

Interview with Herb Edwards (1893-)
Tobby, friend of Elmer Smith
at his home 2619 45th SW Seattle, Washington
February 12, 1972 by Tracy Dalton

- Tracy : Herbert is going to tell us a little bit about the I.W.W. back in the early days. I decided to do this interview for a couple of reasons. A friend of mine, Tom Copeland, back in St. Paul was interested in the I.W.W.. He was interested in particular in Elmer Stuart Smith because he graduated from Macalester College where Tom and I both went to school. Elmer Smith is dead now, he's been dead since the thirties, but Tom found out about Mr. Edwards who was a friend, an acquaintance of Elmer Smith's and we were going to talk to him a little bit about Mr. Smith and we also want to know about Herbert's own experiences in the I.W.W.. I guess we can start with you, Mr. Edwards, what I want to know first I guess.--
- Herb : Please don't say Mr. Edwards. You can say Herb Edwards or "fellow worker" Edwards or if you're a commie you can even call me "comarade" if it comes easier to you, but don't call me Mr., I feel uncomfortable.
- Tracy : Okay, Herb. What I want to know first is how did you first come to get involved with the I.W.W.?
- Herb : Well, I found myself in an industry that was unorganized and the conditions was bad and since everybody more or less are a product of their circumstances and environment, I reacted accordingly. The condition was bad and I didn't like it. So eventually I overcome my prejudices but all my brainwashing that I had been subject to with respect to the I.W.W.. I overcome them readily as I learned that they were not true, the lies they had told about them. So I joined and I don't want to waste your time to tell you all about how I - but those were the conditions. I worked in the lumber industry. I started in Wisconsin when I was a boy, sixteen years old when I landed in this country. At that time I didn't know anything about any organization, I didn't know anything about any hope of changing conditions. You were just simply do the best you can. If you don't like it you go to the next place and hoped it'd get better from the other side of the hill. But a lot of them, especially the lumberjacks and the loggers, they would do that you see, they would move on and things would get better on the other side of the hill that wasn't as bad as the job they had before but they were just as bad in the next place!
- Tracy : What kind of conditions were particullary bad?
- Herb : Well, I could go through - for instance take one particular bunkhouse what I have in mind and I'll never forget. There were two of them there. There were over two hundred men in the camp.
- Tracy : Where was this, was this in Washington?
- Herb : In Wisconsin, in Bayfield county for the White ~~White~~ ^{River} Lumber Company

out of Mason, Wisconsin to be specific. There were two bunkhouses. In the big bunkhouse they had about a hundred and twenty men. There was one door in one end and two small windows and the ventilation was a hole in the ceiling where you open and shut. The bunkcook would come along in the evening you know and open it up at night when you are going to bed so you get some air. There'd be two stoves, two barrel stoves made out of barrels, gasoline barrels, I guess in the bunkhouse and there'd be three ~~barrel~~ stones in the bunkhouse, double decked bunks, no bath~~house~~, no washroom, no way of washing your clothes, ^{except} on the outside in a coal oil can, you know a container where you washed your clothes in and you would do that on a Sunday. The workday was from daylight to dark and you started out when it was dark in order to get to the job when it was daylight and that would probably be three, four miles in some cases. So the days were long and the pay was small and the chuck was poor and the living conditions was still poorer and the wages was less than what you could live on. Now that tells it in as few words as I can. That was general at that time especially in the Midwest. But they furnished blankets at least here. After you come out West here you became a ~~bedless state~~. They didn't even furnish your bedclothes, you had to carry them from place to place. And the average logger was subject to a condition where it was just unbearable you know for a normal human being, but then we were not normal at that time, they were timber beasts. But you come into a city and if you took a drink or two, the police would be looking for you. They arrest you and rob you but you were arrested. It never happened to me but it happened to thousands of loggers that way. Robbed them of their money, turn them loose, broke, go back to the job and work out and get a few dollars and when they got sick and tired of it they'd go back into town. Start the thing over again, get drunk, get robbed either by visiting some place you know, where they could get relief of their manly energy or whatever you would call it and they were just as robbed there too and so on. So that was the story of that industry before it become organized and you see the employers were used to that time, they were conditioned, they wouldn't tollerate anybody trying to organize, they were a criminal act. So here comes that organization slowly but surely after they had had fights in some parts of the country, in Paterson, New Jersey and in Lawrence, Massachusetts there were about forty different languages spoken in that strike and the I.W.W. organized them for the first time! Where they had children working in the cotton mills, where an adult would be more apt to break the threads and so on. And when they went on strike to improve that condition and it was a delegation of women that went ~~to~~ New York to publicise that to the newspaper and get the news to the public. The constabulary, the police, there in Lawrence attack them as they were getting on the train and beat on the women and children both, just beat them to insensibility some of them and that was the condition we had to contend with. But I didn't know anything about that because here I was a logger and you had your nose to the grindstone, working hard you come into town and you didn't pay no attention to it. You read about these "Wobblies" in the paper, they didn't call them "Wobblies" then, the I.W.W.. And of course they had a name for it, they said "I Won't Work"

it stood for it you see and some of them would say "I Want Wiskey" and others would say "I Want Women" whatever they thought was wrong with that they would say. But it was all bad propaganda you see, there were bad people, they burned haystacks, they ruined farm machinery, they drove copper nails in fruit trees, they were all bad. And I heard this thing and being young and innocent with a conservative background, a conservative Lutheran background, you don't think that you were too respectable to get tied up with a bunch of radicals you know, you really had to keep [?] back that wasn't the thing to do! So but later you learned that that was a lot of cock and bull stories so and of course the best teacher is the condition you are subject to and to make a statement now I maintain no one can be a good rebel, can be a real revolutionist unless he has been subject to conditions himself. He may have read books about it, he may visualise it and he may have sympathy and compassion to people subject to such conditions but you really don't understand it before you've been under it, under the, you know, a couple of hard knocks. They say that the wheel that does the squeeking is the wheel that gets the grease and that's why, that's the I.W.W.. They know that too so they figured they better squeek you see, and so they got conditioning through conditions! And to make a long story short I can say there was no organization in America that pioneered more for better conditions, that did more with less members and less money than the I.W.W.. And the members developed a devotion to it that was unknown in the other labor organizations. There was a religious fevour that people would be beat up in free speech fights all over the country. And they would ride boxcars and ride the guts of a ~~boxcar~~ ^{freight} to stay underneath the freight train to cross the country to take part in the fight, to take part in the dead of winter and freezing, like the young Jewish fellow that came from New York when they had the free speech fight in Spokane. He died underneath, they found him dead under the freight train and he was cold dead. And of course emotion had a lot to do with it. Elmer Smith and I had that in common that we were highly emotional and had a strong sense of justice and a strong sense of compassion for trouble of other people and that's what got Smith into trouble. Now I'm back to a - if it's okay with you, you may shut it down if you want to, but I like to bring Smith into the picture. To lay the foundation that was the condition of everything I could mention case after case, case after case where conditions was bad but we would spend all day talking about it because there was so much of it, what happened to me and what happened to thousand others. For instance I hired out on the steamboat one time, there was no work at that time. Time was slack here and a boat that was going to British Columbia and haul paper from Paul Rubber down here for the newspapers and then we come back here we worked thirty-six hours straight without a stop and you know we didn't have no other agreement but we thought we would get overtime pay for it. No there was no such thing you see and when we come to pay out we got paid out straight at the rate of forty dollars a month and of course some of them didn't like it. Well I just got mad. And I got to shore and I know that I got to start a fight there and I challenged one of the engineers on the ship and the

