic -- as an apprentice. Well we used to give them these two or three months as an apprentice, like you'd get, say, 25¢ the first month or two, then you get 40¢, something like this, till you got up to the pay, at the end of three months you should be able to earn the standard wage. But we had that training period in our trade, and I remember when we ^{were} first married and that a boy came to . . . apprenticeships, you could go to the apprenticeship board, but I never hear of apprenticeship board anymore, you never hear apprentice. Very few, very, very few. It's very hard. In fact I have one chap I know right now he's gone through the college for heavy-duty mechanics, but do you think he can get a job as an apprentice? He's got to get the experience somewhere, and they're not training, and nobody's training, everybody goes in at the high wage. You know what happened at the Shipwork Yards, that's what killed that. They didn't train. You just went in the shipyard and you made that big money. And today I hear young ones saying, "Oh, they want me to sweep the floor and they want me to do this and they want me to run errands." I run errands even before, when I was first in the trade. We had to run errands, and that.

AM: (cont) And/in those days we only got five and six dollars a week, and had to live on it. But you can't compare wages, because we got good wages in those days. Even comparable to these days, because liver was only 5¢ a pound. You see what I mean? So we only got, maybe, 30¢ an hour, but at least we had the money to buy the liver and today it's the same thing, you may get \$10 and \$12 an hour but liver's \$2 a pound or something. You see what I mean. The people aren't any worse off today. They just think . . .

SD: Did you have any children?

AM: Yeah, I had two girls.

SD: So did you work while you had children?

AM: Yes, I worked right on up ^{un}til, and then went back to work.

SD: What did you do about childcare?

AM: Their father worked one shift and I worked the other.

And the girls, they were about seven, I think, or eight, oh no, Shirley was more than that, wasn't she? Well, let's see, Shirley was born in '29, oh yeah, Shirley'd be ten, twelve or eleven years old. They were, you know, they could manage.

SD: Did they help you with the housework?

AM: Oh, yes, never in our family we never had any trouble. No trouble with that, we've always had to do our share each one had to do their share when we were all working.

SD: I know that's very hard on some people

AM: Yeah. Well, I just used to, on Saturday and Sunday that's when I did it, when they were smaller, to give them a break, because they used to get the things started, you know, for suppertime, and then of course their dad wasn't home at suppertime much, he had a shift that was mostly at night, for quite a few years.

SD: So you began to work at the end of the depression, or . . .

AM: During the war, or . . . the first time when I first started to work?

SD: Well, you said before that you first started I guess around 1924, and then you had children . . .

AM: Yeah, and then I didn't go back until '40. '41 or maybe it was.

SD: And you stayed in the garment industry during the war?

AM: No, even during the war I worked in that detention home.

I was a matron there for quite a while. I don't remember know I how long. Because I worked there because they had no sugar, these poor kids, they had to eat their mush with no sugar, and that was miserable, but it was allright, there were some good kids in there, too.

SD: Did most people you know support the trade union movement?

AM: I would say, yes, I would say. They could see, but most things were, as I said, you had to be honest and that and you have to work from there.

SD: And you were active in organizing the workplace, you signed people up?

AM: Oh, yes, we organized quite a few, while I was there.

SD: Can you talk about that? The organizing experiences that you had.

AM: Well, you talked to somebody or somebody comes in the shop and says, "It's terrible in this shop," or this or that is wrong, so you^{go} from there and then you visit people at their homes, and especially if they were young people, I always liked to have their mothers or fathers or somebody listen to what I was saying to them and what I was asking them, you know. What was wrong in the shop. That I used to do. But I used to go out at nighttime or in the daytime. I used to work at the Detention Home, and on my days off, that's when I organized Rosemary Reed, you know, bathing suits, when I was organizing them. What was that called, yeah, Reed's. And I used to go all around, to the houses, you go to the houses, and then sometimes they would, we'd meet them outside the shop and talk to them, or then when we felt we were getting somewhere we'd be outside the shop with pamphlets that there was a meeting. So that they'd all try to come and that's how it was. I organized up in Edmonton. Walked in there and organized. There was a big shop up there.

SD: Was it hard to get lists of people's names from the companies?

