Oral History Interview With Mary Hopkinson

Transcript

Accession No: 0478-001

Special Collections Division
University of Washington Libraries
Box 352900
Seattle, Washington, 98195-2900
USA
(206) 543-1929

This document forms part of the Guide to the Mary and E. William Hopkinson Papers. To find out more about the history, context, arrangement, availability and restrictions on this collection, click on the following link:

http://archiveswest.orbiscascade.org/ark:/80444/xv356902

Special Collections home page: http://www.lib.washington.edu/specialcollections/

Search Collection Guides: http://archiveswest.orbiscascade.org/
I am Mary Hopkinson, formerly a Vice-President of the Washington Pension Union. I helped to organize it. I was at the first convention, I think, September 5, 1937. It was a convention of 600 people, the largest that we ever had, I believe.

The first one, but uh....

Where do you suspect the idea for the Pension Union came from? Can you trace it to one individual? Or would you say it......

I believe I can. At that time Howard Costigan was Secretary of the Washington Commonwealth Federation, and he was making talks everyday on the radio. One evening he said, "How would you like to have an old-age pension union?" And everybody just clamored for that. And it was just a short while after that until he came to Anacortes where I lived and talked and had a huge crowd out for that little town.

Who organized that meeting, do you remember?

Who organized that meeting in Anacortes?

Yes.

Well, I don't know who organized it especially, I know a lot of people that were there.

How did you know them?

How did I know them?

Yes.

Oh, just friends.....just people that lived.....

Had you been active in the Commonwealth Federation?

Was I?

Yes.
MH I was never an officer; I was a member though. And the Washington Commonwealth Federation which preceded the Washington Pension Union was a very influential organization. At one time I was told that every labor organization in the state of Washington was a member of the Washington Commonwealth Federation.

AY On the formation of the Pension Union, the original name was the Old Age Pension Union, wasn't it?

MH Right.

AY Why was that name changed?

MH Well, at first it was organized particularly for the old people, because they were meeting with very hard luck. Many had had savings that had been life savings in the banks, and they lost it all when these banks failed. Howard Costigan's mother had I don't know how many thousand dollars and lost it, and that's what made him so angry. He was really angry over it.

AY Were you an officer from the start in the Pension Union, or did you help organize a......

MH Well, I wasn't an officer. I was trying to think when I was first elected. We used to have Vice-Presidents all over the state. And then one year they decided (this would be in the forties sometime; I can't tell you which year) they decided to just have five, five Vice-Presidents. They were to be scattered over the state. I was elected then as a Vice-President, and from that time 'til the time that we......

AY Do you recall who was elected with you, who your other four were?

MH Well, I don't know whether I can tell you all of them. There was one man from Spokane. I can't remember his name, though.

AY I see, but it was geographical across the state?

MH Yes, it was a geographical distribution.
GR  You were chosen by district then?

MH  Yes. Well, not any special districts, just to get them around to different parts of the state.

AY  Were you, yourself, President of a local?

MH  Yes.

AY  Which local was the one....

MH  The Anacortes local of the Pension Union.

AY  How many members were there, would you say, in the forties?

MH  When?

AY  In the 1940's.

MH  Well, I can hardly tell, there were more members than cam to the meetings, you know, but our meetings would be anywhere from 6 to 15, probably.

AY  Why would you say these people who joined the Pension Union, joined it? People like yourself?

MH  Why?

AY  Yes.

MH  Well, the welfare for the people of the state was so terribly bad that they did have in the later 30's, a little welfare and during the depression too, but it was so hard to get it and I might tell you a little incident that I was a party to.... There was an old lady that I treated; I am an Osteopathic Physician, and I was treating this woman, as she had been living on Greenbriar Island with her sister and her husband, and her sister died, and she stayed on there and had her board and room, for just what she could do around the house. But she had no income, and she needed clothes and she needed to have a little bit of spending money. And the only way we could get it was...she went to an attorney and he investigated and found the only way she could get it was to go on relief. Well, to get on relief they tried to argue that they would
MH would have to need food. So I went with her to the woman who was taking care of that work, in distributing the little morsels in Anacortes. And we sat down, and while we were sitting there was a man too, and I knew his family and he had six children. He was working on WPA, and I heard this young woman who was doing this doling out say to him, "Well, what did you do with your money?" He was getting $44 a month, I believe, for six children and his wife. I didn't say anything about it then. But when they began talking to this woman I had taken up there to see her, she began talking her right down, she didn't give her a chance. So I began to talk, and she said, "Let her speak for herself," so I stopped for a bit. And she didn't get much chance to speak for herself, and I finally said, "I want to speak for this woman, you are a young woman and she is an old lady and she needs somebody to speak for her." So they let me.

AY How old were you at this time?

MH At this time? Well, I guess I was in my 60's at the time, I believe, and I told her that this woman had no income, nothing to buy clothing and incidentals with and she needed some money. Well, they said the only way they could get on relief is to need food, and I says, "Well, don't you think they need anything more than food?" "Well," she says, "that's the way the law looks at it. "Well," I said, "we want to put her on relief anyway, and we'll see what happens." So she very hesitantly said, "Well, if you want to do that... So, she says, "I don't know when anybody will visit her." That day, the next day, the woman went back to home on Greenbis Island and the next day there was someone out there to visit her and she got $18 a month, $18 after she had everything paid for, for an old lady like that, was quite a blessing.

AY I see. How long were you Vice-President in the Pension Union?

MH Well, I would say I was Vice-President, let's see we terminated the Washington Pension Union in '61, and I think I have been Vice-President
Then you were Vice-President until the end.

Until the end, yes.

What offices did you hold in the Anacortes local?

I was President of the local there, for a good many years, anyway.

How about in Tacoma? When did you move to Tacoma, first of all.

I moved to Tacoma in '49 and I was not President while Will lived and that would be '56. After that, I was, I believe the Chairman of the local 171 and of, part of the time, the County Council. I think maybe after Will passed away I was chairman of the County Council. We had several locals in Pierce County and they met about once a month.

