Interview with Allan Tyrrell on the 29th of June, 2010 as part of the Britain at Work Project, at the HistoryTalk office.

Dave Welsh: Allan, I'd like to start by...or we would like to start by asking you to kick off with your... when you left school, your earliest work in West London.

Allan Tyrrell: Well, my earliest work was actually in the army. In 1958 I left school, but prior to leaving school when I went before the employment officer - in them days you went before an employment officer - and he designated work that he thought you might like to do. Well, I'd applied to join the Royal Army Service Corps Junior Leaders, and as the army is now, I suppose, it took forever and a day for the paperwork to come through, so in 1958 I left school and I took a job for a company called Electrabuild in Uxbridge Road, long gone, as a potential apprentice. I didn't join the army, because I didn't know if I was going to be accepted or rejected. They sent me to a company called British Light Steel Pressings in Acton where they used to make the old Humber Supersnipe. My job as a boy I suppose, was really to fetch and carry tea, go and get a cheese roll for the electricians, and general dogsbody. But they introduced me to things like how to wire a motor, and what the magnets done, but sadly, I suppose because I was a very small child, I only just made the legal weight to go to work, which you had to do in them days. And after a couple of days of passing out, the company and myself, and my family decided it was best to leave and find a more genteel job. Little did I know what was going to happen when I did join the army. Well I got a job... a friend of mine was working for Samuel Putney's at Paddington - still there now, but I think it's known... it's in Bishops Bridge road... I think it's now known as Travis-Perkins. But then it was a major timber importer and specialist moulding maker. Again, I was only a general dogsbody, a boy that swept up the shavings, things like that, and little did I know that I really liked there. Well I'd only been a couple of months into the job when my army papers come through to report to Bromyard Avenue in Uxbridge Road for a medical, and to be assessed on a career. And again, like the army, I put my name down as a... to train as a Royal Signals, but they decided that the best bet for me would be to join the Royal Army Service Corps as a trainee lorry driver. I duly went from London down to a place called Bordon in Hampshire. Boy, all the stories of all my family that were military people certainly didn't live up to what I thought. Things like whitewashing coal, cleaning the toilets with a toothbrush, the army life certainly wasn't for me and in 1958 it was pretty tough. I suppose it's tough now, but it was pretty tough, and coming from a family where I was the baby of the family, I suppose I was spoilt, I didn't realise. And when you get everything from eggs, bacon, porridge, and gravy all on one dish, and you eat it irrespective of whether it's cooked or not, without complaining, it certainly wasn't for me. And on one occasion when there had been a misdemeanour in the toilets, i.e. someone hadn't flushed the toilet, the corporal of the room come in, picked the first two nearest to his room, one of them unfortunately was me, and we had to take our toothbrush and we had to clean all the urinals out, during the course of while people were using them. Well, after six weeks of my initial training, you had the opportunity to sign on for the full 24 years or the initial 12 years. Although I'd signed on the 12 years, I thought that this wasn't for me and I made enquiries for discharge by payment. Now this is another lengthy process. You have to get twelve senior officers to agree that you're not suited for an army career. Only one of them must object, and you do your full term. Well fortunately I got the twelve signatures - I might have been in court I suppose - and I was on my way.

DW: So how old were you at this stage?

AT: I was fifteen. I suppose I was approaching sixteen, whether I was sixteen I can't really remember, but... I could look up my discharge papers...but, I was very lucky, nowhere to go to work or anything like that, and again everybody... there was full employment in them days that was what was so good. Samuel Putney's was still offering positions for sweeper uppers, that's all I was going to be. I went along and, believe it or not, sweeping up wood shavings and seeing these wonderful mouldings and curved shapes that could be created from machines, and apart from just being a general dogsbody again, getting tea for the machinists and that, I took an interest in what they could do. The boss at the time, his name was Mr Spinks, a grand old gentleman, still come to work in a three piece suit and a bowler hat and an umbrella, whatever the weather. And he got his hands dirty as well. If he seen timber being unloaded and there was a couple of blokes short, he wouldn't bother about his suit, he helped them. He noticed that I was really interested in it, so he offered me the chance to take an apprenticeship. I said yes, they made enquiries at the Hammersmith College of Art, Craft and Building. It had a very good name in them days - sadly long gone, and they couldn't accept me as an indentured(?) apprentice, but what they said, they would accept me as a senior apprentice. That meant that I wouldn't get indentured papers, but I'd still do the four years term, that meant one day release, and four evenings, from six thirty in the evening to nine thirty, at Lime Grove in Hammersmith. Absolutely fantastic! I loved every minute of the training and during that course, my mother died, and I was just coming towards the end of my apprenticeship, and one of the old boys said to me... because conditions were pretty horrendous there. There was no safety equipment on the machines. I mean, if you had all your fingers and thumbs you was really unusual, and I mean that, really unusual. Ear defenders, they weren't even heard of, overalls, well, just weren't heard of. Machinery covered in snow because they were all outside, so when there was snow all you done was got a wheelbarrow or oil drum, filled that with scraps of wood, melted the snow and ice on it, and carried on until it shorted-out the electrics. Anyway, one old boy offered his condolences to me, but he said to me, 'Look, you're coming to the end of your time. Get out there into the real world and go into every conceivable field as a wood machinist.' And I don't know why, but I did think about it, and lo and behold, I'd just finished my time when a job come up, we was walking around in Lisson Grove, and there was a company there called London Industrial Art. It was a sign and display makers, and again, it also covered other sides. There was printing, and so again the salary was phenomenal because we come under the print industry - although I was a wood machinist - making signs in perspex, steel, aluminium, brass, zinc, all sorts of things. It was a specialist job, very interesting. I got the job. Two years down the line, the money was very good, the conditions were pretty good, but I see an advert for Harrods, Harrods the store, but their factory in Arundel Road over at Barnes. And when I see things like, offering a pension, sick pay, because up until then, sick pay and two weeks holiday was unheard of. They were offering pension, sick pay, sports facilities, what they called a family club, that meant if you was married, and I wasn't married at the time, you could take your family... they had every conceivable sport down at Barnes. And I went for the interview, and I'll be truthful, I got it. I was mortally shocked because the work was so out of my scope... I mean, yeah, I chanced me arm, but I thought, well all I can do is lose a couple

of fingers! The work was absolutely fantastic. Some of the clients were very demanding, but the quality and the skill that was needed was just out of this world. And I did have to learn on the job, and I had a couple of work colleagues that were older than me, they were very very good to me. They could see I was struggling, and they would show me how to do the process and... I was there for six years, and then sadly... that was under the old boss of Sir Hugh Fraser... and yeah I had my moments, because I was a bit of a rebel, and although Harrods were very good, again they didn't supply things like ear defenders, the guards were there, but no-one ever used them, there were certain things, and I was a bit of a rebel, and I was always in trouble with the management over it, and anyway, after six years they were taken over by a company called Courtney Pope, they're maintenance and shop fitting now. The only reason why they were taken over is because some bigwig, as we call it, he become a director of the Harrods board, and Courtney Pope then was one of the biggest shop fitting companies in London, and it was just unbelievable that company, where they worked, all over the world and that. And they took all the work in-house at Courtney Post. They took one or two of the cabinet makers on, and I think they took a french polisher, but the rest... unfortunately we got made redundant. Well, again they were very good, because they didn't have to, but about three months prior to being made redundant they said to anyone, if they've seen a job they can go to, they'd let them go to it, but they would still pay them redundancy money, which was very good. I see a job, again, work was so plentiful then, I see a job for John Broadwood pianos up at... It was Old Oak Common Lane, I can't remember the exact road, but it was up Old Oak Common Lane, and it was right on the corner, and again, a completely different field, making grand pianos and upright pianos. I went along, had a word with the boss. He asked me where I'd worked, what I'd done, he said, well this is a completely different field, it's really highly specialised, you're talking about, in them days, I mean I don't know what it is in millimetres, but one sixty-fourth of an inch, and even smaller, and we had to use verniers(?) and callipers and that, and again, I suppose I chanced my arm, and said, 'Yeah, I could do it,' and fair enough I found it no problem. The experience of using the machines from Harrods stood me in good stead. And I was there for two years. The story of my life, sadly, although John Broadwoods, when I say they were the inventor of the piano, the pianoforte as they called it, they had the Royal Warrant to make pianos, I don't know, King George III, I don't know, I haven't got a clue, excuse my ignorance. But anyway, we was going to be taken over by Yamaha. They were becoming the biggest organ makers and upright pianos in the world. And we had all the dignitaries from Japan, and they seen this antiquated, dirt covered, hundred years of dust and woodchips that had never been cleaned, I bet they wondered what they were buying, but they were buying the name, because none of us were kept on. They made it quite clear that they really valued our skill, but it was now going to go mass production. The craft of doing a grand piano leg by hand was just gone. Is that a fault of British industry or not I don't know, but anyway...

Rima Joebear: So did you learn how to do that?

AT: Yeah. And what they call the Fall. They were the only piano makers in the world then... the Fall is the lid covering the keyboard, now that used to be made out of one solid piece of

timber, and then it would be cut so it could fold, but it was always made so that the grain of the timber was matching. The cost of making a grand piano must have been horrendous, because I would go through what they called standard, that was a length, width, and density of timber. And they would go through two or three standards of whatever that grand piano was going to be made out of... mahogany, walnut, whatever the person... I mean some of the clients was out of this world, there was By Appointment to Her Majesty the Queen, Prince Philip, all the royal bods that had pianos. While I was there we made one grand piano for the royal ship then, the Britannia, I think it was called. An amazing part about it, most of the piano tuners were blind, and it was a great company, it was really nice. I mean the quirkiness of some of the workers I mean... one chap, Jumbo his name was, he had a very severe hair lip and it was very hard to understand what he was saying, but his pride and joy was his teacup. And one day I was slack and I went around and asked the boys if they wanted a cup of tea. Yeah sure, so I said I'll go and make it, and I picked this cup up and it was black inside, so I got a scourer out and I put a bit of vim in there, and I scrubbed it and scrubbed it, and I finally cleaned it up. Little did I know that Jumbo had had that cup for about forty-one years and had never washed it! He said it added to the flavour, and I got the biggest roasting of my life, and I was told never to make him a cup of tea again. But anyway, sadly they were fantastically skilled, they were very... what's the word... I don't know, I'm struggling for the word, but they were eccentric in their, you know, in their section of making the piano. There was no-one in the world that could do their job.

