

Norman A. MacKenzie
May 15, 1974

Interview No. 507

Tape No. 3, Side No. 1

Dr. MacKenzie: I came to British Columbia in the summer of 1944. The university was a relatively small institution and the youngest institution in Canada. The total full time winter student enrollment had been about 2,300. It had a summer school for teachers and odds and ends like that. Because of the war practically every male who was physically fit enrolled in one or other of the three service training units, the C.O.T.C., U.N.T.D. or the R.U.S., the Air Force. They had their separate uniforms, their separate commanding officers and so on. The C.O.T.C. was much the largest. Dr. Gordon Shrum who was professor of physics and head of the Department of Physics was also Colonel of the C.O.T.C. He was a man of great energy and imagination and he had prevailed or persuaded the members of the C.O.T.C. to waive the pay that was due to them and with that he proceeded with support and encouragement from the university authorities to build the Armouries. The Armouries had in them on the mezzanine floor, a very attractive officer's mess and too, where they served meals and had meetings of the officers, a very comfortable and adequate lounge and kitchen facility and dining room. And to furnish the lounge and make it look more attractive Gordon Shrum bought for a very modest price I don't imagine it was more than \$100.00, two or three Emily Carrs that now would probably be worth \$15,000 to \$20,000, the way her paintings have gone up. In any event, the C.O.T.C. had a maximum enrollment during that period of something of the

order of 1,200 members and as they were needed for service overseas, in the various units, they moved out and into those units and the younger ones, freshmen, coming in joined the C.O.T.C. or the other units, the Navy or the Air Force. Professor McIlraith, in engineering, was head of the U.N.T.D. and Mr. Alan Harris, in chemistry was head of the R.U.S.

Mr. Specht: I'd like to ask you - you must have seen C.O.T.C. facilities on other campuses. How would you compare them with U.B.C.?

Dr. MacKenzie: U.B.C.'s were far and away the best in any university in Canada. Thanks very largely to Gordon Shrum and as I described, the energy and imagination that he had. It also seemed to have stimulated interest in the student body generally and they participated very effectively, as witness their willingness to allow the waived pay to accumulate and to be used to build the Armouries, to build it much more economically than at any time since. We also had areas available for drill purposes and they went off to summer camps. I remember where the Department of National Defence had arranged for them to do their summer training in.. and I remember the first spring I was here which was the spring of 1945, I'd come in the summer of '44, they were in Chilliwack. I went up one weekend to spend it with them and to see the work they were doing and all of that. And Sunday morning after church parade three or four of the young men went out in a canoe on Cultus Lake and for some, it was a fine bright sunny day and not particularly windy, for some unexplained

reason, they upset and though they were good swimmers, they had been to camp up at Elphinstone, the Y.M.C.A. they were drowned. This naturally was a shock and a very saddening experience to all of us, all the members of the C.O.T.C. and the university generally and particularly to the parents and the friends of those boys. They think the water was so cold that they, when they fell in it, they weren't too far from shore, but the shock was such that they just drowned. The women, they also engaged in appropriate activities, usually with first aid and Red Cross training and experience. And they also had Dean Gage, Professor Gage as he was then, in mathematics, under his supervision and direction they organized the training of radar technicians for the three services and again accumulated a substantial amount of money which later formed part of the money that was used to build the President's House on Point Grey. Incidentally, the President's House at Point Grey, didn't cost the tax-payers of British Columbia or the Government of British Columbia any money. The work was done by the university crews, carpenters, electricians, plumbers and cabinet makers and they did such a fine job and were so proud of it, that the first reception that Mrs. MacKenzie and I had in that home when we went into it at Christmas/New Year '51, was to invite all the workmen and their wives to come and inspect the house and see what their husbands had been doing and so on and so forth. That was, until then, a part of the

