

Mullinight

Interview with Paul Rajewski, Interview 1
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Begin Tape 1, Side 1

This is Pat Pilling. The date is July the 20th, 1982. I'm talking with Mr. Paul Rajewski of 28348 Grobel in Warren, Michigan. Mr. Rajewski is a millwright at Chevy Gear and Axle and a member of Local 235.

PP: Mr. Rajewski, would you tell me when you were born and where you were born?

Rajew: I was born on June 7th, 1943, Providence Hospital, Detroit Michigan.

PP: Do you have any brothers or sisters?

Rajew: Yes.

PP: How many?

Rajew: I have two sisters.

PP: Have they ever worked in the auto plants?

Rajew: No.

PP: Is your mother Polish or part Polish?

Rajew: My mother is a Kashube.

PP: So that's which part of Poland?

Rajew: It's part German and part Polish.

PP: Was she born here?

Rajew: Yes.

PP: In this immediate area?

Rajew: Yes. She was born on Charles in Detroit.

PP: What about your father?

Rajew: My father was born here.

PP: In Detroit?

Rajew: Yes, on DuBois and *Farragut Oh.*

PP: What about your grandparents? Were they first generation? Did they both emigrate from Poland?

Rajew: On my father's side, my grandparents immigrated. And on my mother's side, they were pioneers here in Michigan.

PP: And it was their parents *that* came over, was it?

Rajew: On my father's side, my grandparents came over. On my mother's side, they settled in Flat Rock, Michigan. As a matter of fact, at one time they were fighting Indians.

PP: Oh, so they've been here a long time. But you said your mother's side were part Polish, though.

Rajew: Part Polish and part German.

PP: Were they farmers down in the Flat Rock area?

Rajew: Yes.

PP: Do you have relatives now, *down* in the Flat Rock area?

Rajew: Yes.

PP: Is your wife Polish or part Polish?

Rajew: She's Polish.

PP: And did her parents . . . ?

Rajew: No.

PP: They didn't come from Poland. They were
born here?

Rajew: Yes.

PP: How many children do you have?

Rajew: Two.

PP: How old are they?

Rajew: Five and twelve.

PP: The one that's twelve is a girl?

Rajew: Yes.

PP: And the other one I met, the little one
is a boy.

Rajew: A gorilla.

PP: (laughing) Would you want them to work in
an auto plant? Have you ever thought about
that?

Rajew: No. (sounds like a definite no.)

PP: Would you work actively to discourage them?

Rajew: Yes.

PP: Have you ever had a relative work in one
of the plants?

Rajew: Yes, I'm the third generation in auto plants.

PP: So, who worked? On your mother's side or
your father's?

Rajew: My grandfather.

PP: Your grandfather on your father's side. Is that right?

Rajew: Right.

PP: What did your grandfather do?

Rajew: He was a core maker for Cadillac Foundry.

PP: What is a core maker?

Rajew: A core maker is when you pour steel, and there's a hollow within the steel. You make a core so that the steel flows around it to make this hollow.

PP: Like a doughnut type of thing?

Rajew: Not necessarily. It can be any shape or form.

PP: When did he start working in the plant?

I see, it says on the back of the watch *(that you're wearing)*.
What plant did he work in?

Rajew: The Cadillac Foundry.

PP: The Cadillac Foundry, 1925 to 1950. And then your father worked . . . ?

Rajew: My father worked at Murray Bodies. And when Murray's went out of business, he worked for Congress Tool and Die.

PP: Do you remember your grandfather saying anything what the conditions in the plants were like back in '25? They must have been very, very different than now.

Rajew: When my grandfather came home from work, my grandmother poured a bottle of beer with a raw egg in it. And poured a double shot. And that man didn't speak to anybody until *after* he killed it.

PP: The conditions in the plant, if he was working in the foundry, must have been *just* unbelievable. But still your father went into the plant.

Rajew: He didn't go into Cadillac's.

PP: No, not Cadillac, but he went into one of the plants. Do you consider yourself an American or a Polish-American?

Rajew: I consider myself a Polish-American.

PP: Do you identify with any particular area of Poland?

Rajew: No.

PP: Just as a Polish-American. Do you have an interest in the Solidarity movement, then? Some people have become quite interested in that movement now simply because *it's been* in the papers so much.

