This is Myrtle Bergren interviewing Mr. Dave Stupich, MLA of British Columbia for Nanaimo on June 16, 1979. This is for the Coal Tyee Project.

MB: First, when did you enter into politics? And why?
DS: As a candidate or...?
MB: When you first became interested.
DS: Well, I first became interested in the hungry thirties. The economic conditions of the time were enough to make anyone interested, I suppose, and I lived in a part of the world where people were intensely interested: South Wellington, that is just six miles south of Nanaimo, was a very political community, and most of the people worked in mines or depended upon the mines working as a main economic activity in the community and with the depression, the mines shut down or operated on very short weeks. So people were interested in the economic conditions and it was a CCF politician in the day, Dr. Robert who was a MLA, at one time he was mayor of Vancouver, but he had a weekly program, fifteen minutes on CKNO, it was then, and he talked about politics, he talked about economics and, of course, he was CCF. And we happened to have one of the few radios in the community and some of the neighbours would drop in every week to listen to this radio program, and I would listen along. I was the oldest in the family among the children and couldn't help to get interested by listening to him. He was a good speaker.

MB: And so... when did you first become active then? What happened?
DS: Well, there was no action to become active then. There was no such
thing as a political organization in the community. It was a small community. I attended highschool in that community and two years in Ladysmith and there continued my interest in politics - not active, but interest in talking to fellow students who were interested and one of the teachers in Ladysmith ran for the CCF in 1935. I think it was ... I'm not sure ... in any case, I knew he was interested in the CCF, he was a member, and I used to discuss it with him. And then I worked in a logging camp off and on for about a year and a half, then joined the air force, and there wasn't much opportunity to be active and one wasn't supposed to discuss politics, although it seemed, it always came up when I was around. I got out of the air force in September. When we were in the air force, in the last year and a half, when the government realized we were getting near the end of the war and thought that the people in the Armed Services should be getting ready to return to civilian life, they put out material on many subjects including political affairs, non partisan, but covering all political parties, and the education officer on this one station that I was at for quite a while knew of my interest, and he asked me whether or not I would be one of the discussion leaders in his class on politics, and, of course, he wanted non partisan in my presentation. Well, I did, as far as I could, but I think the students - when I can call them that - everyone who turned out in class certainly knew about my own bias. I made that quite clear. I was let out of the air force in September of 1945 and didn't find any work and was trying to make up my mind what to do. I started to go to university in January of '46. I joined the CCF club on the campus. It wasn't part of the organization as such, but it was an association of the students and I was active in that from the very beginning. And six months later, I noticed a garden party advertised at the home of Mrs. Steves, who was a very active member of the CCF. I went to the garden party and then found someone there who could sign me up as a member of the party. So, that's when I first joined,
I guess, as far as actual political activity in the party itself was concerned, there was a bi-election, a federal bi-election, took place in Vancouver center shortly after that and a university student was the CCF candidate. And along with some of my friends from the university I took some part in that campaign. Did some canvassing, and that was when I first met Colin Cameron, who also was a very active and prominent member of the CCF. And his family. I visited them and discussed politics with Mr. and Mrs. Cameron and the children and just went on from there, became more and more active.

MB: Hunhun. You speak of 1935 in Ladysmith, the teacher who run as a candidate. At this time, what was the position of Sam Guthrie?

DS: Sam Guthrie was the MLA at the time, the teacher, I spoke of, run federally. I'm not sure if he run in 1935 or '40. I think it was '40 when he run. It must have been '40. But I knew of his politics. Because in '35, we were represented by James S. Taylor, who was elected as a CCF MP in '35 and sat for a relative short period for the CCF. So Ronald Graham, the teacher, run in 1940.

MB: And how many times did you stand for an election before you were successful?

