BOATIN INTERVIEW
September 1983
Tape #1

B: . . . been able to accumulate in the answers you make, just want me to fill in certain things, but you've got the floor.

Q: Okay. I first want you to tell me about how you came to work and what kind of work that you were involved with at Local 600, or at the Ford's plant before it was organized if you were there before.

B: Well, I was living in Pennsylvania with my father and he became sick, developed yellow jaundice and was not able to work, so I quit school and I went to work in a steel mill at night. And then when my father recovered from the sickness he no longer had a job to go to because he had been fired, so had my uncle, and they decided to come to Detroit. So--

Q: Were they fired for union activities?

B: Both of them, yes, as it happens. They tried to organize the cement workers. They were working in New Castle, Pennsylvania, for the Lehigh Valley Cement Company and the union was not organized. The AF of L stooge had come there. The charge was made that he ran away with the money but actually that was more suspicion than proof. But all the workers who were involved were given the opportunity of apologizing and explaining that they were mislead, and the ones who wouldn't bow were terminated. So I was left in charge of the family there--my aunt and children and so forth--and my father and uncle came here and two or three months later I came. I got a job in a foundry machine shop. It was a machine shop, the first step after the castings came out of the foundry, on the midnight shift. But before

getting the job the--well, the word that Ford Motor Company was going to introduce the 8-hour day and start people at $5 a day for 8 hours work.

Q: This is what year?

M: Well, this started during the depression years of 1920, '21 and '22. My father was an Italian anarchist and he received Italian papers which reproduced attacks that were made against Henry Ford I in which he was called an anarchist who was going to destroy and destablize the capitalist system by having produced this. So the fact that he was called an anarchist gained him access to the super leftists. The anarchists are supposed to be the super revolutionaries, you know to the left of everybody. So when I came to Detroit I came here to work for Mr. Ford in my childish appreciation of the fact that he was being given that kind of publicity, and that he was being attacked by the capitalists that made him a respectable man, an honorable man in my eyes. But the word not only got to New Castle, Pennsylvania, where I was living, it got all over the world that $5 for an 8-hour day was better than anybody else was paying. Nobody stopped to analyze the fact that an 8-hour day meant 24 hours continuous work and that Henry wasn't working in man hours because it would have been duplication. He would only work you 8 hours because 8 hours after that somebody else took over on the midnight shift and another crew took over after you on the afternoon shift. People came from all over so that the company was constructing--you have not been on Miller Road across from the Rouge plant?

Q: No, the closest I have been is to the Local 600.

B: Well, across the street from the plant are now parking lots. There were some older buildings, a school building which acted as the Employment Office for a time, but across the street from the plant all the way for the entire length of the plant parking lots were being constructed so that meant the erections of fences and so forth and so on. There were parking lots for the salaried workers and the office people and the others for the general workers. Those parking lots for that entire stretch of two miles were full of people who came there at twelve o'clock and one o'clock at night to wait for the Employment Office to open at eight o'clock in the morning. So I spent five or six weeks there meeting people from all over--Mexico and others you know. And I was ridiculed--I was still an intellectual. I had studied English in Italy and I had gone to school . . . .

Q: How far did you go in education?

B: Well, in Italy I went to what is known as the Gymnasium which is the next step, actually vocational after high school. But when I came here my father had always believed in education. We were refugees from Italy actually. We sailed on a--if you wonder about my native dialect, but that's not important. You're not writing names anyway, you're just writing general ideas.

Q: Stories.

B: So what I am saying is really not that important except you're trying to establish possibly, I don't know, the psychological position or the character of the people that went to work at Ford's. Well, I was not the ordinary guy. The first thing I did when we arrived at New Castle, Pennsylvania, from fascist Italy was to register in school. I

arrived here just before Christmas and when the school opened after the New Year's I went to school in the first grade. So I spent time there and climbed up to the sixth grade before I quit to go work nights in a steel mill. And I remember the teacher sending for me, telling me to visit her at her apartment--she lived nearby. She wanted to talk to me and I told her. I remember her saying, you--she was a little woman--asking me to that I should stay in school regardless of anything else and become a lawyer, become something. I was going to work in a steel mill that seemed . . . . Actually I reconstructed. I had some childish imagination. I was beginning to feel my oats I guess, by that time I was 15½. I thought maybe the teacher was interested in me as a, you know--she was 40 years old. She dressed in black. But one of the, Channel 56 interviewed me recently, made a film, I had to confess that I didn't even know the name of that school teacher. That name had never come back and I never communicated with her. But anyway I had a superior attitude, the attitude of a half-baked intellectual who thinks he knows more than the ordinary worker who may be inarticulate and so forth. Since I like to look back, as I said a couple of times, I looked back at those workers and had to admit publicly that they knew a hell of a lot more than I did, even though I had read a lot of books and they were barely able to sign their name. I remember one case in particular. A young Mexican who couldn't speak English--I knew more Spanish than he did even and I was just as bulky as I am now but maybe a little less so, but. As we met there at one o'clock every night and you have a tendency to try to get back to the same spot so you've got people

there that you know because you form a union right there so to speak. Somebody has to hold the place for a guy who goes out to get coffee or get peanuts or get a little, you know--so we were, you get to know.

Q: Those people accumulate every day in front of this--in those parking lots?

B: They came there to wait for the Employment Office to open and that went on for five or six weeks, an interminable period of time and this was July and August. (Laughter) And I remember this young Mexican trying to convince me that I should tell the company that I was 21 years old because otherwise I'm not going to get full pay. There was no work permit needed at that time, as you may know. But I said, I'm not going to lie to Mr. Ford, but inside of me I recognized that I was going to have to lie. I was going to have to tell him I'm at least 18 otherwise I won't get the job at all. That much concession I would make, so my name had become Mr. Dummy--Big Dummy rather from this young Mexican. How old you today, Big Dummy, you know. Well, the irony of it all is that we both wound up on the same job on the same shift in the same place.

Q: Uh-huh.

M: He was getting the top wage and I was getting only half of it. He was getting--after working there six or eight months I forget, I was getting $3.20 and he was getting $6.20.

Q: Oh boy.

B: So you learn, you learn very fast. It's just like, don't sit on the edge of the pond and dream about what a beautiful swimmer you're going to be. You've got to get in the water and you feel your body sinking

and you develop a lot of abilities and understanding that you didn't know you had. So that was a very--you see it wasn't enough that I had seen people killed in Italy by the fascists and so forth and my father himself had been in hiding. As a matter of fact, I got chronic malaria which I contracted, my father was hiding for about eight months in the swamps outside of Ravenna, and all I ever got was two boxes of pills, green pills, because I was worried that they may find malaria on me at the Immigration Office--you know that I wouldn't be admitted and that subsided it. It seemed to me that I got an injection on the arm later on, but this weather the way it's been the last couple of months it's just absolutely killed me.

Q: Oh boy.

B: Yeah. My head catches on fire so to speak. In any event, after eight months and I began to awaken, I no longer called Ford "Mr. Ford" and I called all the bosses son of a bitches and I got beaten up and shoved against machines. I remember it knocked my breath out. That was my first time I got discharged. In any event, under other names I got back. As a matter of fact, in 1940 I quit a very very good job to sneak myself back to help organize the union.

Q: What kind of work did you do? Did you do skilled work or unskilled?

B: Inside?

Q: Yes.

B: Well, the first job I had was completely unskilled, but when I got fired I continued to go to school. I went to the Detroit School of Trades and various others so that I had become semi-skilled. But while under the regime of Harry Bennett those who--he selected a

certain number of people and a lot of them, most of them were Italians from Southern Italy actually. I was not one of them so the skills that I acquired after I got fired the first time were of no value. The truth of the matter is that I got back briefly before the crash in 1929. I'm talking about being hired in August of 1925, getting fired eight or nine months later which took us into '26. I got back it seemed to me at the beginning of 1929 and then we all got laid off when the crash came. I didn't get back until 1937 under a third name. I got fired--well, actually they didn't fire me then, not immediately. I had a skilled job as a machine repairman and I was trying to get people signed up in the union and I talked to--I used to be able to--I'd talk Italian but I'd speak English too, and there were, what most people, I don't know what your, Stepan. Is that a--

Q: Stepan.

B: Is that a Slavish name?

Q: Yeah, my father is from Czechoslovakia, his family is.

B: Well, you may, I don't know that there are any exact figures but having been there I am one of the guys that has survived everything. If they want to talk to somebody who was here in 1932 about the Rivera murals and all of that I get called in and so forth. Even the guys that hate me at the UAW send people to me, see, because I know more and I was there longer than most of these people, see. The percentage of Slavs at the Rouge plant was considered numerically very high and I'm not saying that an exact count was ever made. But in the building of the union it was the Slavish names the voluntary organizers. I

mean in the dozens, you know. The other large group were the Italians. The smallest groups were the American-born whites.

Q: How about blacks?

B: Blacks there was only a few and they all worked in the foundry. Okay, so in 1937 on my third trip back I had lived on a farm and I came with a tool box. I sensed the union was involved in organizing. After doing a little consulting, the union thought, hey, you're made to order. They'll hire you right away. You got a tool box, you worked, you want to go into a machine repairman, and you come from the farm, you know you're just a hick. No problem, I went right in. I could have used my own name and there would have been no problem. But I signed up--I don't think I signed up any more than six or seven people and I got fired. Let me correct it. The last individual that I was talking to was an Italian and the starmen, that was these, the people that represented the company, they weren't foremen, they just meandered all over. They were the eyes of the company. I went to this guy and he comes to me later and says, I didn't know. I didn't know, I'm sorry. I understood the poor guy. Eventually he became a real good union guy. But from there on machine repair they took me over to the foundry, okay?

Q: Uh-huh.

B: They thought that--there everything was black. There were no ventilators and you couldn't tell a white person. There were very few white but you couldn't tell them because most of the blacks were working there. And they thought I would quit but I didn't and they fired me, see. So in 1940, it must have been September of 1940 but I

knew the union drive was going to start all over again. I quit my other job and through some connections that I had I was able to get back again under a fourth name. And then when the and I had become a volunteer organizer. By then the Company wasn't firing people any more because they had gotten their fingers burnt with the Labor Board and all that. I learned some lessons that I try to remember to this day. The CIO had assigned a fellow by the name of Mike Tildman(?)--all of a sudden his name escapes me. Under him worked a fellow by the name of Norman Thomas, Norman Smith, Norman Smith.

Q: Okay.

M: He was a disheveled, tobacco-chewing, overblown guy but with tremendous understanding of the way the mind of workers functioned. He was an anti-communist; he would give you a blood test. But they made a decision to take 50 credentials, 50 organizers card and hold them to give to favorite people so that when the day of distributing metals came they would all be the topnotch. Walter Reuther was the number one organizer and this guy, Mazey was number two organizer and all of that. I had no. 51 so I was actually the number one organizer you see, number one, because the 50 cards didn't count. They were in the drawer some place. So one day Norman Smith sends for me and I thought, geez, I'm going to get a bawling out. I had only had my voluntary organizer card about three or four days and I hadn't signed anybody up and I thought he's going to bawl the hell out of me for that so--

Q: Yeah.

B: He just kind of . . . . He said, were you talking to a certain guy, so-and-so, in the, he describes the place and so I said, oh yeah. I felt better already because he wasn't going to bawl me out.

Q: Yeah.

M: He said, did you tell that guy that when the union comes we're going to get him a quarter an hour back pay? I had to admit it. I had a sheepish expression on my face. He said, you did, didn't you? He says, and did he sign up? I had to admit that he didn't sign up. He said, if I ever hear something like this about you again you'll never get a card as a voluntary organizer. I've got something else to tell you. I want you to go back, forget everybody else and get a hold of that worker and tell him that when the union comes the union is going to get him a nickel back pay, and I'll make you a bet that that guy will sign up and, you know, it took me a couple of days but that's exactly what happened because the workers aren't, you know, you must remember now everybody else was organized and we in '37, '38, '39, '40, we hadn't built the union until the strike on April 1, 1941. The Ford workers knew about the intimidation tactics of the Ford Motor Company and they were aware of the fact that we hadn't organized the union and we weren't such brave guys. And in the other shops the union didn't get the workers 25¢ an hour back pay. They were glad to get the union contract signed up with certain minimal benefits, you know, get the right of representation--that was the number one thing. So that anybody who came along and told them such a farsical thing that you're going to get 25¢ an hour. That worker thought, uh-huh

better be careful. This guy is not a good union man. He's trying to trap me into something, you see?

Q: Uh-huh.

B: Because workers think in practical terms. That's the lesson I think I learned from Karl Marx. I had forgotten it then, that the workers can only see one step at a time. They see the practical things. They see the practical things and they've learned from bitter experience not to fall for phony baloney. You see 25¢ an hour back pay sounded like phony baloney. That worker joined. So that I had to struggle, as I grew, my understanding grew, by then, you know, in 1937 I was no kid any more. I had to forget the fact that I had worked as a language interpreter in Chicago for the 1933 World's Fair and that I had represented, been co-editor of an Italian paper here in the city of Detroit, that I had read a few books and that I had gone to school and some of the workers were barely able to sign their name, you know, they weren't articulate. That a worker who has worked at Ford's had had a boss standing over him continuously counting each piece and marking it down and being told that the guy on the other machine made more than you, the guys on the opposite shift make more than you, if you're not careful we're all going to get laid off and the other guys are going to take over your job, that those workers were practical workers. They were realistic, they were determined and strong, but their strength consisted of the fact that they could not be easily sucked into taking steps that seemed, you know. I saw the same workers in 1932 when Diego Rivera painted his famous murals at the

Detroit Art Museum [Detroit Institute of Arts] which you may not have seen yet.

Q: Yeah, I was over there.

B: You saw the murals?

Q: Is that the one by Wayne State?

B: Well, a little further on.

Q: Yeah, yeah, I went there.

B: Well, part of my education has consisted of trying to remember that worker who signed for a nickel but wouldn't sign for a quarter. And then in running into Diego Rivera. I was looking for a job at that time. I used to walk downtown. My family gave me two dimes. I used one to buy my lunch and one to come back home. I was supposed to be looking for work, but four days a week I spent with Diego in 1932. Diego came to Detroit when he was being charged with being a communist. He had been in the Soviet Union, actually he was critical of the Soviet Union so they began to call him an anti-communist. His complaint against the Soviet Union and we conversed in Italian all the time. He never stopped talking the whole time he worked. I mean he really.

Q: Yes.

B: Yeah, he continuously talked. He had been in Italy and so forth. His complaint against the Soviet Union was they had sent him to the Ural Mountains and it was too cold for him coming from a tropical country and he was never very healthy anyway. He had very thin legs, very bad, very, very--his eating habits must have been horrible. As a matter of fact, his wife constantly pestered him, she was up on the

balcony--she was a little woman. She'd be up on the balcony pestering him. Did you eat? You didn't eat. And his style of painting required that once the mixture is applied to the wall you've got to stay with it with coloring because the color penetrates, okay?

Q: Uh-huh.

B: So he couldn't stop. He just painted, painted paint, you know. Jabber and paint and well, I don't want to go into several other things that are--I'm in two of the murals on the west wall, on the north wall and on the south wall. What is important is not that I'm on the murals. I mean this was a practice that he had. He would use people. Like he's got blacks painted in there. He's got women painted in there. There were no women working at Ford's and yet he's got women walking the bridges. The most impressive thing that he had was not the scientific thing which was beyond me, but the faces and the muscles, the stern expressions of those workers that he painted and this was--it put fire in my veins, you know. Of course I have a regret that when he left us to go to New York he asked me to go with him and I didn't go. But the next important thing in relation to my learning process was that New York was the intellectual capital of the United States in 1932, '33. There had been unions there for many, many years mostly among clothing workers, but the fact that many Europeans resided in the New York area and would've had communist-seeking democracy or had fought in the Revolution of 1848 in Germany and against the Czar and so forth. But all of the left-wing papers, all of the labor papers came out of New York. They were published in New York. Those that attempted to publish in Chicago and Cleveland

and other places didn't succeed because New York was the fountain. Well, the murals that Rivera painted in New York were all torn down, none of them exist. The murals that Diego painted in Detroit are still there and there were those who said--and it appeared in the Detroit News and other things, you know there's a collection of clippings that--leave those guys on the wall because if you awaken them those powerful foreheads, those muscles, they're going to attack us and cut our throats. Let--the proverb is let the sleeping dogs lie. And later on and during the organizing period I used that example many times and I'd take workers there, you know, one or two at a time because there was such strength, such firmness, you know?

Q: Uh-huh.

B: Depicted on those walls. And for--I will be eternally grateful to the inspiration that those faces provided for me. Unfortunately, of course, because Diego had been accused of being a communist even when others said he's not a communist, he's anti-communist. He was a communist before he went to Russia but afterwards. Actually he was not an anti-communist. He was a revolutionary in his own way, you know flamboyant.

Q: Uh-huh.

B: In Mexico he organized the artists and painted murals that still exist, but because of the charge of anti-communism there were very few leaders in the union who paid much attention or used--it's a beautiful opportunity for, to do educational work, because those faces were the faces of the workers that we had failed to organize. When others got organized in '35, '36, '37, '38, '39, we didn't organize them.

Q: Do you have some insights as to why the other big companies got organized before Ford's?

B: Well, I suppose it would not be wrong to say they're just as, if I'm going to put myself on an even keel with other people, if I came to Detroit talking about Mr. Ford it's logical to assume that that's a kind of paternalism and that paternalism affected other people. Maybe one example will paint a picture for you. I was a driver. Some of the organizers knew certain spots where they could go and because they were elderly they could gain access more easily. I recall taking William McKie out in the country to visit some people. Usually, not usually but many times he wouldn't let me come in. He went in by himself, you know?

Q: Uh-huh.

B: Because his argument was he spoke with a strong Scotch brogue and he says they don't like to talk when there are too many people listening, you know. Later on I said to myself, McKie, do you think they'll suspect me of being a company stooge. I mean let me come in. And many times I went in depending on the circumstances--if he thought these workers were already progressive, you know liberal and so on. Well, we went out on-- [End of Side #1]

B: He walks towards the man and they confabbed a little bit and then they went into the kitchen and I'm just walking around. Nobody told me to sit down or stand up or nothing. I'm just watching. But from where I was standing there was a kind of an archway. From where I was standing the living room was to my left and through a little hallway I

could see a part of the bedroom. There was a picture of Henry Ford hanging over the bedstead in the bedroom and yet I didn't ask McKie. That was not--it would not have been correct for me to say, did he sign up? That's the wrong, you dont't ask questions like that. But I'm sure that he signed up because McKie had been there before and he wouldn't have gone back a second time if the guy hadn't given him a good reception. So what does that picture represent? The guy was trying to protect himself just as many innocent workers went and painted the boss's house. They brought wine to the boss. They made sausage and canned goods and, you know?