I would like to ask you some questions about some of the allegations that have been made, concerning the Pension Union and their role as a left-wing dominated organization.

Oh yes, oh yes, what do you want to know?

All laugh together.

First of all.....

Were they really left-wingers, is that what you want to know?

Well, I would like you to reminisce a bit about Bill Pennock, who was President of the organization. He through his own admission claimed.....

Oh yes, he made his own admission. He was a Communist, and he told in his report he made, why... and what he thought he had been able to do for the good of the Washington Pension Union by being a member of the Communist Party.

Have you known any other people in the higher echelons of the Pension Union who were Communists?

I don't know, I never....

When did you first find out that Pennock was a Communist?
MH He made a statement when they were going to trial.

GR It wasn't until the Smith Act Trial then, that you knew Pennock was a Communist?

MH Yes, that's when I....

AY So far as you know, did the Communist Party, itself, ever try to use the Pension Union for recruitment purposes?

MH Not that I know of.

AY Now the Pension Union, well...I have a question to ask you. Why is it in Pension Builder there are many many references to foreign policy, how interested were older people in foreign policy? In the late 30's?

MH Oh, they were very interested in foreign policy, as Bill Pennock always said, our foreign policy, peace, we could never have good pensions as long as we didn't have peace, and we were very much interested in foreign policy. That was one of the criticisms that was made, of course, by the Scab Board and so forth.

AY Pennock was a young man, as you mentioned before.

MH Yes.

AY How do you explain the fact that young men were in the leadership of this Washington Pension Union, which was basically set up for old people?

MH Well, Bill had always taken a great liking to old people, I think he was with his grandmother a lot, I never knew much of the history of his family, because he never talked about his family. He was always talking about other people's families that needed help. But, as I've been told, his grandmother had a great influence over him, and when he went to the University he studied, uh...what is it called? To help people...

GR Social work, or....
MH  That's not the word I want to say, I think you both know it, but I....

AY  I don't know...

GR  Nor do I, I'm afraid.

MH  Well, anyway, he took up that kind of work, and after he was out of there, when he first began in the Washington Pension Union, and at first he was not President, but he rode a bicycle all over this country. Because that was his only mode of transportation, was a bicycle. I've been told, clear over the state, that he'd be stopping a lot, because he was talking. He was well-known all over the state because of his interest in people, and Bill had the most marvelous memory for people that I ever saw. If he went to a home the first time that he was ever there, and little Johnny had mumps, and he hadn't seen that same family for a year or more, he knew the names, he asked how Johnny had gotten over the mumps and all this kind of thing. People just loved him. I was amazed after the hearing came out, and he made his statement about his membership, that there were so many people that rejected him, or rejected the Pension Union because of him, after knowing that he had gotten them their living.

GR  I was going to ask about this, was there ever any difficulty within the organization itself over the communist issue?

MH  With any other organization?

GR  No, within the organization.

MH  Within the organization?

GR  Were there people in there who conducted any sort of...

MH  Not until the statement came out, then some of them left it.

AY  I see.

MH  And people that had benefitted immensely, their whole living, practically because of the red-baiting.
AY In the '40's did the Pension Union work through one of the major political parties in this state?

MH More through the Democratic Party.

AY Did you, yourself consider it a Democratic Party organization?

MH No, I never did, because I knew that the Democratic Party didn't go that far, but I was a Democrat, a Roosevelt Democrat. I was also elected the... in the district, you know, that go around in your own, you know what I want to say...

GR For your Precinct

MH Precinct Committeeman.

GR You were a delegate to State Democratic Conventions too, weren't you a delegate?

MH Yes, let's see, I don't know if I went to the State Democratic Conventions, I went to the other democratic conventions, and then until the 1948 election, when the Progressive Party came out, I had done quite a little work in the precincts and in the County to go into their meetings and all, but when I took part in the Progressive Party and in the Wallace Campaign, especially, I got a notice from the chairman of the County Convention, that since I was not working, since I was not working for the Democratic Party in the precinct, that I would not be a member of theirs because you see the Chairman Precinct Committeeman was also a member of the county organization, that I would not be a member. I answered it by saying that I was working for the Progressive Organization. I accepted the dismissal, but that didn't mean that I wasn't going to go over my precinct.

AY In 1948, the Progressive Party got the support of the Pension Union....

MH Oh yes.

AY Now, as I understand it, each local discussed it among themselves, right?
MH: We did, at least in our local.

AY: Could you try to recall some of the issues that came up? Was there unanimity in supporting the Progressives?

MH: Quite so, until the election came up, as I say. People that I was so sure would vote for Wallace, and then when they told me themselves they didn't, I was horrified.

AY: Why would they vote for Wallace, Mrs. Hopkinson?

MH: Why were they going to?

AY: Yes.

MH: Well, they liked Wallace's program, I'm sure everybody liked Wallace's program.

GR: Which parts of it especially appealed to them?

MH: Well, especially in providing for the needy.

GR: Then it wasn't the foreign policy issues so much, that appealed to them?

MH: No, not then. Not then. That came out after the '48 election, and then we were working very hard on that election because that was the year that our initiative... '73, wasn't it?

AY: two.

MH: '72, yes, '72, I'm getting mixed... was passed and that was a wonderful initiative that provided so much for the health of the people, and in the year or so following that, the health of the people of Washington was the best of any state in the union.

AY: Were you a practicing Physician in '48?

MH: Yes.

AY: You were?

MH: Yes.
AY  Did you find yourself harassed or bothered in any way because you were a member of the Pension Union?