Rajew: No.

PP: You're not interested in that. But you're interested in being considered a Polish-American. Do you belong to a Polish parish?

Rajew: Yes.

PP: Which one?

Rajew: St. Cle^{tus}~~atis~~.(sp)

PP: Have you spent much time in the Hamtramck area?

Rajew: Yes.

PP: Were you raised in that area?

Rajew: No. I ran around there.

PP: Where did you go to school?

Rajew: I went to (44) ^{Carvel?} Elementary. I went to Nolan Junior High. I went to Pershing High School. I attended Highland Park Junior College. I attended the University of Eastern Michigan.

PP: Did you graduate from Eastern Michigan?

Rajew: No, I was drafted.

PP: Which war was this?

Rajew: Vietnam.

PP: Do you belong to any Polish organizations?

Rajew: I used to, I dropped out.

PP: Which ones were you in?

Rajew: I was in Post-41 of the American Vets and I was in PLOV 12 something over here.

PP: That's the what?

Rajew: Polish-American Veterans.

PP: When you were being raised, you were ^{actually} raised in the Detroit area, though. Not strictly

PP: in Hamtramck. Did your parents own their own home?

Rajew: Yes.

PP: Is this your first home or have you had a home before?

Rajew: This is my second home.

PP: How many years have you been in this one?

Rajew: Five.

PP: Where was the other one? In Detroit?

Rajew: East Detroit.

PP: What kind of car do you drive, yourself?

Rajew: ^A Ford Mercury and a Chevy pick-up.

PP: What year is the Ford?

Rajew: 1973.

PP: And the pick-up?

Rajew: 1977.

PP: So, you have one from the company you work for and one from another company. Do you have a boat or a cottage or anything like that?

Rajew: No.

PP: Have you ever had a parent or a parent-in-law living with you?

Rajew: When I arrived back from the Army, we lived with my in-laws for approximately 30 days.

PP: ^{But} ~~Have~~ you ever had a parent or parent-in-law living with you in your own home?

Rajew: No.

- PP: When you were in high school, what kind of jobs did you have?
- Rajew: When I was in high school, my parents owned their own business. They had a delicatessen. I worked in that since I was five years old. I was a co-op student and I worked for the J.L. Hudson Company.
- PP: How far did you get at Eastern Michigan before you were drafted?
- Rajew: My third year.
- PP: Did you ever think about going back when you came back?
- Rajew: Yes.
- PP: What happened? You decided not to do it?
- Rajew: I was working ten hours a day. I used to get off of work about two o'clock. I'd get up at five, and I was going to school for eight o'clock classes in Ypsilanti. And then I just got fed up.
- PP: I can understand that. So actually, how many hours do you have left if you ever wanted to go back and get a degree.
- Rajew: I'd have to pick a major. I've got enough hours in, ~~that~~ I'm over my bachelors.
- PP: Oh, I see. You just don't have a major chosen yet. So, let's go back then. When

PP: you came back from the Army, that was what year?

Rajew: 1970.

PP: Then what did you decide to do or think about doing?

Rajew: I like working with my hands. I had a job offer with Fischer Body 23 as a tool and die maker. I was accepted for an apprenticeship. When I arrived, they closed Fischer Body 23 and I no longer had an apprenticeship. I came back. I worked at Ford Motor Company, which I worked for before I went into the Service.

PP: Which plant? Rouge?

Rajew: Sterling. I worked four days and quit. They put me on the assembly line. From there, I went to ~~(79)~~ Joseph ^{hand}. I was the number 1 choice for an apprenticeship ^{over} there. And the General Motors ~~(81)~~ strike hit.

PP: What year was that?

Rajew: 1970.

PP: What do they make at Joseph ^{hand} (82) ?

Rajew: Automation equipment.

PP: So, you were laid off?

Rajew: I was laid off from September 19th until I hired in at Chevrolet.

PP: When you hired in ^{at Chevrolet,} what did you hire in as?

Rajew: Production.

PP: Doing what? You were on the assembly line again, I suppose.

Rajew: No, I was an axle *straightener*.

PP: What does that mean, exactly?

Rajew: I straightened axles. The wheel shafts that go into the rear end of your car, I used to straighten.

PP: How long did you do that?

Rajew: Two years.