AM: Oh, no, they wouldn't give you any lists.

SD: How would you find out who . . .

AM: Oh, from you and from the next one and the next one, go see Mary, go see Jim, go . . . and that's how we did it.

SD: So would you put together some kind of organizing committee?

AM: Yes, often there was, often there would be three or four of us and then we'd pick up somebody else, and go and see so and so to ^{night} and see someone else or if we could get two or three to come down to the office, and that. There were some tough ones, Reed's was a tough one. Aljean's was a tough one, and that. But we had Men's Shirt Shops, too, I organized that. I had offers from companies, and they're still in business today, to come in and organize the shops.

SD: Really.

AM: Yeah, and they're in business today in this town.

SD: Why do you think . . .

AM: Because they were, the other union was trying to get in, and they didn't want the other union. But I couldn't take them because they were men's, . . . You see. I had even Sweet Sixteen clerks at one time, I had about 60 or 80 Sweet Sixteen clerks. Because they handled the garments. But he wanted me, it wasn't because I wanted him, I didn't want it. But you know I couldn't refuse it, and that. Be-

AM: (cont) cause you see the Retail Clerks, he wanted to keep the Retail Clerks out. Because they seemed a little too harsh for him, like, you know they were too demanding. I never tried to be too demanding, I tried to figure out that I was the boss, and how would I handle it, you know what I mean? That's to me, sometimes you've got to tell a worker, same as your family, sometimes you have to give the kid a good whack on the behind, the same thing with the worker. Sometimes you have to give him a dose of castor oil whether he likes it or not. You know what I mean. And I think that's a whole lot of today, there's none of that. At least I don't see it. I think every contract should be that you maintain a union shop, and you can hire where you want, because many good people are walking around and there's people taking advantage, and that's not good for the union. That's not good for the union when people take advantage just because they belong to the union.

SD: The shops that were difficult to organize, like Al Jean's, what made them difficult, was it the workers or . . .

AM: No, it was the boss.

SD: What kind of things did they do?

AM: Oh they would, well, get the union in and we'll close down or we'll move back east or we'll, you know, threaten, always making it miserable for them. And they paid them, a long time after we started organizing them, they really upped

AM: (cont) their prices and give the people a break. To keep us out. And they'd say, well, why do you have to join the union? We'll give it to you. How long they'd have it was another thing, see, because there was no contract, they could take the price away or take the hours away just like nothing.

SD: Did that work at all?

AM: Oh, some shops it did, some people. Many times a religious thing would come into it. They'd say, "well, we don't believe in belonging to anything, you know!" ^{But} I said, "Well, you belong to your church, and the church is an association," every church is a, they're together, you know what I mean. And they'd say, union or something, ^{I says,} "the lawyers have a union, the doctors have a union, and the bosses have a union." It's not called unions. It's called associations. But it's still a union. ^{Cause} they have rules and regulations and they set principles, right? So everybody actually belongs to a union, in the working world, one way or another.

SD: Were you paid by the ILGWU to organize?

AM: Yes. Well, the people here paid my wages. When the dues came in . . .

SD: You were a full-time organizer, then.

AM: Yes.

SD: When did that start?

AM: Oh, heavens. I guess it was back in '46 or '47, around there.

SD: And did the union itself hire you on ?

AM: Yes, Mr. Herpst hired me. Well, he called a meeting of the executive, and said, asked me to come in, because, a lot of them knew me from the trade before I was married. A lot of them knew me. And they were working in the shops, and I didn't have to work in the shop, so they, that's when I was asked to come in the office. I says, "Okay, I'll come in for two or three months," and I stayed for 16 or 17 years.

SD: What kind of work did you do as a paid organizer? You went to shops and organized . . .

AM: Yes, and I straightened out difficulties and I tried to find help, a lot of things, you know that's what they'd make you laugh; some of these companies, I used to be out sometimes half past eight and nine or ten o'clock at night, going to people's houses that I had cards for, to see if they'd come in to a shop to work. I was hunting help for them.

SD: Instead of the employer doing it.

AM: Yeah. Well, at that time it was rough to get help.

SD: When you were organizing did you have support coming in from any other unions ^{with} in the labor movement?

