

DAVID MOORE
INTERVIEW JANUARY, 1984

I: Let's start with a brief description how you got involved in labor unions--your family history. Were your parents involved in labor unions?

R: Well, number one, I was born in the deep south--born in the state of South Carolina, 1912, and my father was a fireman on the railroad--white man's fireman on the railroad. Had those locomotive engines at that time for a white man, was below his dignity. They only had blacks. Blacks could never become an engineer, and my folks left South Carolina back in 1923, and we moved to Columbus, Ohio and I attended some of the schools in Ohio, and my father had a cousin working in Detroit. The Ford Motor Company was paying five bucks a day. I went up there to get some of that big money. Left Ohio. I wasn't out of school at that time (school wasn't out at that time), and my mother and father and younger brother stayed. Later on they moved to Detroit back in 1927-28. And I've been here since. I think the other part of your question was about the labor movement. I didn't like Detroit. I left here three times--ran away, went back to Ohio. Third time I left there so I couldn't make it. All my family was here, and I stayed here. As you know, the depression hit this country in 1929, and I came from a large family. There were eleven of us. 7 boys, 2 girls, plus my mother and father. And naturally being black we got hit the hardest. Many whites who were hit also--the depression didn't spare anybody, and everybody. But the blacks was always the last hired and the first fired. And with a growing family

of 7 boys and 2 girls, it was real difficult for us to get along. But we struggled.

I: At the time your father was employed at Ford?

R: Oh, no. My father was working at that time for a contractor here in Detroit. He didn't go to work for Ford^d because he could make more money from the contractor. Worked for the contractor. Later he went to work at the Revere Copper and Brass. But he was laid off--wasn't working. You could see misery and deprivation, hunger and everything that makes life uncomfortable was plentiful around the city of Detroit. And I used to shovel snow in the wintertime, and pick out ashes in the summertime and cut grass and do whatever. Not only me, but everybody in my neighborhood. Whatever way you could make a few pennies, we tried. But instead of getting better, it got worse. At that time Hoover was still president, and a chicken in every pot and two cars in every garage was a slogan at that time. But we never could find the chicken or pot to put the chicken in. Damn sure we couldn't find a car to put into two garages. Things went to happening here in Detroit, but people began to get together and discuss their plight, and as a result of that especially those who had been working and were unemployed, the unemployment councils were formed. All kind of agitation took place. You could see at the time some of the best people, I thought, come forward who had not been given the opportunity to do so by speaking and debating about what should be did, how it should be did, who should lead and what not. And I was going around these places, listening to everything.

I: And with the unemployment councils?

R: Unemployment council, yeah. And I began to get acquainted with guys, women and everything. So, I found myself deep involved. Evictions was taking place. I would join up with a bunch of guys. They would, just for example, set Judy and her family out. No sooner than bailiffs and sheriffs left, we'd go and put them back in.

I: How did they arrange those? What was the arrangement? How did you know when people were being evicted? Did you have neighborhood watches?

R: Well, the news was spread something--Howard Jones is going to be evicted in the next block. At that time it seemed like the depression was not always bad. It brought people more closer together. And they shared the common, I would say, bad things with each other. And the good things also. It seemed like more unity at that time. It was more unity among the black and white people here in Detroit at that time than it has been here lately when some things supposed to be real plentiful after and during the war, after the war and whatnot. But during the time of the Depression, the whites and the blacks was closely knitted. The working class people, those who were working in the factories, were doing the hard cold work. But in answer to your question about how did they know that the bailiffs were coming, sometimes they didn't know. They just come and set them out. Sometimes vice would take place and they'd chase the bailiffs away. You know. Then they'd go and get the police and here come two, three or four cars of police went in to back them up. Then we had to back off. But they couldn't stay forever. When they would leave, we'd put them back in again. And nobody would tell them who put them back in again. They couldn't keep 24 hours a day 48 hours a night. So we'd

put them back in. Sometimes they'd get so damn p.o.'d by the many trips they'd have to make. Is it the hell worth it, you know. But as time went on, I began to get more involved in things. So, I found myself deep involved in the unemployment councils. And we did many things. Demonstrations, leaflets, argued with each other, debated what should be did, who should do it. Finally a big thing happened in my life, it was when we had the hunger march, back in 1932. I was involved in that and we all sections of the city and some on our side of hte city of Detroit, Melvindale, Hamtramack, Dearborn, Wy^andotte-- these are all suburbs of Detroit. I don't know whether you know about them or not, but I'm pretty sure people have told you, you talked to some of the guys you said. Especially Dor^gash and Boatin. And on that day, the Detroit contingent got a permit from the city council of Detroit to march through the city limits of Dearborn and they said we couldn't come any further. But you see all kinds of versions of how many people were involved in that march. Newspapers had their version. Each individual had their version. In my own version I would say at least 80 to 100,000 people. When we got to the city limits of Dearborn a place called Baby Creek Park, that's where we had to make our decision whether we would go on. We decided to go and we went down Dicks until we got to a place called Miller Road. There were people coming from south of Dicks--from Wyandotte and the others, Inkster, River Rouge, and whatnot, and Detroit...We merged then. We started to move, they turned the fire hoses on us. Words were exchanged. We stopped and decided to go on again. And the police started to use tear gas. You ever see some of the pictures--everybody was showing pictures of what happened on that day.

I: No, I've read Bill McKee's account.

R: Bill was more deeply involved in it. In fact, he was one of the leaders. Bill and I were in it. I got to know Bill after that. I got close to Bill, real close to him.

I: He was real involved with the Unemployed Councils, too?

R: Yeah, yeah, he helped organize the unemployment council. And on that day, that's when I grew up to be a man. I was in that march. If I'd thought of it, I'd have brought some of my pictures along. We got down to the place called gate 3 on Miller Road by the employment office. And that's where all the fighting began. First some shots rang out; tear gas was going; I saw five good guys, three of them were good friends of mine, killed. Joey Oak, Coleman Lenny and Curtis Williams, a black guy that got killed. He died later on. But one of the guys almost died right there in my arms. And Joe Deblasio, a guy that was shot and fell right across a cop. Have you talked to Chris Alston, yet? That's the guy you should talk to. C-H-R-I-S, A-L-S-T-O-N. He's up in age now but he's got a lot of knowledge. In fact, I got involved in all this because of Chris. But he was one of the leaders of it. Of the march. He and Bill McCaitre were close together. And I saw blood. Black men, white women, black women all pulling together right down Miller Road. And I always tell everybody, that's when I grew up from a boy to be a man. On that day. From then on, I got more people involved. We, I was the honor guard at the funeral for the guys. One of the honor guards at the funeral. One of the biggest funeral marches since I've been here in Detroit. I don't know what happened before we came, that ever took place in the city of Detroit. Took place when they buried guys. When they had the

funeral. Come all the way from Fairy down to Woodward and down to Gran Circus Park. And you couldn't budge for the crowd there. Did you ever see the pictures of the funeral?