DW: Very specialised.

AT: Yeah, they had their own little quirky ways. Looking back it was fantastic working with the guys. Yeah they could be a pain in the butt. Perhaps if I'd been there forty-one years knocking the same piano-tuning pin in, I might have been the same, but anyway... And while I was there and we was informed this, I got in touch with my branch, and I was then a member of the Furnished Timber and Allied(?) trade union. Still got his name, still remember him, a bloke called Vic Allen. He was a local bloke, and I got in touch with him and said, 'Look, is there any jobs going? 'Cos it looks like I was going to be made redundant'. And he said, 'Well actually, I was just about to phone you because there's a job coming up at Earls Court, in the exhibition industry.' And he said, 'Don't worry about going to see the boss, if you go and see a bloke called Jim Arles(?)'. Now some people would turn their nose up when you say 'card carrying communist' but he was a card carrying communist and it was just like Oh Brother, there was the committee, that they'd inform the boss what was happening next month, if they felt like it. But he told me to get down there straight away, and there was a job for me. So I went down to Olympia and at the gate I made enquiries to speak to a chap called Jim Arles. Now by the look of the security guard he obviously wielded some power because they said, 'Oh, hang on, we'll take you down to him.' So we bypassed the offices and I can still recall it now, it was at the back of Olympia, I think it was called Empress Place. It was the old railway sidings underground. Absolutely massive! You could get about five or six big ocean going yachts down there, which is what they used to do, store them down there for the exhibitions. And I went through and spoke to this Jim Arles, and he said in his inevitable way, and I won't use the profanities, 'The job's yours. Let's have a look

at your card to see if you're signed up,' which I was, 'How long have you been in the union?' I said, 'Well, in the union, from the day I was at Hammersmith College of Art, Craft, and Building,' I said, 'I was in the students' union.' He said, 'Well that's good enough for me.' My card was paid up. And he asked me when I could start, and I said, 'Well, when do you want me to start?' He said, 'Well no, you start when you want to.' So I said, 'Well, I'll start tomorrow.' Again, in them days you only had to give an hour's notice to your employers, none of this weekly, monthly, and 'you signed a contract' etcetera etcetera. So I went back to the company I was working for, John Broadwood's and informed them that I'd like to leave at the end of that day. No problem, they wished me well, and I duly started at Earls Court, it was called Earls Court Stand Fitting, it was part of the P&O shipping group, but like a lot of big companies they had their whole list of companies that went under the guise of the company, but they were little off-shoots, but whether it was a tax fiddle I don't know. I think it might well have been. Anyway, I started there and this comes into the Oh Brother... I'd been there about a week when two blokes come up to me and, again, using language that was rather flowery, said, 'Who the $%$% are you?', so I said, 'I'm the new wood machinist. Who are you?' And he said, 'Well I'm the effing guv'nor. Who employed you?' I think that the works committee had seen what was happening because while we was talking about five or six of Jim Arles' little entourage of shop stewards come down and made their feelings quite clear that he wasn't going to employ the person he said he was going to employ. The guy that was going to take the job had only joined the union to get the job. And in them days there were closed shops and that...to anyone that doesn't know, closed shop meant that if you wasn't in a trade union and you wasn't a fully paid up member you didn't get a job. Rightly or wrongly, I don't know, I felt very sorry for the other guy, and I did offer my resignation if he'd been offered the job, but the union said, 'We're not having that.' Language was getting quite flowery at this point between the unions and that. The other wood machinist, he was leaning up against the cross-cut machine smoking a cigarette. The management team and the union reps went up to the office and I could see arms waving in the office and that, and one of the shops stewards come out of the office, and he come back and he said, 'Take no notice of it, the job's yours.' And I was there for, I think it was six years. I can't remember now. I think it was six years. I could look at my papers, but anyway, whatever it was, I was there. And then there was a chap called **[.....}** then when I went there, who turned out to be the... excuse me I'm going to say this now... the biggest bastard going. I'm going to say that. Sorry. But anyway, I didn't know him from Adam, but anyway I was there and had a great time. Great bunch of guys, sometimes the unions would be a bit strong, but for the first time I was getting safety equipment that I'd asked for. In fact, it was there, I didn't have to ask for it. And then in the infinite wisdom of the company... because they had two shop fitting companies. They had one in Olympia, which was called Olympia and Earls Court Stand Fitting, or Shop Fitting, it was visa versa, and the other one was Earls Court Stand Fitting, whatever it was, there were two sister companies. Well they decided to shut one down which was the Earls Court one, and just have one main one at Olympia. Now I got a feeling, this is personal, I got a feeling that there was shenanigans going on between management and the union, because we had a very very very stong union at Earls Court. They weren't militant, they were not militant, they stuck by what they was asking for. I used to voice my opinions against them at meetings at times, but they were good, they looked after their workers, 'cos the management didn't! Well anyway we was all made redundant, but I was pulled aside by one of the foremen, he was the foreman of the labourers, and he said, 'Don't look for a job. You're getting your redundancy money but you'll get someone call

around your house in the next couple of weeks, they're going to offer you a job at Earls Court, at Olympia.' Well, I thought, well, I'm a bit wise for taking someone's word. Got me money, 'scuse my language, we all down the pub that Friday and got pissed, 'scuse my language. But anyway, I went home, and I didn't look for work as such for a week, looked in the papers, and the Evening Standard was the bible for newspapers for getting jobs in the building game. It was phenomenal, I mean, you'd get one or two pages full of adverts for the building industry, everything from labourers, like I started out, tea boy, to highly skilled people. You don't see one of them now...

DW: Lots of jobs available.

AT: Yeah, jobs available, and you could chase the money. I know it's a terrible thing to say, talk about capitalist, but yeah, you could chase the money. Well anyway, sure enough, about a fortnight later a chap called round called **name removed**, he was the convenor steward of Olympia, and I later found out that he was really a lackey for **name removed**, later **name removed**, followed by **name removed**, who become adviser to Maggie Thatcher, and that's another bit I'll come to, and then he... whatever he done, but he went higher up. The only difference was his company was taken out of his hands because... well I'll come to that. Anyway, I was there for quite some time. All together I done seventeen years between the two companies. Regulations as regards to trade unions and demands and that, were dismissed. There was lots of meetings but invariably it went that it was a compromise between what the bosses were offering in all sorts of things, to salaries and conditions. It was only later on that I realised that this **name removed**, in my opinion, this is my personal opinion, was really a mouthpiece for **name removed**. Had some great times, had some fun times, met some really important people, and on one occasion, there was only two wood machinists, there was a general strike of the building industry, '74 was it? I can't remember. It might have been 1974, I can't remember now. Now the uniqueness of them days was that in one factory you could have twenty different unions. You could have one person in a union, and he was completely separate. Well, because the TUC always deemed that where there was a multi-union firm, that the person with the highest salary, or the highest national agreed rate, everybody would get it. But we was informed, and it was a great move by my union, that I should retain my Furnisher, Timber and Allied Trade Union because it was under the guise of UCATT I think it was UCATT, because if ever there was any dispute, then my work colleague and myself would be protected, and by sheer coincidence, when the general building strike took place the company locked the workers out, but because we was in the Furnisher, Timber and Allied Trade which come under cabinet making, they couldn't lock us out. So that meant the whole of Earls Court and Olympia, the office staff and that, had to stay. They couldn't lock the gates, so we had thirty of forty security guards on the various entrances had to come in, just for two guys, my work colleague, a bloke called Bill Lawson, nice guy, I expect he's long dead now. We would come in and just sit by our machines, because we weren't allowed to carry timber, we weren't allowed to do some of the other jobs. I used to read the drawings and the plans, that was agreed by everybody we'd do that, but sadly I didn't, I couldn't understand the plans in there so... I was there for, in total, seventeen years, and then during that period, and I can still remember it, **section removed.**

Well, I can still remember it now, what happened was the conditions were getting worse and worse at Earls Court, at Olympia. You'd see certain sections being picked on, and he then decided that... he had now been appointed as an adviser to Margaret Thatcher to run industry, how a good company should be run, because by that time... and that was a phenomenal amount of money... P&O shipping was making a billion pounds a year, because they had quays in New York, they had harbour facilities all over the world. Well anyway, the first thing he done, he said, 'Right, when you work overtime, you get paid flat rate. We don't look at Saturdays and Sundays as sacrosanct. To us it's just a working day. If you do have to come in Saturday and you do eight hours you get eight hours pay. If we say you're going to work a bank holiday, you work a bank holiday, and Sunday,' and they brought in a seven day working week, that is, you didn't work seven days a week, but you had a shift pattern that one Saturday and Sunday you might be in. And he meant business because one chap said that he was deeply religious, he didn't want to work Sundays, he used to go to church in the morning, he was a Roman Catholic. Eddie, I'm trying to think of his name now, Eddie, I can still remember, I can still see him now, and he was a genuine guy. He said that he wasn't going to work on a Sunday. They promptly sacked him. This was where **name removed** came into his power now. He done nothing. He didn't represent the blokes, he was doing nothing, and then it finally culminated to... on the top of Olympia gate, I can't remember, but it's the one in Blythe Road, where all the goods went in and out. Right at the ~~s~~top, which is a four storey... if you can think of Olympia as the tallest part, they had a gantry. Now we always used to fight to have a safety chain and a warning light because the hoist... there was an electronic hoist, and a bloke called Patsy Burke fell off the top. No safety chain, no warning light, nothing. I could see the writing on the wall, by this time I was made as a chargehand. I don't know what they're called now, but a chargehand was one step from being a foreman. Because it was a unique position that I held, I was a working foreman, a working chargehand, which in them days foremen didn't do the work, but because of the uniqueness of just the two of us I was both a working chargehand, a working foreman, and an ordinary wood machinist. Well anyway, we was called into a meeting, I still remember it as vivid as anything, we were called into a meeting of management and under-managers, and I was included in that, and this was where I had to inform all my people under me that from a certain date, that overtime would be paid flat money, work Saturday, and it would be a seven day week, and I made the comment that, 'Well I don't think the workers are going to like that!' and **name removed** I think his name was, he was a director, and **name removed** looked up and he said, 'Well I don't think you're a company man. Get rid of him!' And I was escorted down to my office, told to get all my papers, I asked if I could speak to my union rep. I was told, 'no', I was escorted out of the building, and I duly went straight across the road. I think it was called Union Law there. There was a solicitors right near the magistrates court, so I went in there, asked if they done union law. They did. I got advice and they said, 'In this present climate, you'd be on a loser,' because in them days you didn't have this no win/no fee. A big company like P&O , and it just disintegrated. Well anyway, I left there in 1988. Can I refer to my notes? Right 1988, where did I go to then, I'm trying to think. Oh...