AM: No, no. We always used to talk to one another and discuss

AM: (cont) our problems, but we never, nobody ever had to help one another to any extent, 'course, we never had a strike, that's the whole, like Jantzen is negotiating here in another month or so, it'll be interesting to see how they'll do. Our trade is a very bad trade. I don't know what else you could even liken it to because even painters or things like that, their conditions don't worsen as quickly as ours with the trends of the conditions all over the country. Because clothes is one thing people, you'll wear that next year if you have to. Do you understand what I mean?

SD: Yeah, it's determined by consumers to some extent?

AM: That's right, that's what's the trouble with our whole trade, it's the first one up, because as soon as you have a dollar to spare you'll buy a new dress, buy a new skirt or something, a new sweater, but the minute that you don't have that dollar, then it's down. And then of course, we don't have the work. So our trade actually is about one of the first to go up and the first to go down. Because, it's always been that way, it's always been that way.

SD: Is there also a fairly slim profit margin, in terms of . . .

AM: Oh, sometimes they can make, some different articles if it's a good seller, it might seem like it's not much profit but they sell three times what they sell one that's more expensive or something like that. Sometimes a little

AM: (cont) blouse like yours will sell and they can make hundreds or thousands of them. And they'll sell. So they don't need the margin. But then there's some things that they can't sell, you know. But they all do very nicely and none of them are hurting.

SD: I'm just trying to figure that in terms of the kind of leeway there would be for negotiations.

AM: Well, we set it for to make our wage, he had to decide can he sell it or you can't sell it. And if he can't sell it for what we're asking and for what he wants, then he just throws it out of the line.

SD: Was there any legislation specifically that would be important in terms of the Garment Workers Union? Minimum wage laws . . .

AM: Oh, minimum wage laws was a good one. Yeah, that's been a big help. That's another thing, who fought for the minimum wage? Unions. It was the unions that fought for the minimum wage, the eight-hour day, and that. Six days a week. Now we worked, a lot of our shops, I don't know how many are now, I never ^{Connie.} ask. Back east in particular a lot of them only worked, five, four days, or five days a week. But you don't get any less money.

SD: Back in the '30's and '40's, how many hours did people work a day, and was it like a six day week, or?

AM: Oh, yeah, it was a six day week and eight hours a day.

AM: (cont) And that was another thing the unions got. When it got cut to 44 hours, they still got the same money as they got for 48, and then when it was cut to 40 hours it was still the same money as they got for 48. And when they got to 37½ hours, which a lot of ours have, and have had for a long time, ^{I think we were} one of the first to get it, still they got the same money as they got for 48 hours. They didn't lose any money by cutting down the hours. Maybe we didn't get a big percentage in raise, but they still got the same money and worked less time. Course some of the newcomers, the European people, they felt they could work 50 hours a week and that was, that would spoil it. Because we felt, like, you can only work so long and that's it.

SD: So did you try and discipline workers . . .

AM: Oh, yes, we tried, and some would work their lunch hours, eat their little something down and then sit down and work. We'd say, "Get up, get away," and the other workers would get after a lot of them, too. Take your lunch hour, or otherwise you're not earning your 60¢ an hour, because you're working a half an hour longer, than you're, so it cuts down the price, you see. But the boss would think: she produces. Oh, many a time, there's lots of fights about that.

SD: Was your family supportive of your trade union activities?

AM: Oh, yes, oh yeah, they put up with me.

SD: They did. (laughing).

AM: Oh yeah.

SD: Was the ILGWU a member of the Trades and Labor Congress?

AM: Yes. Oh, yes, definitely. It was a big thing back east, Toronto and Montreal, that's the center. It's very difficult here, for our trade, very difficult. In the first place, it's alright if things are plain, but when it starts to be embroidery and lace and all this sort of stuff, that's all back east, they don't do it here any more. At one time they had a shop that did them but it just gradually died off, because, embroidery went out and hem-stitching went out, and things like this. The trims, we call it trims, laces, nobody makes lace, they have people that sell 'em here, sure, but they still have to get them from back east, there's no manufacturing, where there's manufacturing back east, you see. So it made it very rough for the bosses to make something different and something nice, you know. Because they had to get the stuff from back east. And then there was the shipping from here across the mountains, that's another thing, CPR and CNR, it cost them more to ship out and bring something in, than the people that lived on the other side of the mountain. You could bring it up to Edmonton, you'd get it cheaper in Edmonton than you could

AM: (cont) get it into here. Over the mountains it was bad both ways-
freight rate.