I: No, but again that was in McKie's book.

R: That was in 1932. By 1933, I got arrested for assault and battery on a policeman. Got put in jail. Got the hell beat out of me. Lo and behold, Franklin Delano Roosevelt was elected in 1933. And in May of 1933, I went to a CCC Camp making 5 bucks a month. It was thirty, but twenty-five of it you never saw. It went to your family back home. I stayed up at three C camp almost 2 years. And lo and behold, I started some agitation up there. Sheriff came out a couple of times. Wanted to put me in jail. Commander of the camp was guy from up in North Dakota someplace, and he kind of understood everything, but, you can't do that, you can't. You working for the government, now. That's the way the Communists do in Russia. I said, what the hell the Communists do in Russia. I thought I wasn't getting treated right and everything. So, we had a rebellion up there, we had a strike at CCC Camp.

I: How many people worked there?

R: In our camp, 385 people in it. All white officers. No black officers at all. And the majority in the camp were black. We had about, must have been about 30 or 40 white in the camp. We had people from Michigan, Indiana, Ohio, Des moines, Iowa, St. Louis, Missouri and Illinois and all parts of the midwest. We were the first group to go out. And we caught hell. We stayed right in Fort Wayne. Fort Wayne was the home of the second infantry division of the United States Army. You ever been out at Fort Wayne? This contingent, now, and we

stayed there three weeks, then they shipped way up to the northern part of Michigan.

I: I've heard it's very cold up there.

R: 35⁰ below zero. And we were living in tents. And we were given old, discarded World War I uniforms. I got some pictures on that. 1935, at night it would get so cold, the pine trees would just pop, you know. But we had to do it. It would give us fleace-lined underwear. Just old canvas tents. But you now, I don't know, none of us caught colds, hardly. Nobody died of pneumonia. But they did build barracks later on. But I was the last one to go into the barracks. So, I ran into one of the officers that was a doctor out of Chicago. A guy by the name of Dr. Epstein, David Epstein. And I had had some knowledge of first aid. I had passed the senior first aid and the junior first aid tests. Red Cross tests. And he was asking for anybody who had any medical training. You'd be surprised you had guys who had one year of college. But I got a job in the hospital. I got promoted. Instead of getting five bucks a month, I was getting eleven bucks a month. And I stayed up there almost two years. Then I was discharged. We couldn't stay over two years. Twenty-months was the limit. I came back here in 1935, back to Detroit. And I got a job out at ^{Briggs} Breaks Mfg. Co. at Chrysler. Got used to making bodies for Chrysler. And for the whole GM setup. I got hired in there, 32 cents an hour. They had all the black guys sanding the bodies with their hands. And you could sand. After you worked eight hours of just x number of days or weeks and you just got so tired. 32 cents an hour. They was paying the blacks 32 cents an hour to sand after they passed out to another section of the line and the bodies were sanded out and

then went to where the white guys were who put what you call the primer on and they were getting 36 cents an your. 4 cents more an hour than we were. But we had to do all the hard work. And they went to another section in the lot where they sprayed paint on and they were getting 4 cents an hour more than the other white guys were. But anyway, I got involved in the union, and I got fired. And ...

I: What union was this?

R: It was the UAW.

I: 174? Local 174?

R: No, no, no. That was local 212. I got fired there. That's what it became. Later on it wasn't in the local at that time. I didn't work at ^{breaks} breaks but 4 or 5 months at the most. And it wasn't regulated at that time. You'd go in, they'd send you home. Lo and behold, I was told that they were hiring at Ford's, 1935. And, in between that time, there was much activity going on around organizing. And, I ran into Bill McKie again. So I said, "Look, we're going to organize-- we're going all out this time." "So, ^{ok} come on, we can't make it. We've got too much against us." "Come to the meeting over on McGraw tonight, we're gonna have some of the guys tonight, and we got some plans." So I started going back and forth to these meetings. So, in between that time a guy living next door to me said "I got hired at Ford." He said "I slipped in through the line and I got in the back door. They hired me. One guy dropped his pass and said, "I got a pass here if you want to use it." Then, January 17, 1935 I walked all the way from my home. I was living (I know you're not too familiar with Detroit) I walked all the way. I left home at 2:30 that morning. And I got out to Ford round about 4:00. And that line looked like a

million people in that line, you know. And I had this pass. At 8:00 the employment office opened up. They had all the Ford service people there. And they would let so many come through, and stop, you know. One guy said, "All those who got a pass come up to the gate." I went and I got inside. They had one black guy who did all the hiring of the blacks. No white man would hire blacks.

I: Was that the guy that was...

R: Marshall, Don Marshall.

I: Was he connected with some of the churches before?

R: Yes. And all the blacks were confined to the foundry. So, he says: "how much you weigh?" I was weighing 116 at the time. I said I weigh 150. He say, you must have rocks in your pocket. I never will forget that. You're hired. You're hired at 62 and 1/2 cents an hour. Wow! 62 cents an hour! You'll work in the foundry on the shake out. Shake out was the worst job you could get. I don't know if you're familiar with foundry work.

I: Not very much.

R: You pour that iron. If you're making a piston, that mold is shaped in a piston. The iron come out of the furnace just like water. Guys would come up, and pour that iron in there, then it would set so long. They they would spray water over it, and the steam would come out and it was hot and you had to go home and shake it out. That's what you call a shake out. All that fumes coming up.

I: What are you shaking out--the bubbles?

R: Well, you had like a, what do you say, a guy with an amputee on his arm, a little hook. He would get that mold it was in and just take it and shake it. Until all that sand come off it. But anyway, that was

January 17, 1935, when I got hired. I worked in all that fumes there for about 3 days and they took me out of there, put me outside on the shipping dock. Shipping motors. I was weighing 116, and the motors weighted 600 lb. And I had to help a guy put the motors in a box car to be shipped out to different parts of the country. I ran into a guy who's an Italian guy, a real husky guy. "I got you. I got you." And I'm going to have to hit this guy right on the side of his jaw, and I know I'm not going to stay here long. But the guy kept telling us, "don't get mad. I'll help you all I can." And I would be struggling with this motor. But I began to get it, there's a way you can handle it. We had a chain that once we got it on the platform a hoist could pull it up and stack it.

