

Interview with Mr. Leon Ladner, April 5, 1972

R. Roy I'd like to, if I may, just question you a bit

L. Ladner Certainly

R. on your background with General Pearkes. Now, one thing that some people say--and you may remember this famous statement, I think it was by James Gardiner in, let me see, it would be in the spring, February 1945

L. By the way, your manuscript's downstairs. Should we have it?

R. I don't think I need it right now, I don't think so

L. I've got a suggestion or two to make

R. Ah, good, well bring it up later. But remember where Gardiner claimed that Pearkes was a Conservative and had been acting in the Conservative interest before he left the Party. Now he told me that --

L. Before Gardiner left the Party?

R. No, before Pearkes left the army. Pearkes told me that although he used to vote on a Conservative ticket, he didn't have any contact with the Party organization as such. In brief that, when he resigned, he had no idea at that time of resigning from the army and running as a member of parliament.

L. That is perfectly correct, because as campaign manager of several campaigns and active in all of them since 1917, I was closely associated with any matters that affected potential candidates. Part of my duties was to seek out candidates, men with the qualifications for running, and I can tell you that that statement that you made there is perfectly right. He never did have any active interest in the

Conservative Party before that date.

R. Well now, were you one of the Conservatives who approached him after he resigned. I know Green ~~did~~.

L. After he resigned from the government?

R. Yes

L. Yes, I was. We wanted to make him lieutenant-governor.

R. Oh, did you?

L. Yes, but the problem was--and I was one of three men involved in these discussions--the problem was that he couldn't afford it. Wallace had spent . . . .

R. Oh, wait a minute. I'm sorry, sir. I'm thinking now of 1945

L. Of 1945?

R. No, I'm thinking of resigning from the army

L. And what was your question?

R. Were you one of the men who approached him when he resigned from the army in 1945 to become a Conservative candidate?

L. No, but I was in touch with the proceedings all the time. The people in Victoria, where he was going to run, would be the appropriate people to do that and they approached him and apart from that it would be the Leader of the Party, of our Party, and I don't know whether he approached General Pearkes or not but I have a suspicion that he did.

R. Well, I believe in 1945 that it would be Mr. Green, who would be leader of the federal segment of the Party here in British Columbia, and I know that he went to see him. Now, as you know from reading the manuscript, he does agree to be a candidate, he goes over to Nanaimo and Victoria and he is accepted there. Now, he has kept no correspondence,

no diaries, almost nothing, and it is a little bit difficult for me to try and imagine or find out precisely what happened at that particular point.

- L. Well, I know Howard Green did go to see him, and Howard Green had a senior position at that time. He had been in parliament since 1935. I had been nine years in parliament; Howard Green was in my office as a young lawyer and in the election of 1930 I was defeated by Alderman Angus MacInnis, I had had very large majorities before that, 5,000 the previous majority. Mackenzie King who was so astute in political strategy, sent out Timothy Heaney from Ottawa to make a deal with what they called the Independent Labour Party which was the CCF Party, and the deal was that in Vancouver South, which covered the area from here to Marpole and from over Boundary Road to the University here, that the Independent Labour Party was running Alderman MacInnis, for a Labour candidate, and the Liberals would not run anybody, but in Vancouver Centre and Burrard, where Harry Stephens and General Clark were candidates, the Liberals would not run candidates but the Labour Party would run a candidate - no, it was reversed, the Liberals would run a candidate and Labour would support them in these two constituencies. The result was that I wanted to stay in my constituency here but the campaign committee for the province insisted that I tour the province and help the doubtful seats. So I spent most of my time all through British Columbia campaigning. When I got back the President of the Liberal Party for Vancouver, a client of ours in the office and a friend of mine, quietly and confidentially warned me that Mackenzie King had made this deal and had lately written a letter, having heard that

the Liberals weren't supporting leaders but were going to support me. Mackenzie King was insisting that they should comply with the agreement and honour the agreement, and that he would put advertisements in the newspaper. Two days before the election a half-page advertisement was put in urging the electors of Vancouver South to elect the Independent Labour candidate, Alderman MacInnis and this friend of mine, who was the President of the Liberal Party told me about this and he said, "You should get busy right now." And that was about five days before the election. So I came back - and when the 32,000 votes were counted I was 700 short. The greatest blessing that ever befell me, the greatest blessing because I was able to devote myself to my professional business and more particularly to business activity, business interests. So it all worked out beautifully, and King was a very good protagonist. Now, that was in 1935, and General Pearkes, of course, went through the war and he came through later.

