

TRANSCRIPT OF AN INTERVIEW

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Interview: Marilyn Harrison

Interviewee: Dr. W. P. Bunt

This is an interview between Marilyn Harrison and Dr. W. P. Bunt at his home in Vancouver, B. C., December 8, 1970.

Harrison: Now Dr. Bunt, could you tell me just a little bit about your boyhood, where you were born and grew up, your family background and activity in the church, and where you had your educational training?

Bunt: I was born in the country near a little community called Markdale in Grey County in Ontario. (Harrison - I know Markdale, that was the part of the country I came from). Do you? When I was quite young my parents moved down to a place called Woodbridge, which is now really a part of greater Toronto, and it was there that I started going to public school in a little country school about a mile and a half out of Woodbridge.

My parents were active in the Methodist Church. In fact, contacts and participation in the church went back several generations. As a matter of fact, I have now in my possession a letter written by my great grandfather in the west of England telling of his joining what was then known as the Wesleyan Movement. He had been, of course, in the established Church of England, but John Wesley made such an impression on him that he became a follower of Wesley, and two of his sons came to Canada, one of them being my grandfather. Both sons were, as their father, in the Methodist Church.

I attended the public school in Woodbridge, and within three weeks of when I was to write the Entrance Examination, we moved to Collingwood. I graduated from public school and went on to what is called Collingwood Collegiate Institute, in other words - high school. After graduation from high school I was induced to come out west by some relatives of mine, so I spent a year in Moose Jaw working in a coal and wood office, in fact I not only worked in the office, I unloaded cars of coal at times, during a very severe winter at that. (Harrison - Moose Jaw would be pretty cold).

That year it was very cold, and I remember at that time a farmer came in for coal. He had driven 90 miles from a settlement northwest of Moose Jaw, and when he had left home two days before, and had driven with horse and sleigh, he said five families were living in one home to conserve fuel and were burning wheat because there was no coal. After a year in Moose Jaw I came to British Columbia. Here I attended McGill College of British Columbia, taking my first two years in arts, and then, as a great many young people do, I became a bit unsettled and spent about six years in business, mainly in the office end of a wholesale hardware. However, the time came when I felt that I must go back to college and go on through for the ministry, which I did. I went back to McGill in Montreal and completed my arts and took my theology at what was then Wesleyan Theological College. At that time there was a very close cooperation between the four Colleges - Congregational, Presbyterian, Methodist and the Anglican.

Harrison: This was in Montreal?

Bunt: This was in Montreal, and I sat side by side with students from all of these colleges under professors that might have been Methodist, Presbyterian, Congregational or Anglican. That I think, was significant in my training because it prepared me at a very relatively young age for the larger communion that formed in 1925, and set my thinking on a broad ecumenical basis. I have always been glad that I went to Montreal because the College arrangements there was the only one at that time for many years after, in Canada.

World War I followed in 1914, as you know, and I along with a great many others thought, well, it would be over in a few months, and I had what I thought then, wasted several years of life out of college, so I didn't

enlist immediately. But toward the end of 1915, I enlisted in an Infantry Battalion being raised on the McGill Campus, and went overseas with that Battalion. However it was not left intact, in other words, it was broken up in a draft, and at that time I was a Company Sargent Major (non-Commissioned Officer). Our Colonel called about twenty of us in when he knew the Battalion was caught in the draft, and told us he was prepared to recommend any of us for commission if we wanted him to. I think we all looked forward to a commission. I transferred to the Royal Flying Corp and my active service in France on the Western Front, and for the rest of the war, was with the Royal Flying Corp. Actually the term used was that I was a Canadian Officer and responded for duty to the Royal Flying Corp, and when the war actually ended, I was an instructor in flying at a training school in England. It was rather interesting that one of the pupils I was instructing just at that time, was, several years later the minister of Canadian Memorial Church, Rev. Harrison Vallett. So that takes me up to the end of the war. I still had about one and a half years of college work in Theology to do, so I returned to Montreal and completed it in one year of work. At that time eighteen hours of lectures a week was considered a full time job. In order to get through in the year I had twenty seven hours of lectures a week. At the end of the year I was about 35 pounds lighter. (Harrison - You didn't have much time for play).

Then I was ordained by the British Columbia Conference in 1920, and about a month later I was married (we have had our Golden Wedding), and my ordained ministry has all been in British Columbia. When I was attending McGill College in Montreal I had a summer field in greater Montreal, and in fact, one of the years I preached through the college year.