I: Why did they select you to do that?

R: They didn't care ^{at that} what time, as long as you could do it. Everybody wanted to work, you know.

I: I mean take you out of the foundry.

R: Well, that's a good question. I think what had happened, that the guys that I was working along with in the foundry had all had black supervisors, most of them black and Italian, that's what they had. They didn't want to go outside in the cold weather. It was January, you know. And it was cold outside on the shipping dock and the wind was blowing like mad. And I wanted to get away from that steam. I didn't know what to do when they said shipping docks. You got a chance to out on the shipping dock. This supervisor was from a place called Columbia, Tennessee. I never will forget this guy, he had that real southern accent. How about one of you boys come out here and go with me out on the shipping dock. I don't care which one. Just get

you so and so over here and come with me. So nobody made a mad rush, but I wanted to get out of that field, you know. So, I went off. He said, son, how much y'all weigh? Now y'all come on here. You know you're gonna have to work with these boys out here on this dock and put these motors up. Now, y'all understand that, don't you? Yes, sir! I was going to get out of there. So, I worked out there until April when the weather began to get a little better. And lo and behold, they sent me to a place called the Rolling Mill. Back in the hell again, you know. That's where they roll all the steel out of. I guess you know the steel mill. And I stayed there. And that's when I worked there for awhile.

I: What did you do when you were there?

R: Well, I was working over on a place what you call a pickeling tank, where we'd get the steel and put it in a big tank to set for awhile til it's pickled. And then they would got the fumes cooking up again, I went from Hell to double Hell. And, I stayed there, and I ran into Bill McKie again. That's when the real movement began to organize here. It began to make the drive on GM and Chrysler and in 1936, about a year after I'd worked there, I got involved with a guy called Bill McKie. I got involved with a guy named Percy Herelly. Of course, he's dead now. Johnny Gallo. He's dead. And Boatman, he was around. And we set up what you call the Ford organizing committee. And things went to happening.

I: Was Shelton Tappes and Dorash involved with that also?

R: Yeah, they were all involved. Dorash especially. Dorash was deeply involved in it. I guess Walter and I've been friends over the years. When you mention his name, that's why you see me beam like I did.

Some of the others had some real outs about them later on. During the McCarthy era, I haven't got to that part. But anyway, we went to one hell of an organizing drive at Ford. I was fired. I was caught with UAW literature inside my shirt. I got the hell beat out of me. They took me to the desk. That's what they called it. They took you to the desk. They said, nigger, if you ever be caught around the Ford Motor company again, we'll kill you. And they got me to the gate. But anyway, through the NLRB cases, we got back. But in the meantime, we were still pushing for organizing. Finally, we organized GM. GM went on a sit down strike in '37. Chrysler was being organized. Then I, Shelton and some of the other guys out at Ford, we were planning, cause that's where the big activity was going on. Gas was six cents a gallon at that time. Where you going to get the six cents to get the gallon of gas. Anyway, we'd throw in our pennies and whatnot, and we'd go up to Flint to help the guys out there in the sit down strikes. And, but after Chrysler, GM was organized. Activity centered around Ford, you know. And it was just awful. So many things had happened to guys who was involved in the Ford set up. Ford was... GM was supposed to be rough. But out of the three, the brutality and the death, the company went to prevent the union from coming in...I mean, beatings, shootings, arrests, going to court. He controlled Dearborn. He had control of the city of Dearborn, economically. All the judges was on his influence, all the city politicians.

I: Repression was the important factor in this. In taking longer for Ford to get organized.

R: I got the last part, what was the first?

I: That repression was an important factor then and all this antagonistic activity by Ford himself and his hired people was one of the important factors that kept Ford from being organized earlier?

R: One of the important factors was Ford had jobs that were more liberal toward the Blacks. I shouldn't use the word liberal. There was nothing liberal in the bastard. He had a strategy that was much different than General Motors and Chrysler. He built homes for Blacks out in Inskster and I say homes, they were shacks, he would give them land they could go out and farm a garden, land to farm garden and you could go to his stores and buy food. It was something like the old concept in the south, the company store, I guess you heard this song about the coal miners. I owe my soul to the company store. Well, in this case you owed your soul to the Ford Motor Company if you participated in his plan. In Bill McKie's book he gives you a better description of it that I think anybody could ever give and after he gave you all this he said now you got to pay. But anyway General Motors and Chrysler they didn't have Blacks on any machine. The best you could do was work cleaning up the floors, mopping in the restrooms, in the men's restrooms and things like that, but Ford had a sprinkling of Blacks here and there in the different buildings and he showed a little more I would say generosity and understanding by not just completely, this is all white and this is all black because he even had white's in the foundry. Most of them were foreign born. Italians, Poles, Ukranians, things like that. He had a sprinkling of Blacks in the motor building. That's where all the motors were assembled and what not. He had them on some pretty nice jobs. And the big point in organizing Ford, why it was so hard in my opinion,

was because you had number one, you had the brutality to force workers, on the part of Ford. Some people in my opinion was not raised to face the brutality. Number 2, you had his propaganda going that if the plant is unionized we are goint to close it down, especially to Negroes. You are not allowed to even go to meetings in unions. They got separate locals, sure did, AFL, all of them had Blacks. To become a member of AFL union you could^g'nt sit in a meeting, participate in a meeting with Whites, you had to have your own separate local, your own separate meetings and what not. This was one of the strategies he used. And this was to his advantage. Some of the Blacks at that time were ready to join the union based on what they had known, what their fathers had told them, some of what they went through themselves. Some of the White's were not ready to join the unions because they had a lot of the southern White government working at the plant. But despite all of that my answer to your question is that these are the two factors I think that caused the UAW to take as long to break through at Ford than they did at GM and Chrysler. Because it was just one-sided at GM and Chrysler. They didn't have any Blacks anyway but at Ford you did have a sprinkling. That caused some apprehension I would say on the part of some of the Blacks and some of the Whites. Being a little apprehensive about just coming straightforward and joining the union and whatnot. They had spies. They had all kinds of methods that were used by the company and not used by GM and Chrysler such as guys visiting your home and going back and reporting to the company that Judy had a meeting at her house last night. Joe Blow was there, Sally Rose was there, so and so and so. So, well Judy, we are going to have to lay you off. We don't