RJ: So you were just sacked on the spot?

AT: Oh yeah, yeah. And they said... again, tribunals like ACAS I don't think was about then. It might have been, I can't remember, anyway. So in 1988 I left there, and by sheer coincidence, while I was at... I could see the way things were going at Earls Court and Olympia, because it had been rumbling on for about a year. Things, people, certain positions were being eroded. The crazy thing was, things like the canteen, they brought in private contractors, there was no subsidised canteen. It might sound minor, but it was something that the unions fought for over the years and it was great. You knew you could get a reasonable breakfast or a dinner. There was no subsidised canteen, it was a private company. I could see it was going to the dogs, personally speaking again. And I seen an advertisement for Rolls Royce motor cars, and my wife's uncle worked there, and he said, 'It's a great company. A fantastic company.' So apart from being made redundant a couple of times in my life, I now got the sack, although it was a mutual 'Well you can stick your job, and we don't want you.' And I got home and I told my wife that I'm out of work but I'd phoned up a job, and I was going to start there the very next day again. There was still a little bit of work around, but it was coming to an end. I went to a firm called CIL Systems. Again, I'd known about that over the years, they used to take folks on for a week, a day...

DW: That's Finsbury Park isn't it?

AT: That's it yeah. Is it still there?

DW: Well, I think it's gone.

AT: Yeah, Morris Brothers, yeah.

DW: It faces onto the railway doesn't it?

AT: That's it, yeah. So I took the chance. I didn't know what was going to happen to Rolls Royce. I just made the application, and nearly a year before I'd made the application, because I thought it was going to go pear-shaped at Earls Court Olympia. Anyway, I went over there, and sure enough, a bloke called Sonny Morris, a good old Jewish boy, he didn't care what race, creed, colour you were, as long as you earnt them a few bob. And he took me on, there and then and, bugger me, it looked like it was going to be a good job. And I was there for a couple of months when I got a letter from Rolls Royce motor cars, saying would I like to go for an interview? Take my apprenticeship papers, and my City and Guilds, and told a lie, said I had to have a day off. Went to Rolls Royce and I got the job there, so I had to go back to CIL and explain that, you know, I wasn't quite honest with them, but I had to do what... And he was good, he was good, he said, you know, typical old East End Jew, my life already. You've got to do what you've got to do my son,' you know. But he was a real

good guy, had no problem. And I started in Rolls Royce, and I was there for two years, and they decided to move to Derby. Now they were very generous, the conditions were fantastic, the money was phenomenal, the conditions, everything. It was a great company, but, including the resettlement to Derby, those that didn't have their own property, they would make provision to get rented accommodation up there. But being a Londoner, all my family in London... Work was getting very scarce now. Margaret Thatcher had certainly killed work... killed the working man. Sorry, I don't care what anyone says, she did. And it's not bitterness, it's as an observer of reality. Anyway, I said I really couldn't accept it, because... They asked me if I had a job, I said, 'No,' and they really couldn't... in fact to show you how good the company was at the time, I can't think of his name but it was a Sir, I went before what could be regarded as a small directors' board and asked why, and they said that no-one had ever worked for Rolls Royce and left, unless because of a circumstance like someone had died or they were emigrating or something like that but... and they used to have not only their own apprenticeships but Rolls Royce Motorcars had their own university. So that shows you how good the company was. With hindsight, Margaret Thatcher played her part again, Rolls Royce moved up. In the mean time I was tipped off by the union that there was a job going at BBC Television.

DW: At White City?

AT: No, at North Acton, where is it? Where the scenery making was. Anyway, it'll come to me...

RJ: Was it in Du Cane Road? Just along...

AT: Well you go further up Du Cane Road and then you go onto Westway, where is now Carphone Warehouse. TalkTalk. Anyway, what a muppet! Wells Farm Road. Sorry, yeah, Wells Farm Road, that's it. And I went along and... I thought the army had bureaucracy, the BBC certainly had bureaucracy. I went before a board of about... what seemed like 144, but I suppose was about 24 people of every description. Asked me all sorts of questions...

RJ: What year was this?

AT: Sorry, yeah, I've gone through. This was in 1989. Yeah, I was only there a year. Sorry Rolls Royce, I was only there a year. That's right, because it went pear-shaped. That's another one. I didn't get made redundant, I had to resign because I couldn't go to Derby. Anyway, that was 1989. They said they'd let me know, but it looked okay, and duly told me that it was up to me if I wanted to look for another job, but it would only take a week to ten days, and in that time the BBC would pay me at a set rate of what they paid their workers,

whether I got the job or not. In other words, if I passed the interview, I was employed from then on. I'd get paid, if I wasn't I'd get the week, or whenever the letter come. Got the letter to the effect that I would start on such and such a day, the usual standard letter to the effect that if I couldn't take up the position to let them know, if this date wasn't convenient. And I started, and it was a fantastic company, absolutely fantastic! Again working conditions. The unions were pretty good, the working conditions were, I would say overall over my lifetime, very good. Had a fantastic workforce, skills that are long-lost, again because of... I don't know, John Birt, I think he was a Margaret Thatcher man, because John Birt took over the BBC then. Anyway, I was there for six years, and then, again, the usual thing, like we're experiencing in the year 2010, cuts were coming into the BBC, not at the top level. They still got their fourteen and twenty per cent pay rises, but savings had to be made in all departments, and one of them to be hit was... they were called Con Ops(?), they were the scenery shifters. They were put out to private tender. So the writing was on the wall there, and after six years they made an offer with the unions that if twelve left voluntary on the sickness record, or absenteeism, then the rest would be safe. But I volunteered because... and this is a fact, it's in the records, one chap was up on the twelve, because he had three days off in five years. In the meantime I'd had a serious accident, and they knew I had an illness that didn't stop me doing my job, but because I'd had about fourteen, fifteen days over two years, and I was under the BBC doctor at the time, I was on the list. Well, there was a bit of animosity because the BBC then said, if we didn't get the twelve volunteers, then everybody would be made redundant, compulsory. They were offering fantastic money, in all fairness they were offering fantastic money, in fact I think I was offered fifteen thousand pounds, which was a lot of money in them days. It was a lot of money, plus a year's salary, plus the entitlements, plus all the tools that they bought us, the electric tools. They were called as tools because under some stupid ruling of the BBC, all our personal tools were ours. They were branded with our name on so the BBC couldn't take them back, so I ended up getting that money - I took the redundancy and I was on my way. Trouble is, was it a right move? I had this untold wealth, my children had grown up, and I'd decided to take six months out of work, doing work around the house, we had a couple of holidays, but a couple of holidays, generally becoming lazy. When I went into the job market, it wasn't there. For a start, my particular trade, and I will at the end of this tape say exactly what we used to do as a wood machinist, I found that life had moved on. The jobs weren't there, the skills were not required, we'd come into an age now, whether it was my fault or not, we'd come into an age where everything was mass produced, the beautiful carvings and mouldings were not being put into homes. The wonderful staircases and balustrades, and handrails, and all the paraphernalia that goes into nice homes, were simplified, streamlined, and mass-produced. And I really struggled. And then, I was struggling for a while, and then I finally got a job - how the mighty fall - I got a job at Maxilla Nursery. Around the corner here, yeah. as a part-time caretaker. I knew the full-time caretaker. The reason why I got the job, because the headmistress, and there's a little bit of nepotism come in, and I certainly don't agree with it, but the headmistress had heard of me, because I used to make toys over the years, voluntary, for Wallingford Nursery... it was a disabled... it was children who were severely disabled, and I used to make wooden toys and give them to them. And I suppose in the grapevine of headmistresses and headmasters word got around, and when I applied for it, I got the job. And I was only there for a few months, when they wanted a full-time caretaker at Oxford Gardens School. And again, it's totally unfair really, but... I don't know what you'd call me, but I didn't really have an interview. I went to see the headmistress, and she said, 'When