fortress area on Point Grey. It was university property, but the government had expanded their own legitimate area to include all of the area where the President's House is and beyond and they returned it to us, that part of it, so that we could build on it. The North-West Telephone Co., the wireless one, had their poles erected in that area, right in front of where the President's House now is and we had some difficulty, but it took time to arrange for them to move them from where they were a little farther south and west, still on the university property but not evident from the house itself. Coming back to the C.O.T.C., as I say, they were probably at the peak of their careers during and immediately following the World War II. Gordon Shrum carried on as officer in command despite taking on the job of chairman of the housing committee as well, in which he had a great deal to do with having the huts moved on. I made the arrangements. I happened to know most of the appropriate ministers in Ottawa, they were friends of mine, like Col. Ralston, who was Minister of National Defence and also Minister of Finance, he had...I had served as a Pte. with him, or and N.C.O. or what you will in World War One. And Brook Claxton, who became Minister of National Defence, and "Doug" Abbot who became Minister of Finance, Jim Ilsey, who was Minister of Finance, all of them were personal friends of mine. I could get them on the long distance phone and say there are such and such huts that are not presently in use by the military and the red-tape will take far too long to make them available for our purposes,

we propose to move them immediately and we'll take care of the necessary formalities later on...And in this way we were able to acquire immediately a number of the huts that were in Abbotsford and actually in the Endowment Lands and over in North Vancouver. We also acquired the use of the military establishments at Little Mountain and out at Sea Island as housing for the veterans. One of the main operations was taking over the Air Force base at Ucluelet and Tofino on the west side of Vancouver Island. Those huts had to be knocked down, loaded on scows, towed all the way round Vancouver Island, unloaded and trucked out into the campus and reconstructed. And we acquired at that time, I think it was, about 110 huts and a hangar and about twelve or fourteen of what we called 'dog houses'. They were little, maybe, twelve by twelve, buildings, I don't know exactly what they were used for over at the base there. But Dr. Shrum asked me if we should bother bringing them over and I said well, we're bringing everything, bring them too. And they proved to be among the most popular of the residence accommodation that we provided for the veterans, including the married veterans because we provided in another adjacent hut, laundry facilities, baths, showers, toilet facilities and all of that kind of thing and we were able to rent them to them for \$5.00 per month.

Mr. Specht: You told me earlier that you lived in one of these huts.

Dr. MacKenzie: We lived in a hut in Acadia Camp, on what

came to be known as President's Row, because we lived there. That particular hut was brought down from Abbotsford, I think, and Mrs. MacKenzie and I and our three young children enjoyed it very much. It was one of the smartest things that I did, but quite unconsciously...without intention, because it made both students and faculty feel that the President was really one of them. We saw them in very intimate conditions, circumstances and we lived exactly the kind of life, put up with the same kind of limitations and restrictions and enjoyed the intimacy of their friendship in a way that would have been quite impossible had we lived in Shaughnessey or Southwest Marine Drive or somewhere else. As I say, it was most enjoyable.

Mr. Specht: After the World War II, in contrast to World War One, there seemed to be still a lot of interest in the military training.

Dr. MacKenzie: There was for a period, and it continued pretty well until the Department of National Defence decided that the officer training units were not worth the money they were spending on them. Personally I think this was a very short-sighted, mistaken view. I think that the officer training units contributed more to the effective purposes of the Department of National Defence for infinitely less money than any other work or unit or department under their care and charge. But as I say, they were looking for economy and they slashed them off as they did a lot of the militia units too. I think this was very short-sighted and mistaken, but somebody, whether it was the

brass or the minister or the government, I don't know, probably a mixture of them all.

Mr. Specht: I would like to come to this a little later. I wonder if we could go back to the immediate post-war period and your involvement. For example, you had been on the Joint Services Committee?

Dr. MacKenzie: Yes. I was on that until it was wound up and we had the administration of the funds and it was a fair amount of money in the funds, of the three units that had accumulated from the waived pay and over and above the cost of the building fee, Armouries and that, because the waiving of the pay continued afterward. I'm not sure what other functions the Joint Services Committee had. We had a Joint Service ball in the winter time down at Deadman's Island, where the Naval buildings are.

Mr. Specht: Is it Discovery that you're referring to?

Dr. MacKenzie: Is that Discovery Island?

Mr. Specht: Not Discovery Island...

Dr. MacKenzie: Its in Coal Harbour. That's Deadman's Island isn't it?

Mr. Specht: I can't remember the name of it.