SD: The war, I guess, really improved conditions to unionize?

AM: Oh, yes, oh yes, it was, people made good money and . . . well, I'm telling you, I myself used to work in Jantzen's and we used to cash our checks and anybody used to ask us, "Oh, you make that much money?" yeah, but we didn't tell 'em it was for two weeks. Just let them think we made that much money that week! But we'd make very poor money even at the beginning of the war. But it progressed and people started buying. Naturally everything improved.

SD: Sure. And did government recognition of the right to unionize help?

AM: Oh yeah, I had very good relationships with the Department of Labor.

SD: Yeah?

AM: Oh, yeah, very good. And lot's of help. Really lots of fairness.

SD: What kind of things would they do?

AM: Well, when I'd have a real argument with a boss and I'd take him to the Labor Board, they'd tell him off just as quick as not, you know. No, I had very, very good relations with the Labor Relations Board. And the Unemployment Insurance I, I sat on the board there for a while while I was working on the, what did they used to call it, not the Regional

AM: (cont) Board or something, but anyways, when there was a dispute come up over somebody getting it or not getting it. So I had to go lots of times for a worker. I had to go and fight, thing like that I had to . . .

SD: Represent them.

AM: Right. That's right. Why can't she have it, or why can't ^{he} he have it, or, she's worked here, or something like that, you know. But I never had any trouble with the government.

END OF TAPE

Tape III. Side 1.

SD: During the war, did any of the government policies such as wage controls have an effect on organizing?

AM: No, I don't think, it didn't seem to bother us, I don't think it bothered anybody really that much.

SD: Were there layoffs after the war when soldiers returned? Were people in your industry replaced at all?

AM: No, no.

SD: I guess it wasn't that kind of industry.

AM: No, it wasn't that type of trade, no, that's right. That had nothing to do with it.

SD: How was the union structured? Was there a shop steward system, was there an elected executive?

AM: Yes, there was what they called the business agent here, because there wasn't anybody higher. There was a business agent, and from the business agent we had an executive. And of course there was the chairman of the executive, and we had a secretary, and so on, a treasurer. Then they had, from that one would go down into a shop chairman, or a shop chairlady, whichever she happened to be, in the shop. And the complaints would go to them, then come to the office, and then I would, if I couldn't seem to get it then I called the executive. And the executive more or less set the policy of how we would work, or what I would do or what I could do. I mean, I could overrule them, but I always waited for the advice to see which it was. And then we would discuss it. To see what could be done. But there was always that. Then there was always the man above me, in Winnipeg, the head organizer, international organizer

AM: (cont) let's say. Although he was very good with me, I could pretty well do what I wanted to do, as long as there was no combustion. But if I got into a position where I couldn't make the company see what I wanted them to see, then he was always willing to come out and help me negotiate what I wanted for the people. And we never had any real bad effects, never. I think we had as nice a relationship as anybody with the companies. This I know, now. But that's the type, and that is to me the better part of union and company relationships. You can have a real tight argument, and yet, forget it the minute it's over. You win or you lose, but forget it. And another thing, people. You take people. I've seen me going in to maybe just talk, they wanted maybe another 3 or 4 cents on a skirt, particularly this time. And I said to her, I says, "Oh, well, Rosie, if I don't get it," I says, "you can always wash dishes." And that went right through the whole shop that I had told her that she could wash dishes, or get out and wash dishes if I didn't get the three or four cents. You see what I mean? People are their own worst enemies. They don't stop to think. As I said, I myself cannot complain and neither can the one that came after me, they also had the cooperation and they got along real good.

SD: Were there regular local meetings of the union?

Oh, yeah.

AM: Not too many, people don't like a lot of meetings, but if it's important I think they should go, once every or two months or so.