can you start?' And I said, 'Well, when do you want me?' and I was there for, again, not long. I was there for about a year, if that. And then the council decided that all caretakers were going to be privatised. In that time I'd seen my job go from being a full-time caretaker, as per a shift, for the school times, doing three hours in the morning, and four hours at night. Three hours before the children come into school, and half an hour up until they'd settled in, and then I was sent home. And then half an hour before the school come out in the evening, until 7.30 at night. A split shift, but you didn't get paid during the day. And it was alien to me, and I thought, 'No, this is not on,' and I went to see the headmistress, and should have been older and wiser, but I wasn't. And there was a clash of personalities and I told the headmistress, who was the wife of a vicar, I suppose she still is the wife of the vicar, for St. Clements, the local church, I think they've moved on now - I told her what she could do with her caretaker's job !And yeah, it was throwing myself out on the scrapheap. The only enduring thing was my wife was working full-time, my wife had never quitted all through my working life. What I'd done, many a time I'd come home and say, 'Oh, I've packed my job in,' 'Oh okay, what you going to have for dinner?' You know the next day I'd get another job, I might only be there two or three days, that's why my CV is not full as such. But now it really was tough, because the disability that I had at the BBC had now come to the forefront. In the end it finally led to major surgery on my back, and I mean major surgery. My age, and there was no jobs there for a wood machinist. I searched all my diaries for old firms, long gone, they'd gone by the by. Park Royal, which used to be a fantastic place for jobs, you couldn't... in my formative years you could walk from one end of Park Royal to the other. If you failed to get a job, then you must have been, excuse me, I'm not being nasty to blind mad people, you must have been a blind mad person not to have got a job, because every firm, whether it was sweeping up, whether it was making tea, whether it was capstan fitter or a machine minder, whether it was wood machinist... there was every conceivable job, well Margaret Thatcher destroyed that. I think it's the biggest factory outlet in Europe, and it's now a desert, and all it's got is cash and carry places, I think Asda's got a place up there. You could get something up there, even if it was temporary. And of course, again my rebel part come on again, when I went down the dole office, I didn't endear myself to them, 'cos I thought that they were there to help me, but it seemed that they weren't. They were there to get me in a job. Well, anyway, on my own volition, I did finally get a job in 1997. I remember it well. I got a job at Wansdale Joinery. Fulham Palace Road. It wasn't what they were claiming. I was supposed to have been a bandsaw operator, but I didn't mind. A bandsaw operator, it's... how can I describe it, it consists of a big wheel that holds the bandsaw. Now the bandsaw can cut logs, it can cut... it's, the blade is about... it's a continuous blade, it wraps around two wheels. One is buried into the ground, boards over it, and you've got the bed where the timber goes through, and then the wheel at the top carries the other part of the band. So they're, I suppose, about forty foot long, in a continuous band of steel, and about twelve inches wide. Now I was told, because of my experience I'd do that job, but I got there and I found I was doing nothing like that, but that's neither here nor there, I had an accident, and I did win the case in the end, but I ended up with a couple of broken arms, broken leg, injury to my head. Anyway...

RJ: All in one accident?

AT: Yeah. The blokes had dropped some flooring ply, they're sheets of three quarter inch ply, four foot by eight foot. About four or five of them come down on top of me from about ten foot high. Well, I knew it was a bad firm in a sense that, I only found out afterwards, that I was about the only one that wasn't a freemason. Yeah, and I found this out because my brother-ion-law was a freemason. He tried to straight it with them, but it didn't work, and while I was off sick, they sacked me. Well again it did lead to a tribunal, and I did win. I would suggest to anyone that's in that position, to go to a tribunal, because I've used them twice - the first time was with the BBC when they made me redundant, I felt that they were discriminating against the people who were sick's record. In all fairness, apart from one bloke with all his wig and gown and about twelve people including John Birt, it was like... I don't know what it was like. But talk about intimidation, there was a whole two benches of BBC, and I was supporting myself...

DW: Did you have BECTU supporting you?

AT: No. Now, can I come back to that, or has it gone past it? Now this is where... you can look it up, you might be able to help me here, a chap called **name removed** was the convenor steward for BECTU. When I applied to BECTU... I'm jumping backwards and forwards now... but when I applied for help from the union, a bloke called Smudger Smith who was the shop steward, he put my request through to BECTU to a chap called **name removed**, he was the area organiser. He said that the offer they were making me was a fair one, and I accepted it, so they're not going to accept the fact that they were picking on the vulnerable. And I said, 'Well, I think they are, because, it's up to him if he goes, but one bloke having three days off in five years is absolutely disgraceful,' and it was just a charade. So I represented myself. But in the meantime, I found out that **name removed** was being investigated and was later kicked out of the union because he was on the fiddle with... and I forget what council... but he was also a councillor, and he was dividing work between his full time work with BECTU and the council he was a councillor with, but he was also fiddling his expenses on both of them. And I think he's still there, a bloke called **name removed**, he took over. I think he might well be there. By this time it had gone past the stage of BECTU. There was too much internal fighting, what was going to happen, they was trying to keep it quiet and that but it... the brown stuff hit the fan, between the union, because they don't like to air their dirty linen in... Anyway, getting back to the tribunal, when I did go to the tribunal I was slaughtered. I was slaughtered, because they had a QC, they had people there with all their accounts and everything like that. I got slaughtered. But in all fairness to the tribunal, when they went out... because the tribunal, as I knew it then, consisted of one full-time, retired trade union official, one representative of say the CBI retired, and one qualified legal person. They said that they would come back. They went out. They were gone about, what seemed like half an hour, I suppose about ten minutes. They come back, they found in favour of the BBC, but they found in favour only because even if they'd awarded me the full maximum I'd got back from the BBC, the settlement was... In them days the maximum was fifteen thousand pound. I'd got that, plus with all the other benefits, and they felt that the BBC... but the stinging remark was that the three people on the tribunal wanted the BBC, the representatives, including John Birt, to stay behind, 'cos they thought that their treatment

was absolutely appalling, and they insisted on... that in future all their process of getting rid of people had to be severely reviewed. I was asked by the tribunal if I wanted a copy. I just wanted to get out of the building. I felt as if I'd really been hammered. You know, this was the difference between the ordinary layman against the big boys. But at least I had my hearing, and if I hadn't have brought up the fact that certain things had happened, I'm sure the tribunal would have never known, and I'd like to think that I did help future people at the BBC. Because it happened, everybody at the BBC got made redundant, within a year of me going they'd all gone. They'd hear different excuses, and one chap, he used the tribunal, and he was reinstated. So, whether I did do any good, whether the little man did do something good in the end...

DW: It was a warning shot...

AT: It did, yeah, and it did become a little less heavy. I kept in contact with some of my old colleagues for quite some time, and that was my experience of the BBC. Up until then, they were very very good, but it was a cosmetic excuse for getting rid of people. And to crown it all, the company that took over making the scenery, and I can't remember, about three months after I left, I'm reading Private Eye, and there's a section in there called Media, and lo and behold, it's not BCCI 'cos that was the bank, but it was a company like that, what do I read? But the company that had taken over the contract for making the scenery for the BBC, two of the directors had been found guilty, for want of a better word, of bribery and corruption, and three senior people at the BBC had taken early retirement. And that was in Private Eye, and I sat there and I went, 'Yes!' but, you know, you can't hold a grudge, well you can but... Margaret Thatcher I can, but... I'll tell you what, when she dies... I never thought I'd say this but, I won't be at all sorry. But anyway, getting back to Wansdale Joinery, I took them to a tribunal and this is where... I'm trying to remember where it was now... but anyway, I went to a company that was no win/no fee. They thought I had a very good case anyway, I can still see the name now, and I went to this company called... it'll come to me, sorry, anyway it's in Ealing, you might know it. They were the ones that were taken on for Joanna Lumley with the Gurkhas. Anyway, I went to them, they thought I had a fantastic case. Again, I think I was stitched up, because I won my case, and for all my injuries and time out of work, and I spent nearly a year, because I ended up having another operation on my back, and I was never the same. I mean, I only had to look at a step and trip over, and I'd break an ankle or an arm, as if my whole immune system... Anyway, I won it, but for all my injuries, and this was in '98, I got the sum of, I think it was £1500 for all that injury and time off. Now I think that I was stitched up. I got a feeling that Wansdale Joinery, because they were freemasons, am I being prejudiced against freemasons, I don't know. My brother-in-law was one, and I've got friends that are them, but was there somewhere along the line, and I got £1500, and when I said, 'Well do you think this is a good enough settlement?' they said, 'Well, we think it's a very generous settlement.' And so I took the fifteen hundred quid, which was a lot of money. Don't get me wrong, in the sense that I'd been out of work a long time. My wife had had to work to cover me, because I wasn't getting any benefits at all. I wasn't getting incapacity benefit, I wasn't getting any benefits at all. Don't ask me why. I really don't know. It's been something that's always rankled with me...

DW: Because it's an industrial injury...

AT: Yeah, well what I was actually told, that if I'd got an award, if I'd got incapacity benefit... I don't know what it was called then. Industrial Injury Benefit, I think it was called then. If I'd got that, if I'd won I would have had to have paid it back. And I could either opt out for it, or opt in, and they... I think they blinded me, 'cos they said, 'Well you could end up actually not only losing all your money, but you might even end up paying us.' So, anyway, I accepted that, but in general the industrial tribunal, I would say, 'Go for it,' although the year 2010, even that is becoming politicised. It's not, I don't think, what it used to be. You do hear the odd occasional cases where someone wins nine hundred thousand pounds, but that only gets in the newspaper because, invariably, the Daily Mail wants to put it in there, and it's highlighting something that you don't know what's behind it. But I was pretty lucky, I'd been out of work for quite a long time, four years. And in May 2002.... sorry, I've got it wrong, in 1998, that's right, I seen an advert in Hammersmith and Fulham Council for, to use political speak, I think it was something like a Patrolling Security Receptionist. I can't remember the full title, but what it was, it was the caretaker of the Linford Christie Stadium. I spoke to a bloke called Steve Wade who I think is still with Hammersmith and Fulham council, went along. He asked me, and I said, 'Well, I walk with a limp. I can't lift heavy stuff. I've got to put it on the line, because if you take a job without declaring...' He said, 'I'm not worried about that. Do you know how to open a front door?' I said, 'Yeah,' so he gave me a big bunch of keys. He said, 'Come on, downstairs.' Got in his car. Drove over to Linford Christie Stadium. I had about two thousand keys, and he said, 'Right, you start tonight. The stadium opens at six o'clock.' And then he said, 'I'll send up a bit of paper...' Well, I'd signed nothing, and I'd gone from being a highly skilled wood machinist to a caretaker. I didn't care, didn't mind. I did enjoy it there, I really did. I met some wonderful people, met some fantastic sportsmen. I actually met quite a few politicians. One fantastic bloke was called David Mellor, who was a Chelsea supporter, a Conservative MP, but when there was a massive great project going on, he wouldn't walk across the wet grass because he had £250 shoes on and they'd get wet. That was the fantastic David Mellor. Little did I know that he didn't worry about getting dirty with his mistress, but that's another story! Yeah, I met some fantastic people, I met the then Commissioner of Police, because we had a big Afro Caribbean project up there, people from the various... So I'd gone from a wood machinist, really rough conditions, terrible conditions at Samuel Putney's, I'd gone full circle to being a caretaker at Linford Christie Stadium. I was there till... that was '98, then in May 2002 it was privatised (laughs). What they were now going to be called was Parks Patrol Officers, they were the constabulary. Now, if I could meet the criteria I could have the job. And that was run 100 yards within a certain time. They did take into account age and things like that, so it wouldn't be 100 yards in ten seconds!