Dr. MacKenzie: Anyway, the ball was usually held in the drill hall of the Navy Unit there. Attended by the Lt. Governor and his lady and all the officers of all the various units, militia units and the permanent force and so on. Really a gala occasion

to which the young men of the three services brought their best girls or their wives as the case may be. The Joint Services Committee helped in arranging these and organizing them and that. The actual training of course, was in the hands of the Dept. of National Defence and the officers of the units themselves. The Dept. of National Defence attached to the units permanent force officers whom we grew to know and liked very much. After some time with us they would go back to other postings in other parts of the country.

Mr. Specht: What role did you have in the succession of commanding officers?

Dr. MacKenzie: Well, it came time for Dr. Shrum, who had been in the position for many years, relatively many, during the war and following the war, to give up the command and normally one of the staff members, by that I mean the professors who were also serving as officers in the C.O.T.C. would have succeeded and certainly expected to succeed. But I didn't think that any of them had the kind of qualifications or temperaments that lent themselves to good commanding officers of the C.O.T.C. It so happened that Bob Bonner, who had been a student, who served with distinction with the Seaforths in Italy and later on in north-east of Europe, I believe, was wounded and came home as a casualty and had taken up again the study of law and he struck me as being the kind of person, with war experience, actual military training with experience, who would make a first rate C.O. So I requested the Dept. of National Defence that they should

appoint Bob Bonner as the Officer Commanding the C.O.T.C. to succeed Dr. Shrum. First they refused to go along with this because this would be contrary to their policy. They have never had a student as the Officer Commanding a C.O.T.C. unit anywhere in the country. But I explained the circumstances to them and, as I say, having some influence with people in Ottawa, they finally agreed and Bob Bonner took over. Dr. Shrum remained as the honorary Lt. Col. and they were good enough, the unit and Ottawa to appoint me as the honorary Colonel. So Shrum and I would appear on the parades, the passing out parades and on other occasions. I sometimes turned up in my uniform of the 85th Nova Scotia Highlanders, wearing the kilt and other accoutrements of that regiment. Other times I would wear the regular blues of an officer in the militia of Canada. Usually I insisted on wearing my own collar badges and cap badges from my old regiment despite military regulations to the contrary. As I say, we took part in it, but Bob Bonner carried on until he went into politics and became Attorney General under Mr. Bennett. And Finlay Morrison, I think it was, took on from him.

Mr. Specht: Yes. First there was John MacLean.

Dr. MacKenzie: John MacLean. John, too, had been with the Seaforths and severely wounded, he was on campus as Director of Personnel and labour relations with the university employed staff. He is a very fine human being and a very good officer. John MacLean became the Officer in Command of the C.O.T.C. and

served the usual term whatever it is. I've forgotten - several years and he was succeeded, of course, by Finlay Morrison and he was succeeded by Dr. Lawrence Ranta. Ranta was the medical officer and I think he was also the officer in charge of the mess in the Armouries. And he had some hand in the furnishings and decorations and organization of the mess, but all of these were excellent commanding officers. They were efficient and popular with the student body. They turned out, of course, on Armistice Day for the Armistice service that was always held by the university in the War Memorial Gymnasium after it was built. And here again we...officer training units on campus lent their support and their help in raising the money for that building. They also provided the guards of honour on other occasions and provided the units for ceremonials, university ceremonials. We had soon after the war a full and first rate pipe band. Frank Ross, who later became Lt. Governor and who was very interested in Scottish traditions, and background was glad to assist in financial ways in the purchase of the pipes, drums and the uniforms of the pipers and a number of us had in mind that we would have them decked out in the Seaforth tartan and uniforms and that. As you know, the Seaforths are a MacKenzie regiment and Frank Ross, himself his mother's folk, I gather were MacKenzies, because his name is Frank MacKenzie Ross and the Seaforths had a very fine reputation in this community and had done distinguished service and there, as I say, both Bonner and John MacLean were members of the Seaforths. But there was some opposition to this on the grounds

that the members of the C.O.T.C. in the main didn't want to be confused with Seaforths and we finally settled for what is quite common in Highland Regiments, the Royal Stuart tartan and plaid for the pipers. Now as the years passed and as the numbers enrolled in the C.O.T.C. grew smaller and the actual interest in military affairs had diminished somewhat the pipe band seemed to disappear gradually, there would be fewer pipers remaining, fewer students who played the pipes or the drums, so that by the time I left the university there was no longer a pipe band and no one to teach them piping and so on and so forth.