PP: And then what happened?

Rajew: I got my apprenticeship.

PP: Was being a millwright your first choice?

Rajew: No, it was my last choice.

PP: In other words, you would have preferred something else?

Rajew: Yes, electrician, machine repair. But, now I'm glad I took the millwright classification.

PP: Why is that?

Mr. Hought
Rajew: Because a millwright does many different things. It's not standing there by a machine, or running a grinder for eight hours a day. Or not running a boring mill for eight hours a day. It's not constantly going out and working. You run into different problems. Myself, I've got two categories that I specialize in. One is structural steel

Rajew: installation and the other is, I work on inductors. I work on a bench. An inductor is something that hardens your wheel shafts. And they cost about \$3000 a piece. And to repair one costs you \$1000, sight unseen.
(small crash)

PP: How often do they break down and they need repair?

Rajew: Constantly.

PP: It costs \$1000 every time one is . . . ?

Rajew: Not when I do it. If they send it out.

PP: If they send it out, it costs that much. But if they have you do it, then it's part of your job. How long were you in apprenticeship?

Rajew: Three years.

PP: Where did you take your classes?

Rajew: South Macomb (*Community College*)

PP: About how many hours did they require you to put in? Practical hours?

Rajew: Do you mean schooling or do you mean job?

PP: No, I don't mean schooling, I mean job.

Rajew: You combine schooling and you combine job and there's eight thousand hours. And when I went to school, I carried a 3.9.

PP: But you never thought of ^{perhaps} returning, *as well*, at the same time back to Eastern Michigan,

PP: and finishing that degree.

Rajew: Sometimes I thought about it.

PP: How many years have you got in now in the way of seniority?

Rajew: Twelve and a half.

PP: So, you've still got quite a ways to go before you have your thirty years in, if you decide to stay in for thirty years.

Rajew: If I don't hit the lottery, I've got approximately seventeen and a half years to go.

PP: So, you'd be how old actually?

Rajew: Fifty-eight.

PP: Would you say you liked your work then, because it does give you the freedom to move around?

Rajew: At the present time, I'm confined to the bench, because that's where I'm working. I used to work heavy construction. I like working on ~~a~~ bench. It's a very meticulous operation, which a lot of people do not understand. I've worked heavy construction. I like both and I can handle either one.

PP: Have you ever considered a job change? Given the fact that inflation and conditions are somewhat precarious these days, plants close from time to time, and so on, have you

PP: considered you might like to do something else?

Rajew: No. I have a very secure position. ✓

Security of job

PP: In other words, there are a lot of people below you *that* have less seniority than you do.

Rajew: Yes. And besides that, I can work anywhere in the world. ✓

PP: Have you ever considered relocating to another state?

Rajew: When I got out of the Army, yes.

PP: Where were you interested in possibly re-locating?

Rajew: California.

PP: Any special reason?

Rajew: I was stationed there and I had a job opportunity out there.

PP: Where were you stationed?

Rajew: Sixth Army Headquarters, the City of San Fransisco.

PP: What would you miss most if you did move to another state?

Rajew: (long pause) Depending on the state I ^{moved} in, I fish and I hunt. I doubt if I would move to a state where I couldn't fish and hunt.

PP: So, you go up North quite a bit, I would assume. Here in Michigan. Am I correct?

PP: Does your wife work?

Rajew: No.

PP: Has she ever worked since you've been married?

Rajew: No.

PP: Do you know of any Polish auto workers who have gone to find work in another state?

Rajew: No. *(Pause first)*

PP: Do you know why, given the fact that some people are laid off?

Rajew: *(* Most of the Polish auto workers that I know have extremely established seniority. And have not been laid off. I think now in the plants, you're running into a change of identities. You're running into Negroes, your running into people that came up from the South. Your Polish workers are the old core and are slowly being phased out. *)*

Polish workers (Id)

PP: Well, of course, a lot of the Polish workers though, are still in their late twenties-early thirties.

Rajew: Not necessarily. Not percentagewise.

PP: Oh, you're talking about production now?

Rajew: Right.

PP: It may happen eventually, but there still are a fair number of Polish workers, certainly, who are members of 235. We were talking for a moment about retirement. You said that

PP: you'd be fifty-eight when you get your thirty years. Do you think you'll stay your thirty years or do you think you might retire before thirty years is up?