captain of the work crews to come ashore and oh I was raving mad. I would fight them one at a time and all at a time and I swore at them and everything but what good did it do you see? You go to a labor commissioner and he's all in cahoots with the employers you got no redress of grievence. Even as late as here in the thirties I went up to an assistant labor commissioner here in town and I know I was going to get into trouble. And that was after they got the NRA and whatnot you know so you had to live more rates, but he had me all spotted. He had heard about the case before I come in. I know I wouldn't get any redress of grievence but I went to see him anyway just to get it off my mind. And after he had given me a lecture I told him, I says, "You know what I think you are? I think you serve the same purpose for the lumber barrons as a barber pole do to a dog." I says, "I think you're a pissing post for the lumber barrons." He threw the door wide open, he was going to throw me out when I says, "You start in right now to throw me out and you see what we will do" but he didn't. And I took along a big Swede by the name of Burke that I wanted to witness because I know I was going to, I thought when I came, and he said afterwards, "Goll", he says, "you could get us into trouble!" And I says, " We are in trouble right now, I hope!" (laughs)

Tracy : Can you tell us a little bit about the incident in Centralia and about Elmer Smith's involvement in it?

Herb : Yes. I didn't know Elmer Smith before that time. I probably had heard about him but I hadn't recognized there were so many. I knowed about Vandermeer that fought the I.W.W. cases in Chicago in 1918 when over a hundred of them were arrested and tried and finally convicted and sent to Leavenworth during the war including Haywood and Ralph Chaplin and others. But I didn't know about Elmer Smith. The first I heard about him was when the Centralia troubles took place and then afterwards I got to learn more about him. He was a young attorney that came there and he found conditions bad for the workingpeople. He had a sympathetic nature and he took cases to help the workingpeoples so he became a marked man before the Centralia trouble. The employers, especially the lumber sawdust kings or whatever term you want to use, they didn't like a fellow like that because he was bumping into their business, you know. Some were cheated out of pay in some cases and others would be injured and they wouldn't get no ^{compensation} the company doctor would falsify the injuries so you wouldn't get any insurance you see. The doctor was on the other side, ^{that's} it was ^{hard} to get any insurance, stuff like that. Smith would take some of those cases you know and he won them. He was a good speaker and I guess he was a good attorney. He had one weakness and that is, he like people, he liked to trust people. He was optimistic, he was always thinking that until he know different he would always thought that people were alright what he met you see. And one of them that were killed in Centralia at that time, Captain Grimm - they were more or less on friendly terms. And the people in Centralia know that the hall was going to be raided in 1919 because they had been raided in 1918 and they broke up the furniture. They broke the

hall, the mob of vigilantes, the would be patriots, the stooges of the lumber barrons. They broke into the hall and smashed the furniture and stole the piano. So they know that something was going to happen. So Elmer would talk to Captain Grimm or Captain Grimm would go and warn Elmer that he better keep his nose out of it because there was going to be trouble and there were! A newsboy by the name of Tom Lassiter had been taken outside of town, beaten up and left in a ditch there and he had to crawl back to town, blind man, and all he did, he was selling the Industrial Worker, the I.W.W. paper on the street! So people alive today you know, I believe live under more liberal condition and we should be glad and pleased that that condition had at least improved from that time because after the First World War for a couple of years there conditions were as bad as in some parts of the country as they would be in Nazi Germany. If you were engaged in any organization activity you were a marked man. If the vigilantes didn't get after you and beat you up, the police threw you in the can and beat you up. You'd be blacklisted so you couldn't get a job. I changed my name so many times during that time I didn't remember my own name on some of the jobs and so did others. One fellow I know when he went and called for his time he didn't remember his name. (laughs).

Tracy : When did you first meet Elmer Smith?

Herb : I met him, I had gone down to Eureka to work in the redwoods, Eureka, California and Humbolt County. I had been there a short time before I was arrested and then was charged with criminal syndicalism and I was out on bail for a few months and then tried and I was acquitted on that trial and of course they thought you know, that I had a belly full after a trial and so they were double angry with me after I continued. I paid no attention to it, I continued. In fact I had the evidence of that, that was the Armistice Day that year and the jailer, he was the son of the chief of police, I think his name was Collen, I think I have it in my file. And he was drunk that night and I met him on the street and he started to lecture to me and he says, "We got the ice on you", he says, "Some nights we are going to come down and tie you behind an automobile and drag you til your guts are dragging out", he said. And I didn't feel too happy about it you know, but at the same time I wasn't showing no white feathers. And I laughed at him and I says, "That's no way to treat a man", I says, "I would object strenuously to a treatment like that" (laughs) I told him. I says "What the hell you talking about, that's no way to treat a man." I just kidded him you know, but and that night incidently I took it serious. Fellows wanted me to stay with another family there so they wouldn't be the place where I was staying and I was going to comply with their wishes and stay there that night but then I got to talking about it. I haven't done anything wrong. I had one trial, I was acquitted. The newspaper lied about it, they even insulted the jury and said that the women on the jury hugged and kissed me to freedom and all that kind of stuff. So I said, "Why should I go and stay someplace else? I'm going to stay right here." So I went and asked the landlord

for a gun and he had an old thirty-eight long barreled Colt I think, it was a real horse pistol. And I got the box of shells. I barricaded the room and I stayed there at night. But there is another man to show you the Tobbly spirit, an old fellow worker of mine, he's living in town ~~was~~ retired. He got his leg cut off right in a freight train some years ago so he's cripple. An American fellow by the name of Harry Clark. He said to me, he says, (he had a husky voice) "I'll stay with you" he says. "Well," I says, "you don't have too." "Well" he says, "I'll come and stay with you." So he stayed that night with me and I think lacked both imagination and nerves because he slept like a log all night whereas I had a gun laying on the chair and every little noise I heard I just woke up. And I'm no gun man, the only time, only once, another time I carried a gun. I don't believe in that. I don't think there's much protection to you in the first place and I don't believe in that kind of a society where you have to protect your life with a gun. It's foreign to my beliefs and my nature. But I did. I wasn't about to run away and I wasn't going to let a bunch of hoodlums kill me without some rebuttal, some reaction. So nothing happened. Anyway that was that. So I'm digressing here, Elmer Smith. In the spring then of the year afterwards we had a -

Tracy : What year was that?