R. At that particular time, in 1945, with Mr. Green head of the Liberal-Conservatives, what was your position vis-à-vis the Conservative Association at that time?

L. Well, we had what they called a federal council - I don't know whether you've heard about it or not.

R. No.

L. Well, I've got a lot of material here. We had a dispute with the provincial organization and Deane Finlayson. They had wanted to assume jurisdiction over federal matters and Howard Green and the other members, and General Pearkes and all of them objected to this because the federal matters, sometimes the policies of the province and the federal

policies were in conflict so that you couldn't have one organization controlling both these things and contesting with each other. So, to shorten my story, at a meeting in Vernon - I've forgotten the year, you'll see it in the data I have here - a resolution was passed condemning George Drew, Howard Green and everybody else in the most vigorous language. Then I was asked to form the Federal Council which consisted of a great number of Conservative people who were interested in federal matters and Deane Finlayson carried on his own provincial organization until he ran out of steam and he had to quit. Finally, I brought about a meeting, several meetings, but one in particular in my office, of Deane Finlayson and his right-hand man, Debussy, and Frank Dorchester, who was then active, myself and one of our presidents, and we negotiated a settlement of our difficulties and we obtained the authority of the federal government to have authority over our own activities. Now, General Pearkes at that time - he was living in Victoria and he, if I remember correctly, was a friend of Anscombe, and Anscombe had been partly responsible for this division because he wanted also . . . being a strong man (have you spoken with him?)

R. No, not yet.

L. Being a strong man, he wanted to run the show and we wouldn't have it. That led up to the circumstances which were later healed. Now, General Pearkes' activity during that time, he didn't take a very active part but he took some part, because he was a friend of Anscombe and he wanted to see the peace between the two parties.

R. I think it was in October 1947, if I remember correctly, that Pearkes was appointed, I think you call it President of the British Columbia

Progressive Conservative Association. Now, I gather - the incident that you mention, that famous time in Vernon . . .

L. He wasn't there.

R. But that occurred a couple of years later. Now, am I right in thinking - and I think I am, that it was in the years after Anscombe came to power, that the conflict between the federal and provincial Conservative members gathered a fair amount of steam.

L. That is correct.

R. But prior to that you had just the one Conservative Association in B.C.?

L. That is correct.

R. And I gather that what Pearkes was attempting to do was to hold the group together which was about impossible.

L. And so he couldn't take a very active part on one side of the dispute or the other until he got into power, until the Party got into power and he was Minister of Defence. Then he joined with the Federal Council and was part of our organization, our federal organization, necessarily so.

R. Well, how did this Federal Council differ from - or what was its relation to the British Columbia Conservative Association?

L. They were separate organizations, they were at that time. Deane Finlayson had a provincial organization in the constituencies, we had a federal organization; sometimes they were the same people but they functioned separately, one in respect to federal politics and the other in respect to provincial politics, and if I look at some material here it will be elucidated - I've got a copy of this, I can give it to you.

R. Oh yes, this is the Progressive Conservative Party of Canada "focus report". I am trying to think of where I can get my hands on a run of

Progressive Conservative pamphlets, leaflets and all the rest of it. Do you know, they don't have any in the Provincial Archives and I don't know where they've all gone.

L. Here's something, look on page 2.

R. Oh, I see. Oh, lovely! Are these spare copies?

L. Yes.

R. Because anything I can have Xeroxed. Oh, this is marvellous! this is marvellous!

L. That's the general picture.

R. Oh, this is a gold mine . . . . I'll just put that aside.

L. Keep that. [letter re the Columbia]

R. Oh this will be tremendously valuable, Have you been approached at any time in respect to the Columbia River by a chap over at the University of Victoria, Neil Swainson, who is doing his Ph.D. on the Columbia River?

L. No, I heard about it. He suggested that I know about the Columbia River, and I've got an address that I gave to the Canadian Bar association on the right of Canada to divert the Columbia River to the Fraser River. I was asked by a very dear friend of mine, Dr. Mackenzie, president of the University - he and I go fishing every year together - I was asked by him to attend a conference at the University of Washington of the International Law Association and to give a paper on Canada's right to divert the river. I spent a lot of time on it, a great deal of time, and had an overwhelmingly

