

D - Francis Dillon  
E - Dennis East

January 4, 1971 - Dennis East  
Springfield, Ohio  
Home of Francis J. Dillon, first President of the United Auto Workers

E - Mr. Dillon, could you start off by giving us a little background about yourself?

D - I was born in Leshville, Ohio, January 1, 1887.

E - You were a farm boy, right?

D - Well, I was a farm boy until my father and mother left the farm and we went to Springfield. There I secured a job in a pattern shop, served my apprentice at Parker Pattern Works, then located on West Washington Street. After that, I went to work at what was known as the Legunda Plant of now the International Harvester Company. There I worked for five years in the pattern shop. Then I left and went to Indianapolis where I worked in various pattern shops and was ultimately elected Secretary of the Pattern Makers Union, where I served for 13 1/2 years as a business representative. And then I went to Toledo, where I served in a like capacity for four years as a business agent of the Cleveland local union. At that time, William Green selected me as one of his representatives of the American Federation of Labor. I remained in that capacity until I retired in 19...

E - Had you known Mr. Green previously?

D - Yes. I had met Mr. Green when he was Secretary-Treasurer of the United Mine Workers. And when Mr. Gompers passed away he asked me, or the Committee of the Central Labor Union in Indianapolis selected me, to serve as the Chairman of the Committee for Mr. Green when he became President in 194...I've forgotten the year now. And, from then on, things happened. Mr. Green was a fine man - very kind, very courteous, very honorable. I served with him until my retirement in 1956. In 1934, he sent me into Detroit to take charge of the campaign to organize the automobile workers and there I remained until the automobile workers were chartered and made an international union in 1936.

E - When Mr. Green sent you to Detroit, did he give you any specific instructions on how to go about your business?

D - No, he did not. Mr. Green was very liberal in those respects. He told me to go in there, and originally I went into Flint, Michigan. There I met some other organizers and we organized the United Automobile Workers Union. Local unions, Chevrolet, Buick, and the various other arteries of organization, and we became then a autonomous body.

E - What were some of the problems that you encountered in those early days of organizing in Flint and the Detroit area?

- D - Well, of course, the employer was very bitter. He oppose all sorts of organizations. He had a lot of thugs running around. I remember one time they sent me to Toledo...I went there, rather, and their local union was in rebellion; they would not concede to anything. I went before the body of about three thousand people and told them very definitely where the Federation stood, and they rebelled, booted me out, and wouldn't let me speak. I walked out and told them they were all out of the Union. I went back to my hotel and remained there for an hour or so, and they sent for me to come back, and there I spoke to them and reinstated them back into the Union. I conferred with William Knudsen,, who was then the President of General Motors. I spoke with him, met him, and he was very bitter against the Union, but I found him to be a very honorable gentleman to deal with. And then we proceeded to go about our organization work. Presently, we had a convention - a group of international federations - and out of that came the first constitutional convention in Detroit. There we met and there we formulated the fundamental principles of our international union as it stands today. We met some opposition then, as we have since, and always will so long as there are working people and those who are opposed to them.
- E - From what I've read, a lot of people have criticized the AF of L, and particularly the leadership of William Green, as being too conservative at a time when the workers, particularly in the Toledo area, were interested in organizing. Do you feel this is an unjust criticism of the AF of L and Mr. Green?
- D - Well, I think that Mr. Green...Time has proven that his philosophy was basically sound. He did not oppose the organization of the workers, he encouraged it. He encouraged me in my work. I feel that Mr. Green was one of the ablest and most constructive labor leaders of his period.
- E - You referred earlier to going to Toledo. Was that when the Chevrolet plant struck down there?
- D - Yes, that's when they struck.
- E - You went down there and told them that the strike was unauthorized?
- D - That is correct.
- E - What was Mr. Green's philosophy about striking at this time?
- D - Well, he was against strikes. He had a horror for strikes. I don't know why, but if he was living, he could explain that. I didn't share all of that, but that was the story, sir.
- E - Do you think maybe that there might have been some justification for strikes at that time?
- D - Certainly there was justification for strikes. There were many strikes all over the country. We had a miserable situation then, particularly in the automobile industry. Mr. Knudsen was disgusted himself. He told me so. He had a lawyer by the name of Smith, Chief Counsel. He said, "I'd be glad to talk to you, Mr. Dillon, but," he says, "you see that big guy back there? I can't. I'm prohibited by the laws of the company."