Herb : Well of course I'm not a female so I don't need to worry about giving my age away. That was in the spring of 1922. In fact the next month it'll be since that time. And then we, I suggested we get Smith to come down and speak to our meeting and we had a Eagles hall rented at the time and Smith consented to come down there to speak. Well, I worked in the woods there so I was on the committee to arrange for a meeting but we had other members on the committee and whether we had somebody on the committee that was a agent provocateur or whether they were so dumb that they didn't know any better or that the printer sabotaged our handbills - because I had made out the handbills that we should have had. We agreed on it before I went out to the camp that weekend and when I come out the next weekend, I mean Elmer was going to speak on the Saturday night, they had our handbill with red letters on it says, "The Red Attorney From Centralia." Well, I know that was like flashing a - but the publicity was out so you couldn't do anything about it. There was no use to worry about it so we went through with the meeting. But the newspaper came out with inflamatory statements you know, about that "Red Attorney", the fellow that was the cause of the shooting tragedy there in Centralia. Oh, they had vicious propaganda about him. And then the American Legion you know, the fellows in charge of it, they were. I'm not, when I speak about the American Legion I don't mean all the members. I mean those people that started the organization in the first place when they started in France. It was started by some reactionary officers that were worried about that the labor was going to be so strong in this country and that they were going to go Bolshevik after the war. So they started that organization as a protection to the employing class. That's the true facts of the history of the American Legion. But that'

doesn't mean that all the members on it are that way. They join it for social reason and reason of improvement and so on like anybody else would join. So they were not all bad, in fact after the shooting scrap, the chapter of Butte, the American Legion chapter or whatever they call it, came out and condemned the Legion for what they did in Centralia. But you are back to Smith there. Smith came down to speak. They cancelled the hall, the Eagles, because they got cold feet. They didn't want no trouble with the authorities, with the Legion and the police and so on. They cancelled it. So we got the Finnish hall on the outside of town. And as we got started they didn't know there was going to be trouble but we went there like nothing happened and Smith was there ready to speak when they came into the hall and they raided the hall and they took Smith to the jail. They kept him there at night. And a Finn woman and I, we went up to the jail and see what was taking place. Naturally some of them that are not use to things like that you know. I'm not saying that they had any less courage than I had but you know they kind of got timid and a little cold feet so they kind of shyed away from things like that. But I felt a responsibility, I mean I was more than anybody else, we had invited him down there and if they were going to do anything to Smith I figured they'd better do something to me too. So they let Smith out about midnight. Took him down to a place where I was staying, I didn't stay in my regular room at that night. I stayed with a Finnish family. And Smith came there and the vigilantes were running around all night round that block in cars, all night. It reminds me, I was thinking about the stories about the covered wagon when they come across the prairies in the fight they had with the Indians (laughs). And there were those white Indians here we were surrounded by all night long. And so the next day - we didn't sleep much. I had an old "Betsy" at that time I had borrowed from somebody. It wouldn't have done much good but somebody would have gone down with me and so nothing happened. But the next day you know, Elmer was going to go down south and I wanted to wait to train time, take him on the train and be under the charge of the railroad and I figured it would be safer there but some of them there, the Finn woman and some others there, her husband and others they thought we should go in a car and I was against it but I believe in majority rule so I went along with it. Well as soon as we got outside of the town the cars were stopped. They took us out, held us under guard and threatened to lynch us and abused and insulted but without putting a hand on us physically. But they were you know insulting and you know and so on with Smith and me. Took us out and photographed us and threatened us with what they were going to do. But Smith was a good influence if I had any nervous condition why he was a good therapy because he was calm cool and collected and I keep my head and we set there and talked like nothing happened. One young man there held the other rifle there were two with rifles in the hall you know. He came over to me and he looked at me you know and he said "You don't look like a bad fellow." Well I looked at him and I says, "Neither do you" I says, "but what the hell are you doing with that rifle!" (laughs) Anyway they put me on the train

that night and the train was loaded you know, with businessmen, cockroaches from Eureka was having a Roman Holiday you know, had got rid of these radicals, "The Red Attorney From Centralia" and that God damned Wobbly. You know they said I had a fluke trial, that's what they called them because I was the first that was acquitted, the rest of them had got convicted on criminal syndicalism you know. You didn't have to do anything you know, course that's another story. And but I got cleared and of course they called it a fluke trial. That was a trial there was something wrong because I wasn't convicted so they were all resenting that you know, the powers that be. Well we came down to a place and there was that young fellow got on there he was a husky, sturdy fellow with a red overcoat and he looked like the Rock of Gibraltar. He brought us along, he came up where I was setting. They didn't have me under guard or anything on the train but they were there I suppose if I was getting - he said he come out there and take you off the train. And the train stopped there quite awhile you know and he says "I got a bunch of fellows out there" and they were unloaded for bear you know. Well that was a ticklish proposition. I was tempted to go along with it but I thought, "Is it worth it? There's going to be somebody killed on both sides." So you had to think quick and I says, "No, I'm going on to San Francisco anyway", I says "just forget about it." I've been wondering ever since what I should have done then but you know you got to think quick. But I figured, "Is it worth it? Just another God damned mad orgy of killing, is it worth it?" and so I said "no", I says, "I'm going on" and when they were going to take me off the train there was no doubt there were fellows on the train there that were loaded to bear you may be sure of that. And anyway we came down to San Francisco and Elmer had been taken back to the jail again in Eureka. They wanted to intimidate him. They wanted to humiliate him you see. But he keep his cool you know, he had a character, he had what it took. He was a real man, Elmer Smith. So we met in San Francisco the day after he come down and saw all the paper. It was favorable, the Call Bulletin, the famous editor he was famous from one end of the country to the other, Freemont Older, the most famous editor San Francisco ever produced. He was engaged in politics and one time in a scandal there you know where the grafters were having control of the whole city government. He got kidnapped and taken out of town and dumped there and they were going to kill him. He had quite a story too, Freemont Older, if you ever read his story its quite a story about scandal and politics in San Francisco. But that's another story, so to speak. So they came there with a photographer and they took a story. Quite a true story they told it the way we said it and I guess I gave you that. So that's when I met Elmer Smith and he wanted me to be a witness. I'm making a long story a little longer instead of making it short. He wanted me to be a witness in Sacramento. Why I don't know, my graying bones were rattling worse then than they do now. But you know I had a loud voice and I guess my personalty at the time was tolerable and so he wanted me as a witness. (laughs) I'll never forget one time you know he was kind of teasing the judge. He

told me he says "Go ahead and recite that Declaration of Independence" he said to me. And the judge said, "He'll do no such a thing!" and I was glad the judge said it because I wouldn't have remembered the Declaration of Independence word for word! (laughs)

Tracy : Was it as a result of that trial that you wound up being charged for criminal syndicalism?

Herb : Well, that was in another case we were as a witness. That's how we got arrested there you see.