MH  Well, no, I never was harassed over it. I know people talked about it, because when during the war we tried to organize a.... they wanted somebody to inspect these stores to see whether their price control was being followed and things like that, and they wanted this organized and of course we went to the...I think it was the Council, the City Council, whoever it was anyway, and they made some remarks about me, then they wrote a letter to the...we had our election, we had our first meeting of this organization and elected a woman, a very nice woman as Chairman, or President, and they elected me as Vice-President, which I shouldn't have accepted, but something to get the thing started, and there was a remark made in this meeting, this Council Meeting about me, about the FBI watching me, so I went down...not to that meeting because I wasn't at it...but I waited until I cooled off a bit and went down to another meeting.

MH  And we sat, this friend that went with me, and we sat there while they did everything they could think of, every little thing that they could think of, and then they were through, and were just going to adjourn and we just sat tough. When they said "Well, I guess that's all our business," the Chairman looked around as if he'd just discovered us and said, "Did you folks have anything you wanted to say?" I said yes I did and I got up and said, "I understand you said some personal remarks about me here, and I came down to tell you that I think I am just as patriotic as any of you folks are, and if the FBI is watching me, I am certainly not aware of it, for I'd be glad to tell them anytime just where I stand." Well, they argued a little bit, but they didn't support the organization.
AY: Did the Pension Union in '46 have any specific role in working for the Wallace candidates in this state, in other words you nominated your own Progressive Party slate of candidates, were you the chief group supporting them in your state?

MH: Not the chief one, I don't think. Well, I wouldn't say, but probably members of the Washington Commonwealth Federation. While the Washington Commonwealth Organization had folded up before that, they did that voluntarily, during the war, the earlier part of the war you see, not the earlier part, maybe the middle, about 1944, or somewhere along like that. But the members, though were still in evidence.

GR: Do you remember an organization in 1946, I believe, called the Washington State Conference of Roosevelt Democrats?

MH: No, I don't believe I do, in '46?

GR: I think so, yes.

MH: Of Roosevelt, well, that would be after Roosevelt's death then.

GR: Yes.

MH: Well, there was lots of talk then, right then, about organizations but I don't remember particularly about that, no.

AY: Was it widespread that among your friends and amongst members of the Pension Union that Wallace or Wallace candidates could win in the '46 election? Did you think he could win?

MH: Well, I don't know that I thought he could win, but I thought that he would make a better showing then he did, and I don't know how many other people felt about it, whether they thought that he could, but I know that it was a great disappointment that he got so few votes here.

AY: What about work with other Pension Unions? Are there, or were there other Pension Unions you were connected with then?
MH There were other Pension Organizations, I believe we were the only ones that called them Unions.

GR There was an organization called the Idaho Pension Union, do you remember anything about that?

MH Yes, there was an Idaho Pension Union, Yes, I know just a little about it, I knew the Chairman came over here convention one time and spoke, but I can't think of his name right now, but there were two or three members over there that I had known slightly, just more by hearing about them, then to know them. Have you any information about the organization in California that called for all the states that had organizations to meet there?

AY Yes, I've seen a letter in the Pension Union Manuscripts about that organization, but I don't know much about it. So far as I know, the Washington Pension Union was the only organization that went as far to the left as it did.

MH Well, I think that's true, too, very true, I'm sure, but then it wasn't a communist organization, by any means, because there was just well, it was a big organization, we'd have 200 come to our conventions, maybe more than that, I can't remember even how big they were. Only that first one I remember, it was 600.

AY Well, how do you explain the radicalism, the native radicalism in the Pension Union at this time?

MH Well, you know, need is the thing that brings people to be more progressive. To look to the capitalist governments for help and don't get it why they begin to organize for themselves, and that must have been the reason people stuck to the Washington Pension Union. In our Pension Union we had what we called the Aid for Dependent Children, a department of it, and there was one woman, what was her name...I knew it so well, I used to take her part way home. She was a large, fairly
large woman. You'd better find her name in the... when you go over to the evidence you have there in the Library. But she was a kind of a President of that organization or leader in it. After Bill died, she said that she was going to try to take some of his work over and do it, and she came once to Tacoma and went to the hospital and died sometime after that.

GR Do you remember the Pension Union or Pension Union members ever approaching other groups that were interested in pensions, I'm thinking specifically of the Townsend Organization.

MH Oh yes, yes, we did. We tried to work a little with the Townsend Organizations sometimes, some places, but they too, thought we were far to the left and not too many...a few of them were very friendly and then we used to go to their meetings too, sometimes, not so much in Tacoma, as in Everett, I think they did.

AY Who would you say was responsible for the making of policy for the Pension Union?

MH The Board, I think, with Bill Pennock's leadership. Tom Rabbitt had quite an influence too, but Tom wasn't as well liked as Bill, this isn't for publication though.

AY You think that Bill Pennock, then, was the most instrumental in having policy making then?

MH Oh yes, oh my, yes.

GR Was there ever any important point where the Board decided against Bill Pennock's wishes?

MH Not that I know of, the only thing that I ever did know of was one member. When this Negro woman was elected a Vice-President. One person was very mad because a Negro was elected. I never saw Bill Pennock mad, except that time. Never. He was furious to think this man spoke up and said something about the Pension Union electing a Negro.
GR Just a minute, I'm going to switch to a lower speed now.
AY What does that mean?
GR This just means that the tape will run a lot longer now.
AY Oh, I see.
AY You were a member of the Board as the Vice-President, is that right?
MH Oh, yes.
AY So, you were in on all the policy making decisions.
MH Well, I wasn't in the office, they often had to make decisions in the office too, but once a month our Board met regularly and that was from all over the state.
AY What sorts of things did you talk about at those Board meetings?
MH Oh, we talked about anything that would benefit the people.
AY Because we felt we were all interested in anything that was for the benefit the people, because we were part of the people.
AY In 1948, were all members of the Executive Board a hundred per cent behind Wallace and the Progressive Party? Do you recall?
MH Oh, I'm quite sure they did. I can't remember it coming up as an issue at all, but I'm sure they were all behind Wallace because our...as long as Bill lived, why we would have a convention...all the walls were strewn with the "Peace" and anything that was for the people, and the big banners of all kinds, and Wallace was one of them.
AY Was the Pension Union membership, that is the members in the Pension Union decreased or increased after 1948? In other words, the Pension Union suffered a lot...
MH Oh yes, it did, it suffered a lot, yes, a lot, oh yes, it did.
After Bill made that statement...I don't know why people thought that a man who had worked....
GR Well, no, '48 was the Wallace election, the Smith Act Trial
wasn't until later.