DW: Like Linford...

AT: Yeah, but this was all done while I was away from work. They had this meeting, and the people that wanted to apply for this had to sign the paper there and then. Well, of course, I had my three days off work, because it was shifts, and again it was a stitch-up, and I did win there. And lo and behold, when I got back to work they said, 'Oh, you're leaving.' I said, 'What do you mean?' 'Well you didn't sign the form,' 'Well I couldn't sign the form when I wasn't at the meeting,' 'But you should have been at the meeting,' 'Well no-one informed me there was a meeting.' It was a Punch and Judy 'Oh yes you can,' 'Oh no you can't.' Well anyway I got in touch with the union. The union was... no, it wasn't UNISON

DW: GMB?

AT: It might have been UNISON, I can't remember. Anyway, I went down the union office just off of King Street, Siobhan O'Moore. Fantastic, she knocked her pipe out, she really did, because she was now taking on not only the department, but the council. They wanted to get rid of everybody under the old guys. In fact it proved it, because everyone went. They even shut down the Janet Adekoke(?) Leisure Centre which was the swimming pool and fitness centre, which was tied in with Linford Christie. Apart from the top boys, everyone went. Anyway, Siobhan O'Moore, and this is where we come to a tribunal again and stay with the union. Even if you don't agree with it, they're there for certain things. In my case, my formative years for accidents, and later on for this. And for about a year she fought for me. She fought tooth and nail, and it finally come to a situation where it was what they call a full council meeting. That's where all the councillors are there. They put their case there, because I said, 'No, I'm going to a tribunal.' Now I think because of my previous injury, they knew I was registered disabled, I think because they didn't go through the proper procedure, I think they knew they was on to a hiding. By this time laws had come in on this, so I think it's something like race, colour, gender, sexuality, and injury, I think there's unlimited compensation. And I felt so sorry for Siobhan because she was put under a lot of pressure. She fought, and we went to this final council meeting. I put my point to them, I told them everything, I proved everything, got my doctors' certificates, my consultants' letters, they were in the meeting. Then the head of the department who later took early retirement... I can't think of his name... but anyway, they made me another offer, and I've got to be truthful, it was a fantastic offer, again. I wasn't looking at the money, but I had to be realistic. Do I take the chance of going to a tribunal, because by this time the union's backed out, they said it cost too much money. But Siobhan carried on. She was brilliant. Anyway, they give me a half hour and I said, 'Well Siobhan, what do you think?' And she said, 'Well, the union have pulled out. I'll carry on, but there's only so much I can do because I can't use union facilities.' So I said, 'Okay, I'll accept,' and I accepted. And I left there, because it would have gone to a tribunal. I think, looking back, I would have won. I know I would have won but that's it. And then again it come back to quite a bit of unemployment, I suppose about a year, if that. Then I got a job in **name removed** as a maintenance guy. And I'll put this on record, it's the crappiest company for your rights, and union rights, that I could come across in the year 2003-4. Because, apart from CCTV cameras everywhere, which I can understand for theft, they even had them in the toilets. It was only when someone complained and said, 'You're breaking human rights,' they took them out reluctantly. But, I don't know whether it's now, but

that was then, but I was lucky. My fob would take me anywhere and I wasn't monitored. But staff, if they wanted to go to the toilet, they had to wait till they were relieved at their desk or wherever they were, and they had to swipe in and out of the toilet, and if they went to the toilet what they called an extortionate amount of times, and time, their money was docked, and they would have to see the company doctor in their own time, at their own expense. Yes, that's **name removed**, and when I approached a couple of the guys and I said about the trade union, oh dear! It was like I had the plague. No-one wanted to know. They didn't believe in trade unions. They had what they called a workers' committee, which was made up of sycophants. One of them had been there about 31 years, the other had been there about 27 years, and they were as old as the knickers and the socks that they were selling to the public. But no, not a very nice company, and it reflected in the fact that while I was there, a couple of long-servers actually retired and, like in business, you know, they thought, oh they would be able to go back a week later and say hello to everybody, but... one bloke was very bitter because he come back and he said, 'No-one wanted to talk to me, I can't get into the office to speak to someone' I said, 'Well, what do you expect? It's a business. It's not like it was twenty, thirty, forty years ago.' That's what sadly today is about. But, well that's really the history of my work. Now I would like to say what a wood machinist is. A wood machinist... now, if someone can envisage, if they go and look at a front door and it's a fielded panel door, it's just a mundane job to me. But I always regarded myself as superior to carpenters and cabinet makers, because we took the raw timber, we cut it up, we machined it to the point that the cabinet maker or the joiner put it together. There's a skill in that, of course there is. If you go to any of the cathedrals and see some of the ornate archwork and mouldings and that, that's the sort of things I done. There's such a variety of machines in the field of wood machining. I couldn't... I couldn't... I think I'd need a year to even just describe some of them. And because wood machinist takes in so many fields of work, as I've said on this tape, I done work in cars. What is wood in cars? Well in particular Rolls Royce, you had the dashboards, you had the framework for the seating, that was wood. Believe it or not, there was even washers that were made out of wood, because metal rubs on metal and it wears, whereas wood, once it wears you can replace it, it doesn't damage the metal. And Rolls Royce were famous for, the only thing you'll hear on a Rolls Royce is the clock ticking! Which I think they put right. But, coach building, I done coach building, I've done shop fitting. When I was at Harrods I was one of a team of six, and about thirty carpenters and a couple of cabinet makers. We decked out the top floor of... I think it was Bloomingdales, one of the top American stores, all the work inside. The exotic timbers we used were... well they wouldn't be allowed to be used now because a lot of them are protected, but I think, when I was learning when I was an apprentice, I think there was something like twenty-six thousand different hard woods, and it seemed like in my lifetime I covered all of them. But, I mean, I done work for harbours, I done work for Royal Navy Docks, the capstans, they were still making them in wood down at Portsmouth and Devonport. And the company I was working for, we had to make them in... it was a timber called yang, it's a substitute for teak. It never loses its... it's like a sap... it never loses it, so it's completely waterproof. You go to some of the beautiful homes and see some of the... I'm looking around now, and this is a church, and if you look at the carve... at the mortar work, well, I've done all that in timber. The cornices in homes. I mean, I've done skirtings on beautiful homes where they're eighteen, twenty inches high. Go to any stadium and see some of the panelling. I've done all that. Filmwork, hammer and nail stuff, you put a bit of hardboard on, cut it out to shape, slap some paint on it and it looks like a cathedral, it looks like... all sorts of things. I mean, I'm very critical, because

when I see things on television and my wife is watching, I say, 'Oh yeah, they're all sitting behind that scenery grabbing a cigarette or playing cards!' 'Oh, you've spoilt it now!' And it's likewise when I go to buy furniture, because I see everything as not made with dovetails, and hidden...they're called Roman joints. I suppose they are still about but the skills have gone. And if they are about, I'm pleased for the people who've got them and are still in employment, but sadly it's an industry that I think has declined. It was a tough industry, it really was. As I've said in the past to people, I actually got turned down on a job because I went for an interview for a job, and the first thing when I got there the foreman said was, 'Let's have a look at your hands!' And I showed him, and believe it or not, I was young looking once. I'd better tell you, I'm 67 now. Bald headed, fat, diabetic, overweight, but I was always youthful looking, and I went for this job, and the first thing the colleague said, 'Well, let's have a look at your hands,' so I showed him my hands, I thought 'What's he on about?' and he went, 'You're not a wood machinist.' I said, 'What do you mean?' He said, 'You've still got your fingers and your thumbs!' I went, 'Well, what's that to do with it?' He went, 'I've never seen a wood machinist with all his fingers and thumbs!' He went, 'No, you're not a wood machinist. I become a bit irate and I told him what I thought of him, I said, 'I spent four years at Hammersmith College of Art, Craft and Building,' and I told him a couple of other jobs, and he went, 'Well, all right, I'll give you a trial, but if you're no good you're going!' And I got the job! But the days of yesteryear and today. We're going back in my opinion. I'm not out in the job market now. I'm going to be very... what's the word, selfish, but I'm so pleased because I'd hate to be a young person just starting out, either in work, there's no work for them, or someone that's just got a young family, because it's a struggle out there. And I've got some wage slips in front of me now. Now, it's rather relevant, I've got two old wage slips, why I kept them I don't know but I suppose it's good because I'm here talking about it now. It's when I was with Earls Court and Olympia - payslips - one is '86. Now a forty-nine hour week I got paid... It doesn't sound a lot, but I got £153, I actually got £231 before stoppages, but that was a fortune in them days. I was about double the national average in wages in them days. And the next wage slip is the 21st of the 5th, '87. Now it says sixty-nine hours, but in them days when you worked overtime you got double time or triple time, depending on if it was a Saturday. If it was after five o'clock at night it was double time, and Saturday up to twelve o'clock it was double time, and after that it was treble time, and Sunday was treble time. I took home £239.33. In other words, before stoppages £318. Again, for the hours, but I didn't actually work them, because half of them hours were made up of double and treble time. The money was phenomenal. I'm seeing jobs advertised now for a forty hour week, a forty-four hour week, and they're only paying £239 before stoppages, and you've got to keep a family on it. So I did have some... excuse my language... I did have some pretty rough and crappy jobs, with poor pay, but I soon walked down the road with them, I didn't even register it on my CV because, well, I was only there four hours! I walked in one door, walked out the other! But one... I think my trade, and the skills have gone. And as I said, if they are still about, good luck to the blokes that are doing it, and I hope they're getting paid for their skill. But also, I think, looking back, I grew up, both as a child, and in my working life, the best time that it could be. Because not only was there full work, I seen the migration of West Indians in this country that were needed, and done all the terrible jobs that people didn't... some people wanted to do, and they were incorporated. But now I see that it's a dog-eat-dog world. Yeah, there's a recession, 2010 there's a recession. I read today that tens of thousands of police are going to be made redundant. We are in a bad time, but I'll tell you what, I'd sooner live through the period that I lived through than do another ten or fifteen