Now then, my ministry in British Columbia began in Grand Forks. Three years there and in the summer of 1923, at the end of my third year, it was felt that the Methodists and Presbyterians in Grand Forks, should unite.

Harrison: That would be about the time Dr. Runnals went to Grand Forks, wouldn't it?

Bunt: Dr. Runnals followed me. He was one of three others at least, who took our brides to Grand Forks. I took mine there and Rev. J. D. Holden took his there prior to my going. Local Union was formed in 1923, and I left there June 30th., and Dr. Runnals was called by the new congregation and began his new work right after I left. I went to Kaslo where I served for two years and left there because a local union was formed. The general policy was, that if two congregations united, a minister different to either of those that had been there, would be called. So in 1925 I came down to Mission City about three weeks before Church Union was formed, June 10, 1925. I had the organization of my field with three preaching points. There was a re-organization within the area but two ministers continued with a better pastoral set-up. Then from there I was called to Nanaimo in 1931, and I was there until 1939 in St. Andrew's United Church. At the Board of Home Missions meeting in March 1939, I was appointed Superintendent of Missions for the Conference of British Columbia, beginning my work July 1st.

Harrison: I think we should go back to Nanaimo a little bit. I have a couple of questions I thought I would like to ask you there. The miners, were they members of the United Church, or were they mostly from the outside the church?

Bunt: I think it is fair to say that many of them were members. One serious break in the fellowship of the community of Nanaimo was what they called the big strike, I can't give you off-hand the year of that strike, (Harrison - around 1900 wouldn't it?). Later than that, and that split the community. The effects of it were still not very far beneath the surface when I went to Nanaimo in 1931. What I am coming at is this. There were two Methodist churches, Wallace Street and Haliburton Street, about a mile apart. Haliburton Church was almost, as you might say, at one of the pit heads of the mine, and largely because of the strike the miners who were with the church went to Haliburton Street Church and unconsciously it became known, more or less, as the working man's church and Wallace Street Church was where the management was. As a matter of fact, when the Haliburton Street cause was established it was largely a split in the community because of the strike that led to its establishment. Many old timers said that. The results of that strike were very serious. As I said, the effect was still not very far beneath the surface when I went there in 1925. The Haliburton Street cause was quite an active cause, not as strong as the Wallace Street, but was a very active cause, and Wallace Street was quite a good active cause too.

Harrison: These miners who were in the church, did they support the CCF?

Bunt: There was no CCF then.

Harrison: Were they socialist minded?

Bunt: Yes, they were, yes, they were.

Harrison: They were quite strong?

Bunt: That whole coal mining area was. Now I am not implying all the miners were in the church. The miners, I would say, were fairly well represented in the church, as well as any group at that time of the community, but political socialism was very strong. I had the St. Andrew's Church when I went there. There were a number of families who were still working in the mines, they weren't all at Haliburton Street, there were some in our church who were very loyal active churchmen.

Harrison: Now I ran across somebody else's writing, that they were commenting on Lashley Hall. Now this would be a strike around 1900, where he was speaking very strongly for the miners and against the company, that the miners were being exploited at the time and the view was that not all of the Methodist church was behind him in his thinking, and this was why I was wondering if there was this break in the town between the miners and non-miners.

Harrison: Lashley Hall, I don't think he was ever a minister in Nanaimo, was he?
Bunt: Apparently he had charge of the Chinese and Japanese Community there when he first came out to British Columbia around 1900 or so, and he was active in Nanaimo at that time. He gave a report that they had a government commission on vandalism and strikes and the causes and this kind of thing, and he gave information at this commission hearing. Now maybe he was Salvation Army at that time. He came from the Salvation Army into the Methodist Church. In the Salvation Army his work was largely that of an office executive, or something like that.

Harrison: That is what I thought, so I think it must have been just after he came into the Methodist Church very early.