- E - When you went down to Toledo there in 1935, some of the Toledo unions were trying to call a conference and you vetoed the invitations that they had sent out. Was this an action that you took on yourself, or through the advice of Green, or through the Executive Council?
- D - I didn't take any advice from anybody. I carried on there on my own. Everything that was done down there was done on my responsibility and I so stated.
- E - At the time the auto workers were trying to get this convention together, or this conference together, in 1935, why did you veto these invitations, why did you think it was unnecessary?
- D - What invitations do you refer to?
- E - Well, according to what I've read, in 1935, the Toledo unions were trying to invite some of the other locals from around the country to come to a conference in Toledo, and it is my understanding that you had a hand in vetoing or stopping these invitations from going out to these other unions.
- D - I had no authority to do anything of the kind and that's my first knowledge of it.
- E - Well, I read it in Levinson's book.
- D - I don't recall that.
- E - Alright, sir. It seems to me that the Toledo unions were a thorn in the side, so to speak, of you, Mr. Green and the AF of L at this time.
- D - That's not true. That's not true. The building trades in the city of Toledo were soundly behind the Federation, and out of that came a conflict between these new folks who had just come in and were going to revolutionize the world.
- E - The new folks, do you mean the auto workers?
- D - I mean anybody who came in - the new guys - yeah, particularly the automobile workers. And nobody had anything against them, that I know of.
- E - In other words, it was just a difference in philosophy among various people in Toledo.
- D - Oh yes, yes. 'Course they both had bad boys among them that made mistakes. I have in mind one, Oliver Meyers, who was a wild-eyed, impossible individual who preached a philosophy that I couldn't subscribe to in the final analysis.
- E - I wanted to get back to another thing you mentioned earlier. When you went to Flint and Pontiac, I believe Bill Collins and a man by the name of Alexander Marx were also organizers with you, right?

D - Mr. Collins was in charge when I was sent in there.

E - I understand the response of the workers to the idea of organizing was quite good. Did you have any trouble in convincing them to join?

D - Oh no, no. We were eminently successful.. We went to Washington several time, talked to the representatives of the President of the United States and we finally came up with the Wolman Board.

E - What do you think of the Wolman Board? Do you think it was a good Board?

D - I think it was a lousy Board.

E - In what respect?

D - Well, I would think it was predominately a company controlled Board. It was set up when we went to Washington in 1934, appointed by the President, Hugh Johnson.....Wolman was the Chairman, who was a professor out of some university in New York - I can't recall now what it was. And then a man from Chrysler Corporation, and another man who was purported to represent labor. I can't recall their names.

E - Kelley was from Chrysler?

D - Kelley was the attorney from Chrysler.

E - And Richard Byrd.

D - Richard Byrd was the man from labor.

E - Do you feel that the Board acted as quickly as it could in...

D - Well, but they sent us a representation schedule, which was, in my opinion, contrary - it wasn't collective bargaining at all. It was a hogwash of fake and of fraud. It was a dream of Mr. Wolman, signed by Mr. Kelley, and subscribed to by Mr. Byrd.

E - You were dissatisfied, or at least you thought the Board was unsatisfactory. How did the AF of L feel about it?

D - Same thing. Same thing. It was discarded. Nobody paid any attention to it. It could have been of value, if it had been set up and operated properly. But Mr. Wolman was a very, very independent, very determined, very...well, he was a very able man, there's no question about that.