Q: Uh-huh.

B: You had to buy your job. You had to buy a car. You had to do all of these things. Those weren't--they were signs of desperation. There were even charges made that so-and-so let the boss sleep with his wife and that type of thing. But my own brother in 1933 paid $300 on a car in order to get a job. My little brother, I've got two brothers. My middle brother--I'm the oldest of the three. He worked a couple of weeks and then he got fired. See he had the car, he had paid the $300 and he owed additional money--I forget how much--but he had no job. But that was something that happened.

Q: Can you talk a little bit more about McKie and his influence in that early organizing period?

B: Well, Bill McKie was a known communist. He was one of the first people to help organize the union at Ford's under what was in 1927 a concentration point of the American Communist Party. They organized what they called the Auto Workers Union and put out an Auto Worker

Newspaper. I helped to distribute that paper but I played only a small role. McKie was one of the leaders along with Philip Raymond who was mentioned in that book who died recently in California, who ran for mayor in Detroit and so forth. He was beaten up by the police many times. McKie was elected an officer at the Local and refused to sign the Taft-Hartley Non-Communist Affidavit, and was therefore asked by the union to step down because the government put the union leaders in the position of clubbing their own brothers into line. This was the--it wasn't the government that told McKie, it was the union officer, you can't serve. But he always continued to serve on committees even though actually he was not the top officer in the Local. As a matter of fact, he never held top office. He was a trustee and served on the Executive Board which, I envied him. I envied him. Because of his age he didn't want to run for top office, he felt that he was more useful, as I've indicated to you, I envied him precisely because I thought that was the correct way. He being Anglo-Saxon, he was able to do things that other ethnic people could not do because the Anglo-Saxons were permitted privileges really and given considerations. I mean the Company would fire foreigners from Moscow, but wouldn't fire a guy who was from Scotland who had been in the Salvation Army in Scotland and played the drums and all of that. And he was an inspiration to many and I know of nobody, not even rabid anti-communists, whoever had a bad word to say about McKie because he was beyond suspicion, beyond reproach, and of course he didn't hide the fact that he was a Communist whereas others, the cowards, you know, wouldn't admit it. They played the Communist role, they were

fellow travelers, they were stooges for the Communists but there's always ways of trying to castigate and cast aspersions. So among other things McKie was admired for the fact that he was an open Communist, and he served as a teacher for many of the younger people.

Q: Who were some of the people that learned from him and later worked in the Local?

B: Well, I don't know whether if they were asked some of them that are still alive whether they would admit to it, but one of the officers, long-time officers of the Local, W. G. Grant, was both president and previous to that financial secretary. I'm trying to give out people that actually worked in the same department with McKie, who were closest to him, Tom Jelley, John Orr who would not admit it if he thought it was being publicized. John Orr refused to serve on a defense committee with, for the five of us who were indicted, who were on trial because he was advised to keep his skirts clean, you know. But he learned from Bill. Walter Dorosh, although much younger I'm sure learned something, although not as much as he could have. The present financial secretary of the Local, Bob King, was in the same department with McKie. The present chairman of the Tool and Die unit although much younger, Al Gardener, learned from McKie. Now those are specific cases of people that knew him, knew of McKie's activity prior to the union coming in and after the union came in, see. But generally even though prior to the union days and even after the union came in, you were not permitted to go, you know, running around the plant. You would be asked what you are doing here and with McKie he did not drive therefore it was a little more difficult for him to be

in access, whereas those of us that were top officers had passes. We could drive our car into the plant and so forth. That was a concession that Bennett made. He said, I'm going to give you the best union, better than anybody else, and put all of us on the Company payroll. You see this was part of the process of winning the fight and they succeeded pretty much with a lot of the people. But McKie knew and was in contact and had an influence on many others: James O'Rourke, myself, William J. Cooper, Tappes.

Q: What about Reuther?

B: Max Cinzori. You know in relation to Reuther, you know about his trip to the Soviet Union along with Victor?

Q: Yes, right.

B: You know also that he denied later on having written a letter from the Soviet Union which contained the salutation, Yours for a Soviet America. You know, however, that his wife was a socialist and I know that for a fact because I was a member of the same youth group with her where she was trying to organize the rest of them. She was always involved in arguments because some of the young people in the youth group started coming there for girls and having parties. And that he himself along with Victor played a role in the Socialist Party to differentiate themselves from them and Mazey, who considered himself a better communist than the Communists, and considered the Socialists traitors because of the role they had played in Hungary, Mazey is of Hungarian extraction, showing the Proletarian Party which in the Detroit area considered itself to the left of the Communist Party.

Q: What kind of theoretical orientation did that Proletarian Party have?

B: They argued Marxism, they argued that the unions don't go far enough because in the final analysis, as Karl Marx pointed out, in Value, Price and Profit, the boss only gives a worker out of his surplus profit just enough to keep the worker alive and strong enough so that he can come back, healthy so that he can come back to work tomorrow morning and produce some more super profit. And, therefore, preaching plain and simple unionism at least to the type of betrayal that the reformists of Europe, to the role that the reformists of Europe played in Germany where the German trade unions were not sufficiently imbued with the true socialist principles were just trade unions who lived by the economic gains the workers could make without thinking of building a better society and in Italy and so forth, but particularly Germany and the Scandinavian countries where socialism had been strong. And therefore they tried to preach the true socialism. The Communist Party was not a true revolutionary organization because it was subservient to Joe Stalin and all of that stuff . . . . They pretended that, the demands that the union was making were not advanced enough. Go measure their communism whether true Marxism. I just can tell you this that at one of the lectures of which Mazey was a speaker somebody asked him in 1937, '38, possibly '39, when the Chinese Eighth Route Army was forced to leave Southern China and escaped to Northern China to one of the isolated provinces, somebody asked Mazey who was on the platform delivering some kind of a speech what he thought of the Chinese Eighth Route Army and his statement was and I discussed this with Mazey since then and he said, I never said that. He said, well, you know, I said it as a joke. First he denied

it. He doesn't know anything about China anyway. He'll trade everything that he knows about China for a good cup of coffee and (. . .). But he only stayed in the Proletarian--I think he paid dues, he paid initiation or whatever it was, and lent his name for a couple of months and then he dropped out of that. The same route was followed by Walter, not so much Victor. In 1937 and '38 I debated Victor Reuther on the danger of fascism and the fact that the country was leaning to war, and he--we had an agreement that we weren't going to talk about the Soviet Union because then they're going to bring up the fact that I was there and I don't want to talk about that. And somebody is going to say that I left a woman there and I don't talk about that. The same charge had been made against his brother. So we talked. He felt that regardless of the fact that in the League of Nations nobody paid any attention to the denunciations against the fascists and he didn't exactly know what was going on in Loyalist Spain. He felt that fascism, Hitlerism represented a danger and that the United States capitalists by shipping scrap to Japan and doing all the other things they had the United States. I remember his criticism of Franklin Roosevelt because Franklin Roosevelt and Leon Bloom of France they had declared the Neutrality Act. He made the argument correctly so and we joined in that statement, even though the discussion was about the danger of war, you see?

Q: Uh-huh.

B: We both agreed that the attacks of the fascists in Spain were the beginning steps in what was to follow in 1939 and so it was just two years ahead of time. Well, we were both premature anti-fascists, but

he disagreed that the Neutrality Act only permits the Nazis and the fascists to annihilate or whatever term, he used a Spanish word. But I know it was true because it was already evident because by '38 the Loyalists in Spain were badly beaten, they were in retreat. Walter was busy for the remainder of his life or for the, not the last four or five years. My contention is that he would have become a very strong anti-Vietnam person. He would have played a very very dominant role later on because he always wanted, for opportunistic reasons or whatever, he always wanted to be out in the forefront. He had a sharp mind and he didn't hesitate to call the capitalist names, you know. He would call Wilson of General Motors who was then Secretary of Defense a jackass--all that type of stuff--but with the same vitriol he also denounced the communists you see. That is, he was more concerned about establishing the fact that he was not really a Socialist of that type. I'm not that kind of Socialist or I'm not a Socialist. I believe in the free enterprise system and the 3% formula and the other things that came out. That doesn't mean that Reuther had not learned something, would absorb some of the ideology of Bill McKie because it was Bill McKie, who brought the Reuther brothers, based on the fact that they had been in the Soviet Union into the labor movement. Not only that, history, you know, it's not easy to prove it but Walter Reuther was not working in industry. They got him a job and then they set up Local 174. One of the things that McKie was sorry about was that he made the recommendation at the Cleveland convention for Walter Reuther to be an official delegate and to be the spokesman of Local 174 and so forth. He said, you know, if he had

been able to predict the future he would, ? it was a mistake. That doesn't mean that when Bill McKie died that Walter Reuther came to the funeral, no. The International did not come to the funeral. When Walter Reuther died we went to the funeral. I even shed a tear or two I don't mind admitting, but by that time McKie had been dead several years. By that time I could see he knew Walter Reuther, because Walter Reuther had some personal animosities. He was very bitter at times, very bitter, non-talkative or stern. And his stooges had reported that there was no way of accounting for my time. I was confronted by a group of Reuther boys. Here I was a member of the Executive Board, I was a president. I was adored by a lot of people. All I had to do was put my name on a ticket. I always had problems, making sure that people that ran. I had to run for convention delegate at every goddamn convention because that way the ticket would get in and that would be all and you had to have a caucus. I didn't believe in caucuses and that was--

Q: You didn't believe in caucuses. Can you explain that?

B: I didn't believe in narrow caucuses for the strict and narrow purpose of winning an election. I attended caucus meetings and I was a supporter of caucuses but the caucuses had to be based on, built around a program. But I had other ideas that were not acceptable to others and they're not acceptable today. I don't, I never did believe in a due's checkoff, nor did I believe in paying committeemen to attend union meetings.

Q: Can you explain your objection to the checkoff?

B: It's based on personal experience. It's also based on some--well, what I think is an analytical view which is kind of fixed in my mind, that the same capitalists who made love to Tito in Yugoslavia and who are making love to Communist China now will use all types of means to undermine and to weaken for the purpose of destroying the leadership and the organization which that leadership represents. The bragging statement that Harry Bennett made at the time that the contract was signed in 1941 adds strength to my belief. I held it previously but it was reinforced. The committeemen or stewards, whichever name you prefer, in General Motors where they had had a union for four, five, six years only had 2½ hours a day to work on grievances. But the committeemen at Ford's had all day. And every union representative in Local 600 in the entire Ford system was placed on the Company payroll as a result of the negotiations that occurred after the strike of April 1, 1941. And Bennett said, I'll give you a better union. He said, you've got a good union at General Motors, Chrysler, Studebaker, you'll see what you get here. And it's been goddamn difficult to convince any union representative that the union should pay the union representatives, and that the union representative who donates his services to the union does it because he's got unionism in his guts and not because he's getting the wages. And when you are on the Company payroll the Company has all kinds of ways of playing up to you: you come in on Saturday for time and a half; you work more than 8 hours during the day you get time and a half; you on Sunday you get double time; you work on holidays you get triple time. And the union, they helped to destroy the real fiber of the union at Ford's. Weren't

it for the fact that capitalism is in a state of decline, American capitalism particularly--the smoke industries and so forth which caused some of these guys with, oh gee, we've got it made. You were a union officer for five years, you got yours and now I'm going to get mine. This is the attitude. They found that membership was declining and the workers were knocking on the door, what about me? I'm laid off. You know you're still working. You were even in the plant on Sunday, you're working seven days. You're an union officer, but me I haven't worked for seven months. You know I've got a family, blah, blah, blah. So the class struggle, the pressure generated by capitalism itself caused some of these guys to learn their lesson as they're going to have to learn their lesson now. The new leadership as a result of the 30 and out thing thought, oh god, we've got it made. We don't have the problems that the early guys had. We get the cost of living, we get this, we get that. You know all of these things, and they found that it's not paradise so they have to learn all over again. But for a period of time, a period of time and even today there are certain favorites that because they're on the company payroll, because they can come in and get time and a half and double time and triple time and so forth and go in and out of the plant anytime they want, don't have to ring any timecard. They know that's important to their foreman even though it's in writing. You've got to report to your supervisor. You've got to ring your time card. Some of these guys don't go in the plant at all and I don't want to disillusion you, you're a young person and I admire what you're trying

to do, but some degenerative influences as a result of the manipulation of the capitalists.

Q: And checkoff is another example of this thing.

B: The checkoff is another one and in Italy, for instance, there is no checkoff. You go to a worker and you convince him. You have to go to his house and you're called to account. You're given a certain number of membership cards to fill. You're given an assignment and the leadership of your union wants to know how many did you sign up. And you have what they call the registration of the members so that--

Q: On a monthly basis or is this just when they're organizing?

B: On a periodic basis. But the dues are collected I think, let me see, it's quarterly, quarterly dues. They have quarterly stamps. I have the books someplace with some of the stamps. The argument that the checkoff leaves the union representative free time to devote to the service of the workers in a society where, you know, a Columbo can catch all the drug dealers and all the murderers in one night all together. The TV is full of detectives but in reality they don't catch anybody or hardly anybody. They don't catch the big guys. It takes a long time, it takes a whole life to develop--when I think of the opportunities that I had as a kid when I saw my father stabbed in 1914 and yet here I am in front of the Ford plant calling Ford Mr. Ford. And I've seen the weaknesses of people that should know better. And without casting any aspersions when the administrator was appointed over the Local, remember that?

Q: Yeah.

B: There was a period, you followed that up. I'm speaking too much I recognize you're going to run out of tape on me.

Q: I have more.

H: We'd better get back to questions and not so much speech making. The UnAmerican Activities Committee came here for the first time in 1952. They had been investigating every one of my neighbors. I lived here since '53, but prior to that I lived not far from here. My neighbors there and my neighbors here, and all were questioned by Army G2, by the FBI, by the Red Squad. And you can get discouraged because no matter how hard they try to cover up or blot out the names of the informants once in a while a name sneaks through. They use one guy against another, you see?

Q: Yeah.

B: And it comes through. You have to, you know. The UnAmerican Activities Committee was brought here at the instigation of the ACTU, the Association of Catholic Trade Unionists, and the Reuther administration, and it was to be a thing operated in sequence. You get your picture in the paper, you're called a bunch of names, and the photos that they usually get when you've got your mouth open and you look like an arrogant son of a bitch.

Q: Yeah.

B: And then the union comes in and says, we don't care about your politics, we're not concerned about that, but the good name of the union and the rights of those workers. They voted for you it is true, but they didn't realize what they realize now that all this negative publicity is hurting the union. We have to go contract negotiation,

we have a strike to settle, we have this or that. They appointed an adminstrator and it's an arbitrary decision. You're not asked anything. In fact, the UnAmerican Activities Committee at least put you on the stand and give you a right to talk. The International Executive Board of the UAW and--I don't want you ever to think that I'm castigating the principle of unionism at all or that I'm really bitter against these guys.

BOATIN INTERVIEW
September 1983
TAPE 2, Side A

B: . . . so an administrator was appointed and those people whom the International had not been able to defeat, no matter what they attempted to do, were all removed. And other people loved by the _____ were appointed in their place so that in a subsequent election their favorites, of course, would have the advantage of, you know, of being known and certainly being able to win. But then the election would not be held for months, and months, and months, so actually it became a stall.

Q: How many people in all were removed besides those five that were publicized?

B: Five.

Q: Five remained, lower level? People that were ----

B: No. A group were--my point is that we weren't even dignified for the right of a hearing. Instead they had a trial committee. Charges were written, the Local employed a staff of attorneys of the Steelworkers and other places. And some from the International staff because the International, the UAW International. And they prepared these lengthy, you know. Which called for the setting up of a trial committee. And the charges were: people would be either members of or subservient to the Communist Party. _____?_____. So, so you are confronted with a situation where some of the people that you have promoted and pushed and tried to influence and encouraged, campaigned for, under pressure from the International. Tappes was already at the International, okay. We had to raise money, we had to print

literature, we had to, you know, have a defense commmittee. You don't want to necessarily answer fire with fire. But there is a tendency to at least want to respond. And the best response is not to leave a person who is already, you know, suspended and powerless, left all by himself. You've got to have the reaction of people, to show that the membership is behind him. And one of the instrumentalities is the Defense Committee. We had very few volunteers, okay? Because let's face it--this is already 1952, the Korean War, the beginnings of McCarthyism. And you had Churchill talking about the Iron Curtain. Reuther hollering "Communism"; Truman hollering "Communism." Walter Reuther certainly hollering "Communism" and all that other stuff. So you can understand the process of intimidation. It's a means of silencing people. The campaign was going on now by Reagan--he's not going to do a damn thing. He's campaigning for reelection. He's campaigning really to defend but to protect the continuation of the capitalist system. I am not angry when, the more he hollers against the communists, the stronger the communists are going to be. Because workers are going to learn--those that don't read any papers and don't have any patience for speeches, they turn TV off every time they hear somebody talking, they only want to listen to music and song, are eventually going to conclude, as they did in Italy--Mussolini used to say, when he called an assembly of the fascists, they had to buy their own uniform, you know, the punitive squads were given guns, and expense money and cars and so forth. But the ordinary Joe Blow, they had to--they said: Yeah, Il Duce, what you say is right but look--I have no work, myfamily is sick. You're right, my son, you're right.