have any more work for you. And they would send you out and somebody else would come right in and take your job. They didn't have any consideration of how long you had been there, all they wanted to know is to find out what were your activities as far as pro or anti-union and I think this in answer to your question, of course that would be my answer to it. But despite all of that it didn't prevail through meetings and leaflets propaganda, determination I would say on the part of guys like Dorosh, guys like Bill McKie, guys like Tony Moranivich, they were determined and I think out of that came the real, I would say efforts on the part of individuals and what not to organize Ford. The last one we organized of the big three. We didn't organize Ford until 1941. We had general motors on its knees in '37. We had Chrysler almost in '35. Some of the sub-plants Chrysler owned at the time like Thompson Products making parts for Chrysler. The conditions in the plant were just miserable. You go in there and you started at 7:00 in the morning you had to be on that job at 5 minutes to 7:00. You had to be standing there when that bell rang before the echo of that bell was over you had to be performing your job. But 1941 we organized the union.

I: Did you see a big change in the attitude of the workers in the plant before and after it was unionized?

R: At that time? Yes, it was a big change in attitude. It was almost a 99% turnaround--100% turnaround. They were more defiant to the supervisors. They had then, having their say so. The union saying well, we are going to work, Judy was involved in an argument or the foreman, disagreed with the supervisor, everybody in that department could stop work and come to Judy's defense. Unfortunately, the war

started. All of this militancy being demonstrated by the workers and it was a big turnaround. And it was. It was there. The militance. It was there. The desire and cooperation among each other, the concern for each other especially at Local 600. I don't think there was any, in fact I know by experience in the labor movement, there was never a local in the whole UAW that I have known where the solidarity and the togetherness and the brotherhood was more exhibited by the Blacks and the Whites as in the Local 600.

I: Why do you think that was the case of the Local 600?

R: Well, I think it was because first, no. 1, because of the people who were involved in organizing Local 600.

I: Did you have accommodations?

R: Guys like a Dorosh, guys like a Bill McKie, ¹ guys like a Johnny Gallo, and who had not only said it, but demonstrated by action the only way we are going to ever get beat ~~by~~ the Ford Motor Company or get some recognition, all of us got to be together. We should not be divided based on race. What happens to Judy as a White woman happens to Dave Moore as a Black man or Sally ¹ Jones as a White woman. And this was instilled in the Ford workers. They had a close-knit brotherhood there. There is still some semblance of it still existing today but not like it did at that time, '41 on up until just a few years ago, in fact you know. A big turnaround was made. But it was because of guys that I have mentioned, like Percy Llewellyn, Bill Moranivich and all these guys, a lot of them I could mention. But the official answer to your question is that because of the leadership and the particular type of the individuals who were involved in organizing the Ford plant at that time. Because they, the byword in this system was, it was

either together, or it could be apart and the only way we are going to accomplish our objective is we got to be, regardless of what your religion or your political thing, your ethnic background or your racial identity may be, and they wouldn't tolerate it. And the guys I never seen anything like it before. I haven't seen it happen since. It was just something that no Blacks were living in Dearborn at the time. But the Whites who was living in Dearborn at the time were more friendly, they were inviting Blacks, and it had never happened before but you used to go and heck we had, it was a complete solidarity and understanding and brotherhood in my opinion what happened there. And to me it's unfortunate it just doesn't exist anymore. Different bread, and different attitude; different leadership altogether.

I: Do you think another part of that might be that more Whites were working with Blacks since there were more Blacks in the plant?

R: Well, that could have been it. But before, during the organization, rather, Ford tried to use the race issue to keep them apart but again I have to go back to the high point of the Ford organizing drive, exhibited by the White and the Black organizers. In all the meetings that you would go to that would be the first point you got to understand that the Ford Motor Company is doing. They are trying to divide you because you may be the word Negro then, you be a Negro and he's White. Or you may be Catholic and you may be Protestant. He did, he used all kind of tactics because you live at Dearborn or because you live in Detroit. And that taught me a hell of a lesson as far as understanding and getting people to realize and understand what the real issues are and exhibited not only out at Ford, for the years to come in the city of Detroit. The police department and what not.

There used to be a time when Black guys couldn't work in Detroit Police Department. Out of 6,000 policemen you had 23 Blacks. But I always said that whatever the leadership of any organization does, it reflects on the membership. And it most certainly happened that Ford during the organizing drive in the UAW. Those in charge of the leadership or organizing the UAW in the Ford plant exhibited and carried out in their own way and handed it on down to the membership and nowhere in the UAW have I witnessed any examples of brotherhood more than I have seen in the Local 600. And that goes all the way after we organize it to conventions and where, discrimination is still rampant in our society but you take back in the 40s and 50s there were some hotels where Black delegate to a UAW convention you couldn't get in there. But out of Local 600 were were fined if a Black guy was being refused admittance to a hotel or motel and that hotel was almost torn apart and would have been torn apart if they didn't give them a room you know. White guys was doing it for us, you know. And we even had run-ins with other locals in the UAW. The White guys did from 600 and defending Black guys, you know. Some of the White guys from other locals around the country just what in the hell are you doing, oh, he's a Negro, he can't do it, he can't eat in this room with the rest of us, you know, these are White guys. God damn it, if he don't eat in here, nobody is going to eat, you know. And we put up a picket line, sometimes we did, the White guys themselves would organize. But at some point time catches up with them. Most of them gone on now, some of them dead and gone a lot of them retired and not active anymore but these are things that happenned. And after it was organized then war came and a lot of Blacks and Whites came from the

South here. Housing become an issue. Certain places in the city didn't want Blacks. Projects were being built. We in Local 600 were insisting that these projects being built by the Federal Government using money is open to everybody. Even some of the damn government officials say well, you can't do that. You can't let Blacks in here, you can't let Whites in here either. And they tried to pit some of our own White guys against the Blacks, moving in different projects but we the Whites and the Blacks would picket and demonstrate together. We fought for integrated housing, at that time during the war. We got a damn war going, our future is at stake, and you say Hitler is th^e enemy, damn it to hell you're going to be saying if the guy on the verge of going to the Army to give up his life of defense of you, and you're telling us that he can't live here. Here he got his draft papers in his pocket and looking for a place for his family to live to go to defend this place and you tell me that he can't live, well to hell with that crap. And as I say I go back again these were things that were did by guys from 600. We had some from other, I won't say that other locals were just anti-Black. You had individuals in those locals but it was not as overwhelming and together in the other locals in Detroit in areas as it was in the Local 600.