E - Do you think that Hugh Johnson, the administrator of the NRA, had an influence upon the operation of the Board?

D - I don't think so. No, I don't think so. He might have had something on the appointment of the Chairman, but otherwise, no.

E - So you would lay the blame, or inactivity of the Board, primarily upon Mr. Wolman, the Chairman?

D - Mr. Wolman was a counterfeit so far as labor was concerned, and he always was. His record shows that. He served in the clothing industry...I don't know whether he's still around or not.

E - Well, after the appointment of the Wolman Board, there was an agreement in March 1934, that more or less set the guidelines for the industry. The Board didn't act quickly, as some of the workers would have liked. And then in April 1934, the workers met in Detroit and they threatened to strike. Mr. Collins interceded at that time, and, again, convinced them or told them not to strike.

D - That was previous to my time. I don't...Mr. Collins was in charge then. I don't know what his policies were. See, I succeeded Mr. Collins up there.

E - I'm behind then. I believe you addressed a letter to Alfred Sloan, did you not, asking for a conference?

D - I presume I did; I couldn't deny it or...

E - You don't remember?

D - No.

E - I was wondering what your assessment was of Mr. Sloan if you did have that conference with him, or if you ever met Mr. Sloan.

D - I've never seen the gentleman in my life, but I've been advised he's a very capable man. One great mathematician I was told.

E - What was the first convention, 1934, that you attended? August of 1934?

D - '34. That was a conference we had at the Shelby Hotel...not the Shelby, but the...

E - Fort Shelby?

D - Fort... Is that it?

E - Fort Shelby?

D - No. That other hotel out there. Out toward your place of business out there

E - At the time of that meeting, you were subjected to quite a bit of criticism by the auto workers. And at that time you defended your actions earlier in Toledo and you called the charges malicious and unjust. How do you interpret the opposition at that time? Did you see it as an effort to get at you personally, or was it just a general dissatisfaction with the progress that the auto workers seemed to be making?

D - No, it was not a personal matter. I didn't think they felt that way towards me. It was a lack of appreciation of the progress that was being made, if any.

E - The workers were just to impatient, then, you mean.

D - That's correct. That's the answer. Yeah.

E - Well, at that convention, President Green offered to....

D - Well, now you're speaking about two different things. The first one was the conference we held at the...what was that hotel out there on...oh, there's a picture around here of it...what's the name of that hotel, the .... Well, that's where we held our conference. Now then, we had a conference there - that's what you're talking about. 'Course they could have cited me. But that was before the Toledo incident. The Toledo incident took place after Collins left up there.

E - Toledo took place in 1935

D - That's correct. You're speaking about '34.

E - The first organized convention in which President Green came and gave the charter to the auto workers.

D - Yes

E - Mr. Green named you President at that time.

D - That's right

E - Could you tell us, what was his thinking or your thinking at the time he named you President? Why didn't they let the workers elect their first president?

D - Well, I think the proceedings of the convention explains that. Mr. Green told them why. They weren't able to go ahead. They had no finances, and they had to become a cohesive body. And he appointed the President.

E - Had he talked to you prior to the Convention about your taking this?

D - He never did.

E - It came as a surprise to you.

D - Well, not completely. I had a feeling that probably he would, because I knew he liked me very much and he had a great respect for me, and I had never let him down.

E - At the convention, after he named you President, Green he mentioned that he was going to embark on a great organizing drive, and mentioned specifically GM and Ford, I believe.

D - Yeah.

E - That never materialized, and Mr. Green has also been criticized for not offering a concrete organizing plan. Do you think this is a true statement of the case?

D - Well, I think it's a half-truth. Mr. Green was limited in his ability to do things by the action of the Executive Council. He didn't have a lot of money, and he was, of course, doing some publicity work, I imagine. I don't presume to speak for him. That about sized that up, as I understand it.

E - You think he was just repeating what the Executive Council of the AF of L wanted?