years, or even five years working. And for the tape, 2010, they're now talking about, don't worry if you're a labourer or a scaffolder or a bricklayer or a general dogsbody on a building site or in a factory or in a warehouse, you're going to have to work till seventy, or if you don't... The average man, they say, lives to eighty-four. I don't believe that, I think he dies by seventy-five. So, I don't know what the answer is, but I'm just so pleased that I lived when I did. Met my wife, had a fantastic marriage, still have a good row! Shouldn't say this but I felt like throttling the kids in certain stages of life, but I'm still looking after them, still doing work for them, but I'm so pleased that I'm retired. And I'm not being patronising but I feel sorry for people out there trying to earn a living. I really do Dave, I really do.

DW: And the trade unions must've... because what you've described is that... I mean obviously the trade unions were responsible for bringing about those better things for health and safety, better pay, conditions, pensions. And all that, since about '79...

AT: Has gone.

DW: Has been eroded.

AT: I can honestly say that all the things that I got were through the union. I mean, I started out... it might sound petty, when I was at Samuel Putney's I wanted ear defenders. I didn't know what a safety guard was because... well, no-one knew what a safety guard was 'cos none of the old boys... well they died twenty or thirty years ago perhaps, that was how old they were when I was young. 'Safety guard? I've never had a safety guard. Didn't do me any harm!' And for that I'm putting up four fingers, but anyway... And when I wanted ear defenders, because the noise was so loud it was, the decibel reading was like a jet engine, and I was treated like a pariah. I was laughed at, I was stupid and that. Never got them. The only time the safety guards come out... when we had word that this time next week at four o'clock, after he's been down the pub, this factory inspector would come round to look at the safety guards, so we'd get them out, and have to rub them down with wire wool, grease them up and try and get them into position... And he'd walk around, well he'd stagger round with the boss, and after about ten minutes he'd be gone. Take them off 'cos it hindered the workers, and it was back to square one. And over the period of time, yes, I can be critical of the unions, but that's what it's all about... if you can't criticise people. But in general, without the union, on a couple of occasions when I had accidents, my holidays certainly, without a doubt, my working conditions, well, I would never have got them. We would still have been working like Samuel Putney's. Everything, salary, conditions. I mean, I've gone from working where the water's so deep in the yard that it would go down your shoes. That's why you wore wellingtons. Because the water... there was no drainage, the toilets never worked. The only thing was in the winter of '63 or '64, we was the only sawmill in the country that was open. The dockers used to come all over the country there. And then, there's another good thing, getting away from it slightly, but to do with trade unions, it's rather amazing that the

dockers were the most militant people going allegedly, and yet the poor guys, they used to come all the way from Wales, from all over the place, wherever there was ports, dockers come to Samuel Putney's to try and get work. If there was any barges coming in from the Docks with the timber. And they wouldn't, but the one thing that was good about it, the union insisted that anyone that turned up for a job, if they didn't get it, our company would give them a cup of tea and a cheese roll. Now it sounds crazy, because we didn't even get that from our boss, you know. But the unions had it that... and we did, we used to get a lot of people coming for that period. We used to have to carry them, we used to have to try and break the ice off the timber to try and get it through the machine, until it fused. I mean, we can laugh at some of these conditions, but again, when I was at Earls Court and Olympia, as I said earlier in this tape, we had a card carrying communist, but his intentions were totally honourable. Didn't always agree with them, and I said so in quite a few union meetings, but his intentions were totally honourable, and without him, we wouldn't have got a lot of things we got. Yeah, 2010, there'd be some muppets out there saying, 'Well, you was overpriced and you killed the industry.' 'No, Margaret Thatcher killed it.' There's no ifs, ands, or buts. Anyone don't believe it, go up to the North-East of England, go out to Wales, where, when the miners' strike was on, I was in the unions. Rather than give money, we decided, because the Daily Mail... and I'm a reader of the Daily Mail... the Daily Mail highlighted that money was going to miners, and they were spending their money in the miners' workingmen's clubs. And we as a union said, 'Right, we won't do that. The money we collect, we'll buy food.' And we bought vast amounts of tins of beans and that, and we used to take it in allocation who would go up with the vans. And I'll never forget this, when we went to Wales, and it was the steelworks because she crucified them as well, got rid of them, shipyards, the lot, used all her north sea oil money to keep people on the dole. Tip your cap. Anyway, I'll never forget this, it was a night journey, we were going into, I'm going to say Port Talbot, can't remember where it was, and in the distance we could see the glow of the furnaces coming out the big stacks. And we were going along, and when we got there, they were, 'Well make the most of it 'cos that's being shut down next week.' And a year later, we was in the Isle of Wight, my wife and myself. We got friendly with about ten or twelve people from Sheffield, and they did treat it as a joke, but there was whole families devastated there. There was husbands and wives, they all worked for British Steel. Who's there now, yeah, British Steel. And one of the guys, it was on a Friday, he said, 'I'd better phone up,' in his funny Midlands accent. They can't understand us Londoners! He said, 'Better phone up, see what's happening.' And he seemed to be gone about a quarter of an hour, twenty minutes. He come back, he said, 'Oh well, don't worry, they've shut the mill down.' And that's what Margaret Thatcher done, and I see all around me now we're reaping the benefit. We've got kids that have... we've got a whole generation that have never worked. You try telling someone like myself that's a skilled, highly skilled... I would say, not the best, 'cos there's always someone, but I was bloody good at my job. I'm sorry, if I was on the market now, I'd be perhaps... if I was working, I would be perhaps in McDonalds. Nothing wrong with that, but I'm sure that developed countries like Germany, China, America, Russia, a skilled man... I know in Germany they do, skilled men are looked after. In this country, it's a skill that's wasted, yeah. Well, I had four years, I might as well... as one bloke said to me. 'You're wasting your time,' at the time when I was an apprentice, and I said, 'Well, now I'm looking... do what I'm doing.' Well, looking back at it, I didn't waste it because I did have good jobs and it did hold me in good stead. You've got people by the thousands, leaving university now with PhDs, and if they're lucky they might get a job in McDonalds. I'm sorry, people say it wasn't Margaret

Thatcher, it was Margaret Thatcher. The only people that done good out of Margaret Thatcher was... and I'm sorry, I'm branding Essex Man... but it was the white van man from Essex that done good, that done the dodgy plumbing, the dodgy brickwork, the dodgy whatever, and treated his workers like crap. And one example about the unions was when they brought in the Youth Training Scheme, that Margaret Thatcher, the idea was that a company would take on these youngsters, train them, and give them a job for three months. What she really meant to say was, we'll take the youngsters on for three months free or cheap labour, and get rid of them. Because I've got a friend, like me, same age, that owned a garage. He got rid of all his mechanics, apart from one or two, took on about twelve YTS and every three months he'd just jack them in. And all they were doing was putting tyres on, and that was it. And sorry, and we've got to be very careful for the future, 'cos I see now that BT, they were recruiting for, I think it was about 150 Telecom engineers. They've had fifteen thousand, they've said a third of them they can't even read and write. It's not their fault. It's the whole system where we, persistently, we never ever learn. We never learn. And that's why I've come to this HistoryTalk, because I don't know what the future holds. It might all be IT, it might be... timber's a thing of the past. I don't know, I really don't, but if we don't listen to people like myself and I hope lots of other people that'll go on this... If we don't take note, the people that are in their twenties, are in IT or whatever high-tech jobs are, if they think they're safe, there's always a new industry further along. And be very careful it doesn't happen to them. I really do mean it, I don't wish to be patronising, but we've got to be so careful.

DW: One of the other things we'd like to ask you, is when you came to the last meeting you'd made a list of the companies that you remembered being around here...

AT: Oh god yeah, right.

DW: Can you remember them, offhand, what they were?

AT: Well, you take going up from Lancaster Road, up to Walmer Road, right up to North Pole Road. There was a whole assortment of factories, I mean in fact, not that long ago, in a company called ITECS, now we was in a meeting, we was talking about the car industry and the tyre-making, well, ITECS used to make components of the like. They would make inner tubes, they would make anything to do with rubber, to do with industry. It might be mouldings for aircraft parts they might have moved on now, I don't know. By that I mean, I think the company's gone. But where we're sitting now...

RJ: Where was ITECS?

AT: ITECS was in... what's the road going up to North Pole Road?

DW: Latimer...

AT: Latimer. That's it, Latimer Road, ITECS. There was a couple of joinery firms. I can't remember the names of them, but there was a couple of joinery firms down there. There was a car component company down there. I think, part of Trico, you know the windscreen wiper people?

DW: I remember Trico.

AT: Yeah, they used to make... I think they used to make the metal parts, something like that...but there was a whole row like that...

RJ: On Latimer?

AT: Yeah, all in Latimer Road, yeah. Because one side was all houses.

RJ: Isn't it still?

AT: Well yeah, but they were going to be demolished for the motorway. That's why I say that, because if you see the motorway, you see part of it jutting out, it stops short into Latimer Road, but the idea was they were going to build that up to Harrow Road. But then, whatever happened, I don't know... something fell off the end! But anyway, god, I'm trying to think, but Pilgrim Paynes I think is still there. That's a cleaning company.