I: Were you successful in any of those attempts to get the government to integrate housing?

R: Was I involved in it--

I: Were you successful?

R: Oh yes, oh yes. I'll give an example. You take the Sojourner Project out here in northeast Detroit, that was one. You take the Herman Gardens over here on the West Side, that was one. And you take the

neighborhoods themselves where individual housing, where Blacks had never lived before in some neighborhoods here in the city of Detroit. The only time they were there they were serving as domestics, or chauffeurs or something like that. But you would always find we had what you call a flying squad at Local 600. Wherever there was a trouble spot you had this flying squad. These were guys we called the head crackers you know. Black and White. I got my uniform home yet. And it's all in the part, but I tried it. And wherever there would be troublespot whether it was involving the union or whatever it was, if it was involving a worker, whatever the problem was Black or White worker the Flying Squad from Local 600 is going over to give this guy some help. We want 50 guys here at 6:00 tomorrow morning, we are going to go to Samanski's house, Samanski's having some trouble with the police department you know. Or he is having some trouble with this, whatever it was we were there, you know.

I: It sounds like you sort of modeled after the teams that went out with the unemployed councils, the groups of guys that--

R: Yeah, well that's where we took our, in fact we were the first local and the whole UAW organized what you called a Flying squad. They took all their locals followed our lead later on. So but during the time of the organization of Ford many people were beaten and they have het scars today to show for it. Some people were murdered. I'll give you an example, this Hunger March. And you could take the battle of the Overpass when Walter Reuther, Dick Frankenstein and Dick Leonard and the rest of them were beaten openly with the police standing right there. I guess you saw pictures.

I: Yeah.

convention, the '43 convention, the '46 convention, the '47 convention, the '48 convention, the '49 convention, the '50 convention, you will see that this issue was one of the main issues of the convention. And I'm proud to say that I was involved in it.

I: And was Local 600 involved in it?

R: Yes, Local 600 was carrying the torch--Black and White. And we got to a point where if you wanted to say anything about integrating the UAW executive board with a Black you were called a communist. Well, before that they had nothing to hang on, they would just have the majority and we could never beat them. But they advocate a Black on the UAW beginning in 1947--'46 and '47, you will find that the issue of communism was the main wedge and the main hammer they had to use against those who were advocating the Black people on the UAW executive board. As a result of that we were branded. Some guys got defeated in their local union by others who claimed to be red, white, and blue Americans and saying that he was a member of or he just followed the issue you were in favor. If you were a White person who was in favor of defending or supporting anyone say it's time for a Black to be on the UAW executive board, you were branded as a Red at that time. The record showed this. This is not what Dave Moore is saying. This is what the UAW record shows. And if you care to look at the proceedings of the convention, you will find out. Starting in 1947 you will find out that that lasted all the way up through the McCarthy era. And I had been one of the guys and I'm proud of it. And if I had to do it again, I would do it with more determination. And I would do it with more force and I would do it with more knowledge than I had at that time and I would never retreat on it.

R: But that's just one example. People want to highlight that. Well, I said want to, maybe they highlight it. But the true history, I say just the true history and I make this a point I will not retreat on that, I don't give a goddam who tries to correct me when they say it's not true history the labor movement and the union organization of plants here in Detroit has never been written. The true history.

I: You mean from the rank and file perspective.

R: Yeah, from the standpoint of the rank and file. And the true, especially the participation and the contribution that the Blacks made in organizing the union here in this town it has never been written. And it has been deliberately concealed. When I say deliberately, I can prove it was deliberate. And this has been one of my sore spots with the leadership of the UAW, including Walter Reuther, he's dead and gone, God bless his soul and he and I had many run-ins on this. I was kicked out of the UAW for 12 years along with Johnny Gallo, along with Paul Boatman and along with others. But I was kicked out and even after we made all this fight with the companies and whatnot the same damn discrimination began to involve itself in the UAW as a whole, not just from 600 but other locals around the country and at conventions. I was among those who took Walter on many times about discrimination in the UAW and the record shows that from the time we organized the UAW no Blacks, man or woman sat on the board in any major position up until 1961. It took us that long to get it, 1961, yeah 1961 and yet they were going all around the damn country hollering about democracy and what the UAW stands for. And this was one of my sore spots with Walter and others around him and others before him and others to come on. And if you look back in the scenes of the UAW convention, Buffalo

You're talking about a Democratic union and how it's functioned and whatnot. But dammit to hell demonstrate it to me in action, instead of words. But lo and behold beginning in the late 40s communism become a big issue, not only in the labor movement but throughout the country. I don't know whether you and your husband were around maybe at that time or weren't around, I'm pretty sure your mother and father can tell you about it. I don't know what backgrounds you came from, what kind of family background you have. But if your mother and father knew Dave Moore and was a friend of them, the FBI, the Red Squad in that city would come to your mother and father's house--oh, I know that Dave Moore was over visiting you. How long have you been knowing him. What's his activities. Has he ever asked you come to a social affair. He's Black and you are White. Why would you go. And if you were to tell them, well he's my friend, I don't give a damn what his political affiliation, I don't know his political affiliation is, I don't know what it is. I never have asked him. He is a friend of mine. Well, we want you to keep inviting him over. But we want you to make a report to us everytime he comes over. What he says to you blah, blah, blah. And you say well, I'm not going to be a damn stool pidgeon, you know. Then they brand you. Then you lose your job, you know. The word passes on wherever you go. But anyway, back to the UAW again. Beginning in 1946 and '47 the change began in the UAW and that change in my opinion was not for the better but for the worse. That's when the McCarthy era began to come in. And sometimes you sit back and you wonder people who you have been so close to and people who have sat at your table and ate with you, people you have fraternized with, people you'd loan money to when they needed money,

people that your wife or your kids went over and helped when they were sick or they needed assistance whatever we were, through fair, and (?) and they turned on you. They will see you coming and they wouldn't speak to you. You know they would tell their kids don't play with them, don't you go over there anymore and even in the church when they wouldn't sit beside you in the church, this happened to my father not because my father was involved or anything but because of me. I was a great admired supporter of Paul Robeson, Dr. Dubois and knowing my affiliation and my background in the UAW and some of the things that happened in the UAW, that is to say, I was put on trial in my local union. Five of us. They called us the Forb^f five. I don't know whether Dorosh told you about this or Boatin told you about this. No charges were leveled against us. No witness, all got a notice. And I found out in the paper. I was on my way to work, I was holding the position of vice-president and the bargaining committeeman at the time at my Plant.