BREAK IN TAPE

AM: So as I said, I think unions are good for people. And a majority of people, even office workers. Because there is a lots of times that somebody with a big mouth can get in and get the favors where as somebody that's quiet and more efficient, is passed by.

SD: Yeah.

AM: And I think you must have heard and seen that yourself. But somebody with a big mouth -- we had one in particular ^{man} once, I'm telling you, you never knew, and he was always friendly with the bosses, always could tell you the boss's business, but he couldn't mind his own. So as I said, that's where a union comes in, that you can at least speak up for that other person, and let the loudmouth go by the ^{way-} And that loudmouth today hasn't got anything.

SD: Did the union have social programs at all?

AM: Yeah, we used to. We used to have picnics and we used to have dances, and we used to have Christmas parties for the kids, and grandchildren, because there was a lot of people that didn't have families and had grandchildren. When I was there we had lots of these and we used to go to Bowen Island and we used to go someplace for a picnic. And we had things like that for them. Tried to keep them interested, you know. And spend a bit of money on them.

SD: In terms of union contracts, was there a master agreement, or did it come out of the local meeting?

AM: Well, there was more or less a master agreement of the shops of the same category. But you couldn't have a master agreement for every one, but like, all the coats and suits, and

AM: (cont)all the sportswear, they were more or less. They were all negotiated at this time. All the coat and suit people would come, and then we would negotiate for all the sportswear. That's blouses and sweaters and swimsuits and slacks, you know, the sportswear stuff. The others, nice dressy coat, and a nice dress, you know, nice suits.

SD: Were there any political organizations that were involved in the union that you were in, for example, the CCF?

AM: No.

SD: Did the communists. . .

AM: Oh, they tried. They pretty near got me, one, two times, but I just went and I just sat there and I shut my mouth, I never opened my . . . they would phone up you see, and I, there was two people with the same name, and I'd say well, is so and so gonna be there? Oh yes. When I'd get there, they weren't there, but they knew, as my boss used to say to me, "You're a little bit on the red side, Marshall." And I'd say, "Oh, yeah?" And he'd say, "Well, that stems from fighting for the underdog." And I'd say, "Well, that's okay." But several times there was meetings called by the Communists, the Boilermakers in particular, that's still Stewart, you see, but I knew another Stewart and he'd always say someone and so and so is gonna be there, but they was never there. So as soon as I seen the gathering, I didn't walk out, I just . . . and then I just got that I'd say, "no!" After two times that they tried it, when I was a little on the green side, and I just went, "no, no, I can't come."

SD: What was this, this was at . . .

AM : They would call a meeting, you see, and try to get together. They said, "Why don't you join," and I'd say, "Well, join what?" I never even belonged to the CCF, I never belonged to any organization myself. I never did belong. And I said, "Why should I? I don't belong to anything, why should I belong to yours?" But they tried, several times.

SD: Were they active in your union at all?

AM: One or two would come up, not many, not many. See, there was a lot of wives that worked, and people with families, and they had their hands full. No, there was one or two or three maybe that really tried to get us to go that way, but we never . . . But that's what I'm saying they talk about ^{them} being affiliated and that, but that's just a lot of ^(borsht?) bush, because it's not so. . . and that. There's nothing wrong with it, the union decides on their own, to give a thousand dollars to any political party but they don't have to belong. But if they think their principles are what they want and're thinking about, then to me there's nothing wrong with that.

SD: Were other women active in the union?

AM: Oh, yes, lots. Oh, yes.

SD: What kinds of things would they do?

AM: Well, they'd be on the executive, and as I said, shop chair-ladies again, and they'd always be on the executive. Oh, yes, the women were real good, oh, yes, they were real good.

SD: They were very strongly pro-union, then?

AM: Most of them, most of them. Because they had seen the times

AM: (cont) get better. You see, when the time we were in way back in '24 or '25, they had seen the progress and how much better it was, and one thing and another.

SD: So people would work there for quite awhile, eh?

AM: Oh, yes, lots of them were there for . . . I worked in the trade myself for 20 years.

SD: Was turnover a problem at all?

AM: Oh, yes, yeah it's a bad trade for turnover.