DS: Well, I was active in Vancouver in the CCF while I was in university from '45-'49. In spring of '49, there was a situation here in Nanaimo that had developed. They had four candidates and each one of them was supported by approximately 25 percent of the membership and each of them was opposes by three quarters and not just quietly opposed but quite passionately opposed. So it was obvious. Well, somebody had to be nominated by gradual elimination, but whoever got nominated would have almost the opposition and no support from a substantal majority of the membership. One of the members wrote to Carl Cameron and asked him if he knew of anyone who might come in and might sort of solve the whole thing by at least having no one against him. So, I happened to be at Cameron's house at the evening he got that letter. He asked me whether I considered. I said,"no", I couldn't possibly. I was to shy to speak,
I had no experience at public speaking and I was sure I was never gonna like that. But he persuaded me to talk to some of the CCF members in Nanaimo, and I did, and they were looking for some way out of the impasse they were in, and Harold Winch, he was the leader of the party at the time provincially, was very anxious that one of the four that is Joe White, and Joe White is still around town, he was secretary of the miners' union, he was in very strong support of the miners, and he was an excellent person, but Harold Winch thought he would not be the best candidate at that time, and Harold Winch tried to talk him out of running, and he spent a lot of time with him. Finally he had him agree that he would not run for nomination if none of the other three run. I think, possibly, he felt at that time that Winch could never get that kind of agreement. But in any case, Winch did get after the other three and when I went to the nominating convention it was still a battle. All four were there, and their supporters were there. None of them wanted their candidate to withdraw, but I had agreed by that time to let my name put forward and by the time it was all resolved, None of them did let their name stand, and I was nominated by acclamation. So, that was April 49, and I ran in '49 against a sitting member who was elected Liberal in coalition and he was running as Liberal in '49. No, It was a coalition in '49.

MB: And who was this?

DS: That was George S. Pearson, today a popular member. He represented Nanaimo for something like twenty-four years. He had held several ministries, Minister of Health at one time, Provinicial Secretary and Minister of Labour, maybe some others, but certainly those, so he was a very popular man in town, and he had beat the same Joe White in 1945 by just about 150 votes. And in that year it was a three party -- a four party fight. In 1949, it was a straight running against the coalition and he beat me by somewhere around five-hundred votes. I ran again in 1952 and was ahead in election night by over four-hundred. There were about five candidates running then and that was the year that W.A.C. Bennett won the majority government and brought in -- sorry -- the transferable ballot was brought in by the outgoing coalition government. And after they finished counting the transferable ballots, although I had been ahead in election
night by about four-hundred, I lost out and Dr. G was elected as a Conservative MLA. That was the second time around. The third time was in '53 and again it was the transferable ballots. I think, I was ahead by nine-hundred and twenty-three votes on election night and Larry was third. I hear, Westwood was in second place. And Bradshaw, the Liberal, was in fourth place and then there was a communist and an independent as well. By the time we finished counting ballots, no, not quite finished, let's say, the second step from being finished, after getting the second choices from the Liberals and other candidates managed to nose out Westwood, he went into second place by ten votes, he just beat Westwood by ten votes after the transferable ballots, and then went on to beat by eighteen. So, I lost that election. I didn't run in '56 because I had that article of the SCA at that time just months before the election was called and it wasn't fair to give that up. I needed some kind of career. So, I didn't run. Burt run as the CCF candidate, I hear, and didn't make it in 1960. I had almost finished my course, and might have run that year, except that Cameron who had been a federal MP, was beaten in the Diefenbaker sweep of 1958, so, he was available and an excellent candidate. So, I supported him for nomination and didn't run. And he didn't make it by 57 votes or something like that. It has always been very close. Then in 1963, Cameron had been re-elected MP by this time and I was encouraged to run but was reluctant because I was a member of a CA firm then and my partners didn't want me to run. Told me that I should have to leave the firm if I was nominated. And I had quite a time to make up my mind. After all, I had a family and four children to support. I still had debts to pay off but made up my mind several times back and forth. Even the night of the nominating convention at one point, I agreed to run and then I changed my mind. Said I wouldn't run and then I changed my mind and agreed to run and during the course
of the evening, a number of my supporters left the hall, some disgusted, I guess. When they felt I wasn't going to run they just weren't interested and left. But finally, by the time we got around to voting I had agreed to run. Phoned up one of my partners and told him that I was running. He said, "Well, we talk about it the next day." I had to get nominated, there was a contest. I won that nomination and my partners decided to wait to see whether or not I got elected before asking me to leave the firm. I did get elected. That was the '63 election. That was the year the main candidate, Westwood was the sitting member, he was the Minister of Recreation and Conservation, and I don't remember any other candidates. Sorry, but I beat Westwood by twelve votes. There was a recount and after the actual recount, I had won by nineteen (votes). Then in '66, there was not contest then and I run again, well, this time the Social Credit Candidate was Frank Ney. I don't know if he was mayor then, but I think, he was. But I managed to beat him by thirty-nine votes on election night. We had an official count and I ended up winning by forty-five votes. '69 Frank Ney run again and this time he beat me by something like four-hundred and fifty (votes). In '72, I was nominated again and beat Frank, that was the time we formed the government, of course we were riding high, and I won that election by over four-thousand (votes). In '75, Frank didn't run but G. Roberts who had run conservative in the '72 run Social Credit in '75, and I hung on to the seat with a margin of about twelve-hundred votes, I guess. And then in '79, I won again.