Rajew: If I hit the lottery I'm gone.

PP: I think many people would make new plans if they hit the lottery. But very few of us can hit the lottery.

Rajew: Well, it only takes one ticket.

PP: That's true. Have you won anything on the lottery? More than, say, twenty-five dollars?

Rajew: Oh yeah.

PP: In other words, you're one of these people ~~that~~ buy several tickets a week, I assume. Are you?

Rajew: No.

PP: Because there are people that do that.

Rajew: I know that.

PP: They belong to these lottery clubs. And sometimes these lottery clubs win, ~~in~~ vast amounts. Though I've never known someone to do so. So, actually, how many times have you been laid off?

Rajew: Since I've been at Chevrolet? Never.

PP: You talked about having lots of hours of school. You said you'd had three years

PP: at Eastern Michigan and of course, you had a large number of hours at Macomb. Since you finished your apprenticeship training, have you taken any kind of classes for interest sake?

Rajew: No.

PP: Nothing at all? Not even in tying flies for fish or anything like that?

Rajew: No.

PP: Ever thought about taking anything?

Rajew: No. I do a lot of reading. I used to do a lot of reading. I have my own library downstairs.

PP: Do you buy books or you mainly get them out of the library?

Rajew: I buy books.

PP: What are your particular interests in reading?

Rajew: Soldiering.

PP: I mean, are you like a Civil War buff, or World War II buff, or something like that?

Rajew: I'm a World War II buff and I'm also a competition shooter.

PP: What kind of shooting?

Rajew: Competition.

PP: That means with a rifle or what?

Rajew: I used to shoot with a pistol.

PP: So, you still do shooting. You go to one

- PP: of these shooting ranges. I've seen them around.
- Rajew: I used to shoot in a league.
- PP: But you don't anymore? You just do it now for interests sake.
- Rajew: It depends how the mood hits me. I like to hunt in the Fall. I like guns. I'm a gun buff.
- PP: Would you collect guns?
- Rajew: Certain types. I like military arms. Man did not invent steel to make a plow. He made a sword. But, I've always been interested in precision machine and working with my hands.
- PP: Yeah, well you mentioned ^{the} tool and die, and I can see (197) .
- Rajew: I do some of my own work.
- PP: You mean you repair guns?
- Rajew: Yes.
- PP: Do you collect antique guns?
- Rajew: No. Military weapons.
- PP: I see. Just military weapons ^F from different wars. 'Cause I know there are people that do that. Especially World War II and Civil War. I suppose some other wars too. Do you collect anything else connected with guns. Such as cannons, for example.

Rajew: No. Rifles.

PP: What do you think about a person taking early retirement because he's laid off a lot? Do you think he would be foolish to do that or should he just try and take his benefits and hope that he gets put back on?

Rajew: It would depend on the person. If it was me personally, and I was given a choice between early retirement and I got the kind of deal I wanted, I'd take it. And then hustle on the side.

PP: What kind of thing would you do?

Rajew: Being a millwright, I can do anything.

PP: In other words, you would use your skill in getting jobs.

Rajew: And I also used to be a trucker.

PP: That means you were a member of the teamsters?

Rajew: No.

PP: If you were laid off, would you consider any retraining, in case there were not any millwright jobs available? Or not enough available, I ~~would say~~, to make a decent living.

Rajew: I have been at Chevrolet's for twelve and a half years. My father-in-law, who was a millwright leader, was there for fifteen. We never ran out of millwright jobs.

PP: In other words, you feel very ^{very} secure. Which you may not have been if you had taken another apprenticeship in some other field. Can you tell me, what skilled trades actually do have a little bit of a problem now, as far as seniority or being laid off? Are there any particular ones that have a problem?

Rajew: You mean as far as classifications?

PP: What classifications do have less security?

Rajew: Cutter/grinders, tool makers, machine repair.

PP: Why is that?

Rajew: Your cutter/grinders are directly linked to production. Because they're ^{sharpening} the tools that are cutting the parts. When production gets cut down, they get cut down. I don't know why tool makers. They run into less work. Machine repair is the same problem:- when production goes down, they go down. If you're not running a machine, you don't have to have it fixed.