SD: And would that undermine the union?

AM: No, because they maintained the union shop, and gradually it would build up again. Maybe it would be down one time and that, and I can't stress that enough, to fight against that union shop, it doesn't need to be called a union shop, just maintain a union shop. And let him hire from outside, because that will sharpen them up on the inside. And everyone has a right to try and earn a living. And I don't care, if you don't want to work, then get out of the way, because somebody is there. And I might sound harsh, but that's the way we looked at it. And we never ever said to a boss, "Hey, you can't hire her," or that, or him, "you've got enough there." We never. And one thing we tried very hard to do in our union, if it's slack, like it used to get slack twice or three times a year, because you make the samples it's slack, when they make the samples, then you make the production, then it's slack, then they make samples again, you see, and then production and then it's slack. And as it got slack, we tried to, ^{that} you would work one day and I would work one day, or two days a week and the other

AM: (cont) would work two days a week, or you'd work two days, sharing was what we called it. And lots would fight that, lots of them were against that, particularly some greedy person, they were against that. I been in here for 20 years and I don't see why I should share. I

And that isn't the point. Everybody has to live, that was our theory. And that was the theory of the International, even in the States. That's the way they worked.

SD: Were the women who were active young or older or married or single?

AM: No, we had some real young ones, and we had some newcomers that was very good, very, very good. Gradually it became younger.

SD: Younger workers got involved with the union?

AM: Yes, because, gradually, of course, the older ones dropped out. They were all good, that^{ever} did accept a position on the executive and that, they were all very good. And the women, as I say, I think the women are a little more militant than the men.

SD: Why do you think . . .

AM: Now I say maybe that would pretty near apply to almost, not every union, but a lot of unions, the women are a little more militant than the men. Oh, because I guess in our trade that's their trade. It's really a woman's trade, and I think that that's what it was. Oh, we had some good women there.

SD: Did the union specifically try and encourage women to become active in the union?

AM: Did the union?

SD: Yeah.

AM: Oh, yes. Definitely so, because we felt they understood even better. They didn't have the strength to produce like a man, you know. So we told 'em that, "You've got to be active or you'll fall down."

SD: Did you do things like have special training programs for women, like in public speaking? Anything like that?

AM: No, but every time there was a seminar or that held by the Labor Congress or by the Labor Council here, we always got them to go to it, to enlighten them as much as possible.

SD: Were there women in the leadership of the union?

AM: Yeah, in back East, in our union here you can't say too much here, because there was just me. But still I had lots of good women with me. But back East, the women are a big thing. They really are a big thing. And in New York when we'd go to convention I could see that these women were really in there and that.

SD: Was there a newsletter?

AM: No, we never, ever had a newsletter, that sort of, I think, came out after, I don't think they have now cause it's, there's not that many shops here now. A lot of them gradually went out, you know. Not because they went broke on account of the union, that wasn't what broke them, they just had made enough money and that was it. They had other interests.

SD: Is most of the trade organized here?

AM: Oh, there's a few little shops now starting up that Connie

AM: (cont) was saying need to be looked in to. Oh we had tried to organize some of these two-bit ones, we call them, and oh, conditions were terrible. I don't know how they ever got a license, to operate. This is what burns you up, too. How can the city or that give them a license to operate under those conditions, this I don't understand. And we used to get a few of those that were bad. And, of course, the people that worked in them were people that had to work and needed the work and it was hard to talk to them. All they had to do was, "Well, I'll just shut up and, I'll just go away," and that's it. And one guy he started up about three times under different names, rather than come across with decent wages and decent time. And I'm telling you the places that those women worked was something fierce, and that's right here in Vancouver in those days.

SD: Sweatshops.

AM: Yeah. Real.

SD: And this was in the '40's?

AM: Yeah. No that would have ^{been} in the '50's. But you know, some woman in there would get in there by, maybe sent there by the Unemployment Insurance, and then she'd come right back down to the union office and say, "You know there's this shop so and so." And I never, never heard of it. She says, "My God," she says, and I'd say, "Well, hang on. Stay there for a while." We often put them in the shops.

SD: To organize.

AM: Mmhm. Women, mostly women, you'd ^{never} a man.