- Bunt: I am very sure of this, that Lashley Hall came from England direct to the Kootenay country, Rossland, Trail, up in there. He was in Kaslo in the early days. Without looking it up, I wouldn't make that a say-so.
- Harrison: I will check that out. It could be that he was in Nanaimo for a very brief time and had sympathy with the miners from the Kootenay days.
- Bunt: Yes, it might be that, and Lashley Hall was what you'd call an academic.
- Harrison: Oh, really! (aside: It was another minister, L. W. Hall. First a Methodist and then a Presbyterian).
- Bunt: This doesn't need to go on the recording, but I recall the first Conference I was at when the probationers, as they were called then in the Methodist Church, Lashley Hall was retiring from the Presidency of the Conference that year. It was an annual election and the retiring President always gave a retiring address which later took the form of a pastoral letter and to be read to the congregations, and after he had read his letter to Conference, nobody was ready to say anything. Finally, one minister got up and he didn't say it bluntly, but bluntly it meant, that very few people will ever understand what Mr. Hall was trying to say and the letter was referred back to him to re-write before it was read to the congregations. That was what they meant. He was an academic. I remember one of the laymen in Trail telling me he wasn't practical. For instance he couldn't even put a stove pipe together, and in those days there were stove pipes, and he had to send out to get a man to do it.
- Lashley Hall had a good mind. I got to know him on in his later years. He was very thoughtful. In fact this pastoral letter of his had so much thought in it they wanted it read, but they wanted it expressed in terms the ordinary people would understand.
- Well, now we've got to Nanaimo.
- Harrison: I was going to say, could you say anything about Church Union at Nanaimo? Nanaimo seems to be one of the few places in B. C. where there was a fuss in the Presbyterian Church.
- Bunt: Fuss, is not the word, it was "fight".
- Harrison: I was wondering when you went there whether this had been healed over or whether there was a fight in Nanaimo and not in other places.
- Bunt: Well, leave it to your judgment to put in what you want in your thesis. I speak plainly. I think the fight was very largely due to the fact that a fighting Irishman was the Presbyterian minister in Nanaimo.
- Harrison: I got this impression from things I had read, that Mr. Lister had a key position there.
- Bunt: Oh yes, and he led that congregation well, he kept them out of Union, there was no doubt of that. He preached anti, but in spite of his preaching, the majority of the congregation went over to the United Church. I don't think that the congregation as such, did, and the majority of their workers did. Many of their key workers in the Presbyterian Church became very active in the United Church. I went there in 1931, that was six years after Union. I think the fight was in 1924. In fact, one woman, also Irish, from a different part of Ireland, said, she at different times thought they were coming to blows in the church before they fought it out. It was bitter.

- Harrison: I gather from reading reports that there were charges of bickering with the church rolls, leaving people off who were supposed to be on.
- Bunt: That was common. In fact, I remember reading, and I was minister of the Mission Church at that time, and reading in the Vancouver press the results of the trial of the court case, and I remember saying to my wife "I'd hate to be that Presbyterian minister after having to admit to having the roll", and apparently he had to. No, the bitterness was almost entirely in the Presbyterian Church. I don't think either faction had feelings of that nature against the Methodists until after Union was effective and the Property Commission had acted, and the former Presbyterian Church became United Church, then the congregation including the Methodists and the Presbyterians were commonly called "church stealers" and terms similar to that. Feeling was not being expressed too much when I went there in 1931 and you didn't have to scratch far before it would bob up.
- Harrison: Did Mr. Lister remain there after Union or did he leave?
- Bunt: I think he left very shortly.
- Harrison: I wondered if you were able to have any cooperation with the Presbyterian church during your days in Nanaimo?
- Bunt: I don't know how long Mr. Lister stayed there after Union, but when we went there in 1931, a minister by the name of Rev. John H. Kirk, was there in the Presbyterian Church and he came to my Induction service and brought greetings of his church. He left a year later and I heard it said from more than one source, that his trouble began in his church when he came to help welcome me to Nanaimo. Now you can assess that as you wish.
- Harrison: Would you agree with Dr. Rae who said the troubles in the Presbyterian Church came from the Irish, never the Scottish? That it was the Irish Presbyterians who were the difficult ones?
- Bunt: Well, that was the situation in Nanaimo certainly.
- Harrison: Well, I just wanted to know what brought it in mind when you said it was an Irish Presbyterian minister?
- Bunt: Dr. Rae may have been pretty accurate. It has just occurred to me now, in my home town of Collingwood, Ontario, they had a fighting Irishman in the Presbyterian Church and he was speaking strongly and continuously against Union and the congregation voted against Union 75%-25%, but in the 25% they immediately, once the vote was taken, came over to the Methodist Church, they didn't wait until the 10th of June. In the 25%, there were, I was told later, practically the whole Sunday School Staff and about 90% of the Session and Board of Management. The active workers came over to the United Church in my home town of Collingwood.
- Harrison: And that would correspond with what happened in my mother's home town where the Presbyterian Church voted out, but all the key workers went into Union.
- Dr. Rae said that one of the reasons why the Irish Presbyterians were that way was because they had the Presbyterian name in their church name, whereas the Scottish had never had the Presbyterian word in their name. It was always the Church of Scotland or the Free Church, and therefore they didn't have this strong loyalty to a name, and therefore didn't mind losing it.