PP: Let's talk a little bit about modern technology and robotics. That seems to be a very popular subject these days. How do you think that new technology and robotics, or that type of thing, is going to effect Gear and Axle?

Rajew: I set up one of the first robots at Gear and Axle.

PP: What did it do?


Rajew: ~~(239)~~ ^{Paint. ~~machine~~?}. Unfortunately, the Gear and Axle tries to run everything into the ground and get every penny it can out of any piece of machinery that it gets in, with the least possible maintenance. We pulled the robot out and we have had it for a year on the second floor of our plant. And when they brought in a representative to look at it, he walked out. Because of it's condition.

PP: Why do you think it was in such bad condition?

Rajew: Because they didn't bother cleaning it or greasing it or anything else. It was ~~com~~ completely covered with paint. Robotics are like automation: it's here. People have to face it. Personally, I'm not afraid of it because I'm the man that's going to have to set it up. Possibly, I might be the man ~~that~~ has to repair it.

PP: I was going to say, if they had a problem with that one in the paint department, wouldn't the company suddenly realize that if they're going to have these robots continuing . . .

End Side 1, Begin Side 2



Robot

Rajew: General Motors operates quite differently than Ford and Chrysler. At Ford and Chrysler, you have a quota that you meet on production. At General Motors, each department does not operate by any production quota. It operates by money; the amount of money needed to run that department. A foreman figures out whether he is making a profit or not. Now ~~the~~ each individual foreman is going to push to the maximum to make a profit. So, what you have is, each foreman palms off their maintenance ~~to~~ the next shift. So, he looks good and the next guys got to take up the slack.

PP: So, the poor robot doesn't get cleaned, and finally breaks down. I can visualize in years to come, that if they have several robots doing several jobs, and this sort of situation occurs, that a lot of jobs are not going to get done, because the robots are going to break down. Am I right?

Rajew: You're right. And that's when they start screaming at maintenance; ^{they} says ^{running} get it ^{right}.

PP: So, in other words, there gets to be a point where the company finally says well, ^{then} it's got to be done, I suppose. So, they tell the foremen and the foremen have to get the

PP: maintenance people.

Rajew: They don't tell him. See, he makes that decision and that way, he's got to take the blame.

PP: Do you feel that Affirmative Action has had anything to do with job lay-offs or is it based on seniority?

Rajew: It's based on seniority. And I hope it stays that way because I'm firmly against Affirmative Action.

PP: Has there been any problem in the plant with Affirmative Action or is the seniority *rule* so strong?

Rajew: There has been no direct trouble with Affirmative Action. But the quality of minority groups that they've brought in, they've brought in as tokens. And I would say that 99% of these people cannot function.
(small crash)

PP: Have they had any apprentices brought in as millwrights, for example? From other groups?

Rajew: Yeah, they brought in apprentices from production.

PP: Then they're what they call E.I.T.s, aren't they?

Rajew: No, they're an apprentice.

PP: They have to take these same courses that you took, don't they?

Rajew: They have to take the test and they have to go to school. But the Union also takes the minority groups and has them practice until they are able to complete the test. That's one of the reasons it took me two years to earn an apprenticeship. I couldn't figure that one out. After I earned an apprenticeship, ^{then} I found out about it. But, no one told me. No one made that opportunity available.

PP: In other words, they didn't say, there're apprenticeships coming up in three months. If you apply now, you can be on the list.

Rajew: They did that, but they had a school where these guys would practice mathmatics.

PP: I see, ^{in other words,} before they even took the test. But you didn't even know that.

Rajew: No.

PP: Have you played any kind of an active role in the Union Local?

Rajew: Indirectly, yes.

PP: How do you mean, indirectly?

Rajew: I know most of the committeemen and I know most of the people that are associated with the Local.

PP: You, yourself, though, have not run as a committeeman, have you?

Rajew: No. But I've hussled.

PP: In other words, you've campaigned for a committeeman, that sort of thing. If there's a grievance, do you sort of help the committeemen find information that would be useful to the individual?

Rajew: If it pertains to what I'm doing, yes. If it doesn't, no.

PP: Do you vote for the committeemen?

Rajew: Oh yes, definitely.

PP: Do you go to any of the skilled trade meetings?

Rajew: It's very difficult for me to make meetings because I'm usually working seven days. Our meetings are on a Sunday.