D - Well, it could be. I don't know. Mr. Lewis told me...you see, I met with Lewis several times during that period. One time he told me that them sleepy son of a bitches in there, if they ever wake up and quit looking out the windows and dreaming, we will get somewhere. And Mr. Lewis had a way of telling you things you didn't misunderstand, brother.

E - Kind of put it on the line?

D - Well, I think he did. I always had a lot of respect for John Lewis. But Mr. Green was in a different position. He had to conform to the mandates of the Executive Council. And I sometimes wonder, I never knew whether he really believed in a lot of those thing or not.

E - You're not sure Mr. Green agreed with what the Council told him.

D - Well, in respect to policies and so forth. But, when I came to a decision, why, that was his decision; he was a good soldier. Lewis was a different type man. John done his own thinking. He was a powerful individual. I knew John long before he became President of the Mine Workers. I knew him when John Mitchell was President.

E - He was an independent man. Not independent, but a strong...

D - That true. I want to get back to the convention, when you were named President. There was a resolution or a motion on approving your appointment as President. And the convention assembled voted against you being appointed. Do you remember that?

D - No, I don't remember...

E - Well, I looked at the convention proceedings, and there was a vote taken in which the convention voted against you, and I just wondered if you remembered the circumstances at that time, and what your feelings were in any way. Did you feel that maybe you ought not to take the job because the workers...

D - I don't recall that motion having prevailed. I remember a motion being made, and it was made by a gentleman from Toledo, wasn't it?

E - Well, there were a couple of motions, one by Forrest Woods, and there was one by Carl Shipley at that time, I believe. It was my understanding the Mr. Green had named you President, and that the Resolutions Committee brought in a motion, or a report....

D - What they did, as I recall, Green's suggestion was that they go to the Executive Council of the Federation at their next meeting and discuss the matter and try and work something out.

E - Yes, that's true. But prior to that, there was a vote taken in which the workers indicated that they did not prefer you to be President, and I just wondered what your reaction was whether you thought maybe you ought not take the job if there was that much opposition. But you don't recall the vote.

D - I really don't. I'm sorry.

E - Well, that's quite alright. At that time they appointed you President, the Executive Council also appointed Homer Martin as a Vice President, and they appointed some members to the Executive Board.

D - Yeah.

E - I presume that you were...

D - Well, I think that's where Green made a mistake.

E - In what respect?

D - Well, he should have ruled them bastards out of order! Christ, we had a constitutional convention there! Instead of messing around with them like he did. He was a great guy on... Well, we won't go into that.

E - Well, go ahead if you'd like.

D - Well, I never agreed with Mr. Green on some of his compromises. And that was one of them. I think if he appointed a man the President, he should back him. Otherwise, not appoint him.

E - Well, I believe Mr. Green supported you, didn't he?

D - Oh yes.

D - But, in that case he didn't. He pissed out on that.

E - On what? You've lost me. He appointed you President and he backed you for President all the way, didn't he?

D - No, he didn't. He didn't

E - When didn't he?

D - Right there. Those guys, those fellow there...Well, I don't know.

E - Well, it's my understanding that he appointed you President, and Homer Martin as the Vice-President...

D - Yeah.

E - ...and Ed Hall as the Secretary-Treasurer, and then he appointed nine members to the Executive Committee.

D - That's correct.

E - And he said that he was following the wishes of the AF of L Executive Board.

D - That's right.

E - Allright, now, everything I've read about that convention indicates that Mr. Green solidly supported you as President, and now you've indicated to me that he didn't.

D - Well, I don't think he did in that instance. When these fellows... what'd they do there? I get all screwed up here. I'm sorry.

E - That's okay. I want to know why you don't think he supported you. In what respect didn't he support you? By appointing the other officers?

D - No, not at all. In fact, we recommended it. They were all supposed to be supported. I don't know.

E - But didn't Mr. Green act on the orders of the Executive Board of the AF of L



in appointing you and Martin...

D - That's right, that's right.

E - You're not satisfied with that?