MB: Hmmhm.

DS: So, I've run nine times. I've won five and lost four.

MB: Yes. Going back to your job ... that must have made quite an impression on your position that you hold today. Did you have very hard times as a boy?... Your father...

DS: Well, I suppose, at the time I didn't really have a much harder time than everybody else around but things were tough. The mines were not working regularly. Sometimes a day a week, sometimes they closed down completely. When the mines were working, father worked. He was a very hard worker
and a very good producer. He was always one of the first to be rehired. But for a period there was just no work at all and the mines shut down completely. And for a while he was on relief and although it was worth a lot more then, I remember we had a family with six children and he was getting $43 and 20 cents a month.

We raised a lot of our own food. We had some ten acres of land and had cows and a lot of vegetables. But still, that didn't leave very much for any extras.

MB: Was he a political man?

DS: He voted labour, Socialist or CCF all of his life. He might have voted Conservative at the time when there was nothing else available, but he wouldn't vote Liberal. But I think, on occasions when there was no CCF before '33, and there was nobody running that he could vote for, he would vote Conservative. He was very interested in the CCF from the time that it was formed. If there was any attempt to have a local organization, he would always join it and pay his dues but he wouldn't take part in discussions. There was a bit of language barrier. He had been here since he was sixteen years old, so his English was quite good. But he didn't feel it was good enough to take part, really, and he would certainly enter political discussions in small groups but not in any public way. Whenever there is any request for funds, and even when he was on relief, he would always find something to give to the CCF party. And sometimes they would be looking for things like food to feed to people who were travelling and he was always very anxious to help in any way he could help.

MB: And I guess during the strike, the long stike, that he was...

DS: You mean the 1913 strike?

MB: Yes.

DS: No, he wasn't here then.

MB: Oh. When did he arrive?

DS: He was in the yukon then. He arrived in North-America in 1897.
He was sixteen years old at that time. In the United States, in Pennsylvania first, where he had some relations, he worked for a short period and then travelled to the West coast and then went up to the Yukon where he worked until 1919. He left there in 1919.

MB: Doing what?

DS: Working in the mines, but any work he could find up there.

He didn't do much in a way of staking claims on his own. A little bit but it never amounted to anything.

MB: Goldrush.

DS. Goldrush. But he got there after the end of the goldrush. But there was still work at the placer mining. It was large scale placer mining then.

Oh, he did some smaller jobs as well - but just any work that he found.

And he stayed up there - I'm not sure when he got there - but sometimes in the early 19 hundreds and left there in 1919. Headed for the States and arrived in Victoria where he met the Immigration Officials from the States. He had quite a temper and got into an argument with one of the Immigration Officials and stormed off the boat in September and said, "if that's the way you feel about it you can keep your country."

And he used a more colourful language than that and he got on the E&N train and came up. He heard there was coal mines up in South Wellington. So he got on the train and came up and went to work in the coal mines in 1919. So that was after the strike was well over.

MB: Yes. And then when he acquired his land...

DS: Well, he first bought a house on a small lot in 1919. He was engaged at the time. Bought this house and it was surrounded by a ten acre farm.

One lot was sort of carved out the ten acre farm and about 1927, '28, when things were pretty good, the economy was going well the farm came up for sale. So he bought the farm that surrounded the lot and moved into the house that was on the farm in 1927, or '28, somewhere around there.