Bunt: I think maybe that is right. I hadn't just thought of it in that light, but the two experiences I know of first hand, were fighting Presbyterians, the ministers were.

Harrison: Now, perhaps we can move on into the 1940's and your work in Home Missions. You were particularly connected with the Japanese.

Bunt: Well, the Japanese congregations of our church, if I remember correctly, were eight.

Harrison: And they were all under your Home Missions?

Bunt: All except Powell Street, which had attained self-support. The minister was Dr. Shimizu, who was one of the more brilliant, academically, and a very able administrator.

Harrison: He was one of the few, I guess, who was educated here in British Columbia?

Bunt: Yes, he was. He had that advantage. In fact, I guess he was the only one when I come to think of it, at that date, and the Japanese congregations as I knew them first, were well organized. I remember what impressed me one time when I was attending the Board Meeting in Powell Street Church while they were self-supporting, I had quite a close connection with them, and while attending one of their Board Meetings the Secretary of the Board had the books there in front of him and he could turn to them at any moment and give the name, the family name, the wife's name, the children's names and ages. They had knowledge of every family in their congregation. It was an extensive knowledge and that impressed me because so many of the congregations other than Japanese, when I met with their congregations or boards, many times they didn't have half the information they should have had about their own constituency. The Japanese congregations very readily welcomed me and I got to feel that I had friends in them all. Of course, I couldn't speak their language, but the impression was that our Japanese congregations and the ministers, I think without exception, (there might have been one exception) wanted to be good citizens of Canada. They got a lot of criticism of course. I began in 1939, it wasn't long till World War II was a-foot. In fact, just a few months after I became Superintendent, the war started and the trouble arose, of course. I always had, and I still have a high opinion of the leadership that was given by our Japanese ministers and the honesty of purpose in seeking to lead their people to be good Canadians.

Harrison: Now, would you say that this was different from the non-Christian Japanese and their relationship to Canada?

Bunt: I didn't have much to do with them but I was a very close friend of the late Dr. McWilliams, and in many a conversation with him, (my opinion is largely based on his, who knew the language and knew the people) that there was not that loyalty to Canada among the non-Christians. On the whole, you see, there are always some, you know.

Harrison: I talked to Dr. McWilliams last spring and this was the feeling that he gave to me that there was a difference between the Christians and the non-Christians.

Bunt: Yes, I think so too.

Harrison: And particularly in Steveston which, he said, were a very difficult group, that they were more radical and less loyalties. In other communities up the coast the non-Christians were more loyal to Canada than those at Steveston.

Once the war came on and the evacuation was made known, I noticed in your Minute Book there is a Sub-Committee called the Consultative Committee on Japanese work. Now was this a sub-committee of the Home Missions?

Bunt: I noticed your notes there. The sub-committee to which you refer, was a smaller Committee of the Home Mission Committee. It was not the Consultative Committee that is referred to in your note. The Consultative Committee was broader. It had, for instance, some Anglicans on it and the word inter-denominational might have been better, and it had as a representative (I am speaking from memory, and my memory is not too good on that point). I know we used to meet with Colonel Mead quite often who was the key man of the R.C.M.P. here in Vancouver at the time, and a Mr. Gale, who was perhaps my opposite number in the Anglican Church. He was with us on this Consultative Committee, and I think there were representatives from the W.M.S. as well as the Board of Home Missions, because the W.M.S. had a very active organization in the Japanese W.M.S. groups. So that Consultative Committee is a broader thing than was the Sub-Committee. The Sub-Committee consisted perhaps at the most, eight or ten of us who were all in the United Church and we were all members of the Conference Home Missions Committee. Dr. Rae was on that Committee.

Harrison: Now was this the same Consultative Committee that I had which were working with the B. C. Security Commission?

Bunt: Yes, it was.

Harrison: That clears that up. Well now, your very small Home Missions Committee, what ~~was~~ exactly was your work in this?