I: The vice president of what?

R: I was vice president of the bargaining committee at the Gear and Axle plant at that time. And on my way to work one day I picked up a paper and the administrator had been put over locals and five UAW officials removed from jobs. Nobody ever said anything to me about me. Low and behold I got the plant and said well, you are to go back on your regular job classification. I had been elected, democratically elected. I'll be damned if I'm going back on the job. I was elected, if the people want to send me back on the job its the people who voted for me, when they vote me out of office. Well, the hierarchy of the UAW sent a communication to the Ford Motor Company and said these

people are no longer holding union positions here. Well, we raised hell about it so finally they put us on trial. The trial lasted almost two and a half years.

I: All this time you were off. You were out of your official position?

R: Yeah, the only thing that saved me completely, out at the plant was the Taft-Hartley Act itself as much as I fought against the Taft-Hartley Act. But the Taft Hartley Act had in it a clause "No union official can ever be denied his right to work." He will be denied his right to hold elected or appointed office, but he cannot be denied his right to work for the plant. With my record with the Ford Motor Company at that time when I had to go back on the job they were glad to see me come back. They were glad to see me come back because they were going to give me one hell of a time and they did. The job that I had before I got elected to the union position was as an inspector.

I: In the Gear and Axle plant?

R: I believe it was at that time that began the Black period of UAW leadership, concerning B. Bradley (?), what they called a member or subservient to the Communist Party. We went through one hell of a deal for 12 or 13 years, about 13, years, trials and the like, and we won. Accusations without any witnesses. No dealing of particulars. Just automatic that he used to say, hey you, we don't want you either a member of or subservient to the Communist Party. But you walked. You were supposed to divide the top leadership of the UAW. Well, the administrators over at Local 600 took out all the elected officers, the President on down. That lasted for some time, then they were raising so much hell that they lifted the administratorship, put some of the officers back and others they kept out, including me. And I

appealed, went all through the appeal stages and the UAW executive board, UAW convention. Well, I was found innocent by the General Council, the highest legislative body of the Local 600, I was found innocent by the executive board of Local 600, I was found innocent by the membership of Local 600. Despite all of that the International Union said the hell with what the membership, what the board says, what the General Council says, we say he's guilty. Without any trial. Finally came up with at the convention, and said we are going to give him a trial after four years they decided to us a trial. We threatened to go to court. And the trial committee, you can understand who held the trial, the trial committee was composed of all the present UAW officers at that time, you know. Naturally, they found us guilty. And we raised hell and the next 8 to 9 years, in 1963 we got a lawyer and threatened to go to court and the lawyer called Walter Reuther one morning and said I got five guys from Local 600 sitting in my office you can put them back on their elected jobs and give them full status in the union and the UAW or we'll go to court. And all of a sudden they wanted to meet with us. We decided to go down for a meeting and then they wanted us to sign a paper and I wouldn't sign a goddam thing. This is the same thing you offered me about 12 years ago.

I: What was that?

R: That I'm not a member of the Communist Party I'm not subservient to the Communist Party, I don't know anybody who is a member of the Communist Party and all that junk. But if there is a threat of going to court they would put us back. They put us back, I guess they played their politics wrong. Three months later, after they put us

back with full citizenship and full status they had an election in the Local 600. All five of us ran for election and got elected.

I: After all those years?

R: After all those years. We beat guys who had been entrenched, who was unbeatable. All five of us got elected with overwhelming votes. Overwhelming votes, we got elected. And we stayed elected. Ed Lock, Johnny Gallo, Paul Boatman, Dave Moore.

I: Nelson Davis.

R: Yeah, Nelson Davis. And, as I said, we held our positions. See at the time they took us out they couldn't defeat us. They had been trying to defeat us all the time, with candidates running against us. I know, I don't think, I know what kept us in office, despite the pressure, despite the awesome power of the UAW and all of its officers and despite the FBI and despite the Red squadron in the city of Detroit and despite all of the federal and local and county agents who at that time was just looking for every Red under a bed. We stayed in office, we got elected. And we got elected based on what I know was what we have stood for in organizing the UAW in the first place. This understanding of solidarity we had with the rank and file people. They trusted us with any kind of problem they had. They knew that if they had a gripe with the supervisor or foreman that we wasn't going to sell them out, that we were going to go all the way with their case, which we did. We would be honest with them and say well, look, you were wrong but we are going to fight for you any damn way. We don't know whether we are going to win. And my experience was that they appreciated that effort because I don't give a damn how wrong for example Judy would have been with her supervisor just remember what

Judy had to go through before the union got in there. Judy had no goddambody to defend her. Whatever that supervisor said or whatever Ford Motor Company said, Judy could have been as innocent as hell, but yet she was guilty without any form of representation at all. And I said if Judy made a mistake and was guilty, I'll be damned if I was going to go along with the supervisor and tell Judy well you are guilty, there is nothing I can do, I'm going to tell judy privately you did wrong but damnit to hell I'm going to fight for you anyway. We are going to make a fight of it. I don't know whether we are going to win, but we are going to push them to the wall. We are not going to give an inch. And people really appreciated it.

I: You said there was a turnaround just a few years ago in Local 600. Can you explain a little bit about that?

R: What's this.

I: You said there was a turnaround in the character of the local just recently.

R: Not only the Local 600 but in the whole UAW. The whole UAW has changed. But it didn't change so much within the local. But it began to change at the top level leadership of the UAW and it was passed on down to the locals. And it used to be when a guy or woman got elected to a position at Local 600, especially Local 600 I'm going to say in some other locals around the country also, that was an honor. It was an honor to get elected to serve 400 or 500 people. That's what our union did, represented 400 and 500 people in a district. Fulltime. Devoted fulltime, you didn't work on the machine. You devoted fulltime to your constituents in that district. And to get 4- and 5,000 people or 4- and 500 people to elect you to a district to