MB: There was a coalition society at that time?
DS: There was a coalition society because the one that is here in town now was formed before that. I don't know that he was a member of this society. He wasn't much of a joiner. Except CCF, he joined that but that was really financial support rather than joining. He worked when the mines were working, he'd work a shift in the mines 8 hours. It was hard work. He was working as a digger. and then he would go home and work on the fields. The farm we bought had a lot of stumps on it and big timber, and in those days, the cedar stumps were 7 feet across, 10 feet sometimes. And the previous owners had done the easy part of the clearing so that they could get some production from the land but had left the main stumps. Well, he was too totally a person to leave that for long. So, he would spend eight hours working in the mine and the rest of the daylight that was available, working by hand, clearing these stumps, using a shovle and a mattock and wooden bars to pry up things and fire dynamite that he would borrow from the mine. That was a fairly common thing in those days. I'm sure the company knew what was going on. The miners that were clearing land would carry their lunch in their bucket to work and then carry powder home in their lunch buckets. So ... the Canadian Collieries helped to clear a lot of land in that area. (chuckle).

MB: Were you old enough to help with the clearing of the land?

DS: Oh, a little, but when he was doing that it was 1927, I was about five or six years old, when he bought the farm. So, I certainly wasn't much help. The clearing lasted for a number of years, and I was able to help a little bit, not much.

MB: Where did he meet your mother?

DS: In the Yukon. She had a brother up there who was in the, at that time what they called the "Royal Northwest Mountain Police," and she had gone to school in Prince Edward Island. It was the only school that was available there and worked for a while there in a store and the store had changed ownership and there wasn't any more work available. Her brother
told her that there was work in Dawson City. So, she left Prince Edward Island and travelled to Dawson City and the work that he said would be available just wasn't available. But her brother and my father were very good friends at the time and my father met Jane McMillan through her brother and I guess, one thing led to another and when my father left there, they were engaged to be married. She went back to Prince Edward Island and, I suppose, to talk to her parents and to bring clothes and things like that. Went back to Prince Edward Island and then came back and met him in Vancouver and they were married in December 1920...

MB: She had no idea, at the time, of course, that he would be a coal miner?

DS: Oh, she knew what kind of work he was doing in the Yukon. And, I think, in planning to travel to the States, that's probably what he had in mind doing. He had very little formal education, and job experience was mostly mining... certainly in labouring in one kind or another. So, I don't think she would be surprised that he would take on that kind of work.

MB: How many children did they have?

DS: Six.

MB: May I ask, what ... are you ... did they all go to university?

DS: No, I'm the oldest. I went to university. No. 2 finished Grade 13. No. 3, I think, went to university. She is a Registered Nurse. I'm not sure. I guess, not. I don't think she has a university degree, but she did finish her Grade 13 and then took her RN. No. 4 did go to university. No. 5 finished, I think, Grade 12. Wait a minute, I missed one. (chuckle) No. 4, my brother, finished Grade 12 and then joined the RCMP. So, he didn't have university. No. 5, that is the school teacher, did go to university. No. 6 finished Grade 12 or 13 here in Nanaimo.

MB: What I'm getting at is the influence of your parents on your future life.

DS: Father was always very determined that none of his children would ever work in the coal mine, that they would get as much education as they could possibly absorb and not had to work the way as he worked all his life. That's
the way he felt about it.

MB: Was he the most influential then?

DS: Mother would never oppose it, but she was the one who was so anxious and active in proposing it.

MB: I'm trying to get into the miners later, but I thought we might cover this first. Do you happen to know who have been Nanaimo's MLA's from the beginning. I know Mr. Dunsmuir was there at one time.

DS: I cannot go any further back than Hawthorne... The reason that I remember him was that he was a socialist. He was elected first I think in 1899, 1900, and served until 1912. But Mr. Dunsmuir was there at one time.

DS: I'm getting mixed up with the federal, I guess.

MB: No, see, Nanaimo, well, right now, of course, it takes in Ladysmith, but until the recent re-distribution it was Nanaimo from Nanaimo River up to Parksville. Prior to that it was Nanaimo and the islands and at that time it cut off halfway through Chase River. Hall was in Cowichan riding or Moose Temple, as it is called now.

MB: Yes.