Bunt: You mean the Sub-Committee?

Harrison: I noticed in that, that you had some Japanese ministers on that Sub-Committee too, at one time or another. At least there was one meeting when several of them were present.

Bunt: The main task of that Committee was to further the interests of the Japanese when they were re-located, and to be a kind of go-between when it was needed, between them and into the new community into which they were moved, and especially our United Church in the new community in which they moved. That in a way, and then, well, they put a lot in the Hastings Park you know, and housed them there for awhile. It was kind of a clearing house, a Manning Pool before they were sent out to other areas, and such things as providing suitable services, and many of the things which weren't provided by the government, you know.

Harrison: You said earlier that you had been a minister at Kaslo and at Grand Forks. Now, how would you see the Japanese churches fitting into those communities, having lived in them yourself beforehand?

Bunt: Well, it is rather interesting. It's hard for me to know what I thought beforehand because I never thought of such a thing beforehand. You see I was there ten or twelve years before the war began, but I don't think we could have hoped for happier relationships in any community or communities

than were ultimately established in Greenwood, which was close to Grand Forks, and in Kaslo, the home of Howard Green. I don't know his feelings on the matter today, but I know he made public utterances against them, and yet when the community went there his mother was one of the ardent friends of the Japanese Community and liked them very much. Incidentally, she had her 97th birthday, the other day. We've been friends of the Green's since Kaslo days, and when Howard Green's statement appeared in the press, I sat down and wrote him a letter, cultured in the kind of terms he would use in writing me, and telling him that I differed with him, and I got a nice letter back and it didn't affect our friendship in any way, and he appreciated knowing what my stand was and things like that.

Harrison: Did he give any explanation as to why he took the stand he did?

Bunt: No, and we shouldn't I suppose, impute, but my own theory is, that if you are a member of any political party, you are not entirely free.

Harrison: I was wondering whether it was because his own family were still with the Japanese, that there obviously wasn't a personal thing there and it was not a history of a personal animosity toward this?

Bunt: No, the Green's were not given to that kind of thing, not Howard or his mother.

Harrison: Now in Grand Forks though, there were problems with the Community and the Japanese, and I was wondering what this was determined by or whether you had any indication. The minister in Grand Forks seemed quite friendly and willing to work with the Japanese, but the town people - - I got some papers from Grand Forks where they very definitely didn't want them, for instance, in the High School - the Japanese students.

Bunt: I wonder who was the editor of that paper at that time?

Harrison: Now, I don't know. I'd have to check that and see.

Bunt: The man who was editor when we were there would take that position I think. I think he would take that position, but he isn't living now.

Harrison: I was just wondering whether the community itself, would tend to be a little narrow-minded or whether it was just a few people on the town council and perhaps on the school board who managed to direct things and keep the Japanese out, or whether it was just the fear they didn't have enough money to enlarge the school to take them all in and they wanted the Provincial Government or Federal Government to look after them?

Bunt: Well now, I am trying to recall whether there was any sizeable number of Japanese in Grand Forks.

Harrison: They were just on the border, they were just on the edge, and they passed a law saying they couldn't come into the town.

Bunt: I see, and you have information, that if I had had it, I'd forgotten, but at Greenwood they took over the community, and surprisingly soon there seemed to be no colour line at all in Greenwood.

Harrison: I was just wondering whether with your work in Grand Forks you would know why they wouldn't let them in, but I gather that the Japanese settled just outside of Grand Forks did so on their own and bought little farms.

Bunt: There was a Japanese community down north-east of Grand Forks on Christina Lake, down in there. I was there too, and I can't recall where they came from. They might be considered in the records department of the Japanese community, although they were ten or twelve miles away, all of that. Of course, as you may recall there were a lot of restrictions - they couldn't fish even in the inland lakes for food, and they weren't supposed to fish in Christina Lake they were living beside, and the same up in Kaslo.

Harrison: And they weren't even allowed to fish in those lakes?

Bunt: I think perhaps after awhile the regulation was eased a bit, but they were needlessly strict for awhile.

Harrison: You dealt with a lot of property. I noticed by your files you have lists and lists of property, both the selling of church property and also the handling of furniture. Now, did you do this voluntarily only for the United Church people or how did you get into the property and furniture handling business for the Japanese?