convincing case. Under the Boundary Waters Treaty Act wherein the right of Canada to control the water within its own boundaries was definitely favourably treated in the United States, and this was called the Harman doctrine. Harman was the Attorney General of the United States and he had negotiated with Mexico some years before to the Rio Grande going down to Mexico, and he established the principle that the United States could do anything with the water that they liked because of a foreign country could interfere it was in derogation of the sovereignty of the United States. Then there was a case went before Chief Justice Marshall of the United States Supreme Court and he confirmed that right. So in this case, when the Boundary Waters Treaty Act was passed, and General McNaughton - I was working with him and he wanted me to go into this thing too, you see, because he was the one who raised this question - so when the Boundary Waters Treaty was passed, I think in 1909, or '03 or something like that, it established the Harman doctrine of the sovereignty of the country, you see. So we went down to Seattle to the University of Washington, and here were the power people from all over the Pacific Northwest and a representative from Washington was there and all kinds of people at the University. So I gave this paper and the substance of it you will see in that political address, but I gave a technical address, you see, which I later gave to the Canadian Bar Association, that brought out these principles and proved beyond any question of the Southam party of newspaper reporters that Mr. Ladner had done his homework, and so I had, and it proved beyond a question of our right and the Americans were flabbergasted. They had lawyers there to give their side of the case. All they said was "This Treaty was made many years ago and it is now out of date", and



that the international law should be established of the equitable apportionment of the rights on the rivers that go from one country to another, and that is the law in Europe, that's the way it's done. But this was a special case of a special treaty which the United States put their foot in in the wrong place. So we did establish that and that had a big effect. Then when McNaughton sat with the joint commission he established his point and the Americans then came to terms on the deal that we made. Otherwise, you know, they're tough traders and that's why McNaughton was supposed to be so undiplomatic because they got his goat and he'd get mad, d'you see, and he'd fight like nobody's business. This is a fact.

R. Can I throw one or two more questions at you with respect to Pearkes, especially in the early years. As you know, he accepts the candidacy, he runs, he becomes a member of parliament, he goes - I find out - on his way to Ottawa (I think I mentioned he is on the train with Doug Harkness and Arthur Smith).

L. Yes, Dr. Smith - marvellous speaker.

R. And then he comes back in the first year or so; in any event, he becomes established; he finds his feet, shall we say, in the House of Commons and he comes back to British Columbia, and I would gather that as he gains more knowledge and more experience as a member of parliament, as a politician - it's completely different from the last thirty-five years of being a military officer - that he gains, presumably, more influence within the party here in British Columbia itself.

L. Because he became a good politician. He sensed the feelings of the other people. He never blurted anything out. He was always cautious and always thought over what he was going to say before he said it and as

*Pearkes as a politician & speaker*

a rule you could never refute it very well. He was very careful in his statements and candid. I have never heard him, for example, give a speech, a political speech, by following, among other things . . . like essays - as a public speakers. As a public speaker he was very good and convincing. He was not an orator, but his candor and sincerity and honesty, and he never made promises if they were going to be broken. Everybody in the party, even his political opponents, recognized those characteristics in him, so as a person he could be very effective because he was liked. As a rule political people try to avoid difficult questions by beating around the bush. Now, Diefenbaker had a very high opinion of George Pearkes.

R. Why- any idea?

L. Because he had been a in the war and of his personality, and mainly because of the respect that everybody had for him. I don't think Pearkes had any enemies that I ever heard of.

R. I haven't found any yet, quite frankly.

L. Even his political opponents in the House of Commons had a very high regard for him. I know that, in contact with them, you see. Then we had a big meeting in Victoria in - I think it was '58 - I don't know if you knew about it.

R. Another question I was going to ask was - and I don't know how much you know about it, I mention it briefly in the manuscript - about Pearkes campaigning for Mr. Bennett who at that time was running as a Conservative candidate - I think about 194 . . .

L. I know about that because I was campaigning, too, for Bennett.

R. Were you?

L. And Howie Green. The two of us went up there to help Bennett, to

make speeches for him. He was running for Yale. We phoned him - we went to Penticton but he wasn't there. We tried to get in contact with the headquarters of the party but we couldn't. So we asked Bennett, "What about the headquarters? We've not been able to find the office of headquarters - of the organization." He said, "I haven't got any. I don't need an organization." "Have you no organized top members of your party here?" "No", he said, "I run the show myself." And he's still running it! Wasn't that characteristic?

R. I'll be darned. I was wondering, you know - to make a great leap forward, but just to touch on it for only a moment - whether Pearkes helping him as much as expected in this particular campaign, whether this would have any relationship some twelve years later in 1960 when Pearkes becomes Lieutenant-Governor. Maybe it has no relationship whatsoever - I don't know.