MH
Oh, I know that, oh, but he made this statement at a...no, not at the Wallace election, and after '48, not until '51, not too much, because, excuse me, I mistook that.

AY
That's quite all right.

MH
But...No, not after the election, the Pension Union didn't seem to suffer, because we had that good initiative passed that year.

GR
Do you think the Pension Union membership might have declined if it hadn't been for the initiative?

MH
Well, no, I wouldn't say that either, for sure. I don't know, but we had all worked hard on this initiative. I wish I had brought one of those leaflets. You must see them over there at the University because they were put in the Collection. Those yellow leaflets there that showed the...carrying the initiatives down at Olympia, Well, that didn't come out though, until 1951, but that...you can see what a crowd there was there in '48 when Bill Pennock was among them.

GR
Tell us the affect of the Canwell Committee on the Pension Union.

MH
Have you ever had the books on the Canwell hearings? Well, that tells the story about what they did...One morning when I was living in Anacortes the phone rang. Bill Pennock was on the phone, he said, "Have you read your morning P.I?" Oh," I said, "I wouldn't have that sheet in my house."

GR
ha ha

MH
"Well, you'd better read it, let me read you the column," he said. And this was the column when...You've read it, of course, both of you, haven't you? Have you ever seen it?

GR
I'm not sure which one you are referring to.

MH
Well, it's the one that...where this woman testified, when I tried to get my citizenship...you've read it. He read the column to me and
this woman testified in Mt. Vernon, that I... I don't know whether
she said I was a Communist... she said that I had said that Lenin was
better than Jesus Christ or something like that. That's what was in
the article. What she had gotten mixed up was that I gave her a letter,
an article to read that was published in the [Vancouver Sun], in 1934,
I believe it was... 64 people went to the Soviet Union from the U.S.
and Canada, 62 of them were from the U.S. and two from Canada, and
one of them was from a Presbyterian Minister in Vancouver. When he
returned he made a report, I've never heard of another one of them
making a report, but he made a report and the [Vancouver Sun] published
it. They made this report in the Vancouver Hotel, I believe it was,
that or the CPR Hotel, I think it was the Vancouver Hotel, and he had
such a crowd there, they were sitting on the floor and on the plat­
form around. This reporter for the [Vancouver Sun] just took it down

and in this article he said that the Minister said that the people

there of course rejected religion, that they felt that Lenin was
more important to them then Jesus Christ or something like this. And
she had read this article. There was such a demand for this article
after they saw it in the paper, that the paper published a sheet of

it and it was circulated, broadly circulated here and up there too!

AY

How did she come to quote you on this?

MH

How did she come? She used to come to my house, she was a patient
of mine to begin with, she used to come to my house and iron for me
because she was a poor girl, and didn't have money for her treatments,
but she would come up and iron for me. And we talked and she talked
as if she was quite progressive you know and she wanted to know these
things, and so I found out later... but at this time we were quite con­
genial and she read this article and she said in this... when she made
her testimony, when I was trying to get my naturalization she said
that which was in the article that Bill quoted. That I tried to in-
ject Communism into the Broadway High School in Seattle. Well, anyway, Bill said, when he finished reading this, "Now that needs an answer. You send it to me, and I'll get it to the fellow at the P.I." He had a kind of friend down there. So I wrote an answer, but I didn't go into much detail over it, I just told how ridiculous it was and I guess I told about what this was about this Jesus Christ business. So after awhile the phone rang again, and here was the Editor of the P.I., that was editing those articles, you know. My golly, he talked pretty nice to me. And he said, "Well, now here it says that you were trying to inject Communism into the Broadway High School. Don't you think that would be a little unhandy living in Anacortes?" "Well," I said, "I would think so."

AY You were not an American citizen then?

MH I hadn't gotten my citizenship, no.

MH You see I was born in Iowa, and my husband was born in Illinois, and we went to Canada. He took out citizenship papers there, because he took a homestead, he did it long before he took the homestead, for that matter. There was quite an important election coming up and he took out his citizenship, but I never had I don't think at that time. I don't know whether women were voting there then, or not, they voted there some before, they did down here, anyway, I never did.

AY Were you educated.....

MH But I married up there, what is it?

AY Were you educated in this country?

MH Oh, yes, all my education is from this country.

AY Where did you get your M.D. degree?

MH D.O.

AY Oh, I see.

MH In Des Moines, Iowa.
AY Oh, I see.

MH Then... He told me several other things, well, I didn't tell him that I had already gotten my citizenship by that time. I'll tell you how he got that, too. Well, you see he said, "You don't say... are you a citizen now?" And I said yes. And he said, "Well, you didn't say anything about it in your letter. Well, I didn't think anything about it when I wrote the letter, so he took all this down, oh, he wrote a real good rebuttal after what he'd had in the day before.

AY Is that right?

MH Oh, yes, Bill said it was the best of any, and he says he thought that probably because I had a profession, that it was... he might get into trouble over what he wrote the day before, but he fixed it up all right. So there was no trouble.

AY Why do you think the Canwell Committee focused on the Pension Union?

MH It was the most influential thing that was going.

AY You think that's why... Do you think...

MH I think that the Washington Pension Union had more to do with the political face of this state than almost any organization that they ever had. Well, of course the Washington Commonwealth did, but they had folded up long before this, but the Pension Union never folded up until... well, until it practically went broke. After Bill... as long as Bill lived he could always get the money. People would donate just generously to him, when the rest of us could have cried our eyes out and we wouldn't have gotten much.

AY Did you have any influential people who were supporters of the Pension Union in the forties, that is...
Besides Bill?