PP: You work seven days now?

Rajew: When possible, yes.

PP: Do you get time and a half on Saturday and double on Sunday?

Rajew: Right.

PP: Have you ever gone to any of the education classes that the Union has? They have education classes, I know, on collective bargaining, ^{on} grievance procedure, on pre-retirement. Even on assertiveness training, so I believe. Have you ever attended any of those at all?

Rajew: No.

PP: What do you think about the Union having education classes? Do you think it's a good idea or you think it's not necessary or what? (airplane overhead)

Rajew: Over the keystone of the Detroit library, the main branch, there's three words written: "Knowledge is Power."

PP: So, am I right in assuming then that you believe there should be education anywhere you can get it?

Rajew: Right.

PP: If you knew a few years ago what you know now, about economic conditions, and certainly the world is not in a very good economic state, would you possibly have tried a different kind of work when you came out of the Army? ^(PR - yes) What would you have gone into instead of being a millwright? You tell me that a millwright can always get work.

Rajew: Yes. I had an opportunity before I went to the Army, when I was attending college. I had an apprenticeship offered to me as an outside electrician. And I turned it down.

PP: Why did you turn it down?

Rajew: Cause I was going to college. I was going

*Current
Edisc.*

Rajew: to be brilliant.

PP: But, you say you read a lot. And there are many people who are self-educated from reading, who are far more brilliant than people who have gone to college and gotten a piece of paper. Which you must be ^{well} aware of.

Rajew: You're a very wise lady.

PP: You could have taken this outside electrician work and continued ^{with} your education at your own pace. Which you are doing now, presumably, from what you have told me.

Rajew: I read when I can.

PP: But, you were younger at the time. Maybe you didn't look at things in quite the same way.

Rajew: No, I had a very, very different perspective. When I came back from the Army, I had a very, very bitter attitude. Extremely.

PP: Bitter at what? At the country, life in general?

Rajew: At the country and life in general.

PP: Because of being in the Army?

Rajew: Right. I felt I had been double-crossed.

PP: How do you feel about Japanese and other foreign cars?

Rajew: As far as what?

PP: Do you think that we should allow so ^{many} ~~any~~ imports into this country?

Rajew: I think what we should do is enact the same restrictions that are enacted against our products overseas. ~~In~~ Specifically Sweden, Norway, Finland, a certain percentage of every product that is sold in that country, has to be produced in that country. This is not the case in the United States. In the United States, we have spent our money in rebuilding most of the world. And now they can sell what they want here but we can't sell it back. I think an example of this was brought out in Reader's Digest. Where a gentleman had tried to market a small electric oven for the table in Japan. Which the Japanese went for in a big (deal.) The next thing you know, he had a law passed against him. By the time he could comply with their law, they had copied what he had done and they had marketed their own domestic product.

It's the same thing with American cars. American cars come over there and they come over with all types of restrictions.

Japanese cars come over here with no restrictions.

PP: What do you think about the situation though, where the Luv truck has a Japanese-made engine. And that many of the parts in many

Japan
-
Imports

PP: other American cars are actually manufactured in Japan, but assembled here in the U.S. Some people don't know whether to call them a foreign car or an American car.

Rajew: The Luv truck, temporarily, is manufactured in Japan. We are now retooling a whole plant to produce that truck in the United States.

PP: Would you feel differently about foreign cars, though, if they were assembled in the U.S., like the Volkswagen?

Rajew: Yes, because they're employing American labor. For several years, for your information, the General Motors Corporation for it's heavy trucks has imported it's brake drums from Sweden.

PP: I thought they made brake drums at Kelsey-Hayes.

Rajew: They ~~did~~. General Motors also imports them from Sweden. At one time I confronted a plant manager and several superintendents and embarrassed them. Because we were buying steel from Czechoslovakia. Which was producing AK-47s for use in Vietnam. The ~~Bro~~ ^{Krupp} Works is in Czechoslovakia. It's one of the largest arm manufacturers ~~in~~ the world. After I brought that point out, they quit buying Czech steel. But they had to be embarrassed

Outsourcing

before they did it.

Rajew: before they did it.

PP: What do you feel about these Quality of Work
Life circles, sometimes known as E.P.C.

Rajew: I am a E.P.C. facilitator.