D - No, not at all.

E - Well, what I'm trying to get at is how didn't Mr. Green support you? You indicated that he didn't in some way, and I wondered.

D - Well, he didn't...What is that there? That....

E - Well, I've just got some notes here.

D - No, up there. You said something about...

E - You mean he didn't support you at Toledo? Way back...

D - He wasn't in Toledo.

E - No.

D - I didn't consult him. That's the reason he supported me. I done it and told him it afterwards.

E - Right.

D - Otherwise he wouldn't have done it.

E - You think not.

D - I'm sure of it. Hell, I knew Bill Green better than I'll ever know anybody.

E - You think he would have been inclined to compromise with...

D - Why he'd of walked out and left them cold. I knew Bill Green better than anybody ever did know him.

E - And you think that in Toledo he would have just walked out on them.

D - No, I don't think that at all, but I do think he kind of belly-walked a little bit. Why didn't he stand up and say, "This is my President. I'm gonna support him. Here he stands. Take us or leave us." That's what he should of done. That's what John Lewis would have done.

E - Allright, but you don't feel you got Mr. Green's support after you were President?

D - No, not in that sense. Not in that sense. He gave me a lot of lip service, just like he done everybody else. He was a fine gentleman - that's what he tried to be.

E - Right.

D - What he tried to always be.

E - Well, you served a President one year

D - A little over a year

E - And they you stepped down and Homer Martin became President.

D - Yeah.

E - During that year that you were President, the UAW was trying to organize. Would you say that you favored a more active organizing plan than the AF of L or Mr. Green approved or wanted to support?

D - Well, we were in a hell of a shape, my friend. We were in a hell of a shape. You had the old craft union boys that were giving me hell, and I don't know what I would have done, to tell you the truth.

E - During your tenure as President, you must have worked closely with Homer Martin and Ed Hall and...

D - I didn't work with Homer Martin. I never did. I never liked him. I never cared anything about him.

E - You didn't...

D - I never done nothing to hurt him, I hope not.

E - When Mr. Green appointed him the Vice-President, you had no say in who was appointed to the office.

D - Oh no, no. I was not consulted.

E - Well, was Homer Martin a consistent supporter of Mr. Green?

D - No. I don't think he ever supported anybody. Only himself.

E - Why did Mr. Green appoint Homer Martin Vice-President?

D - Well, because he was on the Board, I guess. That's the only reason I know. He was...Well, I never liked Homer Martin, period. And I don't to this day. I don't think he's square with himself. I don't think he is, I don't think he ever was...

E - You don't think...is this because of his personality, or is it because some of the policies he.....

D - I don't know. He was a preacher, number one; he left his wife, he run away; and he done a lot of things that I didn't care very much about. The records show that he made a big speech telling how he loved me, and the next day he had a dagger in my back. Well, I just don't like people like that, sir.

E - Allright. I can understand that. Did you mean that...

D - But there's a lot of other people in there that I did, I had a lot of respect for. I mean in the official family. But him, I never trusted him. I never did trust Homer Martin. And I don't now and I never will.

E - I was wondering, can you remember anything specifically as to how or why...Was Mr. Martin working behind your back while you were...

D - Oh, I don't know. I have no evidence. I didn't....To tell you the truth I tried to forget about him. The hell with him. When I got out of there

I... It was a headache to me.

E - Being President?

D - Yeah. The record shows what I told 'em.

E - I have that in the proceedings and everything. And in the report. Since Martin was elected President after you, I was just wondering how he became...

D - He got in there in various ways. Dubious, most of them. There was a Jew, I got nothing against the Jews, who happened to be a friend of Martin, and he was a friend of Mr. Green, and I've always had a feeling that there was some whispering going on there somewhere. And Brother Martin came up with the....had it been me, I wouldn't have done that. I always liked the position of John Lewis: lay her out on the table and let her go where she goddamn pleases. That's my position.

E - None of this messing around behind the scenes.