DW: That goes back, doesn't it?

AT: Oh god yeah, it goes back years, but all along there was... again I suppose because of the war, but before the war there was...

AT: Yeah, their... they'd do upholstery cleaning. They used to be By Appointment to the Queen, I don't know if they still are. I'm trying to think, I wish my wife was here because she...

DW: It was the kind of Park Royal of this area.

AT: Good god yeah! I mean you take... ah, that's it, I know it's slightly off the area, but you take up St Marks Road, Rootes Hall. They made car parts. That later become Fidelity, and now it's a housing estate. If you take a point where the Peoples Hall is. That road along there, where it's Chrysalis now. That used to be the old Phoenix Brewery, then it was a warehouse. I think it Christies used to have it as their... but no-one knew about that. Any local villain, they would have had a field day! There was all little factories around there, in fact I went round there for a job. WH Smiths I think is still there in a small site. But the BBC had a place there. There was a couple of scenery making places there, 'cos I went there. There was a film-making unit there. All right, around Holland Park and around near where I live, Princedale Road, there's still quite a few media little things. But I'm trying to think of St James Hall, Wilsham Street, there was really...It's a pity I didn't have that list now.

DW: It comes...

AT: I'll ask my wife 'cos she knows, but there was just so many places. Even like Holland Park, the back of Holland Park Station, I mean my mate worked there. He was the same age as me, we left school together. He was making components for aircraft. I mean, they was all little engineers. Pottery Lane. Oh, that's it! We always used to call it Osram. They used to make fluorescent tubes. Well when I say made them, I think what they used to do, because they used to put, I don't know, there was a chemical inside them, cadmium and whatever it is, I don't know. They used to make them in there. There was a couple of little factories down there.

AT: Now when I say Osrams, put in brackets a question mark, or something like that. Because what it was, they used to... 'cos when they shut down they left a lot of their fluorescent tubes in there, and what we used to do because the door was broke, we used to go in there and get them and throw them, and they used to make this big cloud of dust. But what we didn't realise, later on in life, there was cadmium and lithium in there! You know, if you do it here, you'd have to evacuate the building and get the chemical thing in, but we didn't care. I mean it's like me, there's another thing for the tape, I mean I don't know if you want it on the tape, but I mean in my industry, I used to cut up asbestos, blue and white asbestos boards And this was **name removed**. They were very good, and in all fairness to them, when there was some documentary like World In Action, something like that, we used to cut this asbestos, there was a bloke called Joe Brinkley, a lovely old boy, he died of cancer, and we think it was that. But you'd be up to your knees in asbestos dust, and then the labourers would go round with these big funnels of vacuum sucking it up. But the point is

the hopper, it spins round. The hopper is like a cylindrical tube. It works on centrifugal force, it sucks it in and then it goes down to a room. But the point is, as it's sucking out you've got a gap, because if it wasn't it would explode. The dust used to come out, so although it was sucking it up in the factory, it was going out the back. But we used to make snowballs, because once I made a snowball and a bloke called Charlie... oh, it's terrible my memory isn't it... anyway, I got it and a bloke called Teddy Button, a lovely bloke, long dead, and I see him, and I got this snowball of asbestos, and I go, 'Ted!' A little bloke, five foot nothing, bald head, fantastic cabinet maker, as he was turning round I thrown it, but I didn't know but the works manager and the top man in the department was walking past the cabinets we made, and as he came by it went..... Everybody disappeared and that, and I got a warning to the effect that, you know, I was out the door next time. But then, this is it, the unions done something about it. Until then, it would have just carried on. And it was by sheer luck we...I don't know what age I was, but... I could work it out going through my CV, but, I had a young family, so I was taking the dust home, because although I blown myself down, you know, it don't matter how good you are with asbestos... In fact, two years ago, three years ago, I come back from America, and I had what they call a cranial haemorrhage when I got back. I was taken into St Mary's Hospital, for five days I was in there, and then when I went to be investigated by the team of doctors, they went and asked questions, 'Why did this man have a cranial haemorrhage?' But like an idiot, I said, 'I know what you're going to ask me. It's 'cos I worked with asbestos.' Course, it blew the consultant asking all the questions. But there's another thing about a wood machinist. People don't realise it, but wood machinists are prone to nasal cancer, because hardwoods are carcinogenic, and carcinogenic are cancer producing... I mean, all right, the old boys that are (wheezing breathing) they're more or less saying, 'Never hurt me!' It's like old Joe Brinkley, he always used to volunteer, because he was left alone, he'd get weeks on end cutting up asbestos, and no-one ever went near him. None of the management there, so he could have his little cigarette, and he could go outside and have a puff and that, his eyebrows all covered, and his hair. And it was just by sheer coincidence, when they said about this stuff called etonite, used predominantly in making the corrugated roofing in factories, in... asbestos is safe as long as it's not disturbed, but once it's disturbed, it's deadly. And one little fibre that you can't see, you've only got to get it in your lung, you're knackered. Oh excuse my language, I shouldn't have said that, but you're going to die with it, you know.

DW: And it's very interesting isn't it because you've now got a government that's saying that health and safety has gone too far, and the message there is that they want to dismantle health and safety.

AT: Interrupting you, if you think... can you remember what Margaret Thatcher said at one time, she said, 'We want industries to be self-regulating.' It's coming around isn't it? It's different words, it's the same thing, because what Margaret Thatcher was saying is that someone in the building industry... well, it's no good having an outside body investigating, let's let the Federation of Builders investigate. They're going to say, 'Oh we don't need a crane, we don't need a safety net, we don't need alarm bells, we don't need...' And it's the same with shipping, you know. But no, I mean the unions... I mean, one of the most

important things with me, and I never had to use them, was it was the only people in the country at the time that would insure a wood machinist's hands. I tried Lloyds of London, and the nearest I could get was what they called 'a pound for pound', in other words, a hundred pound premium for the year would get me a hundred pounds compensation. So you might as well put the pound a week in a tin or something, or in a savings bank. But the unions were the only ones that covered you. HSA is it? Medical insurance... there was a company called HSA. I don't know if they're still going, but years ago a lot of the wise builders, because you never got paid when you're sick, you never got holiday pay and that, that's what the unions fought for. 'Cos I used to... I can still remember working new years day, and I worked up to half past five Christmas Eve... I'm trying to think of some of the other holidays that we've got now... I'm not saying we shouldn't have them, in fact, we still prove... we still work the longest hours in the developed world. But it's a Catch 22 situation. Management have always said the workers don't want to move with the times, well I'll tell you this now. My experience with Earls Court and Olympia, which was P&O Shipping, was we had a massive great contract offered us and we had to do some... it was new at the time, it was MDF. Everyday use now, but it was no good for the cutters we used, you had to have tungsten top... tungsten carbide tip, and it had to run at a certain speed. And I said to the head of the department, I said, 'Well look, buy these cutters and the block, and we'd be able to do the job in ten times, at least, than what we're doing now, because we'd have to keep sharpening the cutters up and things like that.' He said, 'How much are you talking about?' Well, going by this time, I suppose in today's terms... the contract in today's terms would be worth, say, two million pounds for three weeks work. I suppose you'd pay about fifteen thousand pounds for these tools. Do you know, it went right to the top before they finally agreed, and it was only because it was for the then Shah of Persia, who was later deposed. We was doing a big, major... yeah, I think it was the Shah of Persia, or it was the... who was the one who got deposed in Saudi Arabia? But anyway, I know it was one of the big Arab countries, and Prince Charles was there and all that, and they wanted to be prestige P&O to do all the scenery and that. Got a feeling it was Saudi, I think it was Saudi at Olympia. 'Cos it was rather funny, they imported their own sand, palm trees, and their own camels and their own tents. And do you know what? I've got to tell you this, everyone was presented with a gift from King Faas(?) of Saudi Arabia. Everyone was presented with two bottles of spirit. Now talk about hypocrisy! No, do you get what I mean? A country that doesn't...All right, I know that 'When in Rome,' as they say, but yeah. But no, I lived through some good times and some rough times. Still go through rough times now, at times. But the unions have gone, I don't always agree with the ones that are around now with a lot of things but...

DW: Have you stayed as a retired member?

AT: No I haven't...

DW: Oh...

AT: I didn't even think of it. Yeah I know, I didn't even think of it. It's the same with my dad. He was a member of the Labour Party for, oh, well over fifty years, fifty-three, fifty-four years. In fact, when he... 'cos when you do fifty years you don't have to pay, and in them days, they used to have a bloke come round the door for you, to get subs. And for about three or four years after he retired he still paid, although he didn't have to. It was only like coppers, but he was a retired railway porter.