End of Tape No. 3, Side No. 1

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Tape No. 3, Side No. 2

Mr. Specht: In referring to these faculty members who became C.O.s, how would you explain their interest in C.O.T.C.?

Dr. MacKenzie: Well the...Shrum had served himself in World War One with the Artillery, I think it was, in the ranks and won a Military Medal. He had an actual interest in the C.O.T.C. for that reason. Bob Bonner came from active service practically right into the...and John MacLean there, was just a few years between him and active service. Ranta, I'm not sure what units he served with.

Mr. Specht: Dr. Ranta did not serve, but he was with C.O.T.C. since 1944.

Dr. MacKenzie: I think he was in medicine and attached too, with us on the campus, as more or less the medical aide for the university.

Mr. Specht: Finlay Morrison was aide to General Crear in the Second World War.

Dr. MacKenzie: That's right. And he naturally had a keen interest in military affairs, particularly the Officer Training Corps.

Mr. Specht: Also, Ray Herbert, now he was Air Force...

Dr. MacKenzie: Oh, now Ray who lived just across the lane here from where we are now. Ray had a very good record with the Canadian Air Force and turned out to be a natural with them, very popular and I believe he and his unit when they went off for

summer training, were among the best in Canada.

Mr. Specht: The U.B.C. U.N.T.D. also distinguished itself by winning a proficiency award.

Dr. MacKenzie: Oh definitely. As I say, the officer commanding in that first instance was Prof. McIlraith, and he turned that over to Young, Maurice Young.

Mr. Specht: First Frank Turner.

Dr. MacKenzie: Frank Turner, true. Frank left the university and went into the insurance business, I think it was, and then Maurice Young, who again was in the medical profession and made an excellent commanding officer of the U.N.T.D. and his unit was one of the best in the country.

Mr. Specht: You mentioned the military background as being one reason why it would be natural for these people to be interested in military training for the students. Do you think there are other factors?

Dr. MacKenzie: I think that in terms of their own philosophy of society that they felt that in terms of being available if they were ever needed in the future or in terms of their contribution to the nation itself in civilian capacities, the C.O.T.C. and the other units were valuable and important. In addition it gave to the members an experience and an opportunity to earn money during the summer months. Some of them I think were sent off to various parts of Canada for training. Some of them might even have got to Germany, attached to the units over there. All

of this was not only interesting and attractive, but, in my opinion, very valuable to our society, the one we live in.

Mr. Specht: These people would have had responsible positions in society and here they're involved in the training of people who are going to be officers in the armed forces. There's a parallel, I think, with their own position in society of public service and wanting to train people who would be...

Dr. MacKenzie: Likely to follow their example and contribute in a voluntary fashion or in other ways to the public services, the social services and by that I don't mean the professional social services but the local services of the community, both by example and through experience.

Mr. Specht: Would you remember in February, 1946, a meeting with Gen. Crerar when he was touring Canada, touring the various units?

Dr. MacKenzie: I knew Gen. Crerar when he was Col. Crerar in the Department of National Defence and I knew Gen. Stewart who was Major and then Col. Stewart and editor of the Defence Quarterly. I think I wrote one or two articles for him when I was with the University of Toronto. I do remember the visit Crerar made to the campus and we were very happy to have him and enjoyed his visit.

Mr. Specht: The report on that visit said that future training was discussed, the future direction of training on campus.

I guess it would be very difficult to remember the details of this?

Dr. MacKenzie: Well, this was a matter more for the officer commanding and the other officers in the O.T.C. than it was for the President who was concerned with the maintenance of the C.O.T.C. and its effective operations. The details of the training services was something else again. That was a matter for the military based on their own experience and their own reading and their own ideas about the future, requirements, men and weapons and so on and so forth.

Mr. Specht: Quotas were starting to be reduced in 1954 and the C.O.T.C. was limited to 35 at that time. You mentioned earlier that it was economies that were foremost in mind?