D - That's right. That's right. I met Mr. Lewis many years ago, when he was statistician for the Mine Workers. Became Vice-President. Frank Hays, one of the finest men I ever knew, was the Vice-President of the Mine Workers. They were real people. I remember John Mitchell, my friend

E - Yeah. (CUT OUT???) ...Selis Perlman.

D - Up there at the University. Hell, I spoke there three times.

E - Yeah, he was a economics professor.

D - Yeah. He was a nice man, a a great man. He's dead and gone, isn't he?

E - Yessir, I believe so.

D - And Commons is, of course, dead many years. John R. Commons was the Commissioner of Industrial Relations for the Streetcar Men many years ago. John R. Commons. And... Well, I won't take up any more of your time.

E - At the time that the UAW was getting started and so on there, was there much of a Communist Party influence do you think, or did this come later?

D - No. I'll tell you. There ain't no Communist movement. That's a lot of crap. I don't think there's a... Christ! When you analyze 'em there ain't no communists. What the hell are you talking about? That makes me sick. Just because you disagree with somebody, are you a communist? No, I don't share that view at all. Never did.

E - What did you do after your term as Presidency? Did you stay at the AF of L?

D - Yeah, for a period of time. Then I accepted employment with the United States government and remained there until I retired.

E - You had a very active career, in terms of organizing labor and not only in the automobile industry, but everywhere else.

D - Yeah. Since 1907, I've been active in organization of labor.

E - You're 84 years old now. When you think back about that, do you get a great deal of satisfaction?

D - Very much so, sir. I wouldn't do anything else if I had my life to live over. Yeah, it's been very rewarding to me. I've made a lot of mistakes, but I think I've done some things right, but... ??? My life is a long life and I'm very thankful for it. Very few men have had that experience. The great men that I have met - Samuel Gompers, I worked with him, worked for him.

D - ...of the Seamen's Union, Jim Wilson of the Pattern Makers, Matty Wall of the Photo Engravers. I worked with all of them, spoke with them, met them and knew them.

D - No body to talk to anymore. I guess that's the way it must be, sir.

E - Well, that happens sometimes.

D - Sometimes? (Laugh)

(CUT OUT - END OF SIDE OF TAPE)

D - ... as we came to know it. It was a division between two miners. John Lewis was a very positive individual. There was no misunderstanding what he was saying or what he meant. Green was a different type man. He was always for compromising, always for, you know, getting along. Well, in those days of the New Deal, people didn't understand that getting along. They were hungry. They were out of work. They needed something, And Lewis seemed to me to understand that. I couldn't do anything about it. I was obligated to the Federation. They were paying me. And I tried to work things out. I went to Lewis many times over in his office there and talked to him and pleaded with him of no avail. He was adamant, and he was a powerful man, my boy, a powerful man. Physically, morally, and intellectually. John L. Lewis will never be survived in this country for many years.

E - I take it that you didn't always agree with Bill Green.

D - No. I never agreed with his policies. Well, but, I wouldn't say I never did. You see, there's times for compromise, and there's time for action. But Bill never had that disposition. I don't know why. I often wondered, many years ago. He never would move forward, he never make a definite step. But Lewis, hell, he would...yeeeah.

D - I remember one time I was in the Secretary of Labor's office and we had some men discharged up in Wisconsin, come to think about it. And in come Lewis, and there was the old Secretary of Labor sitting there. "Well," he says, "Madam, what's the trouble here today?" "Well, she says, "Mr. Lewis, we're having trouble getting these men back to work". "Why," he says, "That's a small matter. Call up Sloan, the President of General Motors. He can put all men to work." "Oh," she says, "I couldn't do that." He says, "By God, I'll do it." He took down the phone and called him, and got him on the phone. "Sloan," he says, "this is John L. Lewis." You could hear him all over the Department of Labor there, goddamn, his voice rang out. I don't know what Sloan said. "I want you to put these 23 men back to work, starting tomorrow morning." And he hung up. Turned around to Madam Secretary, says, "That's the way to run this office," and walked out. And, by God, they went back to work the next morning, sir. They went back right now.