represent them is just like getting a city council, that you were getting elected to, you know because that's how many people were voting for you in that district. That's just a district alone, you were district committeeman. Now, if you ran for the bargaining committee or the president of your unit, your building, you had all the way from 8, 9, 10, 12 and 15,000 people all depends on what unit you were in voting for you. And some cities didn't have 15,000 people voting for you. You were on the bargaining committee and the president of that unit. And some of the unit had as high as 15- and 16,000 people in it out there at Local 600. We had 80,000 people. One time we went up to 102,000 at Local 600. It was and still is the largest local in the world. Even though it's diminished now. But when you had that kind of confidence and leadership they prided themselves in being selected. They looked at the company representative as an enemy. They didn't expect anything from the company representative because they said we are going to let you work 12 hours or we are going to give you credit for 12 hours a day, seven days a week you go out to the plant anytime. Don't worry about Judy and her husband. This came about in my opinion because of the leadership of the UAW. They did not, as the older guys went to retire, ~~dye~~ out, top leadership in the UAW did not entrench, educate the coming young leadership in the UAW about the hardships and how this union was organized, the brutality of the company, they are not your friend, if they are your enemy. You must all time be on guard to protect what you have and gain more and even don't give up a damn thing, keep what you got and always get more that was our slogan back in 40s and the 50s and even to the 60s. And in spite of my

differences with Walter Reuther I'll say that he was in his grave or wherever his ashes may be, he's fighting like hell today. I had many differences with Walter. I don't think Walter would have did some things, as far as a leader is concerned but the present UAW leadership is doing what they had done in the past. The things that we have won, I don't think we would have been given up. And I know the guys who came along before who were president before Walter, R. J. Thomas, Dick Leonard and those guys, no. They wouldn't have ever given up anything. They would have never made any concessions. But now you have a different breed in the UAW. A different breed in many ways. You have a different breed in leadership. You have a different breed of personnel, and a different breed of the workers. And I know my experience has always been that if the leadership gives militant leadership you will have a militant membership. If you have a conservative leadership, you will have a conservative membership. That doesn't mean that the membership is agreeing with everything the leadership has giving. But they had no one to go to bat for them when they faced the onslaught and the awesome power from the Ford Motor Company. Let's now be nice to the company, let's get a team, company with a program going where we share the responsibility. Well, the hell with the damn responsibility. That's their responsibility. All we are saying is this is your plant, we are saying we got a union in here, we are saying our people are going to have dignity and pride on the job, we are saying they are going to be respected by your foreman and supervisors, we got a contract with you, we expect you to live up to it. You are saying that your company has a right to manage their own business, the company has a right to do this, the company has

right to do that, okay you got that right, but you are going to exercise that right with some kind of responsibility. The contract says you got to do this. But now. There are today concessions. The order of the day is pitting one plant against another plant. The order of the day is presenting one department against another department. It's finally got down one worker against the other worker which we fought so damn hard to eliminate. People died to prevent this kind of thing from continuing to happen. People got murdered, people got eaten, people went to jail, people suffered, people lost their jobs, people were ostracized to prevent the very thing that's happening today.

I: Is that happening in Local 600, too?

R: Oh yes. But they have made concessions. They got one. The company said well to give you an example, the Steel Mill at Local 600. If you don't give concessions in the steel mill we are going to close it down, or we will take our operation and sell it to Japan. Or, in the assembly plant, they say if you don't get us concessions here in the assembly plant here in Local 600 we are going to do our assembly work in St. Louis or we will divide this work load to St. Louis, San Jose, wherever there is an opening, New Jersey. That's the way they do it. I'll give another example. You take in Local 600 membership has voted that they would never give up any more concessions. And Local 600 as recent here I would say a year ago and the UAW under the present leadership and Owen Bieber who won the election down in Dallas, his inaugural speech was that I will never give any more concession. The UAW will never, the concessions are over. And he was applauded, standing ovation, newspapers carried big headlines. But concessions

still goes (/). And I said to myself, being one of the founders, organizers whatever you want to call it. I made my contributions and I give less than a damn who disagree with me what I'm going to say. But the UAW is not the UAW that some people died for, some people was maimed for. Some people sacrificed. It's not the UAW that we once knew. They said well, times have changed. You got to have more partnership with the companies. I'm not against the partnership. That partnership doesn't go to the extent of taking away from the workers that we already have. I see what's happening today.

I: Back in the 40s when you were talking about all measures taken to get the left wingers out of office, why do you think Reuther was so concerned with getting his people in and the left wingers out?

R: Well, Reuther acted just like any other politician would act. At that time communism was a powerful issue to be used by politician to get himself elected, not only in the UAW and the union or anything, generally. City government wherever election, where you were involved in politics. There were forces in the UAW never did want to see Blacks get the recognition that they deserved for the contribution they made during the organization part of the UAW. Not just talking about Ford, but I'm talking about General Motors, Chrysler, all of them. You should know this. Racism is a part of our society, I don't give a damn what nobody say you can disagree with me if you want to, but you being White maybe never had to face racism. I had to face it ever since I was born. My mother and father faced it. My grandfather and grandmother faced it, my great-great faced it ever since that ship sailed along the shores of Africa. And for any major White organization or institution to come along and advocate equality of all

of its members at that time and even today to a certain extent, at that time was not a popular stand for a White person to take, for that membership consisted of the majority of White, almost 80 percent or 90 percent White you know. But there were some Whites who were willing to do that and they did do it. And they wanted that based on what we had went through in Local 600 and other locals to a lesser degree. To be part of the UAW's history and to be part of the UAW's way of advocating democracy itself. And some elements in the UAW didn't want that. And they not only didn't want it they would damn sure be willing to go to hell and back to prevent it. And they did. And when the issue of communism came along, well it was grabbed and seized upon by those in the labor movement as well. If you read the history of the labor movement, many people were eliminated not only in the UAW, not only by Walter Reuther but throughout the whole labor movement, the UAW, the Longshoremen, the textile workers, the farm workers, wherever a union was if you advocated anything, well, I'll go back and give you an example. Take a look at the proceedings in 1949 UAW convention in Milwaukee, a guy named Bill Johnson, a Black guy made one of the most profound speeches on why a Negro should be advanced to the UAW executive board, and the answer to that was that you are following the communist party line. The only people who wanted to have a Black on the UAW, executive board is a communist or communist sympathizer. And this is nothing but communist propaganda. That's the answer they gave us. I said we had supporters. This wasn't all just coming from 600. We had supporters from other locals throughout the whole country at these conventions on this issue. But in answer to your question as to why he wanted to do it, he wanted to eject

himself, wanted to get himself elected to office. Once he got elected to office on that issue he wanted to continue to stay in office. Especially those who he had branded as communists or sympathizers to communists who was disagreeing with him. And this is the way he eliminated them, if he couldn't defeat them by elections in their own locals, some were defeated. Some were defeated by a democratic election. Those that he could not defeat he used undemocratic ways to get them out. He took them out (?).