My father was born in the same hilltop village where Mussolini was born. And my father went back quite aways with Mussolini. Described Mussolini in a way that when he stood up before the fascists he would say: You're right, my son, _____?_____. But look, the Bolsheviks, the communist danger. Well he started this in 1919, 1920, '21 and forth, and a lot of people--and the Communist Party was outlawed. The Communist leaders were either in jail or dead. So that they put two and two together in their own minds. It was a simple process of an analogy that was drawn by joining up. The son of a bitch is no good, Il Duce. He can Il Duce all he wants. He's no god-damned good. If he doesn't like the communists, the communists must be all right. So the Communist Party came out of the partisan war ten times stronger than they had been when they went in, even though its leadership was jailed and assassinated. Stabbed in the back even during the partisans. So, but in any event though--you know, I'm interjecting now. Some of the people that you've talked to and others that you are going to talk to testified. Went to Reuther and beat his chest: Look, yes it's true I went to a meeting with him. Guys like Romano, you know. My wife beat Romano up, he testified against me. But it was the conditions that were imposed on these people that made it impossible for them to do otherwise. You're an International representative, you know, getting good money, a secure job--but you carry out orders. There was no Loyalty Affidavit that they had to sign like a guy joining the FBI. But the process of intimidation takes place. And bureaucracy is dangerous whether it is in the labor movement or in Poland. You noticed what they did there, showed lack

of consultation with the working class. I'd like to talk to you about Poland sometime because I am quite a student and I have a lot of facts that I can document. But all I care to say about it is that if you are not in touch with the workers, even if you have a bill of goods that you want to sell and you know that it is absolutely necessary that that program be put across. Sacrifices or no sacrifices, you've got the obligation to sell your viewpoint to the workers, to the people. And if you don't do that, you are going to get into trouble eventually because they are going to get you. The workers themselves are going to rebel. So you know, loquaciousness isn't going to do it. It's got to be-- just like that worker, he signed up when I told him the union was going to get him a nickel. But the other thing was B.S. because he couldn't see it. And he was right. Because they hadn't received 25¢ backpay in the place where the unions were five years already. And he was smart enough to know, what the hell is he talking about. They didn't do there, and he said they are going to do it here. You know. So I tried to figure what was going through his mind. And Dave Moore wound up later on on the International staff. Dave Moore was one of the five. Okay? I was told that I could go on the International staff but by then I had left the plant because I had a bleeding stomach and so forth. John Orr who had played it safe went on the International staff. And others. But they openly said to me: There's a place for you here, you know. And, incidentally, they feel subservient. You have to be subservient, you have to be obedient, you have to be one of the boys. They continue that policy to this day. The senior citizens chapters are dominated by the International

Executive Board. The guy who becomes the president, the secretary and so forth. He has to be blessed with the support of the International. They create the chapter, he serves for eight or nine months, and they come and make speeches about what a great job he is doing, what sacrifices he is making. So they maintain control and I'm not saying that that is necessarily bad. What I am saying is, a certain amount of bureaucracy you have to have. A certain amount of order, you have to have. What I am saying, and I don't want to repeat what the Proletarian Party used to say, is that the main thing that counts in the long-run is program. You know. And the bulwark of the union has been one of acquiescence. The most conservative labor leader in Europe is a flaming communist compared with the most advanced, most radical union leader here. And it is unfortunate because the mother and father and nurse maid of international capitalism and fascism is the United States today. You may not agree with me but the socialist leadership that was elected in Greece and in France and in Spain is in a sense forced to kowtow, to renege on some of the promises and programs on which they were elected. Waiting for the day when maybe they'll break loose. But I understand it. I understand France sending--this is far afield--I understand France sending troops to Chad, but I also understand why the Soviet Union says in a nuclear arms agreement in Europe the weapons that France has--never mind that there is a socialist president--the arms have to be counted in the pact. Because even if Mitterand continues as president, he's going to have to follow--there was no revolution in France. He has to follow a nationalistic policy which permits him to brag and gets reelected.

Even in the name of some sacred socialist principles to which he subscribes. Chad has uranium. And France knows that. So they play their role and they are able to rock the boat and stick their chest out by going through the motions. There are a couple of communists in Mitterand's cabinet in France. Privately they may have said something but publicly there is no evidence that they have said anything. Because, you know, you get so you play a certain role. Am I going to condemn Mitterand, no, I try to understand. The two prime ministers, or three, whatever it is that serve and all others that serve in the French cabinet, no. I'm not going to condemn Gonzalez in Spain or Papendrof in Greece any more than I condemn John Orr because he advised others not to serve on the committee. Not only wouldn't he serve but he advised others not to serve. So he did--well you have to understand those things, you see. And what they said about--I don't know, you may not have found it nice to tell me what he might have said about the 1957 appearance before the Internal Security Committee in Washington. He may have said certain things that you are holding back and out of decency, or consideration for my feelings. But there were those who said that I spilled the beans. I spilled my guts, I did this and I did that. But the very fact that he inferred that there was a danger of importation. Ah.

Q: So, what did happen?

B: In Washington?

Q: Yeah. He didn't tell me that much. He just said he expected me to find out ---

B: I said that I had been a member of the Communist Party and that I was not now a member of the Communist Party. And it wasn't the case they were taking the Fifth. That question wasn't raised. Okay? I am not a member of the Communist Party. Okay. I had been a member of the Communist Party. I wasn't asked to renege. The whole thing was over in a couple of minutes. Because those guys are bureaucrats. There was a senator from Nebraska. A Republican senator from Nebraska as an established ____?____. He's still in the Senate, I believe. Do you know the names of the two senators from Nebraska?

Q: No.

B: He was the chairing the committee. Chairing the subcommittee of the subcommittee actually. And they had a stooge there who had a tablet, a yellow pad. He kept folding sheets back and forth. What about this, what about that? Like ah--in 1949, I think that was one of the questions, did you help organize a strike in the Rouge plant, against so-called speed-up? I said yes, I think so. That was followed by a couple of questions and then you see they--it was a trap actually. They were leading me up to it once I admitted--they wanted to know if there were communists involved. And I said, yes, of course. Communists are every place, you know. I think I quoted the Manifesto. That the communist spector is all over and when it is not there, the enemies of communisim invent it. So they are the ones that have to be scared(?). And that's it. I admitted a former membership. I also said that I disagreed with some of the things that are being done in the name of the Soviet government or Soviet socialism, or even communism. I might have said that, but I understood that some of--

there were reasons for some of these things. It was a ten-minute proposition. But, I had gone--well Mazey had sent me to an attorney. Mazey wanted to make sure that I didn't throw mud on the UAW. So he gave me the name of Joe Rolfe, a leading Civil Rights attorney who is now, I believe, president of the Americans for Democrat--Democratic Action, ADA. I saw his picture on the Washington Parade. And he turned me over to a younger attorney who was more interested in the $500 that he said he needed for his troubles. And that was the end of that. Now I suppose if I had admitted present membership, current membership, they would have said--well, you know.

Q: Yeah.

B: They might have asked me if I knew Gus Hall. I don't even remember. Or Earl Browder. But I think one question was to do with whether I agreed with Gus Hall or Earl Browder because at that time--not Hall, Foster. Because there was a division of opinion about the position that Browder took. And I might have said that I was with Browder. Because I still do even though he is dead now. Maybe you don't know what that fight was about.

Q: About his deviation during the war?

B: Well they called it--no, not deviation during the war. Deviation was afterwards. The position was that what went on during the war was one thing, but that created false illusions about the possibility of cooperation between the nations of socialism and the nations of capitalism. Captialism is taking its glove off and therefore any illusions that you--you can't carry over any illusions of cooperation to the present period. This is a period of struggle. Well, actually

as happens, Browder was stubborn, Foster was stubborn. They were both right and they were both wrong. But they were wrong primarily in the fact that while rank-and-file Communists like me, I'm talking about the '46 period, you see. Because that started '46, '47 when the Daily Worker devoted half of its front page. (DO YOU WANT SOME MORE WATER?)

Q: OK.

B: To the danger of Browderism. In the meantime what was going on in America, what was going on in Michigan, the Reutherites were taking advantage of that internal fight to throw guys that they didn't like out of the union. And the Communist Party was so weakened as a result of that that they weren't able, the Communist people weren't able to pay attention to the problems of the workers. And, consequently, the corporation was then able to start their process of destroying the unions and the process of ----

Q: They'd take all of these that had administratorship and HUAC and the senate committee all together ruined the influence or diminished the influence of the left in the local?

B: Well in a sense I was making that point now in a more general way. Okay. Following the administrator, charges were preferred. In the meantime months are passing, you see. The communist danger has been squashed because they thought they--new blood. It's like putting up a sign, new management has taken over here. And on the basis of the fact that the General Council, the Local had a General Council. The General Council is going to take the matter up. And the administrator, Jack Conway, confessed to being a socialist, a Catholic capitalist-socialist. He was the administrator. He is carrying out

the decision of the International Executive Board. It's just like Barbie saying I only took orders. You know. What he was really saying is you can't talk. There was nothing you and I can talk about. The International Executive Board decided on the basis of certain facts that they had. And the General Council only meets once a month. So as time passes, because the workers resented, a lot of workers went down to the Local. People wrote letters which were never published, you know. But where, the leadership felt that the membership resented the autocratic method in which this had been done. So they then decided to prefer charges and that called for setting up a Trial Committee and--you'll have your opportunity. You'll have your day in court, you know. They were backtracking at that point because they had you out and they had themselves in. The Trial Committee, in order to conserve finances, so that there would be no lost time paid, the Trial Committee met at night. And there you are, eleven or twelve o'clock at night, all ___?___ you know. And when you have defendants, you have a Trial Committee, and you have a Defense Committee, and you have lawyers, the damn thing never starts on time. So it goes on week, after week, after week, after week. At the beginning workers would come down there but workers have got to go to work the next morning. Or some of them work afternoons or work at midnight. Attendance fell off and they felt that, you know, we got it. They may have had support on the plant originally but you could see that that support is disappearing. So at a given point they brought in high-powered CIO representatives. The Director of the United Steel Workers from Chicago, Germano, came. And his--he took up an entire evening.

Because of the exceptional circumstances that existed in Chicago and in the Steelworkers, President Phillip Murray, found it necessary to do this and that and so forth. And now the union is able to go ahead and negotiate and so forth and so on. And without attacking us directly, he was trying to show that the type of rejuvenated climate that had been created in Chicago could be recreated here, and the workers and everybody would benefit from it. So, under that type of thing who is going to argue with a representative of Phillip Murray? You know. And the Red-baiting nationally continued. The Trial Committee at a given point said there is too much time wasted and they set a time limit and they had the accusing parties that made all of the god-damned speeches but when it came--the defense . . . is last, right? So we had, I don't know, a couple of evenings and workers were angry and they would holler, those who were there. The Trial Committee found us guilty. The Trial Committee had been created by the General Council hence it had to report to the following meeting of the General Council, and the General Council turned down the verdict of the Trial Committee. Okay? But the ballgame had been played out. Four, five, six months had passed. Their boys were in office. We were removed. And the fact that the General Council, which is the highest body in the Local, had turned down the verdict of the Trial Committee, didn't do anything for democracy because we weren't reinstated. As a matter of fact, it took from 1972--it took five years to get me reinstated. Okay?

Q: It's a long time.

B: In the meantime, of course, the Senate Internal Security Committee was brought into the picture and we heard rumors around. So in 1957, two days before an election for top offices that were being held at the Local, the press corp of the whole United States, I'm telling you, there were, you know, the election campaigns with a full slate of candidates in the Local and every one of the units, and people running for various committee positions and so forth. There were a hell of a lot of people out there campaigning.

Q: Yes.

B: People got lost because there were so many god-damned newspaper people and cameras and so forth. So it had been arranged that I would be served, incidentally I was the only one served. Well, a subpoena right there, outside, in front, on the Local steps, you know, with all of the papers churning and the cameras churning and so forth. And because that made the papers on the final day of the election, it got into the evening paper, it was on the radio and so forth. It was part of the game to defeat leftwingers.

Q: What happened in that election? What was the outcome of that?

B: (Chuckling) A very funny thing happened. In 1931 when I spent a year in Chicago and I took some classes at Northwestern University, I had ulterior motives for going there because the teacher--the classes were on theology and the teacher was on loan from Smith College. He was one of the leaders of the Italian Communist Party but he was in exile, okay. He was a refugee. But because his father was Chief of Staff of the Italian Army under King Victor Emmanuel, he had access to Smith College _____?_____. So he's teaching a class on theology and I

took all of the classes with him. It seems to me it was during the summer really, but I'm not sure. Well, in 1943--I've been talking about 1931, okay?

Q: Yeah.

B: In 1943, as actually you know, the fascist's government of Italy wa overthrown and by 1947 you had a new government. The guerrillas, the partisans, had won all over Italy, and the Italian Communist Party was a member of the government. And this man who had taught theology at Smith and at Northwestern was a senator of the Communist Party. The convention, the first convention or second convention, or whatever convention it was of the Italian Communist Party was held in Rome and a card, an oversized card, with a giant red flag with a hammer and sickle is mailed to me by the senator. Senator Umbraggio(?) Dolini(?). Since he knew I was an officer of the union, he apparently had followed me all of these years, you know. But the secretary of the president of the Local was in charge of the distribution of the mail so my postcard, a postcard addressed to me winds up in the hands of the anti-communists.

Q: How did that happen?

B: Huh?

Q: How did that happen? You know what? We found that postcard in the Walter Reuther files over there.

B: Well I never got it back.

Q: How did they get it?

B: I told you the secretary, the girl, the stenographer, was in charge of distributing the mail and everybody had a slot. Okay.

Q: Yeah.

B: Well to make a long story short, during the election campaign, in addition to this summons--as a matter of fact, the day before, the election it seems to me was on a Tuesday or a Wedneday. It was a two-day or three-day election, and on Monday when I reported in the shop, as a matter of fact, I got a phone call--they said come in right away. They've got things on you. We had negotiated with the company in the construction of nice dining rooms with long formica tables, you know, and so forth ---

END OF SIDE A, TAPE No. 2

BEGINNING OF SIDE B, Tape No. 2

B: . . . gum, yeah. They must have spent all Friday, Saturday, Sunday and weekends, you know putting . . . the company, and knowing that, you're up for distribution of unauthorized literature. You can get time off. You can see what the role the company is playing. So if there had been any intention on the part of the workers to defeat me, all those goddamned red flags. The workers argued differently than a poltical person would argue. Where did they get all the money for this? (LAUGHTER) And they didn't know of anybody getting penalized, you see. So they figured oh they've got money, you know. If the company don't like him, he must be all right. Just like when Mussolini denounced the Communists and Bolsheviks. He doesn't like the Bolsheviks, they must be ok. Strange things. So I was reelected. No problem. As a matter of fact, except for once or twice when I declined to stand for election and ran for a lesser position because I

believed in coalition work--take a rightwinger and put him in the position, as long as he supports the union program. I was the program. I was part of the--I was the literary agent. I published a newspaper and I did all the writing. I prepared the slate cards. So program was number one. You don't work for these guys because they are beautiful, you work for them because they stand for this and this and this. So I had commitments that every other election I was never defeated for anything. Never. And one of the questions, it seems to me, that was asked of me by the Senate Committee when I went to Washington was whether I had plans. Now that Foster--it seems to me it was placed, you know, and I don't want to be disrespectful or--the guy who was doing the questioning, I had run across his work in the Detroit area preparatory to this thing, you see. He had apparently been around asking a lot of questions. And it wasn't until I got to Washington that I saw that it was a little stinking, red-baiting, Jewish man of about sixty-five, who should not have been playing that kind of a role, you know. But he had suffered anti-communist phobia, or whatever, you see. Only a person who was raised himself in the radical movement, and the radical movement was founded amongst the Jews, could ask me that kind of question. And the question was, and the phraseology that he used. I mean I always try in general company to stay away from radical jargon, you know. But it is difficult and he was sold on what he was going to ask me on the question of Browder and Foster. They are slaughtering one another and even though you say you are not a member of the Communist Party, how do we know that you are not going to turn up taking their places, you know, something like

that. You see he was gaining prestige or I'd say he was acting smart in front of the Committee there, you know. But there was that type of thing: the Red Squad in Detroit. Unbeknownst to me, asked me that same question. If I wasn't going to be the leader of the Communist Party in the state of Michigan, see. We had quite a Red Squad here in Michigan. It was put out of action after Coleman Young became mayor.

Q: I don't know anything about that. Can you say a general thing on the Red Squad.

B: Well the Police Department of the city of Detroit had a Red Squad, okay. And the state of Michigan had a Red Squad. So between the two of them, in addition to the UnAmerican Activities Committee and the Senate Internal, and the Army Intelligence, they--I was building this house in '53. A petition was circulated that this was going to be a two-family and two-families are not allowed, you know. You build a two-family, how do we know what kind of people are going to move in. So they circulated a petition and got some names. I had to have a hearing. I appeared before the City Council, Zoning Board of Appeals I think it was, and I asked--I don't want to tell you about that--I just want to tell you that I asked for the list. I asked to see the list and one of the guys says, well we can't do that, we can't do that. There are people in here who maybe don't like your politics. I was pretty close to confessing that I might go into--a communist that is going to hunt for the skins and the scalps of these guys, you know. But the fact of the matter is, that petitions like that are not available. They are confidential. But the answer that he gave me, you see, indicated that he had some particular reasoning of his own

for guarding the secrecy of the list. That did not prevent, incidentally, Carl Stellato--he won the election I was running against his brother, and I had just been reinstated and Stellato had been in office for four-five years and he was the guy that had brought charges against me. The JCs of the city of Dearborn had declared him the most eligible young man of that year and so forth. In the meantime, things in the plant were getting rough. We had gone from eighty thousand--we had lost one-third of the membership or more. And I don't know whether Brother Tappes or Brother Orr have told you how many members we have now in Local 600.

Q: Not very many.

B: Fifteen thousand. What was I saying? (SOUND FLICKERING ON AND OFF.) I know, I know. I got the point.

Q: I got it going now. Okay.

B: Well, can I ask you first before--I don't want to make a long speech.

Q: Okay.

B: What political literature have you found that involves me at the archives? Charges against me? Leaflets with my picture.

Q: Now I didn't go through the Walter Reuther files. The professor I am working with, he went through it yesterday. And he told me some of the things that he found. Let's see, he didn't mention anything about finding your pamphlets. He found letters and correspondence and things. I was at the Local yesterday, or two days ago, and I found some files that had your name on it during the '49 strike and all of the activities you are doing with speed-up and letters about what the

men on the picket lines were thinking and what their position on the strike was and all that.