L. I don't think it has, but I can tell you a very important part of that . . . you'll have to judge how much you can use. I was asked to approach certain people to become Lieutenant-Governor, because I was the representative in this country. We had spoken to Pearkes before - he was the first choice - but he said he couldn't afford it. Wallace had spent something like \$50,000 a year, ~~which~~ of his own money. Charles Banks - both of whom I knew - had spent large sums of money because they were wealthy people, but Pearkes couldn't afford this. So he turned it down. I approached several people, amongst them Bobby Ker of Victoria - a very fine type of man - and he couldn't do it for health and a lot of reasons. So finally I reported that it was impossible, that they would have to do something

to get Pearkes. Well now, I don't think you can use this part of the thing but I'm going to tell you about it. So I insisted and there were a number of the members of the party consented to have Pearkes. So highly was he regarded that they decided to raise a fund every year for him of \$25,000 to assist him. But, of course, he didn't like that. However, he took the position and during the first year - I think it was, I don't think he ever accepted any money - it was brought to the attention of Bennett and to the great credit of Bennett, Bennett made an extra government appropriation of \$25,000 a year. Did you know that?

- R. I heard that it was upped somehow or other to cover it.
- L. Bennett did it. I don't think it had any relationship to his campaign, General Pearkes' campaign for Bennett. Mr. Bennett had the highest opinion of him too.
- R. Well, that was just a little side point that I was wondering about. Now, again to go back to the relationship between General Pearkes and Mr. Diefenbaker, and again I think I touch on it in that chapter - and I haven't finished that chapter yet. But in 1948, I think, the Progressive Conservative leadership convention when Drew and Diefenbaker, among others, were running for the leadership, Pearkes nominated Diefenbaker. And yet he says - I haven't put in the chapter everything that Pearkes has told me - he admits himself that he would rather have seen Drew be the Prime Minister but he didn't think that Drew could get the votes. In other words, it was a matter of voting for a man who he thought could get the party into power as versus

a man who might make the better Prime Minister of the party in power.

L. Perfectly right. I know about that. That was exactly Pearkes' idea - and many others. I had a close personal relationship with two men particularly, one was Drew and the other was Arthur Meighen - very close. Arthur Meighen, when he went away, used to delegate to me the job of visiting his parents every second day in Ottawa to see that they were all right. I had a great deal to do with Arthur Meighen. And likewise, I was at that convention of 1948 - I never missed any of those conventions. I've got the convention notes here somewhere. I was very fond of Drew. I supported him because of my personal relationship. But Drew was regarded as being a stuffed shirt man from Toronto, the creature of Bay Street, which he wasn't. He was a very fine character, an able man, but he couldn't win the vote. Just like Arthur Meighen couldn't win the vote, one of the most brilliant brains we ever had in Canada. So General Pearkes, wisely and in sound judgement in the realm of politics, decided to support Diefenbaker. I supported Diefenbaker in the next convention, but in that one I didn't.

R. Yes. Now, of course, this leads us on to the one that I'm just about to deal with in the chapter - in fact I'll be working at it tonight. This will be the convention - let me see, I think it's the '57, is it not? A short time before the election, and here again Diefenbaker is running; I think Davie Fulton is running. In fact I think there are three or four.

L. Oh yes. Davie Fulton and George Hees - let's get the file. . . .

R. To the extent that you remember the famous nomination - as you say,

it was in 1956, not 1957. Now some people wondered why Pearkes once again was nomination Diefenbaker. They knew that he had nominated him before but they thought that on this occasion . . .

L. What year was this?

R. This would be the 1956 leadership convention and there had been a considerable amount of feeling by some writers and journalists that perhaps a French-Canadian should be leader. Evidently Diefenbaker had the idea of east and west rather than two . . .

L. . . languages, French-speaking.

R. Yes, and I was wondering what you might remember about that.

L. Yes, I do. We wondered who would nominate Diefenbaker because we were all for Diefenbaker at that time. He had a remarkable faculty of arousing crowds and we knew it, and George Drew was a sick man. I used to go to his home, privately - just myself because I was British Columbia senior man, you see - and he was quite ill. He had the most wonderful wife named Fiorenza (an Italian name) and they were quite associated with Florence. I remember one occasion he was talking about some matters - Fiorenza was there and George Drew - and he just went to sleep. He was so fatigued he couldn't speak any more. He was a sick man and I felt sorry for him. He often asked me to his home - many times I've been there. He was on Street; the party bought this home for the leader of the Opposition. Diefenbaker, of course, was always pushing for his own interests, you know and we thought that he would be the best candidate. Now I think that George Pearkes felt the same way.