E - The Secretary of Labor then was who, Perkins? Frances Perkins?

D - Yeah, old Frances sitting there with her hat on the side of her head.

E - Lewis was a very direct type.

D - Very, very direct

E - Well, the things I've read have kind of painted a picture that you followed Bill Green loyally and faithfully.

D - That's right.

E - And I think that you did. And, they paint a picture that you did not act independently in some of your efforts. But, you went to Toledo in 1935 when they had the strike at the Chevy plant and Green supported that strike, did he not?

D - I don't think I ever consulted him about it.

E - But, what I've read is that Green supported the strike, and you arrived and said it was unauthorized.

D - No, that isn't true. No, no. There was no authorization or anything. Until I got there.

E - Well, what happened down in Toledo? What do you recall about that incident down in Toledo, and when they struck at the GM plant and you arrived on the scene?

D - Well, of course, it was a lock-out. They went out on strike then. They had this plant tied up down there. And they had a meeting and they sent for me. I was sent down there by Green and I went in there. I didn't consult Green. I don't know whether that was his policy or not. It had to be done, and I done it.

E - Well, when you got there, what did you do? You went to this meeting of the unions that were locked out...

D - No, I didn't. I went to the hotel, got organized there, and I had this mass meeting. They were going to tear the world apart. You know how those thing work. Well, I went down there. They sent for me, and I went down there and tried to pacify them. And they wouldn't even let me talk. Fellow by the name of Cramer was the President of the local union. "You can't speak here, You've got no authority." "Allright, sir, if that's your attitude, then you're all out of the union. You're all out of the AF of L." And I walked out. They sent for me to come back and I re-instated them.

E - After you kicked these guys out of the union, so to speak, out of the AF of L ...

D - Which I had no authority to do.

E - That's what I was going to ask you. Did you ask for any authority to do that?

D - No. I never asked anybody. If they'd a had a brain in their head, they would have known I couldn't have done it anyhow. There had to be something done quick.

E - To keep them together.

D - Why certainly. John Lewis didn't mince words about those things.

E - Well, they invited you back to the convention, to the meeting.

D - Yeah.

E - And, after you spoke with them, they agreed to go back to work.

D - No, they didn't go back to work. They came back into the union.

E - They came back.

D - They didn't go back to work for I don't know how many days. Until we had a meeting with Knudsen...upstairs in that hotel down there. What the hell, the Commodore Perry.

E - You met with Knudsen, did you reach an agreement then?

D - Well, a tentative agreement, as agreements goes in those days. He couldn't sign anything. He made it very plain he couldn't. It wasn't allowed; it wasn't permitted. But he promised me that there would be discrimination, the men would go back to work. "Allright, Mr. Newson, we'll accept that."

E - How did the workers, the Toledo people, receive it?

D - Well, they went back to work. I think there was some bitterness. I don't know what the hell else I could have gotten for them. They wouldn't sign an agreement, I know that.

E - Newson wouldn't sign an agreement?

D - Oh, I think Newson would. Christ's sake, he was a pushover. But them goddamn corporation men, they had a ironclad policy, you know that they wouldn't do this and they wouldn't do that.

E - So you feel that you accomplished a lot down there. These guys were locked out and you got 'em back to work.

D - Oh, I wouldn't say that I accomplished much. They went out. They wasn't locked out. Hell, they went out, brother. Fellow by the name of Rolland went out there with a canvas sign on his shoulder, all alone, started the goddamn thing. All by himself. You ever hear of him? Well, he's the guy that started it, and I tried to settle it the best I could. But...What ever come of Rolland? Do you know him?

E - I never met him.

D - Is he still living?

E - I couldn't tell you that .