B: Well in the same 1957 election where they put up--they plastered the red flag all over, two tabloids came out, identical size, identical color, print, same type captions. One said that I was a Communist agent, the other one that I was an F.B.I. agent. Now there have been times that I got reports, if you search long enough, you find them, but I am sure that they--_____?_____ from one of the gals that was keeping me informed would be no longer there, that that stuff is not available to the public. But the fight continued and this literature was put out not--I was running against Stellato's brother. I ran against Tony Stellato in one of the units. But this literature was put out by Carl Stellato, the President of the Local. And because he had already been in office several years--the trial, and the charges, and the name calling, and all of that. And he was involved. He came to Washington also just to celebrate when I appeared before the Senate Internal Committee. Predicting all types of things, and, you know, and my wife will tell you that she heard a discussion between them in which they were talking about options that they had of possible action they could take against me. And one of them was getting me deported. My wife could tell you that. She heard that discussion. She was working as a secretary of the Local for a long time. And the feeling was that since I represented one of the machining units and there is not that much change in manpower in machining operations as there is in assembly. On an assembly line you're putting on these screws or something where there is a great

turnover. And in the machining units they a had strong--basically I had worked in many units there for a long time. They felt that I, Stellato felt that I might be a potential candidate against him. So the fight continued. But, unfortunately, you have to answer these attacks and in the meantime the company was giving the workers hell and they were moving out the operations--to Cleveland, to Lima, Ohio, and to other places. And of course you know that the International justified all of that. Pretended that it wasn't happening but if it was happening, it doesn't make any difference because no matter where they go, we'll go and sign them up, you see. So we wound up with a diminished membership some of which is attributable, of course, to the bad state of the economy and the technological changes that have occurred. But that reduction in the membership and the weakening of the union is directly attributable to the lack of aggressiveness. To the failure of the leadership to understand that in a struggle with corporations, you've got to fight every day, every hour, every minute, every second, because their promises don't mean anything. They have no country, they have no god, they have no flag, they have no heart. They not only moved factories to other states and the company justified it. But other American workers have the right to earn good wages also. Also, it makes it easier for us to distribute and sale our product. And they not only move to other republics of this hemisphere, they move wherever they thought they could have an economic advantage. And they charged that the wages of American workers made the companies do that. They have no recourse but to run away from high wages. This is only partly true. The regrettable

part, of course, is that the policy of cooperation with corporations or of going along with certain things that the corporations were doing and pretending that those things weren't going to damage the workers, that that--or that the location of plants was not something that the union could argue about because after all that's in the contract. The location of plants and the type of products that these plants manufacture is according to contract the sole prerogative of the company. And by the union never challenging this concept, it's weakened and made very, very difficult the whole fight that has been undertaken in various places with congressmen and senators introducing pieces of legislation and with state legislators undertaking a successful fight, but being stopped halfway because the labor movement itself wasn't helping them.

Q: What about the ----

B: That the people, not just the workers, but the communities in which the plants are located, that made these companies wealthy. They have certain vested rights also. And that the company should not have the sole prerogative to move. They've got to give notice and so forth and so on. But this fight is not being won any place in the United States precisely because of this weakness that allowed a tradeoff--we'll give you three percent annual improvement increasing wages but the prerogatives, the right of management and so forth. And this is carried to a ridiculous extreme where even the pension money of the workers is managed by the company.

Q: Well what about the lawsuit that Local 600 brought against Ford in relation to decentralization?

B: Well, when you have signed a document and it is shown that was a perfunctory act and they knew in advance that it was motivated by sheer politics. It was Stellato that brought the charge in. All that they needed to do was to point out that Stellato had been chairman of the negotiation committee, or had been a member of that same negotiating committee, and that he had signed his name and that most of the meetings, where the discussions had taken place, reported back on contract negotiations over the years, had taken place at Local 600 precisely because that Local 600 was the biggest. And what was contained in those reports? What points has Stellato signed his name to? What provisions did the negotiating committee accept and recommend to the membership for ratification? So it wasn't anything that was put over anybody. They consciously recommended to the workers that the company shall retain the sole right about the location and kind of things that the plants do. And they can do that wherever . . . . The only responsibility of the company is that you work for the company and they have to pay you. Over anything else the union has nothing to say. So it was thrown out because of lack of merit.

Q: Were there any attempts to change the contract the next time it was negotiated?

B: There's never been any attempt. As there has been no attempt to face the issue of overtime. You've got thousands of workers out of the same immediate operation that are laid off and the ones that are working are working six days a week, ten hours a day. That's been going on. Not only that but where here and there, one of the union

leaders appealed: the union, do something. By God, do something. Half of my workers are laid off. Do something. Nobody came to his assistance. So that the poor guy was left up there dangling high and dry because he didn't gain the support of the guys that were outside because after a while they don't even participate in union activity, they don't get the union paper and most locals don't print anything anyway. And the ones that were in the plant working overtime, they, without a lack of budgeting in the family they were spending everything. Buy two TV sets, buy two cars, and so forth. So any union leader who stepped out and challenged this question of overtime, wound up by losing at both ends of the deal. The most that the union has ever done was to say, the __?__ provision included, it says: no forced overtime.

Q: Did you ever offer any suggestions on the decentralization plans, or how to work against it in the union?

B: Well I've offered suggestions up until today. Continuously offer suggestions. I do some ghostwriting, even now. When the Nazis opened up a headquarters on Vernor which you crossed over here, Rinaldi the president of the Local, who was Chief of Staff at the Local when I was put on charges and suspended, and so forth, he appointed me chairman of the committee, you know. With full use of the Local. Come into a meeting day and night, telephone, addressograph, postage machine, everything. Accepts my suggestions. He's getting ready to leave. He's disgusted. He could have gone to the International and the International would have, get rid of him. But his position was that he wasn't going to be a galoppino(?), he's Italian. Galloppino, a

galloping little dog for the International. He was going to stay here. The company has continued to move operations, okay. Yes, I've gone so far as to suggest a strike. A strike.

Q: Was this back then in the '50s or recently that you talking about?

B: Back then and even recently in relation to the Steelworkers even though that is a very touchy thing. Because there is no unity there. Because the rest of the workers considered the Steelworkers privileged characters and many of them company boys, you know. They were favored. How did he get over to the steel mill? He made a thousand dollars a week and now he wants to come back and bump me off. And there is--you see it is a difficult problem. Once you create very rigid lines of demarcations, you have eliminated the principle of working class solidarity. And when you negotiate during a process of decentalization, you are forever on the defensive because the number of jobs that you have is reduced. It says that the top leadership does not accept the principle of challenging the company regardless of the fact that there is a provision in the contract that gives the company the right to move. If you don't challenge them there, what are you left with? To negotiate all types of palliatives. One of them is: areawide senority. Okay. Areawide is a good principle to follow because we started out with classification senority. You had five drill press operators and the company only wants four. The youngest drill press operator is gone because he's only got classification senority. So we negotiated department senority and we negotiated plantwide senority, you know. Or unitwide. We took it on a gradual basis. Up to a given point, that's good. But when the

economy is in a state of recession, all of this areawide business comes back to smack you one. I think we discussed that on the telephone. Now if a thousand people are eliminated from the steel division, these privileged characters, who don't have the sympathetic support of the rank and file guy who is still on that goddamned drill press on the assembly line, the lowest paid job, no hope of ever advancing. These guys who went from this operation from the steel mill have the right as they are removed to bump back into the classification from which they left. All they need to do is have more senority than the guy that was left behind. Okay? So you have internal war. A thousand people being moved out of steel can actually cause ten thousand bumps so it throws the industry into a state of confusion. This guy bumps out of there, there, right down the line, you see. Then you wind up in the labor pool and out.

Q: When did this process start? This bumping.

B: Well this bumping--the areawide senority was negotiated in an effort to combat the decentralization. The company made certain concessions first and they said--all right, we need a new foundry in this area and we want to locate it along the freeway. So located that it can supply castings for the Rouge, and castings for Cleveland, and castings for Lima. Okay?

Q: Um-hum.

B: Well then the union said, all right, let's have plantwide by seniority then. We want to maintain contact with those workers that you are going to put into that foundry. This was important. Beause previous to that in the old foundry, the workers were mostly black. Well it

had happened previously that when a new plant was constructed, whites lived in that area and would say, hey I live there. Let me go there. But when the new foundry was constructed, you didn't have whites being eager to go there. See? So the blacks didn't argue since we are being forced to go there because our old foundry is going to be discontinued, we want to have the privilege of being able to return. But we can't return to the old foundry because the old foundry is going to be turn down. So we want to be able to bump in at any job in the Rouge plant for which we qualify. So then you had a qualify, you had to negotiate a qualifying period of five days, ten days, fifteen days or thirty days, you see. Well this new foundry towards Ohio on 75 ---

Q: When was it built?

B: The Michigan Casting Center, '64, '65--maybe '68. In '68. But he says no, the god-damned thing is new. Only five, six years old. It was closed down. So you have these workers bumping back. Right? and for them it was really rough. You get an opportunity, go to Ohio or go here, go there, you know. And then they can't live in that area. That's all white. So from the east side of Detroit, or from Detroit, blacks would have to be driving thirty-forty miles to run out there. It creates all types of god-damned problems. But at least they had the right to bump back and that gave them some consolation. But in the meantime, the working force at the Rouge plant had shrunk. So bumping back, for a guy had always worked in the foundry shoveling sand with a mask was using a chipper because castings always come out

with sharp points and so forth. You would chip them off and so forth so they can roll down the conveyer.

Q: They aren't organized at Local 600, they have their own local.

B: Well that's what is closed down. That casting--Michigan Casting Center was closed down. That new foundry was closed down.

Q: But at the time that they were ---

B: They were part of Local 600. Part of Local 600. And the union went ahead--the Credit Union opened up an office out there, and so forth. And the whole thing went smackeroo. So the only answer is that--then you have to identify with the communities. And that's the other weakness. The UAW has a CAP committee. The Committee on Political Action but it never involves any of the neighborhoods. Never meets in the neighborhoods. It doesn't involve community people. So that when the Dodge plant was closed down the people who suffered the most were not the Dodge workers because they had bumping rights because the Dodge plant was the oldest. So they just bumped up some younger Chrysler worker. But it was the small business people who had a little store or a bar or something, you see. There was an opportunity to win them over, to build a coalition, you see. Well, very few--some of them participated but not too many. My wife feels that I may be talking too much.

A: Yes, honey. Maybe you should let her ask you some questions.

Q: No, all of this is very helpful. I've got basic questions but it is good when people also offer their own . . . .

A: Problem then because he can vocalize from now till ---

B: She loves me but she thinks I'm--another . . . longwinded.

A: Yes you are. You're terribly longwinded. And I've heard this so many times, it's not any--all my life, that after awhile, I could repeat it verbatim. Would you care for some more ----

Q: No thanks.

B: Why don't we have a glass of water, Italian water. I've jotted down a list of points covering the period 1927 possibly to 1955. I think it is important to take note and to remember that even though workers in other plants were organized earlier than the workers at Ford's a lot of educational work and a lot of militant activity was carried on in connection with Ford workers going back to prior to the 1929 economic crash. There was a certain feeling of paternalism in the families and in the minds and in the homes of the Ford workers. The papers helped but that should not be misunderstood because workers were playing safe because there spies all around. So if you saw the picture of Henry Ford hanging where the Madonna and Child might be otherwise, that worker was a thinking individual who was merely trying to protect his job security because he knew how dangerous it was to do otherwise. But the activity of the Auto Workers Union in '26 and '27 and '28, I don't want to mention names but names could be mentioned of people who got slugged, got beaten up, got arrested distributing literature on Miller Road to the Ford Workers ----

BOATIN INTERVIEW
September 1983
Tape #3

B: The expression on their eyes indicated that buddy, they were with you and they admired you for your courage. There were many obstacles that were overcome. The Bennett Spy and Gangster Department, the Dearborn Police carried on a process of intimidation. If you distributed leaflets on Miller Road you were arrested. Some of us went in and out of jail almost every other week. Finally this ordinance was challenged, not just by the pressure of the workers but by the understanding of some of the judges that that ordinance against the distribution of literature should be taken off the books and it was so taken. Now the point that has to be remembered and this was all preparatory to the building of the union at Ford's is that even though the workers in the Rouge plant and when we say Rouge plant we're talking about the bastion of the Ford Motor Company, these workers were of a foreign ethnic composition--that was the work force. And there were many attempts by Father Coughlin and others to divide these workers along religious lines and along color lines, along nationality lines. It didn't work because ultimately the best organizers of the union were of ethnic, foreign ethnic origin. In fact, when the CIO sent its organizer here to begin the main organizing drive in 1940 he was of Italian extraction, recognizing precisely that the workers in the Ford plant were of ethnic extraction and many of the rank-and-file organizers were Polish, Ukranian, Italian, generally ethnic. This shows the influence and the courage and the understanding both at the top and at the bottom. The organizing drive picked up steam and

leading black and ethnic priests and pastors were won over to help in spite of the fact that the papers carried on a campaign that CIO meant Communist International Organization. That didn't scare Reverend Hill. It didn't scare Monsigneur Jarocky(?) and it didn't scare others. Paul Robeson denounced as a red was welcomed by the union organizing committee along with the NAACP to help bring about the organizing drive. But there were--after the strike in 1941 which was 100 percent successful and even prior to the union contract being negotiated there was much discussion as to what the constitution of the union should have and what the contract should contain. For instance, that's no longer discussed now, but already there were those who were against the introduction of the umpire system into the grievance procedure. Not that they had any particular dislike for the umpire as an individual, but they felt that the fight should not be put on paper, that the fight should take place where the workers could see it and there was much discussion about that. There was, of course, one of the main things that everybody was concerned about, now that the union was coming was doing something about the speed up. I say this because this was part of the educational campaign that had preceded and been made an intrinsic part of the organizing drive, and after the union strike was successful nobody had any delusions that just by holding a strike all problems could be solved. They felt that the fight had to be carried on on a continuing basis. For the first time we had blacks and women in large numbers. Suffice it to point out that in 1942 Miller Road in front of the Employment Office was blockaded by a giant picket line because the Company was refusing to

hire women. Upgrading the blacks out of the foundry where they had always worked took place. Opening up of skilled classifications was one of the discussions of the committees working on Fair Employment Practices and the General Council had occasion to debate the Smith Act, the persecution of Progressives, and some of the legislation that reactionary senators from Taft to Smith to others were pushing in the Congress because they wanted to weaken the labor movement. Yes, there were vast discussions with sirens and long speeches and debates on the question of whether the second front should be opened, and there were leaders of the various points of view invited to address the General Council. The General Council was the top legislative body of the Local and everybody, the nation over recognized the key role that it was playing inside of the UAW. At a later period Local 600 participated vigorously in the fight to have the Farm Equipment Workers affiliate with the UAW. Certain conservative elements were playing politics with this issue and what they were really doing in essence was keeping the workers divided. But the slogan had been that if you work for living you belong in this union and, therefore, the Progressives led a victorious fight for a Farm Equipment ____?____ being brought in. In 1948 Local 600 was the key place, played a key role in the formation of the Progressive Party and most of the officers at the Local attended the founding convention in Lansing, Michigan, for the formation of the State Progressive Party. In 1949 a very vigorous paralyzing strike that lasted three months against speed up. Though(?) the demand was made by many against the Company decentralization, even though the leadership unfortunately felt that

no matter where the workers went they would be signed up. But again on the power of the Local 600 and its reputation and influence, candidates from all corners of the county and of the state would come to Local 600 to ask for an endorsement of their candidacies and in many communities, Melvindale and others, the entire city council was composed of UAW or labor members of one form or another. The April 1941 strike was 100% effective but the organizing slogan as we've noted earlier was that if you work for a living you belong to this union and that was the key to success that should be remembered forever and ever in all organizing drives. Local 600 as the biggest in the UAW and in the USA lived up to its size by staging giant rallies. Parking space was at a premium. If you attended a meeting of Local 600 you had to park a mile away. Signs that prohibited parking on this street or that street had to be taken down to the Police Department because there were so many cars there that the police couldn't keep up with everybody. Something that a lot of people have forgotten: the first election for offices was held in a vacant forty-acre field with booths rented or loaned from the City Election Commission of Detroit, Dearborn, Melvindale, Wyandotte and other communities. That's how gigantic the thing was. This was at the corner of Ford Road and Wyoming on the city lines of Detroit and Dearborn. On all issues, especially on the first contract, Local 600 wanted to go beyond all other existing contracts. There was strong feeling that grievances first should be negotiated directly instead of getting sucked into paper grievances requiring months and taking the fight out of the hands of workers. Many voiced their strong opinions

and many resolutions were passed against the United States being involved in the war in Korea. Many saw the war in Korea as the beginning step to create and develop reaction against labor at home and they were right. In spite of the resistance against the coming of the UnAmerican Activities Committee there were many who succumbed even though the majority did not. The majority of workers did not succumb to red baiting of that period. Many pointed out that the red baiting goal was actually an attempt to weaken labor and they were again correct. Some leaders removed from elective office on grounds of red influence or affiliation with internal fight permitting Ford Motor Company unfortunately, while the union was busy with these senseless disputes, the Company began decentralizing of the plant. We went down in the number of Ford workers and the number was so reduced from 80,000 to 1983 15,000. Now this is clearly understood by many who think back over the years and see that this was a result, yes, in some sense of the bad economy but primarily this is a result of not enough aggressive militancy. And the main thing is that while it may not be apparent an important lesson has been learned that this weakening process would not have occurred and the old-timers particularly, the senior citizens who meet every month in the auditorium, the main auditorium is always jammed, with again the old parking problem. A minimum of 1000 to 1500 senior citizens meet monthly and thus represent tremendous power. They're the ones that built the union and while unfortunately their number and their experience and figuring their old age is not being utilized, they represent a tremendous force which in elections at least have carried the balance of power for many

a candidate and are a powerful influence yet still on the new leadership that has taken over the Local.

Q: That's a nice list of accomplishments. Can I ask you a little bit about the grievances and about the differences in the way that they would be pursued by people on the left vs. people on the right, grievances at the first stage in the shop?

B: The basic difference between the average run-of-the-mill committeeman who didn't believe in militancy, was very clear. The Progressives felt that the best way to settle the grievance victoriously is to debate it out there where the workers could see the committemen arguing with the supervisor in front of the workers so they'd get a feeling, that their own sentiments would be strengthened, their own education would be enhanced. What about the opposition? The best example I can give you is of a union committeeman who had totally misunderstood and had no respect for the power of the workers. A worker had had an argument with his supervisor about his production. The committeeman was sent for. The committeeman went up to the worker and he said, now look, buddy, I am your mouthpiece. You want to have anything said, you say it through me. Putting that poor worker in such a lowdown position that even the supervisor felt sorry for that worker. I witnessed this myself--believe it or not--and this reduced the militancy of the workers. The workers were made to feel as the introduction of the 3% cost annual improvement factor, arbitrarily negotiated by the committee, without considering that the workers might have fought for more. The union traded that away and trading away any of the rights of the workers, putting grievances on paper

instead of negotating them out in the open had a tendency to operate, to make the workers feel that they have no role to play in the union.

Q: Do you think that that's characteristic of most of the right-wing committeemen, to be much less militant?