R. And it was just as simple as that.

- L. It was a matter of political judgement, the east or the party.
- R. And yet I gather that either in 1957 or 1958 that the Conservatives grabbed about half the votes in Quebec and yet Diefenbaker never seemed to . . .
- L. In '58 this is.
- R. Yes, in '58, that's right.
- L. We won, I think 158 seats out of 175 - too many - plus another 100 . . . what would it be?
- R. In the House, or in the . . .?
- L. In the House - 275, something like that.
- R. There's one more question before I shut up - now, this is a bit of a delicate question, but nevertheless it's political . . .
- L. My background experiences you can't pull with delicate questions - you can always pose them, I should say.
- R. This dips into the period from 1957 to 1960 when we have three British Columbia members who are cabinet ministers - Davie Fulton, Howard Green and Pearkes, and how much you know about this, I don't know, but Pearkes as Defence Minister thought as a soldier and wanted the most he could get for the veterans. This is his idea. Green was interested in external affairs; his primary thought, quite naturally is promoting peace and goodwill. So that in a sense - and this is a bad simile perhaps - you have a dove and a hawk in the cabinet and I gather that in not too long a time the dove and the hawk were competing, ministerially shall we say, and that there was a considerable amount of argument which in turn probably resulted in Mr. Diefenbaker's

decision not to use nuclear arms in Canada, and which eventually, as you know, this decision was one of the things which helped to defeat him. Now I was wondering to what extent you had heard of or know about this Green-Pearkes . . .

L. Very little. They would be cabinet discussions and cabinet secrets and I never enquired into that except when after Diefenbaker went out of power and I found out what he had done. But nothing on that point. But that's a natural sequence of events and thinking and that is as you mention there. Both were powers - Green and General Pearkes - but General Pearkes was a strong-minded man and so was Howie Green. Howard Green was even too strong, he was stronger-minded because he got into the position sometimes where he was really stubborn.

R. I've heard that.

L. Much as I liked him - he was one of my three or four closest friends, but speaking frankly, he's that way and he regrets it. So I can just imagine in the cabinet Howard <sup>would fight</sup> ~~was~~ like Billy-be-damned for his point of view and General Pearkes would assert his views but would be more diplomatic. That would be my analysis of the situation, knowing both men as I do, very well.

R. Wouldn't the fact that Green as senior Conservative member and Diefenbaker's representative here in British Columbia - you know, senior minister, senior man - result, or do you think it would result in Green's words carrying more weight with Diefenbaker?

L. No, Diefenbaker in a situation like that would consult a lot of people, and make up his own mind. No doubt Green's words would carry quite a bit, but towards the end, at the last convention <sup>when</sup> Diefenbaker



was thrown out and Stanfield elected I can tell you this . . . .

At the last convention Howard Green was supporting Duff Roblin, General Pearkes was supporting Diefenbaker, if I remember correctly. I, for quite a number of reasons in this province, took the position that our delegates (and I organized most of the delegates, many of them) should first vote to Davie Fulton, giving our home man a pat on the back. He was a young man, he had risen to prominence and he was rated one of the best parliamentarians there and it would be a crime in my opinion that his own associates in British Columbia should vote against him. But after the first vote, I then asked the delegates to vote according to their conscience whoever they thought the best man would be. Now, Howard/<sup>Green</sup>was supporting Duff Roblin as I said. At that convention each party, each candidate had rooms where they received people, gave them drinks and gave them all kinds of things (Diefenbaker didn't give them drinks, but then he didn't drink himself). You know that story, Diefenbaker told me it, the story of meeting Churchill and Churchill offered him a brandy. Diefenbaker said "No thank you, I am a teetotaler." "Well", said Winston Churchill, "I'm glad you said that. I thought you might say you were a prohibitionist." Witty Churchill, you see. Diefenbaker told me that story.) Anyhow, Diefenbaker is a man of very strong emotions and resentment sometimes, although he controlled that quite a bit. Howard Green was the one man in the cabinet when Diefenbaker was in trouble and he was asked if he would resign, because he lacked administrative ability and he made mistakes, and Howard Green was the one man in the cabinet that stood loyally by him and fought his battles