- D - I'd like to see him if he is. He was quite a contrary boy. (Laugh)  
He got a sign and walked up and down out there and said, "There's a strike on here, now." And there was nobody striking but him. And now that that came, the great Chevrolet, of course they were mistreating those people, there's no question about it.
- E - Did you ever talk to Green after that about what happened in Toledo, after you took this action in Toledo and then came back and addressed them and you talked to Knudson and so on?
- D - I think I did, but the people who talked to him was...(CUT OUT). Who else was up there...See, they sent McGrady in there. He was Assistant Secretary of Labor then, and...who was the other big shot? I didn't pay any attention to either one of 'em. Hell, I pushed 'em aside. I'd decided I was gonna do this job. And I did.
- E - After you did the job, did you have to report to Green?
- D - Well, I went and told him, yes.
- E - What was his reaction?
- D - Oh, very cordial. Shook hands, Wonderful job.
- E - He was satisfied with the way it'd been handled.
- D - Oh, yes. Yes. That was the kind of man he was. If you made a mistake for Christ's sake, it would of been your head.
- E - Well, I can't think of anything else I can ask you about, unless you have something that you want to say.
- D - No, but after you're gone, I'll think of some things, I suppose, which doesn't mean anything.
- E - Maybe you don't feel it now, but maybe you felt it at the time - did you feel that you were mistreated by the workers and...
- D - I never did. Never had that feeling in my life. No sir, I never did. I could cry sometimes. I felt very disheartened. But I never had any feeling of resentment or anything.
- E - ...The convention in South Bend, in 1936, in South Bend. And you came and you said in the proceedings that you were passing through South Bend. Were you invited to that Convention?
- D - Well, no, not in the sense that I was invited. As the President, I should have been there. That was my obligation.
- E - Well, the way it reads in the proceedings...
- D - I know how it reads. I remember very well.
- E - ... and it sounds like you were passing through town and you just stopped in
- D - Yes. That's right. That's what I wanted to convey.
- E - Why did you want to convey that feeling?

D - Well, because I thought it was done. I was finished. I just told 'em I was passing through.

E - I understand. And also, later on in your speech, you said, "I have no desire to make reference to my self other than to say that, with the passing of time, those of you who are assembled here today and who are permitted to see another day in the future will better appreciate the many difficulties through which it has been the task of my associate officers and myself to attempt to guide this newly formed institution. We have all tried to do our best, and it will be my purpose so long as I shall preside as President of this union to do nothing or to say one word that will render impossible the establishment of complete unity, etc. etc." You make a reference here to "many difficulties". Do you recall any one thing in particular...

D - Yeah, the whole thing was difficult. The whole damn thing was a mess.

E - But there was no one incident or person...

D - Oh, no...

E - ... that really discouraged you.

D - ...no. I never was discouraged in my life. But I knew this was hopeless. I could never be elected President. I knew that, the cards were stacked.

E - In what way?

D - Oh, well, I just got that feeling. I always have it.

E - Did you have ambitions to continue as President?

D - No, I never did. Never entered my mind. I didn't want to be. I told Mr. Green, "I don't want to be President. Take away the title and..." Well, when Mr. Martin dashed in, I figured, well, got a a young bud here, we're gonna take off. And he fell on his hiny. And then came Thomas, wasn't it?

E - R.J. Thomas.

D - Yeah. And then came the boy that was riding a bicycle around Rochester when I was up there.

E - Walter Reuther.

D - Yeah. Who was the biggest phoney they all had, Well, it's too bad, sir, but, I don't know.

E - At the time you were organizing, had you met Walter Reuther before?

D - I never met him. I met his father. His father was a bricklayer down in Wheeling. No, I never met Walter. I never met any of those boys. No, never did.

E - A minute ago, you just said that you thought Homer Martin fell on his face. How do you...

D - Oh, he never was no damn good. He should never have been elected



anything. He should have stayed out in that church. It's unfortunate. It's all gone now. What's he doing now?

E - I have no idea.

D - They tell me he's running some kind of a business out there.