B: Well, generally speaking, the umpire system in the process of putting grievances on paper creates such a prolonged process that sometimes it takes a whole year before the grievance is actually settled. That worker can be dead or can have been fired: Instead of the committeeman arguing vigorously in the presence of the worker that by strengthening the worker so that the next time a dispute arises that worker will feel--have a stronger backbone, that worker becomes disgusted because he remembers filing a grievance six or eight months before and he's been told for months and months and months that the grievance will go to the umpire. The grievance will go to the umpire, and usually the umpire takes a middle-of-the-road course. His salary is paid half by the Company and half by the union and he plays the role of a mediator, and the umpire system is really an attempt to siphon off the resentment of the worker and deaden the militancy of the union. I should have made that speech in Cadillac Square. I've made these speeches many times. I relived some of these minutes. You forgive me, all right?

Q: Oh yes, it's great.

B: Annie.

AB: Yes, honey.

B: She forgives me.

Q: Can you give me an idea of which buildings can be characterized as left-leaning vs. right-leaning? I know there's a lot of buildings back in the Forties, 25 or something.

B: You're talking actually--you're not speaking present tense?

Q: No, no, back in the Forties.

B: I really have to say that during that early period up until red baiting became a divisive force where unfortunately you had President Truman, President Reuther, President Murray, Churchill and this whole collection of leaders talking as though the main danger to the lives of people was not the loss of jobs or speed up or cuts in pay, injuries on the job, but it was some element known as communism. The danger was not here, the danger was on the other side of the world, and this directed the attention of the workers away from their problems to other things and the problems of the workers--the fight against decentralization and so forth--was neglected. I say that up to 1950 with the Korean War and all the red baiting and patriotic jingoism that occurred, every worker and every leader in the Ford Rouge plant was a militant, aggressive, forward-looking liberal or progressive, and the dead weight of red baiting created such a division and such suspicion and it played into the hands of the Company so successfully that from that day on, things were beginning to go to hell in a basket. 1950 was a decisive year and it became--the labor movement became so weak at the plant level that the Company was able to decentralize, to move the Rouge plant down to the point whereas I've said, it went from 80,000 to near 15,000 now. And it's better not to blame it all on the bad economy. It was this internal

division and weakening of the union that made it possible for the Company to do whatever they wanted. A communist leader was sent to jail, union leaders remained silent for fear of suffering a similar fate, and the rest of the union went to sleep, and it is sleeping today.

Q: Is there anything in the wings?

B: The workers learned that the period of red baiting and internal division which permitted the Ford Motor Company to decentralize the Ford Rouge plant taught everybody a bitter lesson, and everybody looks back upon those days as days that were tragic for the worker and therefore that mistake should not be repeated again. And Local 600 in its present form and some other form and the workers in it will rise to fight militantly again.

Q: Back in the Forties and before the attacks by the House UnAmerican Activities Committee and so on, can you give me an estimate on how many workers you would consider to be--to take a class struggle or a class conscious orientation? Could you just take a guess?

B: Well, I can say that during the war period there was no hesitation on the part of any worker to wear a button which had four flags on it: the U.S. flag, the British flag, the French flag, and the Soviet flag with the hammer and sickle. And once when a professor who had--under whom some of us had taken lessons--mailed a postcard from the Communist Party convention in Rome, Italy, and some reactionaries took that postcard and blew it up into giant stickers and plastered the entire Rouge plant, the people who were branded as being Reds won in the election in 1957, that red branding did not confuse the workers.

The process of disintegration will continue and as some of the older workers retired and some of the conservative leaders were promoted by the International with the help of the Company, it made it easier for the Company to get away with some of its two-faced activity. But I would have to repeat that up until 1950 and for many workers even up to today there is a growing and a deeper understanding of the conniving of corporations as exemplified by what has happened in the Rouge plant. The Rouge plant sticks out as example number one of the need for militancy. When you talk to some of the old-timers they refer to the period, the organizing period, the period prior to the organizing and the 10 years following the organization of the union at Ford's as glorious days that should make every worker in the Ford plant proud.

BOATIN INTERVIEW
August 1984
Tape 1, Side A

(A = Ann)

Q: . . . is it about the Rolling Mill and why the people in the Rolling Mill tended to be more right wing.

B: I understand. (Is this on?) I never worked in the Rolling Mill. I can only comment on the basis of my own experiences and talking to the other workers and being present sometime during negotiating sessions where I could see. I recall also that the, from the very beginning, that this is something, a document, that you may be able to get issued by the American Chamber of Commerce--the United States Chamber of Commerce. It's a pocketsized booklet that said "That when three union representatives come in to negotiate with you, and one of them is a troublemaker, agitator, don't give him anything. The other two are good, American workers, you give them something," you see. And that's the way the Ford Motor Company reacted. From the very beginning, there was a tendency on the part of the Company to try to buy off union representatives. Buy off some workers. To divide the workers by showing favoritism to some and to completely neglect and, you know, weeks off and months off for others. Harry Bennett who was negotiated, who represented the Company in the first labor relations contract, actually tried to buy off the entire union. From top to bottom. He had been successful from '37 to '41 because he not only stopped the organizing drive of the Ford Motor Company but actually had Homer Martin who became President of the entire UAW on the payroll and who was being paid secretly by the Chief of Police of Detroit,

Pickert. You know. He was full of confidence. So in 1941 he tried the same scheme only at that point his name was marked and he was under pressure from the Company and he thought that if he could win some of the union representatives over to his side, he might be able to use the union to put pressure on the Company in the name of industrial peace. So that he could save his own job. The union representative of General Motors only had two hours in which to negotiate grievances on a day-to-day basis. The rest of the time they had to work. Harry Bennett said no. We'll give you a full-time committee. You know, that was bribe and an attempt to weaken the union. Also, to ingratiate himself. In the Rolling Mill, whereas in no other steel operation, you know the Rolling Mill is a steel operation, in no other steel plant in the country did they have, did they pay overtime if you worked on Saturday and Sunday, as part of the swing-shift, seven-day operation. But Bennett gave the Rolling Mill overtime. Even in violation of the law. The law did not provide--provides overtime only after 40 hours. This was an example and then later on when they lost the overtime, the bonus was brought in and there was a constant campaign of maneuvering and pressure and calling here and demands there for certain workers to be able to transfer over to the Rolling Mill. Because they were getting in addition to their pay, they were getting bonuses, of some four-five hundred dollars. They were making more on a steel bonus than they were making in regular wages. And while I had the sad experience of being interviewed by people, who only used--they wanted to measure the militancy of the workers in the Rouge plant by going to the Company

and getting a sheet from them as to the number of wildcat strikes that had occurred. And they thought that that would determine where the militants were. The truth of the matter is that they came out with the Rolling Mill having more wildcat strikes than anybody else did. Those strikes were never, never, never related to a justifiable, acceptable union cause. It was strictly on the basis of this bonus. And that's how the Company played one section of workers against another. That's why, incidentally, about a year and a half ago the Company came along and said we are going to close down the steel mill unless the steel mill workers take a wage cut. Not one single worker in the rest of the Rouge plant was willing to move one finger to help the Rolling Mill. Because they said, you sons of a bitches, you know.

Q: Would you say that situation is similar to the aircraft unit during the early '40s during World War II?

B Well there again, I was President of the Motor Division, okay. There's very little damn difference between a motor and an engine. It's one and the same thing, see. But the Company creates an Engine Division and wants to keep it away from me. So everytime I walked in, I said now look, this guy is getting laid off. He's a good machine setup man. He's a good guy. You know, even the Company will benefit. Transfer him, no. They would always transfer their own favorites. So they had a right-wing setup at the very outset and they hoped that by the time--that the Company had plans to discontinue the Motor Building eventually because it was one of the oldest buildings. So that by the time I got over there, because I had seniority rights, I'd be a dead dodo because they'd have the right-wing deeply entrenched. Because

the Company had plans. They had machines that been paid for by the United States Defense Plant Corporation. The building had been built by the government. They knew that a guy like me, I'd burn their fanny on a million different things, including taking over all of the plant without paying for. Taking over all those machines. And all of that.

Q: So, when they built the Engine Plant, how big of a plant was it at first?

B: Ah, gee, that's a question I've never had to answer. It was about 700' in width by probably 2000' in length.

Q: Did it employ the same approximate number that the Motor Building did, or a lot less?

B: They had longer assembly--pardon me, they had longer automated lines that required less workers, okay. So that in due time they had less workers there.

Q: Would the same output or more?

B: More, usually it was more. The Company would not have automated if they weren't getting more out of us.

Q: So what did they finally do? Did they finally get rid of the Motor Building all together?

B: They tore down the building, yes. Well what happened of course--in the Motor Building we used to make transmissions. That was transferred to Cincinnati, to Lima, Ohio, and various parts of the country. The Company, the Ford Motor Company built a engine plant in Lima, they built one in Cincinnati. Some of the operations went to a smaller plant in Fostoria, Ohio, as I recall. And it was a process of--they were decentralizing at the same time they were automating,

okay. They made money hand over fist because once they killed the plant off, they got that as a tax benefit and then the machines that--the new machines--that they had to install in the new plant, they were able to amortize rapidly instead of amortizing them over the life of the building, they had rapid depreciation. Particularly later on when Eisenhower was President, that was one of the tax changes that were made.

Q: Well you were, eventually or at one point, elected in the Engine Plant.

B: Oh yes, I could still be president there if--I could never have been defeated. They never defeated me for anything. But we arrived at the point where, you know, you can just take so much. Going to conventions became a joke because only the Reutherites spoke and everything was cut and dried, you know. Also, the--I had made the point many times that an active left-winger was caught in a three-way fight, and to the average worker who was not politically mature, who was not class conscious, you got so that you became just another one of the politicans that just wanted to hold a job, you know. And also, since you were being attacked by politicians in the Local, and by politicans in the International, by the UnAmerican Activities Committee, by the Senate Internal Security Committee, you were suspended from office even though you were elected. You know the workers said Jesus Christ, if they can do that to Paul, what the hell are they going to do to me? They are going to castrate me, all that type of stuff, you know. So you can understand. But the fact is that when you have the company and your own international union, your own

local union and the government all working together, the average worker has no chance. And so, the left wing was, the communist party leader was being sent to jail, the papers had headlines every day. Some of the damnest things. In 1952, 3 o'clock in the morning you get a phone call. Paul, you're rich, you're rich, you're rich! Maybe I've bored you with this before but I don't know.

Q: I don't remember this.

B: Well the UnAmerican Activities Committee had been in town and my picture appeared on the front-page of the Detroit Times. We've got two papers, we had three at the time.

Q: This is the more right wing.

B: Huh? Hearst.

Q: Isn't the Times more right wing?

B: A Hearst paper it was. And the Vice President of one of the Locals, Local 400 of Highland Park. His name was Carl . . . what was his name?

Q: Bolton? B o l t o n.

B: B o l t o n, you see. So, he had been arrested--charged with having participated in a bank robbery and so forth. And he probably was that type of guy because later on we discovered a lot of shady things about him. But here I had to appear before an UnAmerican Activities Committee and my picture is on the front-page of the paper and I am identified as Carl Bolton. You know, bank robber and extorter. (LAUGHTER) Okay. But you see to the average workers, they say if there is smoke there has got to be something. There's got to be fire, you know.

Q: We were talking the Engine plant just a minute ago. There's one election that Percy Llewellyn ran against Fred Soretti. I'm not sure which year that was. Who was the left-wing candidate? Or were they both running on Progressive tickets, or how did that work?

A: That was in the Engine plant?

B: You might help me if you give me the year.

A: Paul, that was when Soretti was running against Llewellyn, and then you supported Soretti later on.

B: During the early days?

A: It was after the '52, '53.

B: While I was on suspension?

A: Yes. Something like that. I remember that year anyway. He was in the Motor Building, yeah.

A: The Motor Building.

Q: Yeah, you supported Soretti in '52. I think I found a leaflet. And Llewellyn, I don't know who--if the right-wing candidate ran or not. I had assumed that Soretti was the left-wing candidate but I don't have any indication of that.

B: You found a leaflet in which I endorse Soretti?

Q: I think so.

A: Yes, you did Paul.

B: Well let's see. Well there was a period--as a matter of fact, not a period but for several years when I was unhappy with Percy Llewellyn just as I had been unhappy with some of the things I failed to do. Percy was elected President of the Local and he fought like hell.

Q: Early on?

B: Early on. And he hadn't been--and at the same time that we were campaigning for him to run his--in the Local--he was negotiating for a place in the International. And that was where--we were very unhappy with that. And he did--he was doing all of that without our knowledge, incidentally, okay. And our position was that we need to consolidate our forces at the Ford Plant because a lot of us were not taken in Bennett's promises and so forth. And I am not talking about the early period--'52 was, you know.

Q: So what ---

B: And Percy remained close to the International for a long time. They put him on the Political Action Committee, they put him on the Fair Practices Committee, he put him here, they put him there. And later on when Reuther took over lock, stock and barrel, of course, he came back to work in the plant. But he was always on the defensive and it was very difficult--we always felt that he entertained the hope of some day going away. And you know, Soretti was a much younger guy.

Q: Was he affiliated with the Progressive Caucus?

B: Soretti?

Q: Yes.

B: He was a young guy who I was trying to bring along. I was trying to develop some younger elements, you know, and Soretti was one of them. He's just retired as a matter of fact, last year.

A: But he ended up in the staff, on Reuther's staff.

B: But he was not a political person. But he was a good--I considered him a good, solid union guy. And I had hopes for him. You know, we have to remember, as I was telling you this humorous incident about

the guy that was riding the streetcar. Most people do not realize that the people that built the union at Ford's were all of foreign extraction. You know, it's a sad thing but it's true about the American working class. That it's still compared to--you know, the most conservative, European worker is a great class conscious theoretician compared with the most advanced union worker. I mean the American unions are, you know--so that when it came to running people for office, getting people elected, the guys who hadn't done a damn thing to build the unions, as a matter of fact, that helped to beat some of us up, but because their names are Smith and Jones and Brown and so forth, you know, they were vocal, they could speak, and they had the right to move around, which the average worker didn't, you know. And the company was playing favorites at the very beginning so we were saddled with a bunch of these guys. In the Motor Building, I was asked the question one time: How come your slate lost for the election for one of the conventions? I know what happened. I built the slate where I think eight out of the ten candidates were rank and file workers, which were a state CIO convention. And on the other side, the powerhorses that the Reutherites had were the same guys that they ran all of the time because they weren't workers' conscious so they beat us naturally because they were all politicans. And three of them--and incidentally, I wasn't that alert at that time. It was only years later that it came to me, they were all from, the Protestants, of Northern Ireland.

Q: Oh really?

B: They didn't mind working with the ACTU and with anybody else that could be part of their machine. But privately, between them, they ate up a Catholic for breakfast every morning. Where were the Roman, the Pope, you know? You'd think they were running against the Pope and not running against the Company. And Soretti was one of these young fellows that I thought I'd bring along. And there were others, black and white. Soretti being Italian, you know, even though he spoke very little Italian he spoke with a sort of southern dialect. We carried on and I had confidence in him.

Q: You mentioned ACTU a minute ago. How much influence do you think they had in the Rouge plant? Did they have ---

B: They had a permanent standing functioning caucus.

Q: Inside the right-wing caucus?

B: Well it was part of the Reuther machine. The Association of Catholic Trade Unionists, you know. I think we have to go back. When the CIO was organized in the state of Michigan, the officers were not elected, they were appointed. Okay. But later you have an election. Who were they? They were ACTU guys. The newspapers didn't, you know, they figured these were ignorant workers in a production line. They don't know but we'll get the Newspaper Guild. Well who the hell was the head of the Newspaper Guild? ACTU. You know, you had this type of stuff. So that the state CIO was controlled and they would agree perhaps to have somebody like a fellow by the name of Gus Schultz from the glassworkers. We had only about ten people in the entire state of Michigan that belonged to the union, you see. But he was propelled up to the top leadership and he pretended to be a Socialist and he made,

you know, semi-radical speeches, sometimes very inflammatory, and a good-looking man. But he was part of the Reuther machine. So you had the Association of Catholic Trade Unionists and the Klan and the Reutherites, all of them working together as a machine with communism as the danger and the Company was never criticized.

Q: So did Reuther align with them after he made his turn to the right? They were already pretty well ---

B: They were part of his machine from the very beginning. Yeah sure. They stayed with him. They had no place to go, so to speak. Just like the ultraconservatives of the Republican Party. Reagan says they have no place to go. They are going--you know.

Q: So was the ACTU a strong force in the Transportation unit?

B: The most active president there, a fellow by the name of Cassidy, was an ACTU and he was a personable guy. Flamming red hair, you know. Nice smile. He was friendly. Got appointed to all of the Constitution Committees, Membership Committees, Credentials Committee, the International and the State. They operated, you know, like a bureaucracy. We think of the bureaucracy that existed in the Teamsters Union. It isn't the same. The UAW is still one of the better unions. There's no great deal of money paid under the table. It's not like Presser who gets half a million dollars, salaries and wages and expenses. But if in addition to your pension you can get a hundred dollars a week or a hundred and fifty dollars a week for expenses, which are not deductible. Not reportable, that is. And your fighting for a sacred cause. And this is the way they've done it.

Q: So in the Transportation Unit they had both railroad workers and truck drivers, right?

B: Yeah.

Q: Which would you say were more predominant in that building? Did they have more truck drivers or more railroad ---?

B: Well, I don't know. Between the brakemen and the--it might have been a fifty-fifty proposition. I'm sorry. I really can't answer that question.

Q: Can you think of any reasons why they would be more supportive of an ACTU representative than some of the workers in the other units? That they kept on electing Cassidy?

B: The answer goes back to Harry Bennett again. The Maintenance unit, you were talking about John Spagnol, you had three plant-wide units: Tool and Die, Transportation, and Maintenance. Okay? Originally, Transportation was the only unit that was plant-wide. So those guys in the Transportation unit that were company stooges, had not only the run of the entire plant but even outside. You know--in and out of the plant on trucks and cars. They had passes. So that the--you don't need to have all of them in the right wing. All you needed was an active core. And the Transportation unit was never big. I think that the most they ever had was maybe 2500 people. But working around the plant, able to move around, you know, with the freedom to talk and campaign, they were an active force for conservatism.