DW: Did you ever want to be involved in politics in a party? Did you ever join a party? I joined... I've got to be truthful, I joined the Socialist Alliance for a while, but, I'm going to be honest and truthful, they become too heavy, and they involved my family, and I took exception... I went to Prague on a demonstration, and funnily enough the young lady I said that was representing the union, she come with us. A big group of us went. It was lovely, it was really good, there was camaraderie, we met some brilliant American doctors, because they were saying about... this is my words, I can't remember the company but say Cow&Gate, they were selling out-of-date powdered milk to Africa, and the drugs they were using in the poor hospitals in America were out of date or, you know, counterfeit from the company... you know, they were really good, met some fantastic... but when we come back and we had a meeting... and I won't mention her name, because I think she's still about... Momba is it? A bloke called Momba, he still writes in the newspapers at times... but anyway, she become too repressive, and she was, for want of a better word, she was imposing her will on my wife, and I took exception to that. And then it become the threats, and that's when I said, 'No, enough is enough yeah.' But no, when I say I've always been involved, yeah I can stand out, I mean I've had more rows with **name removed** than silly Mick. Because I said to her... I didn't swear, I didn't swear, but I tried to embarrass her before this last election, because all the things she promised, and what she could do and that, it never come to anything. She was... like so many of them she was there for one thing. As I say, when a politician opens their mouth, they're lying, sadly. I think it's like Thiefrow...it was known as Thiefrow, Heathrow, because all the baggage handlers used to be able to fiddle them and steal everything going, including a jumbo jet... but no, seriously, it was known as Thiefrow, and it's like everything, you don't go into these things to turn into a thief or to fiddle your expenses as an MP, but you get dragged into it. And I think there's a lot of MPs that do genuinely, would like to do good, but they become part of the network, part of the old boys. And I'm not being funny, I'm looking in this office... how many, four of you?... and it's a bit like that. All right, you take a pen home, it's nothing... it is in a way, it's stealing, but when you're taking a scanner, and everybody's doing it, it's not wrong, because everybody's doing it! I mean there was a ?????? at one time at Olympia with me, because there was so much... because you had an influx of say three to five thousand people for a three day job, you had every conceivable goods, whatever the exhibition, coming in, and half of it went out the back door. I mean while I was there, we seen a formula 1 car stolen! Who would steal a formula 1 car? A yacht was stolen from Earls Court, and the most sinister... we was raided, my house... but we had an arms exhibition, and then it was a night site. It was a state of the art night site, and it went missing. Now I'm not being funny, yeah, Special Branch came round my house. But I'm not being funny, that was done by some foreign country. It had to be, because... I'm going back to the FF fire... I think it was called the Fire, Security, and Safety Exhibition. That encompassed everything from military to private security, and I'll tell you

what, when you look at it now, and I was so right with them coppers on that thing... everything's private now. I mean CC covers everything. I was on the last miners' demonstration, and I'm proud of this, and it'll always live with me, and I hope my grandson don't forget it... went on the final miners' march in town, up city, you know, through parliament and that. Tens of thousands, my union was there. I didn't go up for that. I took my grandson, he was only little, in his pushchair...

DW: Was that the one where it poured with rain all the way through?

AT: Yeah. And there were some coppers behind me, big rows of them. And course, coppers when they've got a uniform and their overcoats and everything, they're bigger than what they are. And I was getting jostled, pushed, and everything... and there was remarks like, 'If I had my way, I'd arrest someone bringing a kid out like this, neglect of the kid,' all sorts of things, and in the end I turned around and it's come true! And I said this to Nick Ferrari on LBC and he didn't like what I said, and I turned around and said, 'One day the police might be privatised,' and they all laughed and scoffed at me. Well I expect all of them are retired now, but I'll tell you what, it's come round to haunt them. It's a bit like Nick Ferrari when I... I won't use the word, but I used a profanity, not on the radio 'cos you wouldn't get on, but he was on about something and, you know, it's the usual thing. Ah, everybody out there's lazy so-and-so's, why don't they get up off their arse, sort of thing. You know, well hang on, he was on about single parents. Well hang on, he's a single parent, but he was decrying them 'cos he's just got a divorce. But he's a single parent, he's still got two boys, but they don't think of it this way. There is a lot of lazy people out there, but don't brand everyone the same, it's like the welfare state, on the one hand they say, 'Get rid of it,' on the other hand they say, 'You can't do that because there's tens of thousands of vulnerable people. You can't do it!' I would sooner... I have just come back from America and I do get involved in politics when I talk to them, 'cos they've got a society which, if you're poor, you are poor! You are desperately poor. We went down the South of America, to the southern part of Arizona. My god, they call them trailer trash. They're human beings, but they live in pig shit. Excuse my language, sorry about this if it's still on tape. They do. And we pulled into a gas station, petrol station, and my god, see the people in there. You could see they were earning perhaps two or three dollars an hour. You could tell. I don't want that society, and they say, 'You know, you get people, they get tens of thousands of dollars, they're not working over the year.' And if they're on the fiddle and it's not right then we should do something about it, but you judge a society by how you treat its poor, its weakest. You know, I mean if someone kills someone, then in my opinion, and it's a premeditated murder and it's a violent murder, lock them up. But if someone kills someone through domestic, that they didn't really mean, then you can't ???????, but America do. I mean we was out there, and a bloke's just got released after 27 years in solitary confinement. All the evidence was there from day one. The judge was bent, the cops were bent, they're dead now, so they can't do nothing. They've just released him. They're now trying to get him compensation, but they said, 'He had a roof over his head.' The argument from some of the senates is that he had a roof over his head, he come from a poor black background, with no job prospects. I'm thinking, hang on, you don't know what

that man could've been. You know, and this is... you said to me earlier Dave, about have I ever thought about politics? I do and I don't. I mean, I'll stick up for anyone...

DW: Yeah, but there's politics and politics isn't there?

AT: Yeah, that's right.

DW: There's being in a party and being involved in that, and there's just the day to day... which often comes, I think, from being in a trade union. You've got a sense of justice and you want to see justice done.

AT: I'll give an example, when they shut the rugby club down, before they built this new park, I went on a meeting... and I got knocked down by a car, and put in hospital. But I went on a demonstration to save the club... they call me Lucky in my family. I've had my back broke, knees been operated on…. Anyway, went there, and I was with a couple of people from Socialist Alliance, and they said to me, 'Well you speak, 'cos you know the area,' I said, 'Yeah, course.' And they had someone from like the **name removed** who was one of the trustees... or then trustees of rugby school, and they were saying they can't afford it, and this, that and the other. He said, 'Oh, the club's losing money,' so I said, 'Well,' I made the silly statement, I said, 'Well, you're a banker aren't you?' So he said, 'Yes,' So I said, 'Well, I wouldn't like to invest with you. If you can't look after the books for this club, that you run it into tens of thousands of pounds,' I said, 'I certainly wouldn't invest money in your company … look what happened.' So it got a little bit heated, some of the people, so I said to whoever it was was head of the council then. And I said something, and this bloke turned around and he went, 'I won't'... It's not on tape is it? Is it on tape?

RJ: Yes

AT: I went, 'Hang on.' I went, ' Look up there.' I said, 'You've got councillor, councillor, councillor, trustee, so and so, so and so, rugby council.' I went, 'You tell me whether it's politics or not being discussed here,' I said, 'because who's funding it?' I said, 'That man there,' I said, 'he can't keep his books straight,' I said, 'and yet he works for an investment company.' I said, 'That person there,' I said, 'who was the treasurer of Kensington and Chelsea,' I said, **name removed** s two sons,' I said, 'They had to resign,' I said, 'because there was a discrepancy in the books.' Did you know that? Yeah. We're going back a few years now. And he went, 'Well yeah, but we don't want to bring politics in it. We're talking about a youth club. You used to go to the club.' I went, 'Yeah, and I want to still go to the club.' See, these people don't realise, everything's politics. I mean my wife's terrible. I'm not

being nasty, I love her dearly, but my wife, as soon as I talk about politics she goes, 'I don't want to know.'

DW: Switches off.

AT: Yeah. And there's a lot of women like that. There's some good women, and dare I say it, some of the women are better at it than the men. Because even in my union days, I used to get blokes there that used to say, 'Oh, I ain't going to the union meeting. It's a load of old hot air.' Until we come back and said, 'Oh, guess what happened at the meeting?' 'What happened then?' They'd say, 'What happened at the meeting?'

DW: They still want to know don't they?

AT: And I used to wind them up. I'd go, 'Cor, it's bad news.' 'What's that?' 'Well they've agreed not to accept that pay rise, so we're all going on strike for two weeks.' 'No, who voted for that?' 'Well you should have been there!' Yeah, that used to happen a lot, and I used to wind them up, saying things like, 'Oh, no we ain't getting a pay rise, not this year.' 'What do you mean, we ain't getting a pay rise?' 'No, well you'd better ask...' Oh Les Harris, that's another name for... if it's any good to you. I've got his name here. I think he was district organiser at the time. Les Harrison, he was pretty good. He was all right, because although he was... I think he was district organiser for FTAT, Furnisher Timber and Allied Trade, but he was pretty good. Yeah, I had my sort of arguments with him at times, but in general they were good. The only one that I really was disappointed, was a bloke called **name removed** of BECTU. Then again, I suppose he was sucked in, he got roped in, we can't say, we don't know why he done it.

DW: I mean this is... maybe one day if we could, maybe, borrow... when we're going to have some exhibitions, because this is...

AT: Yeah, course, yeah.

DW: A union card that you get ?????? which is a thing of the past.

AT: I swear... I've got a feeling I did have a lot more.

DW: Have you got any leaflets or anything that would have come out from the union, or any...

AT: I tell you what I'll do. When I go home... I've got a feeling... when I was with the BBC I went on a TUC funded health and safety course. And, I mean they're long out of date now, because what I did incorporate in that... I've got it on my CV, what I did incorporate, apart from health and safety, we took in the project of EU law. Where is it? There you are 1992, incorporating EU safety laws. What come out of that was... some of the things we're gradually seeing come in. But things that were coming in was like the weight(?). We have the... I think it's called mechanical handling now, and I think... that was 1992, so when it's going to come in, if it does come in, they were going to have... you know bags of cement, I still think they're in like 25 kilos, which is fifty-odd pound. Well, I think they were going to reduce that to half that weight. You know, things like... breeze blocks, things like that.

DW: Yes

AT: I know one thing was, there was a certain brick, and that was going to be reduced and it has been reduced, but since then we've had modern technologies that have... what was a very heavy concrete brick is now, sort of light, you know.

DW: A bit more lightweight...

AT: Yeah... but, health and safety with the ladders, that's in. So that's why a lot of people do scaffolding now, but scaffolding never used to be regulated. But that's regulated now, you have to pass an exam, and it's quite right. You know, someone said, 'Oh, it's gone obscene(?)' Well, yes, if you don't teach people common sense, they are going to stand on the end of a ladder at thirty foot up. But then... I shouldn't say this, but I'm going to... but if someone done that, and they're trying to stand on the top, well, they're either self-employed and they're doing the job on the cheap, or they're stupid. Because common sense tells you what to do and what not to do. The only time you see stupid things like that is on like, 'You've Been Framed,' when the yanks cut a tree down and it falls through their house. But there you are.