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through thick and thin. Now Donald Fleming told me . . . I asked Donald Fleming (he was then a cabinet minister) why did six ministers resign at that time. He said, "Well, it was very simple." You couldn't get the business done. We came with these big propositions involving big business, so to speak." Diefenbaker didn't understand it and had a strong suspicion, always a strong suspicion that some ministers had been influenced by some of their wealthy friends and he would avoid making decisions in the hope they would be put under the rug and never come up again. But of course, such things put under the rug do come up again. So Donald Fleming told me that they came back again and they caused a division in the cabinet because Diefenbaker wouldn't make up his mind and the government was getting the reputation of indecision, which is right too. That was the cause, you see. Now during all this Howard Green stood by Diefenbaker and I think General Pearkes did too. At this convention General Pearkes was supporting Diefenbaker - in fact he came to my home here with his son and tried to persuade me to support Diefenbaker, but I said I had made my decision on my understanding of the . . . . But on this occasion about the convention, as I say Howard Green was supporting Duff Roblin and because he had been so closely associated with Diefenbaker and fighting his battles through thick and thin - if there is one characteristic about Howard Green which is strongest, it's his loyalty. He was always loyal to his friends, he never let his friends down. So he was loyal to Diefenbaker. A large number of the people in the cabinet were against

Diefenbaker and at one stage Diefenbaker had his resignation in his hand to hand to George Hees as President of the Conservative Association, and Howard got up and made strong exhortation to the Minister to delay this matter and try to work out the trouble. By the way, speaking of the convention and some time afterwards, but not long, Howard and Donna, his wife, called on Diefenbaker and his wife in the convention headquarters and Diefenbaker refused to receive them. Did you ever know that? Terrible thing. Well that annoyed me immensely. They had an annual meeting to determine whether or not they would have a convention. Well, the vote at the annual meeting really meant whether or not Diefenbaker was to continue even though it had to be done at a convention. I was at that annual meeting and it was in Toronto - I used to contact the head man in Toronto - I met Hon. James Macdonnell. He had been head of the National Trust Company; he was a Rhodes scholar, tall, very conscientious and honorable man, and he said he thought Diefenbaker should go out, for a great number of reasons. I met Hugh MacDonald there and he said, "You're going up early to the convention." I said, "Yes, I want to meet some of the fellows." He said, "I think I will too. I know the rascal has got something on his mind and I'm going up to find out what it is and I'm going to move a resolution to the meeting." The annual meeting, you see. So we went to the annual meeting and Diefenbaker gave one of the finest addresses I ever listened to on leadership and just roused the delegates, about 150. Hugh MacDonald was sitting next to me and he roused them enthusiastically and when he finished his address he had a standing ovation and who should get up but MacDonald. Diefenbaker

is a remarkable man that way, you see. The government went out - in August or September the ministers resigned, and this would be December. Between that time and December Howard Green had been, defeated after 22 years in the House, a loyal supporter of Diefenbaker. Diefenbaker never even sent him a word of consolation, never wrote him, never wired him, never telephoned him. He just left in a cold breach - an unhappy situation. That annoyed me beyond words. At this annual convention when he finished this remarkable address he came down to shake hands with everybody, you see. The annual meeting had decided to hold a convention so Diefenbaker was bidding to get support, came down to shake hands. I was at the rear end of the room, at the back, purposely. But he came down and he shook hands with me and started to talk, you see, but I was just boiling inside about Howard Green, so I said, "Have you had any word from Howard Green?" "Oh no," he said. "Well", I said, "you haven't communicated with him." "Well go, I guess I haven't." Well I said, "John, that's absolutely disgraceful. There is a man sitting in the House there as leader, newly elected, there is Howard Green standing out there in the unhappy position after twenty-two years in parliament, and the leader of the party to whom he had been so faithful, in cabinet and out, to treat him that way", I said, "is disgusting beyond words." By that time people had started to gather round, you see, and so I ended the conversation by saying, "John, all I ask you to do is to think it over." And I turned around and walked away. That's how I ended my relationship. The strange part of it is that Diefenbaker has always been friendly to me - write to me - I had a letter just a week ago. So I came home - should I tell this to Howard Green or not. I decided I wouldn't, after I'd waited several days. And a few days after that

Howard phoned, and he said, "What do you think happened? - about Diefenbaker." I said, "I haven't the slightest idea." He said, "Donna [that's Howard's wife] got the nicest letter from Olive [Diefenbaker's] that you ever heard of." So a few days after Diefenbaker wrote Howard Green and he gave a dinner for Howard - and I've got the menu here. Did you know about that? In Ottawa, the members of parliament, last year. They gave him a banquet, a testimonial dinner, he was the honoured guest and senators and House of Commons members to the extent of a hundred and fifty paid seven dollars and a half to honour Howard Green. And the chairman of the meeting was Heath McQuarrie whom I knew - Tom Bell was the organizer and Tom Bell told me that it was only that day at midday that Diefenbaker decided that he would come to Howard Green's dinner.