DS: And it did not include Departure Bay. Departure Bay was Comox riding prior to '66. It was Nanaimo and the islands, including the Gulf Islands right down to West Heaven just outside Victoria. From Gabriola right down. But Sam Guthrie was elected in the 1920ies for Cowichan. I'm not sure if it was called Cowichan Malahat or Cowichan Newcastle, I think Cowichan Newcastle, and he represented that area right up to 1945 and he was beaten, and then in 1952 Bob Strucken run for Cowichan Malahat and held it right through.

MB: What about Parker Williams?

DS: Parker Williams was the representative before Sam Guthrie. And Sam
Guthrie followed in Parker Williams's footsteps. Parker Williams left politics to become a member of the Workersmen Compensation Board. The very first Board was instrumental in getting workers' compensation, workman's compensation board legislation passed, and then when the legislation was passed, he was invited to sit as a member of the board and he did. Accepted a position as a member of the Board and then Sam Guthrie took over.

MB: I understand that Hawthorne has something to do with this too, really.

DS: Oh, yes. There were three socialist members of the legislative at the time Hawthorne was one, Parker Williams was one, and then John McGuiness was another and they worked together to get that legislation brought in.

MB: And they seemed to have the various divisions between people, not the divisions between ethnic groups but did they divide as far as the actual work is concerned. But there was also the division amongst the working class, the workers. And that is what I wanted to get into. If you know anything about it. What was the point on which they divided. Because it has been of such importance in Nanaimo in elections, and I would say, very passionate divisions too. And also...

DS: Within the working class?

MB: Yes. We had the strikers and the non-strikers, you know, and this is very bitter. Even today, we have to be careful about those things. So, I'm just wondering if you can shed any light on the divisions between the workers here in politics. I can understand the divisions between the strikers and those who worked during the strike.

DS: I would think, it would have to be part of that. Because nobody worked in the beginning and then gradually some of them just had to go to work. There were really tough times, even when you were working. And
when you weren't working, there was no such thing then as
unemployment insurance or relief and no medical plans and nothing.
So, really, there was no money coming in and nobody to help them. At
first, the miners were pretty strong and they held together well in spite
of everything that was done but gradually, one by one, they just got to
the point where it was a case of standing up for the principles that they
believed in, and seeing the chances of beating the company seemed so
slim as time went on, the company was holding fast, and there was not
much chances in beating them, really, so, standing up for your
principle and seeing your family literally starving. So, one by one, people
gave in. All the ones who were determined to hang on resented this
very much and personal animosities developed that carried over to
politics, and the people who did go back to work in the early stages
were accused of being all kinds of things including friends of the
management and were almost pushed into that camp even so they didn't
want to be. And I would thing that carried forward into politics as well.
And, as you say, it's still remembered. There is a fellow my own age,
he is dead now, but I can remember him talking about people in the
community as saying that he had no use for them because their father was a
scab. Now, that's dying out but there is still people in town who
remember it with a great deal of feeling. No, I didn't experience that.
The strike was long over before I was born. So, I heard stories and...
but I think some of the men who experienced it and some of the
ones who did not go back until the union was broken completely, as much
as they suffered themselves, they did admit, and some admitted to me,
that different individuals who had gone back to work, that they really
couldn't fault that person for having gone back to work in view of
the circumstances. But others were not nearly so magnanimous and some of
the children of those people were even less so.
MB: Yes. So I hear. The origin of the coal miners, the ones that came out
here, I understand, that, right from the very beginning, they struck, they
began to protest against the conditions they worked under, even from the
very first.
DS: Well, most of them had come from... were English miners that sort of lead that kind of action. They had come from that part of England were coal mining, was very much a sort and they had been accustomed there to trade union organizations and to having different conditions because they had to have very active and strong trade union organizations. They came out here were there was no organization. So, from what they saw, it wasn't as good as what they experienced at home. They came out here looking for work, I guess, there wasn't enough back home. But back home at least they had trade union organizations that were able to get them something, you know, better working conditions. They also had a very active political organization at the time, and they wanted to see that here as well.

MB: Yes, they did. I didn't realize that. That was in the very early days.

DS: Oh, yes, sure.

MB: This was even before the 1913 strike. And then that organization was broken?