Dr. MacKenzie: The beginning of what I claim was a very mistaken policy, but there it was.

Mr. Specht: This was steadily diminished. In 1960 twenty, and later fifteen, finally well until the end. At this time too was there a decline in interest amongst the students?

Dr. MacKenzie: As the war faded from the memories of the people of Canada, and particularly the young people who had no personal experience or knowledge of it, it was inevitable that the interest in military training generally and in the O.T.C.s diminished and then there was the apparently normal and usual reaction against the idea of war and against military activities.

and military expenditures. This was perhaps more pronounced in the student body than anywhere else in our society. Then, of course, the war in Viet Nam and the propaganda on both sides in respect of that war flowed over into Canada and influenced the thought and action of Canadians and particularly Canadian students so that as after World War One, not to the same extent and not with the same speed, interest in and participation in military training of all kinds diminished. It dropped to a lower and lower ebb so that even if the government had continued to maintain and support it, I'm certain that officer training units would have continued but with much smaller numbers, I would think, in total. Probably not more than two or three hundred in all three services, in enrollment, including young women, of course. Women came to us after the war to enrol in the officer training units and appeared on parade and were issued certificates in the passing of parades, as they were called, which were held in the armouries and which when the units were substantial in size, were very impressive occasions. Again, the Lt. Governor and his aides, heads of all the military units in the area including the permanent force were on hand to add colour and importance to the occasions.

Mr. Specht: This is a slight digression. Do you think that the military esprit on the B.C. coast was as strong as in Nova Scotia?

Dr. MacKenzie: Different. In Nova Scotia, for instance, in the late 1800's, the militia was more or less a family affair and

every able bodied man was liable to call-up if necessary for defence and I know in the case of my own family regiment, the 78th Pictou Highlanders, Seaforths, it was raised and maintained in that particular county, and one of my uncles, John T. Sutherland, was a Major in charge of one of the companies, and he had the equipment of his company stored in his own farmhouse. I remember as a boy borrowing one of the Glengarry caps that the Seaforth wore and my younger brother borrowed another one, and we went off fishing in a little boat and my brother stepped into a wasps nest and got stung in the rear there and departed rather rapidly and left his Glengarry there. I'm sure we didn't go back after it. I'm sure the Glengarry is there and sometime in the future they'll find tha badge that said 78th Pictou Highlanders and wonder what Indians and what other one had been involved there. This was in a way more typical. But here, there were some of the ranger units the Rocky Mountain Rangers and so on, of the Interior, but the concentration was in Vancouver and Victoria, I believe, the Seaforths and the other numerous units, the Irish and British Columbia and so on. Excellent regiments with excellent service in both wars. And in Victoria the Canadian Scottish, which was originally...I think, they helped to form the 16th Battalion overseas and they wore the Seaforth tartan, but they were made up, I think, originally of four different Highland units. After the war, because the Seaforths here in Vancouver wore the Seaforth MacKenzie Tartan, they decided to adopt a different one, which was right and proper that they

carry on their own traditions over here.

Mr. Specht: Its less of a family affair on the coast then?

Dr. MacKenzie: I would say its less of a family affair than it was originally in Nova Scotia. It was sort of...every household more or less was prepared to defend his home and his county and his province if necessary both individually and collectively. In a way it was natural, for that period. Of course, it changed and there are a few Canadians who went over to try and save General Gordon who was killed in the Sudan, they were employed on the Nile in the river boats there, but they were taken from the logging camps, guides and so on who could handle boats and canoes. The Boer War, was, I think, the first time that Canadians participated. One of the first Victoria Crosses was won by a Canadian. It was won by a Negro from Nova Scotia who had been on one of the British Warships I think, and he was present at the relief of the city of Lucknow, and there he was so fearless, in terms of leaping into the breach and dealing with guns that were fired at him that he was awarded a Victoria Cross. He is buried somewhere in a little grave in the country community of Nova Scotia. Individuals as I say, participated in the American Civil war mainly on the North, but always as volunteers. Halifax, of course, was a very important naval and military base throughout the 19th century and the 18th century.