R. Well how do you account for that sort of thing?

L. Well, that's the extraordinary man he is; that's why he lost out, you see. So Diefenbaker came and sat at the head table. I was

I happened to be in Ottawa, and I kept saying to myself, what the hell is that man going to say, after all the things that I knew. But very few knew what had happened. Well he got up and he just praised Howard beyond words; said what a great external affairs minister they had had - complimented him no end. Now, I said to myself, has this been said with sincerity, or are the idiosyncracies of the character of emotional . . . and carries on as a matter of expediency. But he has made doubt, you see, but an interesting thing about Diefenbaker - I gave him some time ago (he was always quoting Sir John A. Macdonald stories, but he only had a few). One day I sent him a book - I'm a collector

of books, I've got hundreds and hundreds of them - called The Anecdotal Life of Sir John A. Macdonald. Have you ever seen it?

R. No.

L. I'll show it to you, downstairs. . . . written by a man named Beer in 1892. He saw this, and was he enthusiastic about it. So I said, "John you can have it." Boy he was appreciative ! - yes, terribly appreciative. Then he started giving more stories from Sir John A. Macdonald's book. One day in a catalogue, it seems to me, I saw that book, the British Parliamentary Anecdotes - Disraeli, Gladstone, Lloyd George and Churchill and all these people, so I obtained that and I sent that to him. John was pleased beyond words about that - very, very pleased, even more so than about Beer. One day he wrote me a letter to thank me for this book - a nice letter (I kept all his letters, you know). Then about a month ago, no at Christmastime - I have a list over a long period of time of people in Ottawa to whom I send holly and among them, of course, is John Diefenbaker, before he was Prime Minister and while he was Prime Minister and after he was Prime Minister and I get a little note from him always thanking me, you see. So this last Christmas even though he was out of circulation in a way, I wasn't going to take him off the list. I have Jack Pickersgill as a personal friend of mine, a very good friend of mine, and I felt this - somewhere here I've got the card . . . a kind of card, you know, that you send for Christmas or special occasions - and John writes in his own handwriting to thank me, he intended to thank me for the holly, but he was so worked up about this book that he thanked me a second time for the book. A very nice personal card - love from Olive and John, or something like that. But I thought you would be interested

in the peculiarities of that man's character.

R. I know and I have spoken to and interviewed a number of people - Pearkes, of course, General Foulkes - in fact a variety of very senior military men - Doug Harkness, in fact I have had access to the Harkness Papers which are closed to the public.

L. You have - that would be very interesting.

R. That was most interesting and - how shall I put it - when I tell people, you know, that I am writing about Pearkes, everybody is interested but they all think that the three years that he was Minister of Defence that they were in a way his worst years. But if you look back on it, it was a time of tremendous technological change. This was the time when they scrapped the "Arrow". Well, if the Conservatives didn't do it, the Liberals would have done it - one way or the other. Nevertheless the Conservatives did it. It was a time when the militia, for example, were given the civil defence role on top of their military role and didn't like that very much. It was a time when they got the Bomarc but didn't get the warhead and there was a great discussion - you know, here we are with the Bomarc and all we have is some sandbags in the tip of it and what the devil good would that be - and so on, and so on like that. But to my mind, and as far as I can figure out, the problem was not that Pearkes didn't have the ideas but he couldn't get a decision from Diefenbaker.

L. Well this is just as I have told you. Vacillating - that was what destroyed his cabinet. Strong men in the cabinet like Don Fleming with a tremendous brain, scholarship man and all that kind of thing

they wouldn't stand for this. It wasn't the kind of life they wanted. But I was interested in General Pearkes also because I had a lot to do with the Great War veterans, you see, and I organized the first one here - I wasn't a veteran, I was turned down. I have flat feet and I can only walk about three miles. I tried three times but they wouldn't let me and I was turned down. So I devoted myself to the families of the men who were overseas and I spent half my time in my law office dealing with their problems. When the elections came for the Unionists' campaign in 1917, the Great War Veterans Association insisted upon me running.

R. Oh, for heavens sake!

L. So - I just happened to see that the other day. So you can imagine my keen interest in General Pearkes as a great soldier.

R. I'll be darned - 1921.

L. And the Great War Veterans Association made me an Honorary Life Member for work that I had done for them. We had a publication called B.C. Veterans and this was a large write-up on that. I just mention that because it relates to General Pearkes. So when he came along the veterans were all behind him and I took an active interest in trying to get him to run for parliament.

R. This is another question in a way - and yet I don't know whether you can answer it. When he went in in 1945 he told me that the main reason why he went in, and he repeats it again in the first speech he makes in the House of Commons, was to begin to help the soldiers get re-established.