Bunt: Well, I think it was probably the way the title to the property was held. I think that in almost every case the property belonged to the United Church of Canada as a body corporate, and it was administered through the Board of Home Missions, and they in turn, placed the responsibility for property matters on the Superintendent of Missions for British Columbia. That is how I came into the property.

Now furniture, I think what we were trying to do then was to try and save as much as we could of what was stored in the attic of old First Church, places like that and out at Steveston in halls where the Security Commission took it over. The Security Commission did anything but keep the furniture secure. Again and again it was sold, and I think, as I recall, that was about all I was trying to do was to try and safeguard their interests until such time as they would be free to take back their own furniture, but it was moved in so hurriedly that I don't think they had really time to organize and classify. It was just piled in there and the old top attic floor of the old First Church was jammed full and it was hard to segregate it, and in a loose way we'd know if Steveston property was in such and such a section and that sort of thing.

Harrison: When they were evacuated, were they only allowed to take certain things or a certain amount of stuff?

Bunt: The houses were so small they couldn't handle it. For instance, up at Lemon Creek, up in the Kootenays, there was a big Japanese settlement there, and I remember one time when I was in there, Tak Komiyama, who died not too long ago, (Harrison - about two years ago, I guess it was. It was just after he came back to Vancouver), Tak was a missionary in there and they just had a little house, no lining on the inside, just two by four's studding and then the siding on the outside, a very small house, and Tak was there and his Mother and Father were there and the W.M.S. worker was living with them. At the time I was visiting them I was in the house and Tak and I slept on couches in the living room and I was right against the wall and it happened to be cold weather when I was there and you could scrape the frost off the inside walls with your fingers. I don't know how his father and mother and Miss Hird arranged their accommodation in another part of the house because it was so small. Their house probably was larger than many of them too because there were three adults in the family. They could only use so much of their belongings because there wasn't space to put them. That is why it had to be stored elsewhere.

- Harrison: How did you find the cooperation between the two levels of Government and the R.C.M.P? Did they cooperate, and how did you feel they reacted? These were the men who were actually working with the Japanese.
- Bunt: I had very little to do with the Federal Government level. It was all to do with the B. C. Security Commission.
- Harrison: Now, what would their attitude toward the Japanese on the whole be, were they sympathetic?
- Bunt: Well, you might have to distinguish between an official position and a private position.
- Harrison: Well, it's mainly the private one I am interested in since the official one is on record.
- Bunt: I have a great deal of confidence in Colonel Mead who was the contact man for quite awhile, and I'll never forget one of the things he said to me in an early interview I had with him on the matter of this dispersal, rounding them up, and it was to this effect. He said there was no need for them to have made the wholesale arrests that they did and take them into custody. He said there weren't more than 50 in the Vancouver area who were doubtful, and we had them all rounded up before they started to round up the others, as we had been watching them for some time and we had them under control. His own personal position was that it was a tragedy to break the families up the way they did, shipping the men here and the women there, and that kind of thing. That was his private position I found working with him, and I think Dr. Rae would say the same thing because he was with us quite often. I know Dr. McWilliams had a high opinion of Colonel Mead too because of his humanitarian approach to the whole thing.
- Harrison: In other words would you say then this whole thing was forced upon them by sort of a mass hysteria at the time of the war?
- Bunt: Yes, I am quite sure of that.
- Harrison: Do you think this feeling has always been as latent and came to a head when the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbour, or do you feel it was partially stirred up by politicians?
- Bunt: I can't think of any politician who would deliberately do that, although my knowledge of them is very very imperfect.
- Harrison: In the newspapers of course, you get the politicians speaking but you can't tell from what they are saying whether they are speaking because of pressure behind them, or whether the reporter has given the right slant to it.
- Bunt: That's true.
- Harrison: I just wondered if at the time you were aware of this, and how. I gather there wasn't a loud outcry defending the Japanese at this time?
- Bunt: When a war is on you have to expect certain reactions whether they are normal or abnormal. There is a war hysteria, but Dr. McWilliams said again and again that so many of them in British Columbia came here to get away from the kind of conditions in Japan that were holding them down, and they didn't come here to re-create trouble.
- Harrison: How did the Japanese clergy and the Japanese Christians react to the whole evacuation situation when they were first notified of it. Were

Harrison: they bitter? Did they feel they were being dealt with very harshly when they tried to assume they could be good Canadians? How did they react to this?