Mr. Specht: Going back now, do you think there was any difference between the Liberals and Conservatives in their approach towards the units on campus?

Dr. MacKenzie: I would be inclined to feel that it depended a bit on the Prime Ministers of the day and I don't think MacKenzie King was ever keen upon the Department of National Defence or the Militia or the training since it was contrary, I think, to his nature. He was more interested in what you might call the social issues, the social services, employment and unemployment and all of this was part of his training, background and temperament.

Mr. Specht: The Conservatives were in power now from '57 to '63.

Dr. MacKenzie: Yes, and I don't think there was any particular difference there. The Liberals, as I say, with Brooke Claxton and "Doug" Abbot and Mike Pearson, all of whom had war experience and all of whom I know, were interested in the officer training units on the various campuses. MacKenzie King would be inclined to leave matters of that kind to them. He would not concern himself. General Pearkes, of course, in the Conservative ranks had been...he and Gen. Worthington had been officers in the Pacific Command, they had both been most helpful to the university during and after the war in a variety of ways and were interested in the Officer Training Corps on the campus so that I think it was more a matter of personality than of philosophy I believe, as between various parties. The C.C.F. tended to be anti-war or passivist inclined, Agnes McPhail and Woodsworth for instance, were I think, honestly and genuinely passivist inclined

and would feel that the officer training corps was creating an attitude in young men and young women that wasn't what they were really interested in or believed in, so I would be inclined to feel that we would get less support from people of that kind in that party.

Mr. Specht: What did you think of the integration when they started that?

Dr. MacKenzie: I...following my own experiences in World War One, felt that it was quite unnecessary to have three departments, paymasters and postmasters and hospital services. These I felt could very usefully be either merged or a degree of co-operation between them to prevent the duplication, the overlapping of services, but the actual merging of the three forces, I don't think I was prepared to go that far. I think there was so much in the tradition and the uniform and the Esprit de Corps, particularly in the Navy and the Air Force and of the military units, individually in the Army that was lost with the merging of them all together.

Mr. Specht: Did you express your opinion at the time that this was going on to any authorities?

Dr. MacKenzie: I don't think I did publically. I was in Ottawa as a Senator I guess at the time and I knew Hellyer and I knew when I used to sit in on the Liberal caucus, though I ranked in the Senate as an Independant Liberal, would vote as the issue moved me.

Now I felt that the idea, the principle of the integration of the services was a good one provided it was carried out with discretion and some regard for the points I've mentioned.

Mr. Specht: Could you tell me about what you did when you were a Senator and the move came about to disband the campus units?

Dr. MacKenzie: Well, I wrote some letters. Expressed myself firmly in respect of them, though I don't think I made speeches about them. I have often found over the years that if you direct your views to the key people as individuals you get farther than waging a public campaign which may arouse their opposition and resentment.

Mr. Specht: Did you talk personally with Mr. Hellyer about the issue?

Dr. MacKenzie: I think that I wrote to him about the disbandment of the C.O.T.C. and of the liquidation of the Militia Units during the whole of that period, whoever was available. I know one evening I was at the annual dinner of the Seaforths and Mr. Campney, who was then I think, Minister of National Defence, anyway a minister in the government, was there, and he called on me for a few words and I chided him about the liquidation of every unit I'd ever belonged to! Which I didn't think was necessary. Of course, the extreme example of this was the liquidation of the Blackwatch, a permanent unit, a Montreal based unit. I think I know of the reasons why this was done, but I think it was stupid and unnecessary and unwise.

Mr. Specht: Did you think at any stage that there was a chance of stopping disbandment? I'm sure lots of units mounted a campaign against being liquidated.

Dr. MacKenzie: I...with the kind of social temperament of the day and the...rising costs of defence so called anyway, and the natural desire of the permanent force to retain as much as it possibly could for their own limited budget, it was very difficult to do anything effective about it. I think as I say, the public weren't particularly interested in or concerned about the expenditure of money on any of these operations, because of the difference of the temperament of the times.

Mr. Specht: Did you stand up in the Senate and talk about this?

Dr. MacKenzie: No. It wasn't on our agenda.

End of Tape No. 3, Side No. 2.