SD: And they would be able to do that, eh?

AM: Oh, yes, oh, sure. I mean you'd get a good woman that has some principles and can think of others and you've got a worker. You've got a worker, a better worker than a man. I think, anyway. A better worker than a man, in that respect, to help better, other people.

SD: Do you think because women have more social conscience?

AM: I would say so, yes, I would say so. Oh no, there's nothing wrong with women, there's a lot of good women around. There's a lot of good women now because they got the better freedom and they can get to places and they can . . . I think the women in labor and in politics and that, it's allright. Kiddingly, I have always said, that what the country needs is more women running it. Because you know a woman manages a home. Nine out of 10 manages a home. The men don't manage it. And that's what's the matter with a lot of the men. And now, of course, they train them for management, don't they. You know, what do you call it, business administration. Now, they train them. But women have had business administration since the day they were born, practically. Right? So that's what I say. So you see, women aren't stupid, they just never had a chance, till this last while, that's the only thing. But I think that a woman can manage and foresee things for betterment, for better ways of doing things, than a man ever could.

SD: Did women in the union ever talk about responsibilities outside the workplace, like children and housework and so on?

AM: Oh, yes. We always, that was always a consideration to have to talk to the boss, you know. She has this and she can't work overtime, you know what I mean? She could come in if you could use her in a certain way, a capacity. She's a good worker, and she can produce, but she can't stay . . . and many bosses would go along with it.

SD: Did those kinds of outside responsibilities affect women's participation in the union at all?

AM: No, most of them are pretty good, most of them are pretty good. I think, and then today I think you'll find the women are better, even than they were ten years ago. I think women are very much more conscious than they were ten years ago, and therefore, that makes them more militant in their doings, and, with a union, or with an organization.

SD: Did the union raise any specific issues like maternity leave or childcare, equal pay, equal work, rest areas for women, these kinds of things?

AM: Oh yeah, the rest areas, that was one of the things we straightened up, was somewhere for them to sit away from the machines, you know what I mean. A lot of them just used to sit at the machines, that's the only place they could sit. But they got lovely lunchrooms, a lot of them did, before I left they had lovely lunchrooms. That's where they had their coffeebreaks where they didn't have to go out. Oh, we tried to keep conditions. . . we tried to keep the restroom facilities nicer for them, you know. Jantzen's always had nice facilities, and Bernards, and Fitwell, eventually, eventually. It was terrible in there for years, and Queen

AM: (cont) Beth's always had, they're not in . . . See some people, manufacturers got older, and they just went out of business. So it's really down from what it was.

SD: Were there any specific health or safety questions that faced people in this industry?

AM: Yes, the health is in a cutter, the fluff, the fluff. There's a lot of fluff in the garment trade, a lot of dust, you might say, or that, cause cloth is moving all the time, there's always a certain amount of fluff of the thing. And the pressers handling an iron, I agree, it's a lot better than 1926 and that when I used to press, you had a 22-pound iron, and we had to wet the materials and then press them. Today they got steam irons, and that's a lot better. But a lot of them . . . that's real bad, eight hours a day to have your hands crooked around the handle of a thing, that's why their hands are so, like that. arthritis.

SD: Does fluff cause diseases when it is around, brown lung or . . .

AM: Oh yes, TB, we had to keep watching for that. I tell you where you see a lot of that is in the States.

SD: In the South.

AM: Yeah, well there's so many more of them there. Not particularly the South, just in any garment trade. Our shops weren't big enough to really have the hazard but we had to watch, you know. Certain material.

SD: The ILGWU had fairly strong positions against discrimination.

AM: Oh yes. That was our big, big, big thing.

SD: How did that come out?

AM: Well, I don't know. You just had to keep talking it all

AM: (cont) the time and you had to make them, the other people, feel that that isn't the way to feel, ^{just} like I tell you like that, she wasn't going to have that DP tell her what to do. One thing we tried not to call those ^{people,} displaced people, we called them newcomers. We didn't call them DP's, things like other people did, you know. But then the odd one would get mad and they'd say, "You dirty DP," or you 'so and so', and that was what we used to have a lot of. Amongst ourselves, not amongst the boss, and that.