Bunt: I never heard any of our Japanese ministers express themselves bitterly and I can't say what they thought. I am sure some of them must have thought this unfair, as most of us did. And I think they set about, in a Biblical sense, to be a real Shepherd to the people and tried to restrain them. We lost one young minister here, a Mr. Nomoto, and he went mental, and because it was a bad case, he didn't live too long. I think the people who knew him felt that it was largely the strain that was happening to the people that caused him to go the way he did. Even though they must have felt themselves very bitter, I never heard any of our ministers express themselves that way.

Harrison: They didn't try to denounce the church or anything along this line?

Bunt: Not that I know of. Of course, again as I say, I don't understand Japanese.

Harrison: Certainly Rev. McWilliams didn't give that feeling that he had gotten it either, and I was just wondering if in a slightly different position, maybe you would have gotten a different feeling.

Did any of the Christians, or very many of them go back to Japan after the war?

Bunt: I don't think so.

Harrison: Now do you feel this was because they really had adopted Canada as their country or because the church was able to interpret to them what was happening?

Bunt: I think both. I think most of them wanted to stay in Canada. In fact, some of them said that the dispersion from British Columbia was the best thing that ever happened to them. Some of them came to see it after a few years. As they got scattered around instead of being in a little Tokyo, they got spread over Canada and entered into the life of Canada as Canadians rather than Japanese.

Harrison: I was just wondering because there has been a statement made that quite a few of those who signed up willing to go back to Japan afterwards, did so, because they really didn't understand the significance of signing and the fact that maybe their parents wanted to go back and therefore their children had to go back in order to keep family solidarity, and I was wondering if the church had been able to explain to its people a little more fully what was involved, and therefore didn't sign up through misunderstanding.

Bunt: You probably know that Mr. Kabayama, one of the eight ministers who were here, is temporarily back in Japan preaching. He is supposed to come back to Canada very soon.

Harrison: Is he? I didn't know that.

Bunt: He has been in Japan for two or three years. He had a fine family of eight children, and one of the eldest boys, I think Abraham, is principal of a High School in Edmonton now. He gave them all Bible names and they were a fine family.

Harrison: Were you at General Council in 1944?

Bunt: I don't think so.

Harrison: I was wondering, there was a foreign - - - - -

Bunt: I was there in 1940, and I think it was eight years before I was there again.

Harrison: It was 1944 when the Board of Home Missions came up with a resolution obviously condemning the Federal Government and its handling of the Japanese situation, and Francis Stevens brought in an amendment which greatly watered down the original intent of it, and I was wondering what your reaction was to this? It was a very, very narrow vote. In General Council passing the amendment, I think it was 14 votes passed the amendment, and from the newspaper account, they obviously had a very very bitter fight over it.

Bunt: No, I wasn't there that time.

Harrison: I just wondered if you might have been there?

Bunt: Francis Stevens, of course, the son of Hon. H. H. Stevens, staunch Conservatives, I don't know whether I can recall what H. H. Stevens' statements might have been on the Japanese.

Harrison: He was for the evacuation I know, because I talked to him last spring, and he said it still was the best thing that could have happened.

Bunt: I think it worked out that way, yes.

Harrison: He said they had to get out of British Columbia, there were too many of them in B. C. This was a good thing to have them dispersed. What the actual feelings were at that time, I don't know.

Bunt: Were the Conservatives in power at that time?

Harrison: No, it was MacKenzie King, and the Liberals were actually handling it at this time.

Bunt: That's right, too.

Harrison: I was just wondering if you had come across it at all? I got the feeling from talking to several people and also reading Presbytery and Conference Minutes, that this whole Japanese situation wasn't discussed too much, and I was wondering whether this was kept quiet because you could work better, that you didn't have an open-all discussion about what the church's position was going to be or anything along this line, and I was wondering if this was done deliberately, that you felt it was better to work in a quiet way with the Japanese?

Bunt: I just can't recall. I doubt if there was anything deliberately planned that way. My own thinking is that quite often you accomplish your end if you don't publicize it too much.

Harrison: This is what I wondered because I got that feeling in reading that this was the way you were operating, and this was sometimes better to be quiet. I was talking to Dr. Runnals and he had the feeling that perhaps if it had been widely known throughout the church and discussed, that maybe you wouldn't have been able to do very much. He seemed to feel that church congregations would be quite split on this question.

Thank you very much Dr. Bunt.

Tea is served and Mrs. Bunt remarks it is their Anniversary Cake -
their Golden Wedding Cake.