Tracy : Where was that?

Herb : In Sacramento, California. That was in April or let me see, no we were arrested. The trial of a ~~Castro~~ ~~offen~~ Firey, two of them that were members of the organization they were tried for criminal syndicalism. One turned out phoney and the other one was all right. The only one I know of during the trial that was in California that turned out phoney, a young fellow that had been in the Navy, puked up his guts and so on. There wasn't anything to say because there was nothing secret about it. We were open and above board and that's what irritated them you know. They thought there was something secret about it you see but no we were a labor organization. You can't take a labor organization underground you have to be open more or less. You protect the record of the organization as much as you can and so on but your activities was open and above board. You can't lake a labor, you can take a conspiracy, a few politicians meeting in a basement someplace and they talk about the revolution there's going to be sometime when they got organized and all such things instead. But a labor organization with a program of industrial unionism, you can't take that underground.

Tracy : So you were really sent to prison just because you testified that you were members?

Herb : I got out on bail eventually in the summer. I was there, let's see from April to July and then I got out on bail. A fellow up in Eureka sent my bail down here and I got out then. I had been elected on the organization committee of the lumber workers during that time and I didn't want to resign as long as I got out on bail I went right out on the field and became active again. I went up to Fort Bragg and there's another example to show what the stooges of the lumber barrons would do you see. I got word from Chicago about what had happened in Fort Bragg. They wanted me to go up there and see what was going on. Well I had a policy at that time that if there was a consensus of opinion that somebody was needed to go anyplace, I wouldn't stop. That don't mean to say that I was the fearless kind. I got a very sensitive nervous system. My physical courage is quite limited but I had a bull headed tendency to say that and I had a certain amount of what you call moral courage. You know I feel they can't do that to me you know, that's not kosher you

see. But the word we got out there that a fellow by the name of John Stall from Eureka had been down there, he was a traveling delegate and he had been arrested. The vigilantes had taken, along with the police mind you, taken him out on the beach, beat him unconscious, left him on the beach unconscious for the tide to come in and make it look like drowning and two delegates that were with him were driven out of town. So, maybe I'm getting the story too complicated, am I?

Tracy : Well it's interesting but it was a complicate time, I guess.

Herb : Complicated, I should say it was complicated! That's why I didn't want to talk so much about the past. I want to talk about Elmer Smith because it's as complicated as hell. Christ all mighty I say it's complicated! Now when you look back on some of it there you see you're, it's a great therapy for your ego you know, when you get all and you feel of yourself going down the hill and when you look back at the time. In one of the trial, the first trial I had in Sacramento, they believed their own lies and it was obvious that they wanted to keep women off of the jury because they had read that crap about me being kissed and hugged to freedom in Eureka you see, so I think the prosecuter and they were deliberately keeping women off of the jury in my first trial in Sacramento. And here a homely old square head, well I wasn't old at the time, I was young but I remember, always remember my father used to tell me one time you know I was balling about something I guess I was seven, eight years old. He says, "You are the homeliest kid I've ever seen!" he says and you know it stuck with me. I used to go to the mirror you know, and I look at my freckled face and I was wondering if I wasn't as homely as my father said I was. (laughs) And it sort of, it stuck in my memory you see so I had never had an egotism that way that I was God gift to womenkind but they had that story in there and so on. Well aside from that, better get away from that. Anyway that's where I learned to meet Elmer Smith. In fact when we come down there, not in the first trial when we were the defendant. We were arrested in the courtroom as we left the stand.

Tracy : Because you testified that you were members of the I.W.W.?

Herb : That's right. It was just as well, just as important more important than some of the other things I haven't talked about to show you the nature of the criminal syndicalism law, the way it was played in California. It was guilt by association as the term that's been used recently in some cases you know they used it with regards to the Communists for instance, guilt by association. The law itself that was meaningless. It sounded to me like a dog chasing his own tail. They were running around. Criminal syndicalism meant that you taught, aid and abetted; taught, aid and abetted criminal syndicalism. Then they went down to define criminal syndicalism and their defination of it was just as meaningless and made as the law itself you see. So you see if they could get the jury and brain wash the jury, prey on their you know and appeal to their

moral patriotism and their moral and labor prejudices, it was a cinch to get conviction. And if somebody held out, they would scare him, they would intimidate him so bad in the jury-room. Because when we were convicted that time the fellow was chairman of the jury that had a reputation of being fair to labor, he was so nervous, so frightened that he could hardly hold the paper. He was going like that, he was shaking like a leaf when he read the paper of the conviction. And the Klu Klux Klan for instance was strong in California at that time. They were sweeping out all through the Western country at that time in the early twenties and no doubt they had been frightened there because we never, the best we expected was a hung jury. All they had on us, course I think we carried our membership card just on principle you see but I mean that's because we went to the courtroom and said, sure we are members of the I.W.W.. There was no beating about the bush and that was supposed to be enough to convict you. Now the law and the attorney thought well they can't convict you for that because no one is supposed to be a witness against himself you see it's supposed to be part of the jurisprudence in this country guaranteed by the Constitution and federal laws and state laws and so on.

Tracy : Well, I've got a question. Isn't it true that they wouldn't let you testify at a trial like that unless you did say that you were a member of the I.W.W.?

Herb : That's true. Those that we had qualified character witnesses you know on there but their testimony was useless. If they said they were not members their testimony was disregarded. But on the other hand, the ones that were accepted were paid, professional stool pigeons that went from trial to trial, people like Coots and Diamond and later on a fellow by the name of Munson and a couple of others you see. But Diamond and Coots went to trial after trial and got paid for it. They were coached by the prosecutor what they wanted him to say. All they had to say was that "Blackie Daily" or "Slim" blew up, ruined the farmer's machine, put the pitchfork and ruined the farmer's machine in Dakota or Oklahoma or someplace probably hit your home state even. Or drove nails in fruit trees and put fire to a farmer's barn or haystack and put lye in a scissorbills or a scab's shoes so it'd burn his feet and stuff like that and they did it you see. And they would go free although they'd testified to their guilt! But you see they were damned reformed ex Wobblies you see and they were protected by the prosecution. But that was the testimony, believe it or not, that was the testimony used against us so you see naturely we all had that feeling you know that we were not guilty of anything. And like I told them when I spoke there at the Elingsburg there when I had that paddle deal and the prison reform and I says, "I should be ashamed of myself" I says, "I did time in prison, too. I should be ashamed of myself." I wasn't even charged with doing anything but being a member of a labor organization. I says I