L. That's true.



- R. Now, he is in there and from that point he  
but he remains in and remains in and remains in. Now, why?  
I haven't asked him this myself.
- L. Well, I think he has always had a sense of service to the country.
- R. Yes, that's right.
- L. . . . and the work that he was doing and knowing the complexity  
progress and the fact that veterans and people like that would  
be in many cases side-tracked from the financial policies and so  
on. He thought he could render a service there for . . . .  
Now I did the same thing in 1917 . . . . I had the nomination for  
the Unionist party. The men were coming back from overseas. They  
were in hospitals here. I thought the returned man should be in  
the House of Commons and that we should elect one. So I proposed  
to them, having been active with the veterans - Walter Buren was  
president and he was a very active man - I proposed to them that  
they should have a vote in all the hospitals  
on the man whom they thought should represent them in parliament  
and I would see that he was nominated in my place. I gave up the  
nomination, I had the nomination in my hand. So they nominated  
Colonel R.C. Cooper who wasn't a politician and made a mess of his  
speaking as a politician. He was no good at all - in fact when his  
term was up nobody would support him and he just declined to run  
and that's when I ran in 1921, December of 1921. He went in there  
for the purpose of helping the returned man, because their problem  
was great and the people who stayed home and wouldn't go to the war  
like so many in Canada and in Quebec, they would be effective in

parliament and there should be a strong counteracting effect which would be indifferent, as it might in some cases when there was a difference, you see, and if the parliament wasn't

even amongst prominent people . . .

I used to handle all the cases of their troubles, you know, and one of them was in connection with a mortgage/a lady had a mortgage and some company in Winnipeg was foreclosing her. Her husband was overseas in the war. She had a family of four or five. One of the boys was just going through a course of studying mechanical engineering, or studying mechanics of some kind, in University and was going into a field where he would earn good money and could pay off the mortgage. This company - I told the local manager about this and he agreed with me but he said the headquarters had insisted and he could only proceed with the processing. I wrote down to the president and he wrote a nasty letter back that he was going to proceed. He finally came out, came into my office and I argued with him, presented the case and I said "Now this is not a case where you should press for payment. Give the woman a chance until the boy gets through and he'll pay." "Well, I can't, our policy is just to proceed with these actions." So I got after this man pretty soundly and he said to me, "Men like you who live off these poor women in these difficulties." I said "You son of . . . , get out of here!" So I sent him out. An extraordinary thing happened. Years after I was in parliament and I was always on the banking and commerce committee and lo and behold one day here was an application for reorganization of this

company in Winnipeg and the witnesses were this very man, the president of the company and his brother. His application had merit - it was in connection with insurance. Hennessey, who was the government superintendent was against privately owned insurance companies, he wanted to make them all mutuals. So he was trying to force that idea upon this company which I didn't agree with. In the committee I was always pretty active, being a lawyer I took an active part in its thinking. So I went in and defended the application, supported the application and in the end the application was approved by the committee. I went back to my office and I was suddenly when in walked this tall president. I looked at him. He was emotional. He said, "Mr. Ladner, I don't understand you. After the way I treated you in Vancouver for you to stand by my application like that is beyond my understanding." Well I said . . . "I always endeavour to make my decisions and accounting on the basis of my judgement and my conscience. Your application was sound and why should I interfere with my judgement and my conscience. It was an over-emotional action on your part and my part in Vancouver." I thought you'd be interested. Now, I want to say a word or two about your chapter. At first I thought you'd have more direct quotes of General Pearkes, but when I read on I see you have got quite a number. There's <sup>a point</sup> ~~was~~ here about the lieutenant-governorship which you haven't got.

R. No, that's going to be the last chapter.

L. You must talk with him about it. He may want to tell you about it, you see.

- R. Now looking a little bit beyond that part - let me explain a bit. I finished that particular chapter with Pearkes supporting Diefenbaker for leadership in 1956 and I am going to stop right there. Then the next chapter will deal with Pearkes from 1945 to 1957, which is 12 years, as the Conservative expert on defence. In other words, what are his opinions as a member of parliament on Canadian defence policy during those twelve years and then end that with the election in 1957 and his becoming minister. Then the next chapter will be on him as minister - maybe one or two chapters, I don't know - and then the next will be on him as lieutenant-governor and that will be it.
- L. But most of the material you can get in Hansard.
- R. Yes. But I was wondering if you might have any . . . .
- L. I wouldn't have very much excepting what you see in there.