Q: And so you think that ---

B: In Tool and Die, incidentally, the workers in Tool and Die were assigned and participated in and voted with the units in which they

worked. Okay? It was the Company's proposal that the Tool and Die be made plant-wide. And they did the same thing with the Maintenance Unit. And the Tool and Die was never an effective left-wing unit even though it always had, with the exception of one or two terms, it had left-wing leadership: a John Orr, a Walter Dorosh. You could never get Walter Dorosh to participate in the Progressive Caucus. Or John Orr. When we were suspended in 1952 and we were put on trial. This is when Percy wanted to prove to me, of course, that the animus--he thought that I had hated him. He became chairman of our Defense Committee. Walter Dorosh was asked to join the Defense Committee. He wouldn't do it, wouldn't do it, you see. So in a sense they always had the pretense of being anti-Reuther but the other two, the Maintenance Unit and the Transportation Unit were always used by the Company against the rest of the workers.

Q: So they hired in workers who would be more concilatory ---

B: In Maintenance they could do that. In Transportation they certainly could do that, and the Tool and Die wasn't that easy because there you had specific classification senority. Classification senority. And some of the operation, may be had ten people under that particular classification.

Q: Uh-huh.

B: The classification was not based on whether you were a die maker. It was like if you were a Keller man. That's the name of a particular machine. So a very restricted, craft-ridden line of demarcations, you see. So it wasn't easy for the Company to go ahead and hire people left and right, but they did it there too.

Q: So it seems like that would be a good opportunity for whatever caucus you're affiliated with, if you can move around the plant and talk to other workers, that that's a good place to be for doing your political work in the union.

B: As a matter of fact, it was when a guy by the name of Blaich. Who was an ACTU, when he was president of the Tool and Die, that he said: "Well if Maintenance can be plant-wide and Transportation, they have no skill, they can be, certainly we can be plant-wide." You see.

Q: Um.

B: And he meet with a lot of protest because guys who had already been elected committeemen, say, in the Motor Building and in the Foundry and other places were Tool and Die workers. And they were elected strictly because they had the run of the whole plant. A Tool and Die person was all over the Motor Building so he had an easy chance. I wound up sometime with a--one year I had a bargaining committee of three and two of them were Tool and Die people negotiating for the production workers, you know. But they didn't want to leave their spot and go plant-wide but they ---

Q: When did they do that? They had their own--well they started with ---

B: I'm not certain. Maybe your papers can tell us. Because I don't know if this discussion is helping you at all.

Q: Blaich was the Tool and Die ----

B: Yeah, what year is that?

Q: That's '41.

B: Well there you are.

Q: '41, '43 and '44.

B: It seems to me for three years. And then ----

Q: I don't know who was here.

B: Then the rest of them were left-wingers, you see. Starting with Lacey, all the way down. You have any luck with Lacey? He 's around.

Q: Yeah. No, I called him last time. He didn't want to do an interview.

B: Well he's been out of circulation. How about Chantress?

Q: I don't--I haven't looked him up. Do you know what his first name is?

B: It's Jesus.

Q: Oh.

B: Jesus, yeah. He's a sick man though. I think he's had a throat operation, but--. Of course he went to the International later but he made ----

Q: He was left also?

B: Yeah everybody starting with Lacey all the way down. It was always --

Q: How about Fitzpatrick.

B: Oh Fitzpatrick was ACTU.

Q: Yeah.

B: Yeah, yeah. I beg your pardon.

Q: Oaky. So when did the Tool and Die people vote with the plants that they were in, and represent ---

B: During--well you've got, what is this space here?

Q: Well I couldn't figure out--the Ford facts were missing for that date so I couldn't figure out who was elected in '42. Probably Blaich also.

B: It was during the period of '43, '44, maybe '42. During Blaich's term of office. As you can see, he was in there for four years.

Q: Um hum.

B: You've got him down for three.

Q: Yeah, he's probably here too since he was elected two years after. Okay, then the other building that seemed to be pretty strongly right wing was the building that only existed during the war period, which was the Aircraft Unit.

B: Well the Aircraft Unit later became the engine plant, okay. They called it the Aircraft Unit and we knew that eventually it would become the Engine Division, but it was there that they transferred their ---

Q: Oh, okay.

B: They transferred their favorites. There you worked a lot of overtime, you know. Gee, that's a good place to have to make friends for the company.

Q: Yeah. And that's the place where the ----

B: That lasted until 1946.

Q: And in there, the movement headed by Larry Yost against the no-strike pledge, was initiated.

B: Well--. Have you talked to Larry Yost?

Q: No.

B: He's around.

Q: Is he? I had one number but it was the wrong person.

B: Larry--I've known Larry since I was a kid, you see. Since he was a kid rather because I am ten years older than he is. Being a Californian do you recall when--who was the union leader who was in jail for the bomb? Who was pardoned by Governor Knight.

Q: Yeah. A long time ago. Early, you mean, in 1902 or something like that?

B: No, no. You're talking about MacNamarra. I'm talking about Governor Knight pardoned--there were two union guys . . . .

SIDE B, TAPE 1

B: . . . spent some time in Chicago. And I took over a task from the--I was a member of the IWW. Do you know what the true name of the IWW is?

Q: Yes, the International Workers of the World. "I Won't Work" I've heard it called.

B: Wrong twice. Industrial Workers.

Q: Oh, right, yeah.

B: The Fascists call it international because they said the communists organization. . . . We should have been and it wasn't. It died because it didn't understand the class struggle. It taught that you only have power when you are the point of production, you see. And when you are unemployed, we can't organize you. That was part of the one big--in any event, we had a funeral hearse, you know.

Q: Um hum.

B: With two caskets inside of it and I traveled the country, making speeches, asking for the pardon. That this union leader from California be pardoned because he was serving life. And that's where I met Larry Yost. Here I was a kid from Italy and at times I had--I still can't explain it. I find myself thinking in Italian and

speaking in English and some of the words came out, you know. Larry was a blonde kid. Smooth. Nice appearance. Good kid.

Q: He was in the IWW also?

B: No, he wanted the job of driving that hearse. He thought, oh you know. (LAUGHTER) Because there was also some glamour, but there was nobody to check the books. And workers are so liberal. You drive into an Italian neighborhood or a Polish neighborhood there was plain, ordinary workers. They'd fill a god-damned hat with dimes, I'm telling you. Fight for the liberation of--the guy had an Irish name. I almost said Dewey. Tom--Tom, Tom, Tom.

A: (INAUDIBLE)

B: Anyway, eventually, poor Larry Yost killed the thing because people began to ask for an accounting of the money, you know. Then Larry was in the--came to work in the Motor Building. And I was publishing a paper. I was secretary at the time and I was publishing a paper.

Q: This is early?

B: '41.

Q: '41.

B: Yeah. And we didn't get along because--well, I guess something followed him in there. Some people came to the conclusion that he couldn't--that he was shady. I never thought that he was shady. It was very difficult. If you had dimes, you know, and you had a meeting here today and then you went to Columbus, Ohio, the next day, and what the hell. In any event, when he saw that he couldn't get any place in the Motor Building then he went to the Aircraft. There he was a radical because, you know, associated with me. Associated with IWW of

Chicago and had more experience than anybody else. And he found the building dominated by right-wing company stooges. None of them who had been elected. So he was a flaming radical compared with them. So they drove him nuts and he left there and he went to Highland Park and after that I lost track of him.

Q: When did he go to Highland Park?

B: Well, all that I can tell you is that the entire Ford Plant, Ford system, was unionized at the same time, okay. And I would say that in Highland Park there was an increase in production, in manpower, because in addition to making agricultural machinery, I think a big order for Jeeps came there. Or maybe it was just plain ordinary pick-up trucks. Now the production of agricultural machinery would have to be 1946, after the end of the war. But if it is connected with the military, then it might have been '43-'44. I'm sorry. I can't ---

Q: So when he was in the Aircraft Unit and he ----

B: There's a man who might be willing to talk to you. That's the former Ford Director, Bannon. I can't think of his first name.

Q: Ken?

B: Ken Bannon.

Q: Is he still around?

B: Yeah, he's a young man.

Q: Oh. Hum.

B: He was president of Local 400 and through the machinery he became Ford Director. There wasn't anybody at Local 600 that could be trusted by Reuther to be Ford Director. They had to go to smaller local, which by then was very small.

Q: Yeah.

B: Ken, incidentally, had come out of the Motor Building. He had been one of my constituents.

Q: Oh really.

B: Yeah, when they tried to defeat me and when they couldn't defeat me they became luminaries, you know, because of all the mud that they slung. Reuther said hey he's my boy. And these guys were appointed left and right in all kinds of places. They became heroes by fighting against me although they got their nose bloodied. Yeah.

Q: So when you were talking about in the Aircraft Unit and I brought up the point about Yost and his fighting against the no-strike.

B: I can't ---

Q: You don't remember that period?

B: I can't give you any info on it.

Q: But would that be--he would be fighting with the right ----

B: Where did you pick up that information?

Q: Let's see. This is in most of the secondary literature on the UAW as a whole. They bring up the no-strike, the fight against the no-strike pledge, and that it was started by Yost or that it was led by Yost all the way to the International. He brought the issue to the convention in '43 and '44, I think, when they had a referendum vote. And the UAW members all voted whether they wanted to rescind it or not.

B: And Yost--it is indicated that he was the leader of that fight inside of Local 600?

Q: Well not inside of Local 600 but he was the one that brought the issue to the convention. And started the debate in the convention. And I don't know how much support he had in the Aircraft Unit.

B: So what year are we talking about?

Q: I think it was '43 and '44. He's got to be fighting on the right wing within the Rouge plant to be arguing those points, right? "That we should rescind the no-strike pledge."

B: Well, the movement against the no-strike pledge actually was led by blacks, particularly, you know, from the president of the union of the Sleeping Car Porters. His name escapes me. I have trouble with names anymore. He was the only black member of the CIO Executive Board.

Q: I can't think of the name either.

B: Well at least you'll pick up Minutes of that period you'll see who was the black. There was only one. You know, there was tokenism there and in the UAW we didn't even have that. We never had it in spite of the fact that--in the state CIO also. No women and no blacks. As a matter of fact, one of the questions that this guy Alvern asked me--he reminded me that there was one year when I lead the big fight at the state's CIO convention in Michigan to have a black placed on the International Executive Board--on the State CIO Executive Board. I had forgotten. But we had that problem in Local 600. And even when we had twenty- twenty-five percent of a reduced membership, very few whites went to work at Ford's after 1945. It was usually blacks. If you went in front of the Ford employment office, if there was a hundred people, there would be eighty-five or ninety would be black. And a rare white coming from the outside from the farms and so forth.

We still didn't have a black on the UAW Board. In no area of the country. And Ruether fought against them. Reuther has always been a sexist, a bigot, a racist. He had a certain animosity against me going for his wife. As a boy, as a youth when I came to Michigan, I went to--well, I wanted to become an electrical engineer so I went to Cass Tech and there I met some young people. We're talking now about, prior to the Depression. So I became a member of a youth group. Most of the members were Jewish. It just so happened that the woman who later became Walter Reuther's wife, May Reuther, was a member of that group.

Q: Oh.

B: Okay. So in 1933, some Jewish intellectual, a newspaper editor out of New York with a large following, he was an anarchist. They bought a farm in Michigan and in due time--I don't believe, got be in '30, yeah '33, the early part of '33, and I went up there in 1933 and stayed there for three years. So, in 193--probably December '36, I came back to Detroit to enlist in the--to go to Spain with the Loyalists. And I had a child born, and my father said: Look what happened to me, I volunteered, who is going to take care of your family if you lose a leg. My father actually went to the doctor that had approved my physical examination to go to Spain. In the meantime, I went to Local 174 which is Reuther's local back then. It must have been by that time--it must have been either January or February of 1937 because I was going to have a debate with Victor Reuther, the younger brother, on the question of Spain. Whether Spain--whether the union should support Loyalist Spain and so forth. And I was for the affirmative

and he was for the negative. Well, I knew that this gal May whom I hadn't seen for ten years. Not ten years, say '27 to '37. Well ten years. She was working--she was Reuther's secretary by then. So I went in--they had an old building over on Michigan Avenue and Mayberry--Grant, an old neighborhood, the place has been torn down. I'm waiting for Victor to come down because Victor was on the staff. He wasn't there so I chatted with May a little bit. Walter walks by and unbeknownst to me she had mentioned, because the debate had been a subject of discussion, how it should be phrased and Reuther was preparing and Walter was involved. Because he was protective of the Reuther name. She says: "Oh yeah, I know. You guys tried to organize a stud farm up there--a Jewish stud farm." Because I had said something about, we had beautiful horses, you know, I was trying to glamourize the farm. Here's a guy who makes, and then disappears. So I looked at May and she said: "He doesn't like you." I said, "What do you mean he don't like me. He hardly knows me." She says, "He resents you because I told him that we were members of the youth club together, you know, that type of stuff." I remember thinking what an asinine thing. We see pictures of Walter Reuther--this is out of your field--we see pictures of Walter Reuther marching with Martin Luther King. Walter Reuther never raised a finger until it was respectable to march with Martin Luther King during the last period, you know. But, as a matter of fact, I remember there was an organization of blacks that were dissatisfied with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People because it was conservative, you know. It is still conservative but it has been

rejuvenated. Or with the Urban League which was looked upon as an "Uncle Tom" organization all of the way. So there was an organization formed called A National Negro Congress. You may not be familiar with that name, but Reuther participated in organizing them. Just as in 1931 and '32, he had gone to the Soviet Union the same way that Stanley Nowak talks about these guys that joined the government and the party in power in Poland, you know. You got on the bandwagon. He worked actively with communists to get support to go to the 1936 South Bend Convention in South Bend, Indiana. He knew all of the time that he was associating with communists. But when he saw things change and it was to his advantage to play with the UnAmerican Activities Committee, the Senate Internal Affairs Committee, to red-bait and so forth, then he became pure. And when it was safe to associate with Martin Luther King, towards the end only did Martin Luther King come to speak to UAW meetings, you see. There is this terrible opportunism which is not necessarily evidence of a flaw in Walter Reuther's character. It is conditions that make the man, so to speak. You press from all points and you want to maintain the position of power. What is wrong is when you pass the story on that if he can only get rid of the communists, get rid of the reds, then the union will grow. Implying that the Company will then be nice to you. That they will stop fighting you. Because that is not true. The class struggle goes on. It's eternal. It's a continuing proposition between employee and employer. And that's the fallacy of Reutherism. But we will outlive it. We'll outlive Reagan and all their--you know, just the way we've

outlived Mussolini and Hitler and all these other sons of a bitches. Well, that's not either here nor there.

Q: Let me go on to ask you about some of the other plants that were--. How would you describe the foundries, both the Jobbing Foundry and Production Foundry politically?

B: Well, let's see, my recollection goes back to Zack Benford whose name I had fogotten until you mentioned it. And after that, Buddy Battle was the dominating figure and had it not been for the fact that he was black and noisy, he would never have amounted to anything but he played with the Reutherites. The Jobbing Foundry, well there was period there, I think, but the Jobbing Foundry came to a standstill.

Q: Yes and the Specialty Foundry takes over.

B: Yeah, but there was period of time when there was very little work, maybe just a handful of people there. And as the Specialty Foundry was then born, Buddy became the leader there. I can't remember anybody else except those two guys.

Q: I'll see if I can ---

B: Now, Ernest Loftin who was vice president of the Local and you might have met him when you were there.

Q: Ernest? No, I have had correspondence with him but I've never ---

B: Yeah, well he's out of there but he was not, he was not active. His period came later.

Q: I've got Morgan, with an F, I don't know if that's Frank or what. Harold Johnson ---

B: Oh, Harold Johnson. Harold Johnson was just a religious black.

Q: Was he with the Progressives or with the right wing?

B: I guess he was--he didn't know where he was. On and off.

Q: He was in the middle?

B: Well I don't know where he was, really, he was not a dependable person.

Q: Okay, then we have--is this George Popp?

B: Oh George Popp. George Popp was always on the defensive because he was Yugoslav and at times he had--he was not a very articulate person. He only lasted one year as I recall.

Q: Yes, that's right.

B: Who have you got? Oh Gives oh.

Q: Gives. I don't know what the first name on that is. Harry comes to mind but I don't know if that's right. Or Henry. And then we've got Battle all the way.

B: Battle starting with ---

Q: Starting in '52 with the Specialty Foundry.

B: Yeah. Well as I say the Jobbing Foundry died and went through these changes and you know.

Q: And then we've got the Production Foundry, the Iron Foundry, which had Harold Johnson also and then the other Johnson--Bill Johnson. Back and forth. First you start with Tappes, Veal Clough. Was he a left-winger?

B: A communist.

Q: And then Hester. I think it's Edward Hester.

B: Hester was expelled from the Local and from everything else that he ever connected with because he was a Numbers runner.

Q: Oh really. Was he a Progressive?

B: Well the Progressives were the leaders so, he was an opportunist, he would be with the leaders, you know.

Q: Okay, now we have Horace Sheffield.

B: Sheffield has always been a Reutherite. He still is.

Q: And Tappes?

B: Well he went to the International and Tappes, who had been the Local Recording Secretary from the beginning was---. What period is that? What year is that?

Q: I have him for '47 and he was also in '41 the first year.

B: Yeah, yeah, but in '47, yeah. In '47 they were the difficult--well that was the Reuther period and he was defeated for Local secretary.

Q: Oh so that's when he ran in--let's see ----

B: Then he ran in the ---

Q: Oh yes, the last year is '43, no '44, and then he was out. Did he stay in the Local or he went to the International right after this?

B: No, no, he didn't go into the International until 1951.

Q: Okay, so he had two years back on the job then. You told me he was elected here.

B: I guess so.

Q: Would you consider him still with the Progressives at that time in '47? Or was he siding with Reuther at that period?

B: Well accusations have been made against him but accusations have been made against me. Against many of the--I do not, incidentally, in the latter period, after the death of Walter Reuther, people that went on the International staff, or some even prior to that, like Tappes. If you accept my explanation that for a long period of time only blacks

sought employment there. The number of blacks was increasing, okay. The whites who had been there longer, prior to anybody else, had a long period of senority and some of them left. Some of them only stayed there during the war period. So the number of blacks became higher. And that wasn't only true here, it was true nationally in industry. So that the, under--we had had a Fair Employment Practices Committee which for a long time existed only in name. The International needed black organizers and guys like Tappes who had come up and who was graduated from the University of Ohio and so forth. He was a local, articulate, persentable person. The International hired him. I don't say that he sold out even though some people say that. I guess you've interviewed Dave Moore?

Q: Umhum.

B: Some people made the charge against him. Woodcock even said that if I wasn't retired he would give me a job, you know. Give me a job after I was already gone out of the plant. Some Reutherites even came--they sat at this table right where you're husband is sitting--and they said that Reuther did me a favor by expelling me. Because it gave me a chance to regain my health, you know. Big thing. So, I don't know, Tappes associates freely with me and he knows who I am. He associates with communists. Even though if you listen to certain people they'll say that he testified and he blackened names, that he destroyed families. I don't think that he did that. He did some damaging work but I think he's retained--he's still a man of principle.