Yes, I mean outside of the Union, people who would support it.

Oh, would support it, oh yes, some laborers would support the Pension Union, some and I think, I never did know just where his source of income came from, but he always seemed to be able to get money, even hundreds of dollars from some people.

Were any of your delegations to Olympia ever denied an audience with the Governor?

They couldn't. The Governor left though one time when we were down there....

Which Governor would this be now?

Langlie.

I knew it.

Who else?

That's when the ADC mothers were down there. And they had, I believe they had told him they were coming, and he went to Portland. That's what they said, he went to Portland, anyway. "All right," they said, "We'll stay." The Secretary of State, who was Secretary of State I wonder?

Cole, Cole, does that sound right?

Yes, that's it, Cole. He says stay in his apartment, Government house, so that's what they did, but oh, they were there with their children, they just moved right down there, and they started to drive them out, and some of them they dragged out. There was one woman they dragged out, I can't think how many different ones, but anyway when they started to vacate the Governor's office, Bill started to talk and oh, he could talk, he could always talk, just what he wanted to say. And he just murdered them by words. But they finally got them out of the Governor's office, but they stayed in the Secretary
of State's Office and in the halls, and things like that, and spent
the night there. Langlie was there the next morning. They said you
just get Langlie back here, and he came back.

AY: What do you think added to the demolition of the Pension Union
most in the 50's?

MH: Added to what?

AY: To the, the uh....

MH: Destruction of it?

AY: Yes.

MH: Oh, Bill's statement, I believe.

AY: What about the role of the Federal Government, itself? Do you
think, for instance, today, the Federal Government is really taking
over the...well, is looking after the needs of the older people?

MH: Oh, a lot more than they did, oh, my goodness, yes, they're
getting more than they did, indeed they are.

GR: Do you think this was part of it?

MH: Oh yes, I....Well, the big fight was over by that time, you know,
after this initiative, of course we had a dirty initiative passed in
1950 to do away with this 172 of '48. That hurt for quite awhile,
but they never, they never did come back with liens on the homes
afterward though.

GR: Do you remember the Pension Union contacts or co-operation with
other non-Pension groups. I remember earlier you mentioned Bert Kelso
of the Worker's Alliance.

MH: Yes, at the first convention, that's what I wanted to tell you
too, this first convention, where we had 600 people, this was a new
thing, they elected Costigan as...not as Chairman, there was a man
by the name of James Sullivan that was elected as President. Costi-
gan was elected Executive Secretary. And he really ran the show, as
far as that goes, everybody...At that time Costigan was in good standing in the state. But later he succumbed to the Moral Rearmament Organization. But at first, he was really...and he was a good speaker, and one of those vivacious kind that just went through all the antics, as my niece said, it was just amazing the things that he could perform while speaking. That was it...Costigan was one of the leaders at first, but then after Bill came into the picture, why Costigan had kind of slipped some, and then as this Moral Rearmament came on, he just got clear away from the organization.

Kelso Worker's Alliance?

And Kelso...the Worker's Alliance at the first meeting, said at the end of the meeting, he was one of the last speakers, they had various ones that had spoken...Terry's father had spoken, and oh, just a lot of them. And they had written up their constitution and passed a lot of bills, not bills, I don't mean....

Resolutions.

Resolutions. And we were almost ready to go home and Burt Kelso, who was a cripple...had fallen...he was a high climber and he had fallen from a tree and had gotten...oh, a good many years ago...and got one leg crippled, but he was on crutches, but he was a real dynamic character and he said...he was giving them a little talk, wishing them well and he says,"If you ever get into trouble, come to the Worker's Alliance, we'll fix you up."

Was the Worker's Alliance a left wing....

Oh, yes.

They were?

Oh, yes, sure.

What were the relations of the Pension Union with the Washington Committee for the Protection of a Foreign Born?
Oh, they always supported that, oh yes, very much so.
John Caughlin was the attorney. He used to come to our State
Board Meetings and talk to us for a long long time. Every State
Board Meeting, John would come, because he was doing all the legal
work for us.

Would C.P. Speakers come too, to the State Board Meetings?

Well, they didn't come as C.P. Speakers, as I know of, I sup-
pose some of them were, but....

Well, I meant...

Not..Oh, not openly, not particularly, for that, but people
that I knew that were very....well, like Holland Roberts from San
Francisco who spoke......

Of the American Russian Institute

American, yes, Friendship, American-Soviet Friendship.

Well, I think he had something to do with the National Congress-
men of American-Soviet Friendship, too.

Well, I don't know, but I know he came...I know one time he came
and spoke after had had been to Europe and he had been in Rumania
and had seen that H-3 treatment for arthritis. Holland Robert's wife
was in a wheelchair for years with arthritis, and he went....he was
in Europe, and he went to Rumania and found out about this treatment
and brought home the material, for it and his wife began to progress
right from the very start...I had a letter from him and from her. And
when I'd written about this H-3 treatment and where they got their
medicine for it, their shots for it, but... oh, she is up teaching her..
is it a girl's school, children's school, or something. Anyway, now
in Palo Alto, California, he is in San Francisco.

Why were so many of the Pension Union speakers speaking on Foreign
Policy rather than pension subjects?

Well, they spoke on pension, oh they spoke a lot on pensions and
about efforts made and what we should do to gain our help from the government, but as I say, foreign policy is just as Bill said, that we couldn't have pensions if we're fighting wars and we couldn't....the same way with other things that were going on. And foreign policy was a lot of it, tied up in peace and war.

GR What was the effect of the Korean War on Pension Union membership?

MH Well, I think they were practically all opposed to the Korean War, though.

AY They supported World War II?

MH Oh yes, yes, they did. I'd like to tell you just a little bit about the time that this California President of their...they didn't call it a Pension Union, it was a Pension Organization though, he called for all the states to send their...if they had an organization, to send them to Los Angeles and they had quite a big meeting there. And there was...