went to prison for that. "At least these fellows," I said, "they're charge and go to prison with something. They either steal somethin or hit somebody on the head or rob somebody, do something bad to a girl or something like that." But I says, "We didn't do anything" and of course the fellow's sitting there and a kind of a grin to you. And so that was the facts and we were about a hundred and fifty of us tried. But you see there I'm back again talking about myself and leaving Smith out of it you see. That's when I got to know a fellow like Smith you see. His democratic spirit it was none of this like you see in some courtrooms even some of the attorneys we had in someplaces would be snobish you know. They treat you like you were just some sort of a, you were charged with something and looked down your nose at you. Smith was not that kind. Neither was the attorney I had in Eureka because he's dead now so I can say so. He was a member of the organization at one time on the East Coast but he went to Arizona, found a mining claim, made some money, went to law school and become an attorney so you see quite an interesting history. And Elmer Smith you know, he wanted me to room with him because I don't think he felt too safe to be alone. He said I could save some money by him. It wouldn't cost me anything for room rent, which was true. but I think he felt safer with me. After the taxpayers up in Eureka and I didn't show no white feather there, he probably thought I was pretty good man to have around him. So anyway so I roomed with Smith, so I got pretty well acquainted with him, talked. I didn't find out But I introduced Him to some friends in San Francisco and they found out more about his life. He had a nice looking wife and they had a kid or two and she was the daughter of a judge. But I don't think their love life was too happy and I think Elmer said something to a friend of mine, but that's beside the point anyway. Very few have anyway I guess, some of them have and some of them don't. But outside of that all I can say about Elmer Smith, that one of the finest man I ever met. After the shooting scrap in Centralia he devoted his whole life to get them out of Walla Walla and of course he contracted ulcers and then he tried to treat it and then he had operation. Well once you have operation for ulcer, you start cutting up your belly, you just had it. I believe in treating that by diet. Ulcer is more psychosomatic anyway, you get it and it go away. I've had ulcers too and they go away, heals up and so on. But anyway, that's what kill Elmer and he kill him early. He had ability, popular. I remember a trial we had when he spoke to the jury. The corridors were lined with people to hear him. Oh boy, he sure made a talk, sure made a talk and he could talk too. Yah, big red Elmer Smith!

Tracy : You wound up spending, you were in San Quentin right?

Herb : Umhum.

Tracy : For how long?

Herb : Forty months. It would have been three years but I lost four.

months, yah that would be three years, four months.

Tracy : What were the conditions like in San Quentin then?

Herb : Well of course they were both bad and good, and bad they were free and easy but the lack of, they were not as strict but the very lack of strictness made it bad that way that there were you know a lot of bad stuff going on. A Mexican when I was in there and the hoodlums from San Francisco you know they got into a kind of a race fight. And I think, I don't know how many but I bet you in about six months there I bet there were thirty of those prisoners killed, killed each other. But that didn't even hit the newspapers. No, didn't even come up in the newspapers. And we had a you know, the Wobblies some of us at least some of them went kind of individual routes you know. Things were too tough for them. They missed the good chow on the outside, missed sleeping in a good bed a lot of things you miss in a place like that. But some of us that were more iron bound you know, we tried to maintain an organization in the prison and we did. We did maintain solidarity there and if somebody was picked on we just pulled the pin and went on strike and we refused to work. And of course some of us we had a little common sense we realized we were not going to make the state California come to terms but we would show our solidarity to show that we were all together so when some younger member, usually picked on the young ones because they had the tasks you see. They had tasks to fulfill. The rest of us, I was still past the age limit even then. So you know some of us in our early twenties. They would have tasks to do in the jute mill and if they didn't meet their task they would lock them up on Sunday. Well, they refused to go to work on Monday so that then throw them in the dungeon and so we went with them you see. We pulled the pin, we refused to work so they locked us up too. I hadn't been in there for thirty days before I was on the first strike and that was what they called the dungeon, it is done away with now. That was made during the time before California became a state. It was underground and it was made like a huge bake oven. It was totally dark after they shut the outside door and they'd lie him on the floor you know totally black in there and you'd get a loaf of bread once a day and they bring you in a can of water and a place to do your business in and take it out in the morning. So I was staying with a fellow by the name of Ross, young fellow from Minnesota, a hell of a nice fellow. Good disposition and he never let anything bother him. He didn't have a vitriolic disposition like I used to have! (laughs) And when that fellow came on the bread a fellow by the name of Vinegar Face we call him you know, a guard. He broke in singing some Wobbly song you know. I've never had a voice I couldn't hold a voice at all but you know we broke in singing and called Vinegar Face and he kind of shook his head. But the old Vinegar Face I run into him one time and we had a clash and after that I held my ground and he treated me all right. He used to come around and ask me how I was getting along and all of that there. I met him one time after I came out of prison. I was riding

the bus from Palo Alto and I had a feeling you know that somebody was looking at me in the back, you get that feeling you know sometimes somebody is looking at and there was Vinegar Face. Well he rushed up to me you know with his southern drawl he had been an Army man. he says, "Hiiii, you're looking goood" he says. "Oh, I'm doing all right". (laughs) And so, but I had a clash with him one time he tripped me you know he was going to rub me up to the coach post there to meet out punishment you know, the captain of the yard was and I says, "I'm doing my time and I'm doing my work. Don't come and threaten me," I says. "I don't threaten worth a God damn. Do what you have to do, but don't come and threaten me" I told them. I got along all right with old Vinegar Face after that. (laughs)

Tracy : I wonder if you could tell us a little bit about why the I.W.W. sort of fell apart?

Herb : The main cause if you are to look for a real cause, there was a split that took place in the organization in the 20's. It was the complete breakdown of the organization that ruined the effectiveness of the organization. And the causes, I would say there were three major causes aside from side issues but three major causes. In the first place the Russian Revolution had taken place. A lot of them members they were not only Russian but they were from that part of the country and aside from that some of the American Wobblies they saw we weren't getting nowheres fast as revolution we were talking about, the revolutionary industrial unionism. That was fine on paper but we were a long ways off and here the glorious revolution had taken place in Russia! So a lot of them became interested. In fact the whole organization backed the Russian Revolution. It was only after news started to come out of Russia that they were persecuting the minorities who had a record of revolutionary activities even before Lenin, Trotsky and Stalin and all of them. They had been subjected to the punishment and atrocities in Russia under the Tsar. So but when we learn about that why a lot of them turned back but most of us didn't believe that you see. You wanted to believe the Russians and evidently it was a success. We were, the organization as a whole, the majority of the members were a hundred percent in favor of it. But then we still wanted to maintain the I.W.W.. We felt we had a good strong organization and we were not interested in starting a political organization. We were not anti political but we were non political. We believed in the power of the workers in the industrial union, economic power that was the key to our progress toward power. But the others again, they quit the organization to join the Communist Party. Well, there was a convention they formed after the Communist Party was formed in 1919. They had a convention in Chicago which Socialist Party members, left wing Socialists, joined it and so on but I don't go into that. But they formed that organization. In Leningrad in 1920 when there was a conference of an organization called the Red Trade International which was under the domination of a part of the Communist Party and the I.W.W. was invited to attend and we had a conference there, a