PP: How long have you been a facilitator?

Rajew: About six months.

PP: Do you think they're working?

Rajew: Yes. We are getting a lot more cooperation.

PP: How many people are in your particular circle?

Rajew: Approximately ten.

PP: Are they all millwrights?

Rajew: Yes.

PP: You said you're getting a lot of cooperation.

In what way?

PWL
Rajew: One of the points that we ran across, that
we had trouble with, was communications.
Foremen didn't understand the people's
problems. People were frustrated. They
didn't have a place to vent themselves out.
We needed equipment, material, tooling.
And management people did not understand
our problem. They say, hey do this job.
Christ, if you can't find the nut and bolt
to do the job, you can't do the job. Then
finally we sat down and we started talking,
and we're starting to hammer some things out.
I help set up this one plant. One of the
things we did, was we wanted steel racks

PWL

 Rajew: moved into a certain position and the superintendent didn't like it. They were right next to his parking lot. So, we brought it up at a E.P.C. meeting and we solved the problem. Now where we don't have a house-keeping problem. ~~But~~ we can unload a truck, instead, ~~of~~ directly in the racks. And we have no loss of material due to more handling. Our heavy equipment was in a state of disgust; unsafe. We have brought it up in the Circle and we have talked about it. And we said, ~~and~~ you want to move machinery, you go to get a piece of equipment, it don't run. So what we have slowly done, is, we have worked with the foreman and he's allocated people to work on that equipment. And we've slowly been rebuilding our own equipment.)

PP: When you say you have a circle with ten people, actually how many are in management?

Rajew: One.

PP: Just one individual.

Rajew: Our foreman. Or else we have coordinators sit in.

PP: Do you think these circles ^{do} have some kind of long range effect?

Rajew: Definitely. I've seen it.

PP: And yet some people are not very happy with it.

Rajew: No.

PP: Why do you feel that might be the case?

Rajew: Because they threaten their power structure.

PP: The power structure of the workers or the power structure of management?

Rajew: The power structure of management.

PP: Except sometimes some of the workers are not too happy.

Rajew: No, because they are used to the old system of doing favors for the boss to stay in his favor.

PP: So, in other words, it also effects, in a way, the power structure of the worker, then? Or, it effects ^{the} networks, you might say.

Rajew: It effects the old lines.

PP: What do you think about the idea of a young person of eighteen, either male or female, instead of being trained in high school or just after high school for one job, ~~then~~ perhaps for more than one job? Given the changes that we're all going through right now. (airplane overhead) Would you think that might be a good idea or do you think a person should be better trained in one particular job?

Rajew: I, personally, did not learn my trade in high school. Experience and knowledge equals wisdom. And you have to have the

*Current
educ*

Rajew: experience.

PP: But people are being trained ^{now} for jobs in high school or after high school and when they get out of their training, there just aren't any jobs for them. One example being ^{the} school teacher. So, this is why I was asking that question. Do you think that perhaps people should be trained, whether it's college or vocational school, whatever it happens to be, for perhaps more than one type of work? ^{Be} Cause a school teacher cannot get a job now. Too many school teachers are out of work.

Rajew: Go down with my sister to Houston and you can get a job.

PP: In Houston?

Rajew: Yeah. She got a school teacher's job in three days. She used to teach at Fitzgerald.

PP: Well, there's somebody Polish who went down to change.

Rajew: I forgot about her.

PP: I think I asked you about auto workers. How does she like being in Houston?

Rajew: She likes the surroundings she's working in but she doesn't like the weather. Too hot, and humid. But she has to make a living.

PP: Is she married?

Rajew: No, she's single.

PP: How do you rate the importance of a man's job to his image of himself? How important do you feel a man's job is to him as an individual?

Rajew: That would depend on the man. And what importance he places on his job.

PP: You mentioned, ^{before} I think we even started taping, that you looked at your job as a means of livelihood for your family. In other words, you gave me the impression at least, you were not necessarily looking at the job itself as being that important. It was a job. It was a good job. But, it meant that it gave you a livelihood for the family.

Rajew: Correct.

PP: Whereas, some people feel that their particular job is very important. But, I was just asking in general terms. I suppose what I'm concerned about is this, that the old first generation Polish ethic, value, was that the man is a hard worker and he provides for his family. And nowadays, in quite a number of cases, although a man may want to do this, he's laid off. I'm talking about the automobile industry now.