Q: Okay. Then we have a turnover from Harold Johnson--Bill Johnson--Harold Johnson ---

B: Now you are talking about ---

Q: I'm talking about from '48 to '52. They traded off every year.

B: Well after that he--it looked like Harold Johnson went to the--I don't know how the years work out. But it seems that--oh, oh, yeah, I know. I think I know what the years. When the Jobbing Foundry deteriorated to the point where there was nothing there, Johnson transferred back to the foundry where he probably had started to begin with.

Q: Harold?

B: Harold, yes. The same Harold that was in the Jobbing Foundry. The same guy, you know.

Q: They called him old man, right.

B: Old man, right. He was in advanced age.

Q: So he was a left-winger also?

B: No, no. I said he was neither fish nor fowl.

Q: Oh, okay. Then Bill Johnson.

B: Bill Johnson was a left-winger.

Q: So that their popularity was about the same it looks like. That they were running against each other ---

B: Well Bill Johnson was a young man. He was a law student and presentable. Very articulate. Reserved but articulate.

Q: And then in '55, Godfrey Franklin. He was elected.

B: Yeah. Godfrey Franklin.

Q: He was a left-winger?

B: Yeah, he always passed off as a left-winger.

Q: And then in '57. Bantom.

B: Have you talked to Godfrey? He's around.

Q: No I haven't.

B: He just ran for mayor of Highland Park. That's where he lives.

Q: Okay, then the Open-Hearth building. I haven't been able to talk with anybody over there. I talked with Krause and he's around and he would like to do an interview but he's out-of-town this month. He was president in '47 and '48. What's his first name? William Krause.

B: Yeah. Well the only guy that was a Progressive there--well, Smith always bragged about his background in the Miners Union but really the only two that were Progressives were Duncan and Kaspar. Kaspar is dead and Duncan is back in Tennessee or wherever. He's still a young man.

Q: Neil Rice was a right-winger ---

B: Oh, Neil Rice. Neil Rice is black and I'm sorry, I don't know what became of him.

Q: Was he in the Progressive Caucus or the right wing?

B: Well the truth of the matter is that with the exception of a few that were neither fish nor fowl, but they weren't that many black leaders. The only right wing out of the blacks was Sheffield. Every other black was either a middle-of-the-roader or a Progressive.

Q: So he was a middle-of-the-road. You say Neil Rice?

B: Yeah, yeah.

Q: And then Krause was also the middle-of-the-road?

B: I'm afraid I didn't get to know him too well. What year was that?

Q: He was in in '47-'48.

B: I don't even have a visual presence of what he looked like.

Q: Hum. And then Carl Smith gets elected again from '50 to '55. And then Wensko.

B: Now he's another guy I can't I can't tell you.

Q: Okay. In your building, the Motor Building, you had Llewellyn who was with the left, Cooper which was with the left, and Alloy. I don't know who that is. He was Progressive also?

B: Yes. He's around. He lives in the Detroit area.

Q: What's his first name?

B: James.

Q: Then Cooper, then Kerr.

B: ACTU.

Q: ACTU. How did he get elected in the middle of all this--it looked like the left was pretty strong.

B: Well he was Scotch and he identified with those other individuals that I described that were from northern Ireland but who it was convenient to play politics against the left, so to speak. When did Kerr get elected?

Q: '45.

B: I think it lasted one year or was it two?

Q: Just one.

B: Yeah he was a class conscious worker but he was in an impossible position and he drank a lot and smoked a lot and coughed a lot.

Q: Well you've got Cooper for two years again in '46-'47. And then O'Roarke.

B: O'Roarke right.

Q: He was the right-winger, right? He got elected two terms. Did you beat him when you ran in '50?

B: Um-hum.

Q: Okay, then Soretti the rest of the time.

B: Well, after that--what are we talking about, 1951?

Q: 1951.

B: Yes. That's when I was removed. I was removed in '52.

Q: Yeah, and then you come back in the Engine Building later on, right?

B: '56 or '57, I'm not sure.

Q: What was Tony Stellato? Was he a right-winger also?

B: Tony was Carl's brother and he was a nothing. He was just Carl's brother.

Q: Kasper. Do you know who Kasper is?

B: Mike Kasper, yeah. He's still around.

Q: Was he in the Progressive caucus?

B: Um-hum.

Q: Okay. Then ---

B: Well, I mean if you identify these people by name as being progressive, I don't know what some of them will say, you know.

Q: If they ran on the Progressive slate and associated themselves with the Progressive Caucus and ----

B: Well, are you working on establishing political lines?

Q: Um-hum.

B: Based on the activities--the action that took place? Are you going to identify individuals with some of these actions, with some of these --

Q: Well you there's two ways that you can do it. You can do it by characterizing buildings and the way that you do that is that you get an overview of who was elected during that time. So that you can say maybe during, say this span from '41 to '57, in the Tool and Die nine Progressives were elected and five right-wingers. So you get a feeling for what kind of politics the workers were supporting in that unit. And then I am going to look to associate that with, you know, the amount of skilled workers versus unskilled. Or the production type. Whether they had the opportunity to talk with one another while they were working. And things like that. So getting the names straight would just mostly help me in establishing what the character of the plant during this time period was.

B: Well maybe you've answered my question, but my question specifically dealt with whether you were going to link the names up with the various currents that existed at a given time, or whether the names were going to be used as a guide by you?

Q: Yeah, right.

B: And not mentioned?

Q: Yeah, right.

B: I mean I don't care if my name is mentioned.

Q: No, most of these individuals ---

B: But I'm no authority on some of these individuals.

Q: No, I'm just trying to get a feeling ---

B: I was a busybee. Five o'clock every morning I was out there with an armful of literature and one of my weaknesses was the fact that I didn't spend

END OF TAPE 1

August 1984

BOATIN INTERVIEW
August 1984
Tape 2, Side A

B: . . . and he's forced to sign a contract which imposes certain limitations on you. And then along later comes a Supreme Court that says if you violate the contract you can be fined. You know that type of stuff. So some workers, even good workers, lost faith in the union movement because they felt that the union had not performed. And the workers were wrong. It wasn't the union that was wrong. The union had limitations from the very beginning. If the union could solve all of the problems--they had, you know the strongest labor movement was in Germany. How come that the Nazis took over, you know. And if the union, labor organization, could solve all of the problems what happens to the argument, the silly argument of the UAW, which was one of the most militant organizations which sacrificed hundreds of lives, leaders were sent to jail and were killed on picket lines, you know. Dealing with the ranchers out west and other places. When their understanding was so limited they said, you're only power is at the point of production. You have no power other than what you have in the factory. Because you can interrupt productions and hit the boss in the pocketbook, as they call it. And certainly if the union could solve everything, what becomes of the argument, the Marxist argument that you have a chance in the political structure. And furthermore what becomes of the fundamental Marxist argument that the educational, the ideas that prevailed during a given historical period reflect the economic power of those that dominated, that owned the wealth of

society during that given period. I mean the education and everything else that flows from it is influenced by the owners, you know. And it is only when you change ownership that new ideas are born. (It looks like rain, huh? Is that rain? I have birds (SOUND OFF). So that's one of the things I chastise myself for. That if I had spent less time, when I saw the union go downhill and I saw, you know, contracts were negotiated--30 and out. And I was one of the fathers of that idea. But I hadn't thought far enough ahead that 30 and out means while there may be that guy who is going to hang on, who is afraid to retire. He's lived in fear all of his life. If he can stay on another ten years maybe he'll get a bigger pension and a new contract. He's got that much faith. Sometime I criticize them--why don't you get out and make room for another guy. But what happens when another guy, new guys, come in? There is a complete transformation in the leadership of the union. Poeple who didn't live through the dark days, you know where you were clubbed on the head and you had somebody standing there marking every piece that you produced. Well it's appropriate that the new leadership should take over. But if that leadership isn't imbued with the understanding of the necessities of maintaining an active militant organization with an informed membership, then those of us who came before have failed to do our job. I mean in that sense I've failed.

Q: Even though you tried to bring along younger union ----

B: But I spent more time in what the average worker was called the brandish. Oh, he's just a politican just like everybody else. I heard that charge made any number of times. And then, of course,

along came Reuther and along came the UnAmerican Activities Committee and said, "Yeah, you fooled the workers into voting for you, but all the time you weren't fighting for the rights of the workers. You were taking orders from Moscow," and that type of stuff, you see. You can't help it if the average worker accepts some of bologna. So, you want to go back to some of the names?

Q: Okay, so we got--well we were done with Tool and Die. Maintenance workers are next. The Maintenance Unit. You mentioned earlier that you didn't remember Spagnol. He was in ---

B: Oh I remember Spagnol. I don't know where he--he was ---

Q: We had Pat Rice ---

B: Pat Rice was a Progressive. We elected a vice president after that of the Local.

Q: Um-hum. And then you have C. Hart. I don't know what the C stands for.

B: Ha. Sorry I don't remember that at all.

Q: Let's see Spagnol. I have him down as a right-wing. Is that what you said?

B: Who?

Q: Spagnol? Or did you say Middle?

B: He was considered a right-winger, but I think it's because he was voiceless. He only lasted one term anyway.

Q: Two terms actually.

B: Two terms.

Q: Yeah. And then you had Rooney.

B: Well, Rooney he's one of a--he's dead now.

Q: Was his name Dennis?

B: No.

Q: Well maybe that was the guy in B Building.

B: Ann would know because he became treasurer of the Local. No, Rooney was an Irish-Republican.

Q: Republican huh? Oh boy, he's really ---

B: But his political coloration, so to speak, did not become known until, you know, the situation in Northern Ireland developed. And at that time, all of a sudden, he became very active. But he had spent so much time associating with the ACTU and the right wing that nobody trusted him any more. And then he got sick and became blind or at least in one eye, and he died. But in the last six months of his life he was fighting against death and he became extremely active, you see. Trying to make up for lost time.

Q: Were most of the ACTU people from Irish descent? It seems like most of the ones that you've been saying were.

B: Well, you had, no, you had, well you see I made the point earlier that you had foreign elements in organizing. The majority of the poeple that worked on production lines, the foundry, on the hard jobs, were of foreign extraction. Italians, Polish, lots of Polish. The bosses were either English or German or Appalachian whites, okay. So you had that antagonism. Amongst the Poles, you would have a lot of ACTU. They responded to the anti-communist attacks.

Q: Did the Poles go with ACTU more than with the Progressives, or that was still a small percentage of them?

B: You want to know something? Well, aside from the fact that a person whose got a long name like that, did not get elected to office. He may have helped to organize the union. There wasn't any Polish officeholders. Do you have any? No.

Q: I don't know. There are a few with long names. I don't know who this is.

B: Macunovich. Macunovich was a Yugoslav.

Q: Yugoslav? Yeah. There's a few.

B: Yeah, but that's so late.

Q: Yeah.

B: But the people that--see, I told you about some workers who became dissatisfied with the union. They had worked their fanny off and they really were ignored and bypassed. They had brought in a lot of members but then had no influence in the destiny of the Local after that.

Q: So would that turn them to the right?

B: I would not say they were right-wingers. But they were not active participants in the Progressive Caucus, you know. The elections were held, some of these people who had worked hard were fired by the Company. They were Labor Board cases that were reinstated later on. And there was a lot of injustice in the way some of these people were reinstated. For instance, you know senority is one of the basic fundamentals around which you built the union, okay. We got letters from all over the world when the union was recognized. They started to come during the period of the strike and the strike didn't last very long. I worked for the Ford Motor Company in 1912, in 1919. And

there were letters back and forth. You needed translators, you know. And I had had some training in that, I had worked as a translator. They came from all over the world. Now if the first letter didn't do it, the second letter or the third letter and the fourth letter, and as we fought with the question of, you know, how many people can the Rouge plant take. The committee working on senority had to establish--and I couldn't argue with that even though it effected me personally, what became known as a four-year break. Regardless of the reason why you stayed away from active employment longer than four years, you know, your senority could only be counted from the day that you returned. If you had a four-year break in senority even though you may have worked twenty years at Ford's, you lost that. Later on we negotiated a clause in the contract as part of the pension package, that while you could not have the preceding period of employment counted as part of your senority, if you had more than ten years even there we lost. If you had more than ten years of previous employment, you could pick up the ten years and add them to your pension credits, you know. But that required going back and the Company was the only one that records, you know. In my case, I got screwed every which way because having worked under a false name I would have had to kneel to the Company, kneel to the Union, you know, and I probably wouldn't have gotten anything. Just would have made a monkey out of myself. As a result, I get practically nothing. When you read that the Ford workers are getting $600 that retired thirty years and out, I worked more than that, I get $59.84.

Q: Boy.

B: So there were Polish workers who had helped organize the union, Ukranian workers. Foreign-speaking workers, did not get elected to office and they--the more mature understood the union. Others became disenchanted.

Q: None of them tried to shorten their names and do it that way.

B: They were too proud. They had contributed to building this giant organization and they couldn't see why their prestige and the contribution that they made wasn't recognized, you know. To be appointed to a voluntary committee that didn't pay even expenses to drive your car. All the non-paying jobs, all the things that nobody else wanted, you got, you know. But what I am talking about is the misunderstanding of the function of a labor organization. A labor organization is limited in the things that it can do. And if a worker doesn't understand that, then he's not a class-conscious worker. He's not a Socialist. He's just a poor--a vegetable who reacted in the same way that a dog would react. You kick him and he's going to bite you. The Ford Motor Company kicked him and he bit back. But after that he ceased to exist. And that's a terrible problem. And the only answer, and there is no other---di balamuta(?)--a understanding of the relationship between a worker and a corporation. A corporation has no country, it has no god, you know, it has no flag. And that's where the union, the top leadership of the union failed when they said. "They go to Cincinnati. We don't give a damn. Well go there and organize them." But the step to Cincinnati was the first step. The second step was beyond the ocean and away, you see.

Q: Yes, yes.

B: Why were they going to Cincinnati? Why were they going to the cornfields? I was in Fostoria, Ohio, and I almost got run over by trucks. A little factory in the middle of farmland. Workers didn't care if they got laid off because they had forty acres of land. It came February they wanted to get laid off, you see. They asked for a lay off so they could go work. But you could never hold a meeting. Never hold a meeting. It was only if a major thing occurred you tried to hold a meeting right after work. But these guys lived forty-fifty miles away. I'll tell you it was astonishing, astonishing. I come out to the parking lot with a couple of guys. We had this, as a matter of fact, three or four cars had gone. We were trying to convince the International that this job runaway was a dangerous thing. It was going to kill the union. And in some cases we got access to the plant and in some cases not. So here we are looking at the parking lot, by the time we got--we went to Fostoria from Lima or from some other place in Ohio.

Q: This is in the early '50s?

B: Yeah, yeah. You know, I mean, if you had a couple of years to spend I'll take you through my picture gallery. I got it on pictures, Ann can tell you, from here to Timbuktu. But the bell rang and all of a sudden these trucks, you know some had a plow on it, some had stakes--a guy was going to pick up a hog or something. Jesus--out of this vroom, you know. (LAUGHTER) So the union did not point it out. In 1957, I contacted the governor of the state of Michigan. We wanted to have our son who was a language major represent the state of Michigan at the World's Fair in Brussells. And I was told I don't think you

are going to get an O.K. for your son, you know. I had to bow to the president of the Local, who had always been on the right side of things, to contact the governor, Governor G. Mennen Williams. I finally did get an appointment but I had to be reminded that one day during a Labor Day parade I held a sign up in the face of the governor who was on the reviewing stand: "Stop

A: "Job Runaway."

B: "Stop Job Runaway," or something. He regarded that as a personal charge. A personal affront. I don't think I really meant it that way. I just wanted the platform to recognize that, you see. But everybody knows that we were right. The phone rings sometimes, people say: Some still think I'm in the plant, you know. They want a job for their son or a job for their daughter. I've been on T.V. several times. I've been interviewed, my picture in the paper, and, as a matter of fact, I was telling you about the Reuther--that stud farm that Reuther was talking about--I don't know whether ---

Q: No, I don't think you gave me that.

B: It just came out in 1982 and I don't think I gave it to you. You'll look at it some other time.

Q: Okay. Okay, you were telling me that Rooney was a ----

B: What was Rooney's first name, Ann?

Q: James, Jim Rooney.

B: Jim, Jim, yeah.

Q: In the Maintenance Unit?

B: Jim, yeah.

Q: Okay, so he's the guy that you just said ---

A: Well he's dead now.

Q: Yeah.

B: Yeah. He became treasurer of the Local. You might have him listed that way. I'm not sure when that was.

Q: Yes, that must have been later. I only have up to '57 here.

B: Yes it was later.

A: What?

B: That he became treasurer?

A: Yes, that was about '78, '77 or '78.

Q: So he was a right-winger then?

B: He associated with them because he didn't like communists. But I don't know whether he was a member of ACTU, he could have been.

A: Well I remember the time when Reuther called. I was the unit secretary, and Reuther called, this was way back in the forties, late forties. And he wanted Jim Rooney's address and of course we weren't allowed to give out any addresses or phone numbers at that time. So he said this is Walter Reuther calling. I said yeah, big deal. I said I don't care if you are Jesus Christ, but you are not going to get the address. Because we are not allowed and I understand he made some references to that later on about me.

Q: Oh really?

A: Who I was, who was it that answered the phone and, you know.

Q: Hum.

A: He said, I talked with Ann Boatin.

B: He was a sick man though about the time that he became treasurer, right?

A: No, he was fine. He just died of a heart attack. He died suddenly.

B: Wasn't he going blind?

A: Well he had cataract problems.

B: Okay.

Q: Art Speed was a member of the Progressive Caucus, wasn't he?

B: Yes.

Q: And then this Yugoslavian guy.

B: Macunovich? I don't know. He was neither fish nor fowl.

A: Yeah.

Q: And the Miscellaneous Building--how would you consider that just over all?

A: Right wing.

Q: Right wing?

A: Joe Berry was president.

B: Yeah but ---

A: Joe Berry was a right-winger. He ate a communist every day.

B: Yes, well ---

Q: Was he associated with the ACTU?

A: No, he was an Arab. Joe Berry.

B: There was a--have you talked to Yeager?

Q: Yes. It was very brief and McCusker was sitting right next to him.

B: Huh.

Q: So he wasn't too open.