AY Did Washington send a representative?

MH Yes, I was just going to say how many they sent, I did know, I think about 15 went out from here. I went to that.

AY You did?

MH As a candidate from the...or as delegate, I mean from the Pension Union in Tacoma. The County Council in Tacoma, and then we've had people...I think the FBI have not neglected us, they've had people in our meetings that...and in that meeting, in fact.

AY What went on at that meeting?

MH What is it? Well, they...Little went on before we got our delegate elected. There was one there that wanted to go very very badly, and one of the locals there was supporting her. I wanted to go, but there was one other in our local that I wanted to go. I told her if
if she would go, I would willingly stay at home, but she said, "No, I wouldn't go anyway." And she says, "You go ahead." So I told them I would like to go and this one local, though, didn't support me, but the rest of them did. I was elected. Then they elected her. I'm positive she was working for the FBI because I can have some other evidence, but she went to this other local... she told them that she would pay half of her own way if they would send her from their local. I guess the FBI paid it, probably, but anyway, she went. I believe there was 15 of us. Well, there were some... I know there was one woman... before this, just a little, they were talking about what should be the base pay per day for the old people and one woman from Seedrow Wooley said, "It should be equal to this dollar and a quarter," you know, that's an hour, it should be equal to the base pay. At that time it was, I don't remember just what, I don't think it was a dollar and a quarter an hour, maybe a dollar, but anyway, they said that's what it should be based on, was the.... what do they call it?

The minimum wage.

Minimum wage. It should be the minimum wage. Because the family that was on welfare just required as much as a family that wasn't on welfare. But anyway at this meeting down there... One morning we had... there were several of us that met out on a little veranda from the upstairs over the porch. There was a place to be seated there. And we had, I think we had breakfast out there, and then we had a little meeting and she attended this. This came out... came back here... our policy, some of it was known back here by other people before we all got started. So then we were to have a meeting. You see that's now, when they were trying the... Scabboard was just having that hearing here on the Pension Union. Now, that was the first one, that wasn't the one I attended, that they had.
AY  '55?
MH  What?
AY  '55?
MH  '50-.
AY  five, is that generally?
MH  Was that it?
AY  I believe that's it.
MH  Well, I guess it was, I don't remember. This wasn't as late as '55, though, was it? Well...anyway, when we came back, why she went into a dinner we were having and spoke to one of the girls from the Pension Union. "Oh," she says, "your hearing is postponed." And we hadn't heard it. Where did she learn it? ha ha. How did she know it was postponed?
GR  Pennock was a member of the Communist Party from the 1930's...
MH  I don't know...
AY  '37
GR  '37
MH  '37, yes.
AY  That's in the state...
GR  How come he never told you?
MH  I don't know. Well, you know, he was here and busy. I tell you parties and politics was never talked. Dr. Fisher said more about parties and politics than any other one, about the Democratic Party. That we always supported the democratic candidates.
AY  You raised Fisher's name, now, were you friendly with Dr. Fisher?
MH  Well.....
Did you know him quite well?

Oh yes, I knew him very well.

What was his relationship to the Pension Union? I know he became President after Pennock died.

He was Educational Director, and a marvelous one, too.

What did he do as Educational Director?

In that. He went to Olympia between every meeting of the Board. He got all the information about the budgets from the Director of Social Security, well I guess they called it the Welfare Director later. That's another thing that was done, you know, we used to have a Social Security League, we used to have the Welfare called Social Security. But they changed it when... oh, that fellow from the big timber industry, what was his name... became Director, then they called it Welfare Department.

When did you marry Will Hopkinson?

In '49.

Was he a member of the Pension Union too?

Oh yes, he'd been all over, and also the Worker's Alliance and then IWW.

Your husband was a member of the IWW?

Well, my second husband, yes.

And the Communist Party.

And the Communist Party, yes.

Your husband was a card-carrying member of the party.

What?

Your husband was a card-carrying member of the party?

I don't think so, I never saw his card, but... he was a member alright. The thing that... when he crossed the line, he was in Mexico during the latter part of the second World War, I guess, no
the first World War, and he...I guess he was IWW then.

Yes, I think he was.

Well, anyway. When he came back they took his card away from him and his IWW card, and he says that was the worst thing he missed.

Who took it away from him?

What?

Who took it away from him?

Oh, at the borderline somewhere. I don't know just who took it, I've forgotten that part of it, but I remember him saying that he hated that worse than anything else they did to him.

In all your years in the Pension Union, what would you say was the highlight, what was the most important legislation the Pension Union sponsored for them. Well what would you say...

Well, legislation...that initiative...the first initiative in 1940 - of course, that just broke the ice. But it wasn't as good of piece of legislation as 172.

Well, how can you explain, then, and I should have asked this before, that 172 was passed while the Pension Union was sponsoring it, and there was an awful lot of adverse criticism and newspaper ads and at the same time the Progressive Party in this state was smashed.

Yes, I can't explain that, I don't know why, only that I know that 172 had great backing. You'd know from that picture. You've read the article, the whole paper, too. That was a product of Tom Rabbitt's.

Well, is it...

Course that was after Bill's death.
AY Would you say the Pension Union mobilized in much stronger fashion to support 172, then they did to support the Progressive Party?

MH Well, I can hardly say that they did. Do you remember right after...right after the war in '45, do you remember the Republicans came out with "Had enough?" "Had enough?" "Had enough?" Everywhere you saw signs up, "Had enough?" and that's when Bill was defeated for legislature, too, that's when Tom Rabbitt was defeated too, from the Senate. And that was in '46. But why we passed that in '46, which we did, that 172, and defeated Wallace as we did, with so much...you know, he got such a small vote, I would not know.

AY Was Russell Fluent a member of the Pension Union?

MH Oh, yes.

AY He was?

MH Yes, I'm very sure he was, I never lived near him, but it seems to me we had a meeting at his place, down by Olympia. I'm quite sure that was a Pension Union meeting there.

