

Bob White's life and politics

by Pat Mandin

"I've never regretted a single day. I've had a great opportunity in life to make programs for working people and get paid for it," says Bob White, the controversial president of the Canadian Auto Workers.

White was in Edmonton last Wednesday promoting his recently published autobiography *Hard Bargains: My Life on the Line*. The book chronicles White's political career of thirty years.

This career, which began with White as a teenage shop steward in a woodworking shop, has resulted in his present prominence as possibly Canada's most popular and controversial labour leader.

White hopes that the book will "give the public the chance to look at the internal operations of a major union, to look at the internal democracy in a union like ours, and to examine the politics, warts and all."

He also hopes his book, like the recent National Film Board documentary *Final Offer*, will let people look into the negotiating process, which I think quite frankly the public has a great deal of misunderstanding about."

White's memoirs consist of detailed inside reports on several significant events in recent Canadian labour history. Accounts are given of the 1982 Chrysler strike which involved Lee Iococca; the Canadian Auto Workers' (CAW) role in the

Newfoundland fishing disputes; and the surprising separation of the Canadian sector from the American based United Auto Workers, which led to the formation of the CAW. White also recalls his earlier days of plant gate and doorstep organizing for the United Auto Workers.

White taped these memoirs over eight consecutive days. The tape transcripts were then recompiled by the Toronto columnist June Callwood. Callwood has produced 23 books in this fashion for celebrities, including a best seller for the television commentator Barbara Walters.

White expressed his enthusiasm for the heavily scheduled promotion tour as a "great opportunity to bring the issues like free trade to the public."

White recently attracted criticism for a national anti-free trade advertisement sponsored by the CAW.

"We put that ad in the papers to say to the Canadian people that it is not over," said White. "The Mulroney government does not have the right to take Canada down this route without an election campaign involving this issue."

The pact will have consequences Canadians will regret, White says, because, "first of all, you start with a very real restructuring of the Canadian economy. This restructuring

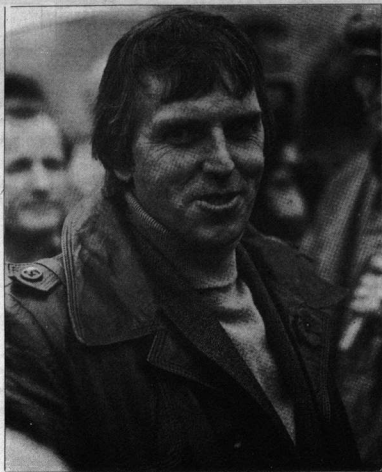
mean workers losing their jobs and families losing their homes."

"The whole question," he continued, "is whether we will be able to determine our economic future or will we be locked into a continental policy. It will determine our social programs in the future and our ability to determine our own culture."

"It all gets to the question, 'What does this mean to us as a sovereign nation?' Sovereignty means more than having elections and a parliament. It means having a real control of your destiny."

White has gained a reputation for his remarkable stamina during the famous marathon negotiations that he has participated in. He attributes this to an almost total absorption with his work, as well as to a daily regimen of running three miles a day.

"I do get tired sometimes," he said, smiling, "but then some right-winger will say something."



Bob White amid his union brothers

Student politicians "bugged"

by Ron Charles and Max Wallace
MONTREAL (CUP)—The discovery of a hidden microphone in the offices of the student council has raised fears of illegal police surveillance at Concordia University.

The microphone—a small metal receiver—had already been disconnected when it was found in the ceiling of a student executive office. An electronics expert on the university faculty confirmed that the object was an illegal listening device.

The discovery came less than six weeks after two Concordia students were questioned by agents claiming they were from the RCMP. The students were asked about their political activities with different campus groups.

One of the students said an aggressive man, claiming he worked

for the RCMP, called her at work one week after she attended a peace march.

"This fellow said 'Hello, this is Corporal Ducesne from the RCMP. We're doing an investigation and I'd like to meet you,'" she said.

She said he knew internal details of a Concordia group she was working with and proceeded to mention facts that only had been exchanged by word of mouth within the group.

She told the caller she wanted to find out what her rights were before being interviewed by the RCMP.

"He said 'Oh! You don't want to cooperate with me... this is non-cooperation and it's going in your file.' I said 'OK, if you want to play this game, why don't you call me back later then.' He said 'I'm coming

to pick you up right now.' He'll immediately, I was terrified," she said.

The student asked not to be named until an investigation is completed into the identity of the questioner. She has enlisted the help of a Concordia legal adviser who is attempting to set up a meeting with RCMP officials.

According to a Montreal civil rights lawyer, student associations are often watched because they are likely to be in the middle of campus political activities.

"I don't think these people in the secret police understand what legitimate political dissent is or what democratic values are," said Stewart Istanty, an attorney for the League of Knights and Liberties.

In 1983, a Carleton University student named Andy Moxley admitted he had been paid by the RCMP to spy on campus peace groups. Despite denials by the agency, Solicitor General Robert Kaplan, a week later, told the House of Commons that Moxley had been a paid informant.

Since the creation of the Canadian Security and Intelligence Service (CSIS) in 1984, domestic spying was taken out of the RCMP's jurisdiction and transferred to the new agency.

Gerry Cummings, a CSIS spokesperson, refused to comment on individual surveillance operations but said there is a possibility some campus groups are being investigated.

"Nobody in this country is exempt from investigation if they're involved in certain acts, whether they be in labour, university, or whatever," he said. "There is an understanding however that the free flow of ideas on campus is not to be infringed upon."

Earlier last week, the Concordia student council began a search of its offices to locate other listening devices. So far, none have been found.

"It's pretty scary to know that anything we say or do might end up in some file in Ottawa," said council co-president Robert Douglas. "It shows that somebody thinks students are a threat."

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