fellow by the name of William [?] went to Leningrad and we were invited to join. And Zinoviev who was later killed at the time of Stalin, he was one of them that was executed though he was one of the right hand man of Lenin that were together in Switzerland before the Revolution. He was Lenin's right hand man but still he after Stalin got into power and became crazy, paranoid or whatever you want to call it, but the man was out of his mind! He killed the cream of the Russian Revolution and that's the danger to be pointed to of too much political centralization, too much power in the hands of one person. But aside from that, you want to know about the I.W.W. broke up. Well, to make it as short as I can a lot of the members joined the Communist Party. The word went out from the Red Trade International, from the Communist Party, that those who do not affiliate with us we will liquidate them. They either join on our side, nobody sat on the fence, we will liquidate them. Of course in the physical sense means to kill them but in that way was to break them up, to destroy them. So some of our active members joined that became sold on the Revolution and wanted to be good loyal Communists. They started to break up the organization within the I.W.W., people we knowed and trusted and so on. Our own Secretary Treasurer went to Russia under the time when he was in office in Chicago. And I remember it well because we had a big meeting in Seattle and protested and what to do about it. And I think it was the biggest Wobbly meeting that has been held anywhere; business meeting where members had to show their cards. The hall was loaded and the stairway was loaded, they couldn't all get in. And believe it or not the best they could do was to elect me as chairman and that wasn't because I was a good chairman. Because we had no loud speaker and I had a good powerful voice so that's why I was elected. We had a better chairman a fellow by the name of Tom Murphy and he would have been a better chairman than I, he used to be chairman. But you know Murphy being Irish I was a good chum of Murphy we got along fine and if I took the floor he would recognize me but he showed partiality to some of them, he would the other way he wouldn't recognize them. So they'd ganged up on Murphy and they started to gather around me you know and I was young and full of pee and vinegar (laughs) and so I was elected chairman. It lasted for two days that meeting. But I'm getting away from the subject now that's me coming in again. So that was one factor that had to break up the I.W.W. but they were not all. Some of them who were the other factors tried to blame it all on the Communists but I don't blame it all on them because at the least they had some kind of a program.

Tracy : Well first, like in what ways did the people who joined the Communist Party try to destroy the I.W.W.?

Herb : Well later on. I want to, before I remember now I want to tell the other factor as I see it. Another faction of course first of all before there was any interference by the Communists or what, I call the "pseudo anarchists." I hope to Christ they weren't anarchists because their irresponsible decentralist

policy [some words not intelligible] - but not to get off the subject. We had agent provocateurs in the organization. People who joined the organization for the purpose of finding out what they could and to advocate bad policy, policy that were against the law for instance you see and that did a lot of harm. So it confused members you know, young people, it's easy to confuse you if you know what to say and so on and you get new members into the organization that don't know too much about the philosophy and the theory and practice of the organization but they are full of grievences. They are easy to confuse them and to get them to do things they shouldn't do you see. And I think part of the sabotage what some members were accused of I think came from brainwashing by agent provocateurs. Like they're doing now you've seen about the FBI have spotters in these students to get them to do something you see! And we had people like that in the I.W.W.. Now of course as far as sabotage is concerned, I'm not going to take no holier than thou attitude and say that some of them didn't practice it. Since the beginning of time I think people if they were abused and were subject to injustice they would find some way to retaliate and get even. And a lot of what you call sabotage was done by that. But the organization itself were opposed to it not because of any holier than thou philosophy but because that type of thing, violence just begets violence and destruction and what do you gain by it? We had a philosophy and we wanted to take over the industry for all of the workers for all of the people as part of the I.W.W. philosophy. So what the hell do you want to destroy the things what we feel should belong to the people and use for their benefit you see. It don't make sense. But of course we got one of the strongest cases they had against the I.W.W. in the Chicago trial was sabatoge, the destruction of property and violence, oh gee, they had a terrible story about what we were guilty of you see. And of course I was just a young member, had just joined the organization during the time of the Chicago trial. But we had those people. But then we had another element that I see coming to the front in the later years that I see is one of the bad features of the organization. Now I'm speaking as an individual you understand. I'm not speaking authoritively as a spokesman of the I.W.W. today so I feel I have a right to say it and I don't care who knows it. We had a left wing element what I called "pseudo anarchists." They believed that you know, just never mind about this constitution of the organization and program and so on. We do our thing the way we want to have it done you see. But the result in is that five and six people instead of being democratic are very undemocratic. Five or six people can get together someplace and will make their own program and will interpret their own constitution and the preamble of the organization. I think that's very undemocratic and that's what I found. And that hampered the organization from taking a more or less responsible position. It's a lot of things what I'm opposed to now but I heard but I didn't understand it that time. For instance we say we are all leaders. Well that sounds good and to a certain extent that is true because everybody got equal rights. But it is

biological nonsense to say that we are all leaders, there is no such thing. Many times we were handicapped in the strike because nobody wanted to stick his neck out and take a responsible position and have a committee that is elected and therefore this is the policy and this is what we are going to do and when they are elected to do. What I call democracy running wild. I hope there will come a time that we all have sort of a mutual understanding that we have sort of a mental telepathy that we could look at each other and we know what we want to do. We don't even use language and everybody's on an equal basis and we don't need everybody to give any orders or instruction. You could go on the job and you'd all know the blueprints and you followed that blueprints and you take your tools and you go out in the corner and you do your thing and the others all go over and do his thing whatever they call it and so on. That's fine and so on but we haven't reached that stage yet, maybe in the year 9050 or something we will reach that stage hopefully. I hope before that time incidentally but I won't see it. So I have kind of a switch around. I'm not authoritarian, I'm a libertarian yet! But I think you have to have some systematic [some words not intelligible] - the Communists were the ones breaking but some of themselves were handicapping the organization about being responsible and you see what I mean? Too irresponsible, you got to have some system. I don't believe in this military discipline. I don't believe in somebody ordering you around but I believe you got to instill sound discipline in an organization. This is what we have to do and we agree on it. We go ahead and do it, then you don't go ahead and start doing something else. Well, so I'm back to a case now I have the three factors. Don't forget now I use quotation marks and inverted commas for "anarchist." I'm not saying that they were anarchists. I hope they are not. I'm not an anarchist myself. No doubt they have a lot of beautiful philosophy about it and so on. Some of the men I know, in fact when I went to Chicago, not the last time but the convention before last I went out to the Walheim cemetery to see the statue there where the anarchists were killed in Haymarket riot in 1886. Spier and Parson and Lingg and Fischer and what was the name of the other fellow? Well those were men of guts! Lingg you know he was an anarchist he told the judge he says, "When you dynamite us we will dynamite you", he says, "Hang me for it!" (laughs) But of course they had what it took but that "pseudo anarchism" I don't go for it because I think you can't. We lost opportunities that way I think in the organization in the early thirties. If we had had more of a grip now you take that yourself there, I've had more than my share. But I'm getting away from the subject now. I hope you didn't have it on the tape, some of it. But those were the three factors what I consider were the break up of it and I will show you an example that you don't have to take my word for it. In the spring of '23 there was a strike in the lumber industry that spread right down to California and I was out on bail at the time when I was on the organization committee and I went up and down through the lumber industry and so I know what was going on there. I kept in touch through the