PP: In some cases, he's laid off because he doesn't have much seniority. What does that do to his ego if suddenly he's without a job?

Rajew: Rips him apart.

PP: Do you know of any Polish auto workers that this has happened to?

Rajew: Myself!

PP: But you said you haven't been laid off.

Rajew: Since I worked at Chevrolet.

PP: Actually, how long were you laid off for? You were laid off for how long?

Rajew: I came home from the Army and went to work for Ford Motor Company. I spent four days at Ford Motor Company, quit, went to Joe Lamb. I worked six months for Joe Lamb. When GM went on strike in 1971, they locked up Joe Lamb because the machinery we're supposed to ship could not be shipped and they couldn't build anymore. And I was laid off for three months. I got six months of sub-pay. No, I got six weeks of sub-pay. And after that, we got \$73 a week. I had a car. I had a wife. I had a ^{new} baby, new furniture, and we ^{had} just moved into an apartment.

PP: Did it make you physically ill as well as

PP: being obviously very upset?

Rajew: It didn't make me physically ill, but it made me more bitter.

PP: What about nowadays? Do you think that many of the people being laid off are getting bitter?

Rajew: Yes.

PP: Do people talk about it in the plant?

Rajew: No.

PP: But you hear about it in social gatherings?

Rajew: Indirectly.

PP: What do you see as the future of the auto industry? Particularly Gear and Axle here in Detroit. (airplane overhead) What do you see in the next few years?

Rajew: I'm kind of curious about that, myself. Because they have built the new Cadillac plant. We have installed some tooling that is unreal. There are two auto plants being built in Lake Orion.

PP: Two? I knew there was one, I didn't know there were two.

Rajew: I think there's two. And I want to see what happens when all this tooling starts producing money for General Motors. If General Motors is going to be willing to say, hey we're making money. When they lost money for the

Rajew: first time in thirty years, they came crying to us. I wish I could say that was the first time my family lost money in thirty years.

When they build this plant over here in Pole Town. One of the largest (460) *debate* that General Motors had, . . .

PP: You mean the one they're building now.

Rajew: Yes. Was, that they considered that would take seven years for that plant to pay for itself. General Motors has a policy of a plant pays for itself in five. So they blackmail Detroit. And they blackmail Lake Orion. And the Gear and Axle has blackmailed Hamtramck and Detroit, for tax concessions.

PP: Well, basically, General Motors wants tax concessions. (467)

Rajew: No, General Motors wants tax concessions, and they've got them.

PP: They want these tax concessions and yet they even publish in the papers these, to put it mildly, gigantic bonuses that the higher executives get. They're so high that it's almost unbelievable for anybody else in the United States to read about it.

Rajew: It is not only bonuses that are given to the executives. They have a convention

Rajew: once ^{every} ~~that~~ ^{which} year is paid for by the company. Sometimes this is a cruise trip to the Caribbean. Your executives do not buy their cars. Their cars are supplied by the company. Their fuel and their insurance is paid for by the company. Well, I would sure as hell love to have somebody pay my insurance and pay my gas bill.

PP: I wonder what's going to happen generally with the American car industry. Whether they're going to stop imports or whether they're just going to keep on going. Whether General Motors and the other companies are going to build smaller, more fuel efficient cars. Just what's going to happen. Have you any idea?

Rajew: General Motors is going to build smaller and more fuel efficient cars. They are tooling for that now. The only question in my mind is what happens when they put these tools to work?

PP: How do you mean what happens?

Rajew: Who gets the money.

PP: You mean from the sale of the cars?

Rajew: They're coming out with a new van.

PP: Oh, who's going to have the money to buy the cars. Is that what you mean?

Rajew: No. Who is going to share those profits.

PP: You mean to say because there's no profit-sharing right now with the workers.

Rajew: Yes, they have a stock-option program. But there is no profit-sharing program. The first time General Motors lost money in thirty years, they came crying to the American worker: Concessions. And now everybody's crying for Concessions.

PP: Well, maybe there'll be some new plans in the new year when the profits start rolling in. We'll just have to wait and see, I guess. Well, thank you very much indeed for talking with me.

End of Interview.