B: Well, unfortunately, Yeager has deteriorated. He was a much better man during that period.

Q: Would you say that during '46-'47 he was ---

A: Yes.

B: During '46-'47 he associated with the anti-Reuther group.

Q: Oh, so he was Progressive. All right.

B: But later on when the attacks on the communists and so forth, I didn't know it but he was acting as a--he started out as a school guard. I in the city of Melvindale, and then later on became an auxiliary policeman. So you know ---

Q: Was in the fifties? In '52?

B: Yeah, then, you know, they probably threw some mud in and he said un un, you know. So since then he's been--. It wasn't accidental. If you think it was because of McCusker, oh no.

A: Yes, it could be from McCusker too.

B: Yeah but he fixed--McCusker is dying, you know. He's very sick. He's been acting--he hasn't been installed this year yet as the president of the Retiree Chapter. And the rest of the officers are black and Yeager hopes that he might wind up, you know, as president of the Chapter.

A: He's a stupid, dirty bastard.

B: I'm talking about Yeager, Ann.

A: I'm talking about McCusker now. He should have died a long time ago.

B: Oh yeah. Well but the--there was change in that De Lafronte was a progressive guy.

Q: He was. How about Gentry?

B: Do you remember Gentry?

A:: George Gentry?

Q: He was president of Miscellaneous in '55.

A: Oh he was a big, black man.

B: A great big fellow?

A: Yeah.

B: Oh yeah, yeah. He was okay. George Gentry was okay. Now that I ---

Q: Yeah, they were one year elections at that time and, you know, some of the guys were in office one year and that was the end of it. And then you never heard of them again. They didn't even run for committeemen jobs or anything, they were off and they left.

Q: Your best impression is that he was middle left.

B: No, George was all right.

Q: He was left-wing?

B: Yeah.

Q: Okay. Do you remember those guys--Wenslaff from the early period of the Miscellaneous Unit, '44-'45?

A: Yeah I know Wenslaff. He was--I think right-wing, he was more right-wing.

B: I think I remember him but not too well.

A: Again, one year and that was it. Didn't run for anything any more.

Q: How about the name Schoff? S C H O F F.

A: Who?

Q: Schoff. S C H O F F.

B: What year is that?

Q: That's '42 and '43.

B: Schoff went into the Gas Stamp Committee after that. About '43?

Q; '42-'43.

B: Yes, he was on the --Ann, gas stamps? There was a committee on gas stamps in the plant.

A: Oh, well that was during the war, yeah. Yeah, well.

Q: Okay. In the Transportation unit taping we talked about, it was pretty much of right-wing building.

Q: We have Lane, William Lane.

A: Lane became a foreman.

Q: Oh, really?

A: Oh yes. Lane became a foreman. He was a president of the unit and he was defeated and within a week he was a foreman. Or higher than a foreman in the plant. And it was so outrageous because ---

B: Ann, she's got Neville here. Was it William Neville?

A: Yes, William Neville, was again a right-winger. A Reutherite,

B: Down here you've got ---

Q: Cassidy.

B: Bill Marshall.

A: Bill Marshall was a right-winger. A nice guy. A pleasant person.

B: As a matter of fact it wasn't until later--was it Neuman that got elected it finally?

A: Yeah.

Q: Well, look, he's in '42 and then in '50.

B: Oh no, it's not Neuman that I'm talking about. Who is the guy that we see around the Local sometime when I was--who goes out of his way to say hello?

A: From where?

B: I'm not talking about Marshall am I?

A: Marshall's dead. He's been dead for sometime.

B: There's a, a thin-faced, white guy.

A: Oh you're talking--about, he's a committeeman. He was a bargaining committeeman for years. He was on the staff here at the local. But he was late, he was later on.

Q: Do you remember Glandenes?

A: Oh, Glandenes. Yes, yes.

Q: He's a right also?

A: Yes. The whole plant, the whole Transportation unit, there was never a left-winger elected there.

Q: Neuman also then?

A: Yes.

Q: And Cassidy? And Cassidy was the ACTU guy you were telling me about earlier, right?

B: Um-hum.

A: Cassidy was awful later.

Q: Yes.

B: Not that much later. Cassidy ---

A: Wasn't--oh in the '50s.

Q: '55 and '57.

B: Yeah.

Q: And then you've got the Glass Plant.

B: Sometime if you're uncertain about where these guys belong. And you study the--you see who the officers were of the Retiree Chapter and you'll find that everyone of them was a Reuther appointed ACTUs.

Fitzpatrick, Cassidy, McCusker. You know all these birds, you know. Where are we at now?

Q: The Glass Plant.

B: Glass. Oh this is where little Mike is at. Do you have Mike at all?

Q: Yes, he's in '44-'45. I have him down as with the Progressive Caucus back then.

B: Yeah, yeah.

Q: How about Bardelli? He was a right-winger?

B: Bardelli has always been a noisy but cautious guy.

Q: McCormick was in for one term in '43.

A: Neither here nor there.

Q: Okay.

A: He didn't contribute anything to the local.

Q: Roebuck in '51?

A: Yeah, he's another one.

Q: And Bradford in '53?

A: He was a middle guy.

B: Yeah.

Q: It looks like it is pretty much the same people, back and forth.

B: Well it wasn't a very big unit. And there wasn't--a certain amount of skill was required. It wasn't necessarily the best job, the best place in the world to work at. A lot of heat or gas, that glass put off. A lot of silicone. One of the arguments was getting proper ventilation and so forth. That type of--you had to be--to fight for safety protection. That sort of thing.

Q: So overall that looked like it was more of a right-wing building? Does that match your conception of it?

A: I'd say it was in the middle.

B: It wasn't a production building where the job fluctuates. People stayed there. So that you had--the same people without too much change. And it was--they had rest periods. There were certain advantages they had there because of the nature of the operation. So it was the kind of place where you had a lot of fights. Also, the Company kept threatening that they were going to build--that glass--the production of glass requires a lot of water and they were going to go to Alabama and Mississippi, blah, blah, blah, you know. And they eventually did.

A: Mike could tell you more about that.

B: Mike can ---

A: Mike can tell you more about that. You don't know these plants, Paul. You was so involved with the Motor and the Engine that ---

B: Ann, I'm judging by ---

A: Yeah, but I think ---

B: Well Bardelli dominated it. Incidentally, there were two Bardellis there.

Q: Oh really.

A: Yeah, they were brothers.

Q: Oh they are brothers.

A: Al Bardelli and ---

Q: Oh, I've got to separate these out then. They're both right-wingers?

A: Yeah, yes, of course. But they're brothers and they're both active in the _____ plant.

B: But weren't they both there?

A: Yeah, yeah.

B: That's what I thought.

A: But you see Bardelli.

B: Well Mike Zarro, if you want to make a notation. Mike Zarro can tell you which is which. One is younger than the other.

Q: Okay.

B: I don't think the younger one wound up in the International either. Just Al.

A: I don't know.

Q: In the Pressed Steel we start out with J. B. Jones.

A: Oh yeah. A tall, lanky guy.

B: J. B. Jones had a very militant brother who was president of Murray Body Local 2. But they weren't the same type of individual and eventually he might have become a foreman. I don't know.

A: I don't know.

B: He may have left the plant entirely.

Q: We have Waldron next in the Pressed Steel.

B: Waldron, well you can tell that he only lasted one year. He was a-- there isn't anything I can say about him. Not distingushed.

Q: Okay. Then Tamoor?

B: Tamoor, yeah progressive.

Q: Romano at this time. He was with the Progressive slate, right?

B: Yes, he was a nosiy Progressive who was one of the--well, his emblem was a broom when he ran for office. On his campaign card he had a broom. So when he went before the UnAmerican Activities Committee, he says he is using the same broom. There he is sweeping out the no-gooders in the union and now he's still sweeping out the no-gooders in the union. Then he wound up on the staff of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers.

Q: So did he run on the Progressive Slate then?

B: Yeah.

A: Yes, he was a member of the Communist Party.

Q: During '46 and '47.

B: Yeah.

Q: And then later on--I read his ---

B: I don't know if he was a member of the Communist Party. He said he was. Actually he was a member of the International Workers Order, IWO. An insurance, left-wing insurance organization. Are you familiar with that?

Q: Yeah, yeah. I know that's in his ---

B: I never met with him as a communist. I met with him as a member of the IWO.

Q: In his testimony in front of HUAC he says that he was successful in changing the Pressed Steel Unit from left to right after he quit the Party, or something like that.

B: I don't know whether I read his testimony. And I ---

Q: But here it shows that he is out in '48. Acciacca is in. So is Acciacca elected on the Progressive slate all these years?

B: Yeah.

Q: Well he was in quite a while. And then Allen, I'm not sure--oh J. Allen.

A: Joe Allen.

Q: Joe?

A: A good guy. Progressive.

Q: Okay. And then the last one is Yesta. I don't know if I am pronouncing it ---

A: Oh Yesta was a blowhard.

Q: Just a middle-of-the-roader?

Q: Yes, that was in '57. So Pressed Steel had a lot of elected lefwingers here except for the last year.

B: Well see it's when you get into some of these secondary positions

END OF SIDE A, TAPE 2

Q: . . . or Saari. You mentioned that your father was the best committeeman that he had ever met in his life.

A: He was. My father was a great, great guy. A great man.

Q: I can't remember which one of the two said it.

A: Whichever one, was telling the truth.

B: Did Acciacca, did you go into his appearance before the HUAC?

Q: No, he was evasive on the issue of communists in general. He didn't want to talk about that, so I didn't push it.

B: Was his wife there?

Q: Yes.

B: I see. If you had talked to him privately he might of --well, I know, he's--he cried before the UnAmerican Activities Committee that his children's life was spoiled and ---

Q: Yeah, and I read his testimony too and they didn't ask him to name any names, and I was surprised. You know that everytime that somebody was cooperative, they had a list of names and they said was this person there, was this person--they didn't ask him. Which I didn't understand why they did that. Even though he gave that voluntary statement.

B: I don't know whether I was in the hall when the testimony was given. I don't remember that. You know, the fact is that every member of the UnAmerican Activities Committee that came to Detroit. We did such a thorough job on them that none of them ran for reelection to Congress in the subsequent elections. We really--we carried the day. Except that they came back later and then there was the Senate, you know. But ---

A: What other names do you have?

Q: Okay, let's go to the next building. The Rolling Mill, I think we've got, almost all right-wingers. We've got McNalley in the Rolling Mill. He's right?

A: Oh yes. Everyone of them was right.

B: They have always been right.

Q: I've got Prato, Gorman, McNalley again. Knight, Kinney and Mando. Mando I have as a moderate.

A: Well, I don't know.

Q: Moderate or right?

A: Yeah.

Q: Okay.

B: But what used to happen is that some committeemen would, you see--here you've got the officers.

Q: Yeah, right. There's no recording of the committeemen, systematically. I have maybe a few.

B: Well you see, for instance, this guy is a black guy. De Loach, Kirk De Loach. And the very fact that he was black he knew he had to cooperate with the white, the structure there. But his being black told the tale, you know. But he didn't necessarily play much of a role. You very seldom saw him at any of the meetings. So you get a--what I'm trying to say is, you get a picture, a partial picture only--

Q: By looking at the top leadership, yeah.

B: Yes, you wind up with a--I told you about the Local. The officers were all white, you know. The International Executive Board, the officers were all white. We had that situation. And that did not begin to change as far as the Local until much later. But in the buildings, blacks rose to leadership in secondary or tertiary positions, you know.

A: Well you know in the Motor Building, this is rather interesting, all of the officers, the top officers, were all white. Everyone of them. There was never a black until Paul ran in 1950 and his vice president was black. He chose a black. Well that just spread throughout the Local. What are you doing, Paul? Once you let this happen, you know, the blacks are going to take over. Of course, they did a terrific job on him. Nigger-lover and everything else.

B: As a matter of fact, for a black to even--to rise up to the position of vice president, it's like Ferraro rising ---

A: In the Motor Building. It was unheard of.

Q: Who was that in 1950?

A: Fred Terrell.

B: That's Fred Terrell.

A: Terrell.

Q: So that was a slate that won that time?

B: Well you can see I carried Terrell throughout. And even after I was gone they accepted Terrell. So we did--I told you about working with Soretti?

Q: Yeah.

B: I had sewed some seed there that produced ---

Q: Yeah.

B: On the other hand, you had this type of situation. Where Soretti subsequently had Pierce, who was a Klansman, on his ticket.

Q: Oh really?

B: Oh, a son of a bitch,

Q: Um. Okay. The B Building was one, it seems to be going back and forth, but in the beginning they had Jensen in there as president in '41-'42.

A: Marty Jensen? Well he was an organizer.

Q: Martin you say his first name is?

A: Marty, Martin Jensen was an organizer. He was one of the top organizers.

Q: Was he a progressive?

A: Now we're talking about '41-'42-'43.

Q: Yeah.

A: No I wouldn't say that he was a--well you see it was in its infancy at that time, so it was in '42.

Q: So would you just call him a moderate?

A: Really at that point they were trying to build a union more than anything else. The fact that he was an organizer, you know, signed people up and--so I don't know what you would call him.

Q: Okay, then we have a Rooney in the B Building.

A: Which Rooney was that?

Q: He was in for one, two, three terms. Forty-three to '45.

A: I can't place him.

Q: I don't have a first name.

A: Can't place him.

B: You got these out of the Ford Facts.

Q: Yeah. Lots of times they didn't put the first names, so--. I have Dennis here. Dennis Rooney.

A: I escape it completely.

B: Well it's a different Rooney than the other anyway.

A: Yes, it is.

Q: Then we've got Leo Orsage.

A: Oh Leo was a good guy.

B: Progressive, yeah.

Q: In '46. Then Donnelly, Mike Donnelly.

B: A good guy.

A: Mike was a nice guy.

B: Oh sure.

Q: He was a left? Okay.

A: Moderate I would say. Donnelly?

Q: And then we've got Riley for one year.

A: Riley was a nice guy. Moderate.

Q: Then Quillico, that was Walter that was in the B Building, right?

B: Walter, right.

A: A progressive.

Q: Donnelly again. And then--how do you pronounce his name. You said it once before. Balogh?

B: Balogh.

A: Balogh. It's a Hungarian name. Charlie Balogh. Charles Balogh. You don't pronounce the g. Balogh.

Q: He was in which camp?

A: He was a left-wing at that time. In the early days.

Q: He was elected in '57. At that time had he turned?

A: Oh he was a committeeman for a while. A long time before he became chairman. So he was with the so-called left-wing peoples' caucuses. Not overly progressive, but I would say moderate.

Q: Un-huh. Now the tire plant was only in existence during the war, '41 to '45. We have Pilon.

B: Now, he left to go into business?

Q: So was he with the right wing?

B: As a matter of fact I think, yeah.

A: Yeah, yeah.

B: I think of the reasons why he left was because he didn't like all the militancy there.

Q: Sidelko.

A: Who?

Q: Sidelko. Only one term.

A: I don't remember him at all. Not not even that name.

Q: Huh. We have one term for Samp. You said he was a right-winger. And then Don Wade.

B: Um-hum.

A: He was good. He was a progressive.

Q: And then Frame and Cold Heading came in in the '50s.

A: Well then you had Ed Lock in 1950 in the tire plant.

Q: Tire ---

A: Plastic. It became plastic.

Q: Oh yeah plastic. Yeah, okay.

A: Tire and plastic are one and the same.

Q: Okay, let's see. Okay, plastics started in '46 right after the ---

A: It was called tire plant and then became plastic.

Q: Yeah, I have some information that is kind of weird. I think that this is wrong. It says that McCusker was elected to the Plastic Unit in '46. But I've never seen any reference to him being in the tire plant other than that.

A: No.

Q: I think that's wrong. We have Ed Lock, who was a Progressive. He stayed in from '47 to '51.

A: Well he off with Paul.

B: He was one of the guys on trial and was suspended from office.

Q: Oh. And then Pluhar.

B: Pluhar, progressive.

A: More or less(?)

Q: And then Kay for one term in '57.

A: Oh he was a Reutherite. He didn't know what the hell he was.

B: You talking about Paul Kay?

A: Yeah, Paul Kay. Harmless little creature.

B: He's still around if you want to talk to him.

A: He was an opportunist, and he would go with anyone.

A: Spring and Upset became Pressed Steel, and then Pressed Steel to Dearborn Stamping. So you can git all confused.

Q: Yeah.

A: The same building can have two different names.

Q: What am I--I think I have it at the bottom of something else. We did Axel--no, we didn't do Axel. Semion is a left-winger, right? Hogan is a left-winger, Ignasiak is a right-winger, and Plawecki you don't remember him?

B: Plawecki, right. A Reutherite.

Q: Parts and Accessories. D'Agostino.

A: Right wing.

B: All Reutherites.

Q: And O'Connell, a Reutherite. Edwards?

B: Yeah.

A: Foundry Machine Shop, we had Jack Poole, he's a moderate I think, right?

B: No, he's a left.

Q: He's a left? Raniszeski.

B: He's still around if you want to talk to him but he's not that healthy.

Q: Yeah, I talked to him last time. He didn't want to do an interview.

B: Oh.

Q: Jack Poole.

A: Oh.

B: I told you I ran into him at the store one day. Sent greetings-regards to you though.

A: Yeah.

Q: Mancebo.

B: Progressive.

Q: Okay. Spring an upset. Here we've got Twyman.

B: Yeah, he was a so-called Progressive.

Q: Spowart?

A: Progressive.

B: _____. He was part of the anti-Reuther caucus.

A: Oh, yeah.

Q: And then McMillan and McIntosh.

A: McIntosh was a right-winger. A definite rightw-inger. McMillan was an in-between.

Q: Okay. We've got these, Fane and Kovak. We have Lesinski and Morgan. Morgan, I think, was a left-winger, right?

A: Yeah.

Q: Lesinski do you remember?

A: I can't remember. He must have been a one-termer, right?

Q: Yes, one term. And then Brothers.

B: Brothers is a left-winger.

Q: Rinaldi in the Lincoln Mercury Parts. Lou Rinaldi?

A: Well, he was Stellato. And they were with Reuther ---

B: He became a superintendent for the Ford Motor Company later so they trusted him.

Q: Oh, so he's a right-winger?

B: They sent him to ---

A: Well anyway he was a superintendent.

Q: So either right or moderate then?

A: Yeah.

B: I think he got a big steel plant near Buffalo, New York.

A: That's _____?_____.

B: Yeah, yeah.

Q: Okay, we got them all.

B: Something cold to drink or ---

END OF TAPE 2, SIDE B