DS: Well, it was broken temporarily. That long strike did brake the union.

They didn't have the resourced to carry on. They didn't have any money to pay strike pay. So, they did lose out. But, it wasn't broken for all that long. The men tried right from the times the mines re-opened, they started organizing, to re-organize the union. At a time, I remember talking to one individual, he said too, most of the people are dead now, who said that the owners of the mines had no objection at all to people having political meetings, no concern, anything like that. But if there is any hint at all that anybody was talking about trade union organization, well, then that person perspired, there was just no question about it.

My father was blackballed for a while. He went up to... worked briefly there. He was...

MB: Which year was that?

DS: In the twenties. The early twenties. Twenty-three, twenty-four, something like that, and I remember him telling me about the early times to organize. hey had a system of cells that they tried to start the organization
About trying to get the union organized, they had a system of cells, and there was one near from where I lived and in one person's house and half a dozen people in that area, who were interested, used to attend meetings there and raise a bit of money for union activity and this was very much under cover. None one knew who was involved in these things except the half a dozen people who met in that one house and the person whose house that was knew someone else to go top, but the rest didn't. Because, if there was someone else there who was buying for the union and he could give names, well, then all those people were fired, it's just that simple. Pete Green was the leader of that little cell in my community.

MB: How would you spell that last name?

DS: Just the same as the colour. G-R-E-N.

MB: Oh, Green.

DS: Oh, sorry, not Pete, I don't know his first name. I went to school with his children. One of them was until very recently the chief of police in Oak Bay, Jack Green. He was the one who is about the same age as myself.

MB: Yes, Jack Atkinson.

DS: They lived very close together... There is just one house between the Ackelson's and the Green's.

MB: So, they finally built their union?

DS: They finally got to the point where they had the majority of the membership and then they were in the position to shut the mines down. And they did win the right to organize...

MB: Yes. Now, then we had a Socialist Party in Canada?

SD: There was a Socialist Party of Canada at that time. I don't know anything about it, I never heard anything about it. 1933, when the CCF was formed, I was twelve years old and I just don't remember hearing anything about politics prior to that. I don't know whether there was ever a candidate that presented the South Wellington area. Sam Guthrie was, but...

MB: Now, what about Hawthorne...

DS: Hawthorne... didn't represent South Wellington, you see,
that would be Nanaimo.

MB: Oh, yes.

DS: But Sam Guthrie, Parker Williams, they were socialist candidates and they did represent that area. But I just don't recall hearing anything about it.

MB: What do you thing the concept of socialism was in their mind?

DS: Very basic, I think. The Dunsmuir's owned everything and the men were slaves working for wages and socialism promised them greater rewards for the work they were doing and the owners of the mines were getting everything and the workers were getting a pittance and were working as slaves whereas they should have a right to own something and have a higher share of the income. I don't thing that was very philosophical, that was very basic.

MB: Yes. Things were clear in those days,

DS: I think so. Ya. Because we had nothing in the way of social progress. No pensions, we did have Workers' Compensation Board in the early twenties, but no health insurance. They did develop that in the mines too. I remember, my father's pay cheque would have ... every second fortnight there would be decution for the hospital and every fortnight there would be decution for medical coverage. It wasn't complete but it was substantial..

MB: Yes. Now, there was a split there too in ... amongst the socialist mining people, which I suppose, a lot of the miners were. And what I'm trying to get from is, what was the cut-off time. On what issue did they divide here in Nanaimo?

DS: I don't know. One person who just might know something about that is Rod . There are others who I think would know, but they were long gone. Alex Mac Lellan might know something about that. Did you talk to him at all?