And the bosses always used to think, "Oh they were lucky that they had it," oh yeah and you're lucky that you got them, too. But I myself, it's hard for me to talk against a company, because I never had, I had a few corny ones but not, nothing like what I, maybe somebody else does, I don't know, ^{But} I made it a full-time job, my family will tell you, I mean I worked hours ^{of} the day and night, you know. Time was nothing. That was the job, and I had the job and I had to do it.

SD: Did you enjoy it?

AM: Oh yes, I think so. I got awfully tired at the last, and that. Well, I got mostly tired because the boss, my boss, died, and the bosses from back East, they were trying to set it up like back East and you couldn't set it up like that. Because we haven't got the trade here to do it. We haven't got the people. And then it just got too much for me, I had to give it up. I'm not patting myself on the back but you know I even meet people today, and they all say, "My gosh, we'll never forget you, Anne, we'll never

AM: (cont) forget you," you know? I just felt I did a job, that's all, that's all I felt, I felt it was my job and I had to do it, and that was it. Oh, we improved, we improved, a lot, over the years.

SD: Did you ever have any negotiations around maternity leave?

AM: No, we never, oh. . . I think that we did, I don't remember . . . no, back East they had it in theirs. I had to laugh when that came in (laughs). We were at a convention in Atlantic City, I think it was, and had called a meeting of all the shops right across Canada, all Canadian people to come to this meeting. And they were saying in Montreal they'd got maternity benefits. And this girl got up and says, "For the single girls, too?" (laughs) I thought the place would go in an uproar, you know, it just sounded so funny to get up and say, "For the single girls, too?" (laughs) And so he says, "Yes, for the single girls, too." But it was funny.

SD: Were there any other women organizers in the labor movement at the time ^{with} who you specifically remember?

AM: In the other unions?

SD: Yeah.

AM: Oh, yeah. There was Mrs. Hallock in United Garment Workers Union, she used to work here. And I can't remember their names, actually, but there was ^{the} Restuarant Workers, and, who else was there? I don't know, someone else.

SD: Did you ever get together with those women?

AM: Oh, only a couple of times like at Trades and Labor meeting or something we'd talk over. Sometimes if we'd had

AM: (cont) some problem come up we'd phone one another and ask what, what do you think.

SD: Were you a delegate to the Trades and Labor Congress?

AM: Yeah, oh yeah. And we used to send other delegates, too, we always had one or two from the executive so that least one or two of us were there all the time.

SD: And were you on the District Labor Council?

AM: Yes, oh yes.

SD: What kind of questions would come up on the Labor Council?

AM: Oh, none in particular I can't think of now. Mostly, you know, to do with hours of work, and the way of hiring and that. I don't know that at that time I used to say, they wanted something, and to cut it right down that the union had the say, you know, and I'd say, "That's crazy." Now one time one guy just about flew across the room at me when I got up and said, "That's ridiculous," I says, "As long as ^{they} maintain a union shop that's all you need, you don't need to have it a closed shop. You don't need that word 'closed' in there, that's a fighting word." I says, "Let him hire from outside because that doesn't hurt the guy on the inside, it just makes him know that he can hire. And nobody should have to wait in line. Because some guy is fiddling around on the inside and the boss don't like him." Very seldom, once in a while we'd get a boss that didn't like one or two, you know, but not too bad, not bad. Dislike a person, you know. No, as I said, I've seen that big arguing was often mild?

SD: Are there any sort of specific others things that you'd like to mention about your experience in the trade and

SD: (cont) organizing?

AM: Well, all I can say as I said at the beginning, either you be honest or you might as well quit now. You go to them with it honestly and you try to negotiate it that way and hope that ~~the~~ can see it your way if it's right, and I used to tell people, "Don't come and tell me a pack of lies and everything cause I can't go in there and fight if I myself know that you're wrong. How can I go in and fight for you?" So just be honest, that's all I can say. And you've got to give and you've got to take, you've got to give also. And get something next time, you know. That's all you say, you want 15¢ and you're gonna get 7 or 8, take the seven or eight and come back for the next time. Because I think that's only fair.

END OF TAPE