AY Is that right? What has become of him? Is he still alive?

MH I don't know. Do you know I haven't thought of him for years.

AY I don't know. I just know that he was a Progressive Party candidate for governor.

MH Yes, he was.

AY He also was instrumental in cutting the funds to the Canwell Committee in this state.

MH Of what? cut...-

AY Cutting the funds to the Canwell Committee.

MH Oh, Oh? Oh, I know, oh my, yes, they were very angry over that Canwell Committee, all of them. Yes, Russell Fluent was a good man, too. I knew him, not too well, but still in meetings and all. And Al Fisher was influential too, he was from the
MH lumber industry.

GR Was that A.A. Fisher, who was defeated for CIO office?

MH Oh, I suppose, I can't remember.

GR He was part of the left wing caucus within the state CIO.

MH Yes, that's right, yes, the CIO used to be very left wing, you know, very progressive and then they got the scare along in the...not Canwell....

GR Washington State had its CIO purge in 1950.

MH Yes, well, yes, about that time. Yes, that was during the... oh, his name...I know it as well as can be..

AY What would you say were the high points in terms of numbers, what was the highest number of Pension Union members throughout the state?

MH Well, I never did know, but I think that, sometime that they had quoted, I've forgotten how many thousand, twenty thousand, I think at one time, but they didn't have that many that were active, that were going out at all, I don't know that it was that many, that but it seems to me that I've heard Bill say that/many had joined, something like that had joined, but you want to know how many were active, that we could rely on?

AY Yes.

GR What percentage of the membership could be counted on to show at the meetings and contribute and actively support things like 172?

MH Oh my, there were a lot of them...I couldn't begin to tell you what...who supported what...was supported generally, it was... but I would say that there were active members going to meetings and so forth...and sending to the board, I don't know how big the membership was, but we used to have at our board meetings, oh
anywhere from maybe 25 or 30, up to 100 at some Board Meetings, I believe. Oh yes, I've known that hall to be pretty full down there, so it was a kind of loose organization in a way you know, but there weren't many requirements made of them and they could come or stay away, just as they liked, but they contributed, more or less. And Bill used to collect lots of money, and after Bill was gone, we just gradually dwindled, I think we were getting... before that... It tells you in those papers that you took to the University what... Our financial reports are all there, but if you look at them you'll just see, every month was getting just a little lower and a little lower and a little lower. Dr. Fisher just didn't have a good hold on peoples' pocketbooks, that's for sure. They didn't. I just tell you, they just loved Bill, they'd give to Bill more than anyone else because they thought he was so sincere and working so hard for their interests, and if they had it, they'd give it.

Let me ask you this... I understand the grievance committees were the high points for getting people, for helping people....

That's right.

Would you comment on how the grievance committees worked, and how Langlie, I understand Langlie tried to buttonhole this.

Yes, I can tell you quite a little about that, because my second husband was the best grievance worker in the state. When they came to have their hearing, he sent in the best, and most in order of any person in the state of Washington. Dr. Fisher told me that. He could get things for people, help for people. When I first went to Tacoma, now this was before the worst of the fight was on against the Pension Union, of course... it was a fight but it wasn't quite so bad. There was an arrangement made, you see the law said then that
the client, that is the people that wanted to be on welfare, they could use, they had a fair hearing, they still have a fair hearing that you can get. But at that time they could have a fair hearing, supported by a person of their choice, and of course they chose the Pension Union as their lawyer to represent them.

Ay The Pension Union wouldn't charge anything for this, is that right?

MH No, oh no, they always took these cases, and they won them many many times. And in fact, practically always, because they knew, especially my husband knew just what the law said, and he just made them come right up to the law and Bill Pennock knew too, and Bill used to support a lot of these people, Dr. Fisher did too, different ones that went with them to these hearings, but now you see then Roderick...what was his name, I cannot think of it, but when he became Director, then they got their law changed and it had to be a lawyer of the next of kin, well, the next of kin never knows anything about the law or about how to....

AY What year...

MH Manage a case and they didn't have any money for a lawyer. What is it?

AY What year was that changed?

MH Well, it was the year that fellow was elected, now I wonder just when it was...

AY Approximately.

MH He was from this big timber company, Weyerhauser Timber Co., and they got him elected Director of Social Security.

AY Approximately, when would that be, the 40's?

MH Around the 50's, I'd say...somewhere along there.
AY I see. What was Arthur Langlie's relationship to the Pension Union?

MH Well, he was Governor of the state.

AY Well, how did the Pension Union...

MH Oh, he just hated them, I remember we went down there one time, Bill said to me, "Would you chair a committee to go to meet the Governor?" I said, "Well, yes if you want me to."

So, oh, there were about 15 or 20 of us, and it was a big gathering; it was a demonstration we were having. Tom Rabbitt was in... was on the committee, and oh, we had this big table full on both sides and a few of us standing and we introduced ourselves and the Governor greeted us. Tom didn't need an introduction, because the Governor knew him, and Tom just kept digging into him about the issue, I have forgotten just what we were trying to get that day. But he'd just, well, keep answering him and crowding him and Langlie got so mad, oh he was just as red as fire, and finally left the room.

AY What did the Pension Union think of Governor Walgren?

MH Oh, he was fair, fairly good, I won't say he was fair, but he was fairly good, I guess. He wasn't as bad as Langlie, anyway. But you see, he was elected in... wasn't he elected in '46? No, he had a term or two, and then Walgren.

AY Then Walgren, then Langlie in '48.

MH Langlie was elected in '48. Well, Walgren must have been elected in '44.

AY Yes. Are they 4-yr. terms, then?

GR Yes.

AY Then it was '44.

MH Yes, 4 years for state.

AY It's Walgren, Langlie, Walgren, isn't it?
Yes. I think the people, they liked him alright, he wasn't strong, though. You know he didn't get too far.

How about Rosellini?