MB: I've got his name in my book. I haven't seen him yet... No. He's got a new phone number now.
MB: It seems to me, and I don't know just what you've said, I and my
husband too, who has been quite active in union organizing, feel that
personalities had a lot to do with it too. Personal contacts.
DS: I would think that would be the case, but I just don't know..
MB: Macellan, isn't it?
DS: Yes, his father was very active politically.
MB: Mac Lellan?
DS: That's Bill MacLellan or MacMillan?
MB: MacLellan. What is his first name?
DS: Alec.
MB: Yes, Alec MacLellan. I've got it.
DS: O.k. I give you the phone number. Another one who might know something
is Arthur Stevens. His father was very active, whereas my father was
support, these people were actual members of the organization. So, I think,
they are young enough to... but again not old enough to remember everything
they should.
MB: Well, a lot of people just haven't thought about it that much.
LS: Sure. But Alec MacLellan, for example, was active in distributing the
CCF newspaper at the time. He is about my age. So, he wouldn't know
any more than what he heard his father talk about.
MB: Right. Well, now, as far as the actual mining... did you work in
the mine?
DS: No, I tried when the logging camp closed down where I was working in
just shortly the war. I did go to the mines and see if I could get work
there. Father didn't want me to, but economic determinism, I guess, and
he was just afraid that, if I started in the mine I never get out there.
But at the time, the mine manager had had an argument with my father
or thought he had. He had heard a story that father had accused him
of something but it turned out to be quite untrue and later on, the guy that
was running the mine was apologetic about it. But he had believed this
and because he felt that way he couldn't fire father but he could deny
work to his children which he did. So, I never got started in the mine.
MB: Yes.
DS: I joined the air force shortly after that. I was old enough by then.
MB: You have any observations on how the war effected the coal mining in Nanaimo?
DS: Oh. The Coal mines were closed until Hitler started getting things moving and shaking and then the coal mines started opening up, and as far as the miners are concerned, this was just one more way of proving that the capitalist system just couldn't work. It could mobilize to fight a war but it couldn't mobilize to fight poverty. And the only time that it could really work well was when it was gearing up a war or fighting a war because as Hitler got active and as the imminence of war grew, then the mines became more and more active. If they needed any proof they had it in that. So it made them more determined than ever to change the system.
MB: Ya. At that time the mines were owned by how many companies?
DS: Well, all the mines around here were Canadian Colleries, Dunsmuir. And Dunsmuir, I suppose, sold out his interest to Canadian Colleries and then the name of the owner was the Canadian Colleries Dunsmuir Ltd.
MB: So, that new millionaires were made out of the war?
DS: They were very small mines that were developed in and around this area. But they never amounted to much. Mostly they were family concerns. The Fidicks did some coal mining in South Wellington, but most of the coal rights were owned by Canadian Colleries Dunsmuir Ltd.
MB: Not like in some of the logging companies...
DS: No.
MB: Did religion play any part in your life?
DS: Father was raised as a Roman Catholic. I don't know what turned him really. He would say that thing that turned him against Roman Catholicism was when his mother died, because she was poor she was not buried in the church yard, she was buried outside the church yard. And that was his excuse. But I think it was really rationalization, it is just that
he lost all interest and he had no interest for it. Mother was raised Presbyterian, I guess. It became later on United Church in the twenties, I guess. I'm not sure when the Presbyterians and the Methodists went together, but she was an adherent of the United Church from that time on and still considers herself as such. She is not a member of the church but she would consider herself to be a religious person and raised us that way. Father didn't object, he didn't try to stop it or didn't try to influence it. He had no interest in Roman Catholicism and he didn't object at all to mother sending us to Sunday school and taking us to church. He would, but didn't try to stop it.

MB: What do you think about... are there any differences between the morality of evil locally between then and now?

DS: I don't think so. As far as father is concerned, I would say he is more religious - or at least - lived the Christian Ethic more than many people who are regular church goers. Because he certainly did everything he could to help his fellow men to the dis( )gregation of his children working on the farm producing food that he was giving away to people that we felt could very well afford to buy it or raise their own...

(chuckle)

MB: Before I close now, is there anything that you would like to add?

DS: No, not that I can think of. It's easy to say it was a hard life. We were raised tough, we had to work on the land when other children were going off swimming in the summer time and we resented it very much at the time. But looking back on it, I think it was a very good upbringing we had.

MB: Do you remember the feeling you had when you first heard about the CCF and socialism?

DS: Not really, because it was a sort of a gradual thing. I'm sure when I started listening to those radio broadcasts, that it was simply because there were adults in the room and I was the oldest child. So I was
allowed to listen with them. And I think it was really part of growing up that I could be with the adults. But listening to Ted Ford who was a very convincing speaker. I certainly became convinced myself. But that was at a very early age. No, I can't think of anything else.