bulletin what was going on up here and we had a big strike a successful strike. I think we pulled more jobs than we did in the famous general strike in 1917. We covered quite a territory and in Ontario, Canada there were lumber workers were out on that time were part of them. Back in the state of Maine even we had an organization. I know the fellow that went back there to organize, fellow by the name of Leonard Bolton and he had more guts than sense. So we had a successful strike that came out and went very good and we gained members. According to record we had the biggest membership in the spring of '23 in the lumber workers. We had around twenty-five thousand members at that time in the lumber industry alone. That's more than we had in 1917 although we had members coming in then too by the thousands, they were flocking in. But they gained some concession and of course there were members trying to hold what they had you see and there was some talk about having another strike in the fall you see. Some of them you know, wanted to strike all of the time but others wanted to maintain organization to build organization. There was another thing what Jesus some of them anarchists when I talk about power they think about power of the individual, I do no such a thing. But you got to create power, without organized power you have nothing. But I mean collective power, I don't mean some Mussilini or some Hitler or some Stalin power, individual power. But I believe the power of organization and if you are going to get anyplace you sacrifice a lot of things to maintain that power. You hold the organization together. You do things that you don't even like in order to maintain organization. So when they had a conference in Portland in a by golly I think it was in August of course there was the time once when I went to prison. And they decided not to hold, they had the elected delegates stand for job organization. They were elected from many jobs around the Northwest there and they decided not to have any strike. They went back with the strike bill, went out on the job and spread it all around there wouldn't be any strike and the members settled on there wouldn't be any strike. But they were too naive you see, they the average Wobbly, the average member including myself we were naive you know. We were trusted, we like to trust people and we hadn't been subject to this conspiracy and this political intrigue what you find more in political organizations both radical and conservative. God if they can't have some intrigue and some secret conspiracy going why they are not happy! They got to have that's part of it they enjoyed that scene. But you see we were naive you know so instead of preparing for that which they should have done and said "This is the final, don't recognize any other strike bill coming out, this is the decision of the lumber workers conference headquarters." And what happened? Instead of that a few days after here comes another bunch of people going through the lumber camps saying that the strike is on and the other strike bill was phoney!

Tracy : These were Communists you think?

Herb : No I wouldn't say that they was, I don't know. No I wouldn't

say that because after all I'm not, I'm anti political program I'm anti dictatorship. But I'm not altogether, I've a lot of friends both in the Trotskyists and among the CP and so on so I'm not narrow minded especially since I was out of the organization for a long time. I fight prejudice in my own mind because it don't get nowhere. But I'm anti certain part of their program and I'm not bashful to tell them so. So whoever it was that could have been agent provocateurs. We had a certain element of the left wing that was anti Communist but they felt that the organization was becoming too centralized you see. They wanted more decentralization and more of go in the corner and do your thing you see if you know what I mean. I know I leave the "h" out when I pronounce "thing" but never mind that part of it. (laughs) So that was a diaster in the lumber, that was a diaster. They didn't know they create confusion and you see lot of the members they were not versed in that, what the hell are those people trying to do, here comes a strike bill telling no strike and here comes another there is gonna to be a strike. And the last thing a Wobbly wanted to do even the most backward ones they didn't want to be a scab! When the strike bill comes that was part of his religion you see! That was Christ like having the choice of St. Peter asking them whether they wanted to go to heaven or go to hell why you know what I mean, the choice was easy to make! So they created a lot of confusion. It was tragic, there were thousands throwing away their cards and the controversy started. That was part of it but that was taking part in other parts of the country which was not as obvious as this particular incident I'm telling but all through the organization this split the organization was torn apart. We lost a lot of members and there was a fight and it became so bitter in places there were even fist fights you see. Well we were in the prison at the time and you can just imagine people who were devoted to something that are fanatical much more than I am now you see. Christ I was just like a religious fanatic about the revolution, about the class struggle at that time. Lived for it! Worked for it! You drempt about it in your sleep. And that was much harder that split that took place then, than anything the prison and being convicted and all of that stuff. That was just details compared to feeling that the thing you had worked for and well for lack of another word, suffered for was split wide open. That was hell, that was hellish. And some of them carried it on even with the split in their own ranks. But some of us we had a mantal element here to preserve that we refused to go along with that. We talked to all of them regardless of what stand they took and we had a good library there. We sent out for ourselves and friends sent in books. We had probably the best labor library on labor subjects of any group of people in America right there in San Quentin at the time! Yes, we had everything yah, and I'll never forget there because some of them was lucky, we had people that had far more better education that had a command of the English language than I do. But there was a woman there that later became a Communist sympathesizer, a millionaire woman in California that was friendly to labor. And she sent us in a Christmas

present for fifty dollars to the group you see. Well we thought the best was to do to buy books for it. So I says "But somebody ought to write and thank her." Well, we looked at each other and nobody, so I wrote her. And you know how purchase is spelled. So I spelled "purchace" as "purchage." Well it was a simple mistake with anybody. I've seen people born and raised in this country go to high school make as much mistake. But to me I was studying English at the time and boy was my face red when I discovered afterwards that I had spelled it as "charge" you know as you charge something, "purchage" instead of "purchase" because it sounded like it to me when somebody say it you see. I thanked her for the books. Well that showed how simple minded I could be you know, just a poor square that tries to get along in this world. (laughs) Yep, so that was that and of course from then on then came the Depression and then it was still, and of course there's no question about it that the Communists had a policy and some are bitter about it. We were torn in the side, us Wobblies they wouldn't join us you see. We had a reputation of being the most militant organization in America. And they invited us to join and we would be the labor faction of the Communist Party in this country. But we couldn't see that dictatorship and of course probably part of it we would have been just as well if we had, I don't know. History will decide that, probably never decide but it wasn't done and of course a lot of them left. Instead of taking orders from some big shot at the top, we wanted to, so we voted against it when the question after Williams came back from Leningrad. We voted on that referendum, that vote didn't carry and we later refused to affiliate and of course then the fat was in the fire. We were subject for liquidation and they wouldn't do anything and they had money you know. Of course they reached the intellectuals who was writing books and so on. A lot of the books was written at that time afterwards and other people who were friendly to our organization they go to Socialists. People who write books they go to Socialists for information you know they go to a library and there they find the books where it says that the I.W.O., the wonderful history they had in the past you know the free speech fights and the militant workers all over the country, the fights they, how improving the conditions and the noncompromising stand, but sorry to say they fell to pieces at the end of the First World War. Because that was a part of their program to say that because when they left and joined the Communist Party and when we wouldn't affiliate with it well of course it was a good argument to put that when we missed these prominent intellectual members in the organization well they couldn't carry on with all the dumbbells that was left you see! So of course we went to pieces at the end of the First World War. And I'm not telling you propaganda but I'm trying to tell you here and I have proof for it that we did have more members at least in the industrial union by far in what I was a member of in '23 and probably would have continued but the thing that took place and the Depression come along and so on. But even later on, even after I quit the organization

over some personal matter in '37 we had an organization in Cleveland. We had job control of shops of the tool and dye makers which is one of the most skilled crafts in America. The tool and dye makers that make tools and dyes for other craftsmen you see we had control of that. And they wanted a speaker that was coming here, Cedervall, he was right in the midst of it and had the experience of it and if you have a chance you should hear him, he's a good speaker had a good sense of humor and he can say a lot in a few words. He could say ten times more in a few words than I can. I ramble all over creation and I need not tell you! I think you should get on, you try to control me there because I no governor on my mouth machine there.