Well, he wasn't either. But Rosellini, he was fair about meeting us alright, but when Dr. Fisher, he wanted to do...all the business himself, he didn't want a committee, so....

Would you say he was a little autocratic?

In that respect, I wouldn't say particularly, otherwise, he was a very smart man and all. He really wasn't a good over-all President, not like Bill, you know Bill always, of course, got his way. But he convinced the people to see his way and Dr. Fisher wanted to meet the Governor, he never wanted people to go with him to meet the Governor. You know they should never go alone to meet the Governor. So when our committee would go down there...Now one time our committee went down....Is this all going to come out in the open? ha ha

Well, I'm the only one who will be using the tape.

We went to Olympia, about 25 of us, and Dr. Fisher would go and see the Governor and make arrangements about having him meeting the committee, but he went in and said that the Governor would see only five, so we had four Vice-Presidents, and he was the President. He would have like to have left one of the Vice-Presidents out, he didn't care much about her, but he wanted to take a woman who had a grievance there in, and do them just....some of them that didn't know anything about the Pension Union or our organization, but anyway I said as long as the Vice-Presidents' were there, I felt they should go. Course he didn't try to dig me out, because I guess he thought I'd fight. But the other one was just as good a Vice-President as I was, and maybe better. But we went in and had our
MH  talk with him, and when we were leaving I said, "Would you come out and meet the rest of the committee?" "Oh, yes," he says, "I didn't know there was anymore here."

AY  Is that true?

MH  He went out, there was about 20 out there. Not quite 20, but nearly, about 25, I think, there was 24, 25 something like that, that went down. He went out, shook hands with everyone of them, said he was glad to see them, anyway, whether he was or not.

GR  Do you remember if the Pension Union ever had any sort of relationship with the Seattle Labor School or the Tacoma Worker's Center?

MH  No, not, definitely not anything that I....don't know of any, ever know of any.

AY  Well, you've been most helpful, can you think of anything else that you think is important about the Pension Union?

GR  You were going to...you mentioned earlier you wanted to talk about Pennock being in the jug.

MH  Oh, ha ha, well, you know they arrested Pennock, just before our convention: Our State's convention was meeting on Saturday, and he went to jail, Oh, I don't know just how early in that week, but it was just in that week before the convention met, and of course if they could keep him out during the convention, it would have been quite a blast at the Pension Union. But his mother, I don't know whether she put up all the bail or not, I don't know whether she has that all to do, but anyway they just made a desperate effort and got the money for his bail and he came out on that Saturday, that we met, and I thought they'd eat him up when he got down to the convention. And he came just as he was in jail, with his pants,
MH rather old pants, but that didn't make a bit of difference, they were just wild and he was...

AY Well, he obviously, from what you've said, and what I've read and heard of say he was the dominant force in the Pension Union.

MH That Bill was?

AY Yes.

MH Oh yes, he was a marvel. Bill was one of the most progressive, active, and knew how to do of anyone I ever knew. He went back to the Progressive Party Convention, as you say, in '46, when he got back there you know they had panels, labor panels and different ones, and they didn't have one for the old people, for pensioners. Right now, he got up and they had brought in their own requests', they were heard because of Bill Pennock, and when he spoke it was just a marvel to hear him speak, and do you know we have very few of his radio talks. Bill was one of those fellows that when a thing was over, into the waste paper basket it went, if we had them...When we were putting the Collection in the University, we tried and tried to find some of his talks, they were just marvelous, you just can't understand... There's just one record, have you ever seen that yet? I don't know whether it's in the Collection.

GR I don't know.

MH Well, you know I could find out, maybe...

GR Did Pennock ever make a mistake?

MH Oh, ho, ho, ho, I suppose he did, he must have, you couldn't grow up without making mistakes.

GR I mean in running the Pension Union.

MH Oh, in running the Pension Union, well, now that...I might think he did...
MH think he didn't, and somebody else think he did, I....

GR But you can't think of any?

MH Well, I think of one...

GR For instance....

MH I don't think he should've made his statement.

AY You don't think he should've made his statement?

MH No. I don't think he should've gone on the witness stand either. But they were so sure that he was so popular and so good, and influential that that would be the best thing they could do, and I...People are not that Progressive.

GR Well, former Communists I talked to say the reason Pennock was chosen to make this statement was precisely because he was so popular, to be sort of a sacrificial lamb.

MH They took advantage of him, I think they took advantage of him, too.

GR Oh, well.....

AY You think the C.P. asked him to make that statement?

GR You think the Communists took advantage of him?

MH Well, I don't know who took advantage of him, but I don't think he should've made the statement.

AY No, Terry Pettis didn't think so either.

MH He didn't think so either?

AY No, Terry was a defendant with Pennock at the same trial.

MH He was what?

AY A defendant. With Pennock.

MH Oh yes, sure, I know...

AY Terry was on trial....

MH Oh, I know, I was just telling George awhile ago they brought Terry back from St. Paul with...in irons.
AY Handcuffed?
MH Not handcuffed.
GR Leg irons?
MH Yes, leg irons. And one other one, I think he only came from Portland, but I can't remember which one he was....
GR Well, let's see, Dashbaugh, Bowen, Huff, Bartell?
MH You probably knew that about Dashbaugh getting out of jail without bail....
GR He was released by mistake at the same time Pennock was bailed.
MH Now, Terry thinks it was before that, I think Terry's mistaken, but I'm not sure. What we heard at the convention that day, was that when they let Bill out, after he got his bail, the officer thought it was both of them that got out, he just let Dashbaugh out too. He walked up to his lawyer, Dashbaugh did, and found out....Well, he...Terry says that he thought that they had gotten bail for him, but his bail was ten thousand dollars, but Bill's had been reduced to five thousand, and that's how they were able to let him out. So he went and talked to his lawyer a little while and.... she said...she called up at the jail...this was the story we got at the meeting that day...that she called the jail and said were they looking for Dashbaugh? And, no, they didn't know Dashbaugh was gone and she said,"Well, he's here!"
End