Tracy : Well, that was the last question that I really had. I suppose we could end the tape now.

Herb : I think you should get back to Elmer Smith there though. But I have already told that, that I tell you about that story I wanted to emphasize that he was a marked man before the Centralia shootings scrap. And the only thing he did was to give legal advice to them when they came and asked him if they had a right to defend themselves. He said, "You have that right."

Tracy : Tell us about what went on in Centralia.

Herb : Well, there were two stories in the midst of the organization had one story, we had the other story and that is that they choose to have the parade there, they never had before -

Tracy : This was the American Legion?

Herb : Yeh, it was the American Legion, they had a parade and of course citizens that were along with it, sympathisers and flag wavers and super patriots and what have you. But they were using the Legion as a cats paw you see. And they stopped in front of the hall.

Tracy : The I.W.W. hall?

Herb : Yes. Now they say that they started to shoot at them when they were in the ranks. That's a lie. Common sense would tell you it's a lie. No more people are going to start unless they are stark raving mad, they are not going to start shooting at a bunch of people in a parade; a bunch of soldiers in a parade. Would they?

Tracy : Yeah, it doesn't make sense.

Herb : Doesn't make sense. They broke ranks. They were marking time, what they call in military vernacular, stopped there and marking time there came to a halt and sort of marking time. Somebody made a "Let us go" and they went for the hall, broke into the

door and they were met with a fusillade of shots. It wasn't Everst the fellow that was killed and mutilated, I guess he done the most shooting. But the best authority for that is Ralph Chaplin's "Centralia Conspiracy." I understand it's out of print. I had one there. I saw the widow of Ralph Chaplin before she died. She used to live in Tacoma, Edith Chaplin. But I have one I think if I can find it if somebody didn't swipe it from me down in my doghouse in the basement. But I think it's coming out in print again down in Houston. That is the best authoratative statement of the Centralia massacre.

Tracy : But Elmer Smith was not present.

Herb : He was not in it at all but he was, due to the fact that he had given that advice that they had a right to defend themselves he was tried in a place call Montesano down here in Grays Harbor County he was tried. And of course they brought in, intimidated the jury. They brought in the National Guard and they had the army in there to you know to intimidate the jury and so on. And of course they were convicted and they did I think there were twenty years. Anyway they got out. They are all out been out many years and I think some of them took parole but a fellow by the name of Roy Baker he didn't want to take a parole and he wasn't out till the last. We wouldn't take the parole in San Quentin either you see. The group in San Quentin wouldn't take the parole. They did take some of them did in Walla Walla. There were fewer of us but the majority of us pledged ourselves that we'd done our time. We weren't going to go in there when the year was up we go in and get before the prison parole board and they set your time and they ask you a lot of questions and so on. But most of them just liiked right at them and just grinned and said, "I have nothing to say". We do our time. Ofcourse they call up one for fourteen at that time they would give you fourteen years but most of them got either four or five years and then you got time off for good behavior. Well I lost four months, not for anything I did myself but for going out on strike with the rest of them. We had a long one there that lasted about ninety days you know and about fourteen days of that time we went on a hunger strike. They made the bread so damn bad that we couldn't eat it. So we took a stand if they try to starve us to death we'd said we going to call their bluff and we're going to speed up the process so we went on a hunger strike. But you know we tried to keep it under control. I was one of them that spoke up. We don't believe that we can make the state of California come to terms by doing this. We can't you know, we haven't got the power and all we can do is to make a good protest and show that they don't have us buffaloed, so to speak. So when after we broke the hunger strike we went back eating again. But that was about ninety days we were locked up but then we were in a cell. But that was the last one. You see the fellow who was captain of the - am I boring you now?

Tracy : Oh no!

Herb : He was captain of the yard, he had been a Pinkerton man and he made a boast in the San Francisco paper that he know how to handle those Wobblies. There wouldn't be no strike by the I.W.O. when he was captain of the yard. So we called his bluff. So that morning you see after he had three in the dungeon, two he had thrown in because of the work stoppage and the third one was thrown in the dungeon because when he had a visitor on Saturday he tried to get information out to our defense office and he was thrown in, so we had three in there. So we pulled the pin on him and stopped working. Well they tried to talk us out of it you see and they sent us out in the yard. He didn't want to because he had been on record that he had it under control you see, there wasn't going to be no strike by the Wobblies while he was captain of the yard. So they sent us out there to talk it over, thought we would weaken. No, we didn't weaken. So they took us there in front of us and he give it the lecture and he said, "You are doing your time as individual prisoners, he don't recognize no organization as far as he were concerned, we were in their as any ohter criminal." I guess I was the one that suggested that, a fellow by the name of Thompson, very intellectual man, good education. He's a walking encyclopeda. But he got to be a weak timid voice so you couldn't hear him. I wanted that you could hear him well. So when Thompson didn't suit me what he said so I told them I says, "I don't give a damn what you believe in captain Hobbs, I'm going on what we believe in. We came in as an organization and we are going to leave as an organization or know the reason why" and I says, "and what the hell are you going to do about it!" So they sent us back in the yard and they talk it over you know and it was middle in the afternoon before they make up their minds. But then when their honor was broke, they took us up there and made us strip naked you know, looked through our clothes for matches and tobacco and see that we wouldn't have anything you know cigarette paper and so on, of course I don't smoke any. And of course they were ferocious then. But that is one time you know I never had no prejudice anyway against the colored people as far as that is concerned. I didn't have no prejudice against other convicts as far as that is concerned unless they were sneaks you know, some of them slimy bastards that were doing the bidding of the [fades away]. But I saw when people who were doing life for smuggling they would take chances to get over there and get in tobacco to those fellows who wouldn't take chances that could lose good time. So some of them fellows had good guts and principles. Yes you bet. Didn't bother me any because I didn't smoke anyway and that Thompson was next door to me you know and of all the things he would pick on, he was going to try to teach me Greek on toilet paper. He wrote Greek alphabet characters on the toilet paper and passed it on to the next cell! (laughs)

Tracy : Well I think we can stop the tape now. I think we've got about everything we need. Thanks a lot.

Herb : Well, it hasn't been a very good, there's so many things to say....