I: And that's basically what happened at 600?

R: And despite the contitution they are saying that everybody is entitled to hold office regardless of race, political affiliation or religious or ethnic affiliation, national origin. That was the constitution. Regardless of political affiliation, national origin or religion every member of the UAW is entitled to hold office that was the constitution. And that's what we fought on. Even if I am one, the constitution says I have a right. This is the constitution that you voted for when we organized the UAW. But you know what happened, they changed that.

I: When did they change it?

R: They changed that at the 1953 convention in Atlantic City. Even though we had been taken out back in 1950. That's when they took us out. And I didn't get back until 1963--13 years I was out.

I: Why do you think that was in 1948?, I mean it was 1950 when Stellato came in and they had referendum vote on that loyalty pledge and it passed, it has a low turnout for the vote but it passed. That every officer had to sign this loyalty oath.

R: The question is why?

I: Yeah. What were the circumstances around that vote?

R: Well, the circumstances that was around, I go back to the newspapers played it up big. This was around the Taft-Hartley Act. You had to sign a loyalty pledge. Every person who holds a position in a union local must sign a loyalty pledge. John L. Lewis, president of the cole miners, John L. Lewis said the hell with the loyalty pledge, and he wouldn't sign it and we said if it's good enough for, if its' that bad John L. Lewis, because John L. Lewis gave us a lot of money to help organize the UAW. And there were guys who on principle, some of the right wingers. Some right wing guys said the hell with it, I'm not going to sign it. There were a few but there was a few of them. And the question is so why it passed? I think it was scary at that time. If you didn't sign it you were branded as one who didn't sign it because you must be a member of or a supporter of the Communist Party. That's why. And it was a low turnout. A speaker wasn't hardly turn out you know. They were going to move out _____. And they passed it and a big fight took place on the floor. Do you remember Stellato supported Reuther, Reuther got Stellato's full support for awhile, then Stellato realized that he couldn't stay in office because the local at that time was right down the middle. And for his own political future and remained to be president of Local 600 at that time, you carried a lot of prestige and you still do today. Other locals all throughout the country use to look forward to Local 600 leadership. And Reuther didn't want to see the leadership of Local 600 spread all over the country like this. Because at conventions some of his supporters would get up and say if it was good enough for Local 600 dammit hell it's good enough for me. But the

hysteria began to spread at that time and I think in answer to your question I don't think, I know being part of it at that time that nobody likes for a newspaper or his neighbors to accuse him or suspect him of being disloyal American, as good American as that individual may be. And the hysteria that spread, my God. If you read, you'll see where people would report it. They lost their jobs, they were crucified, they were called before committees, it was an awful thing. This lasted all the way up until the 60s, almost.

I: You mentioned about Stellato and when he got in he was elected as a right winger. Then shortly thereafter switched to be a left winger. You say that was for political reasons?

R: Yeah. Stellato broke with Reuther. And he got elected with Reuther's support.

I: Before that was he a left or a right winger?

R: Stellato was a left winger. He took part in all these left wing activities and Stellato came from a working background family. His father was killed in the foundry up in Milwaukee. And Stellato had begged for bread, so he told me and others you know what I mean and the guy who appointed Stellato on, the international rep is a guy named Percy Llewellyn. Percy was strictly a leftwinger. And so most of the guys in 600 were. Most of the guys were left wingers. But the hysteria started, some of them went back to where they really were in the first place and in fact Local 600 was a left wing local. You couldn't get elected at Local 600 if you weren't part of the left wing caucus, you know. I said the left wing, I mean from a stand, I think it was what I went back before and said that it was based on solidarity and brotherhood and I won't say that, but I would say most

of them had progressive and liberal and left wing enough to believe in what they thought was right and how they voted. They demonstrated how did they vote without any pressure, they would come out and they would vote it if you ran on this ticket and here is what I stand for, they would make a decision and they would vote for you. And then if it really got to a point where it was strictly left wing, left wing or right wing. There was no center. You were either over here or you were there. And we still prevailed in Local 600. We were unbeatable. The international union could not beat us politically. And so the only way they could do it if they had to move in and take over through administratorship. And back to the question of Stellato, Carl took his orders from the UAW from Reuther when he got elected and he was part of the deal that had charges against us. But later on he recanted, said, look I made a mistake. He apologized, look I made a mistake and he fought just as hard to get us reinstated and he fought just as hard to get us kicked out, you know what I mean. That's when he and Reuther broke. You read the proceedings of the UAW convention, you'll see, well, some of the dirtiest words that ever been said at a UAW convention between Stellato and Reuther. Reuther made a statement, Carl was up on the microphone he said your skirt is hanging, your dirty slip is hanging, you know. Stellato turned around and used some choice words at him right back at the mic you know. And this was all over Local 600. But it's a long history, Local 600. I don't know what your thinking may be. You say you're going to use this for your dissertation, well, use it. I don't give a damn.

I: Can you tell a little bit about what the groups that made up the different wings were. What kind of small organizations made up the progressive caucus and which the right.

R: Organizations?

I: Like you know with the right wing we have the ACTU people.

R: Well, I would be lying and I would be and I know you would say I would be lying if I tell you that there weren't any communists there you know what I mean. There were people who were open and say, you take a Bill McKie and you take and all those, they didn't hide it, you know what I mean. They didn't try to deny it. And Bill McKie was on the council, said look I'm a member of the Communist Party and here is what I stand for and so on and so on. But when you say the groups who made up the left and the groups who made up the right, on the right you had the ACTU, the Association of Catholic Trade Unions, I believe it was. And you had the Masons and you had the knights of Columbus.

I: Were there any language clubs or anything that was _____.

R: Language clubs?

I: Or any other ethnic groups that would be part of a _____?

R: They belonged to their own different clubs in the neighborhood. But at Local 600 when you talk about the groups that made up the right and the left I named them, those that I know I don't know anything about any, it may have been, if they had their own groups in their neighborhood and whatnot. But I know what it was, you would have the catholics fighting the Masons or you would have ____, but they were part of the right wing. They had differences also, and the left wing had the Communist Party and you had so-called liberals who wasn't

members of the Communist Party and you had progressives who wasn't members of the Communist Party and all of those made up the left.

I: Were they Socialist at all?

R: Oh yea. You had Trotskyites.

I: Which side did they fall on?

R: The Socialists? They would swing back and forth. They would be with the left for awhile on a certain issue and they would go to the right for awhile. And you never could tell where the hell they were going to be. They wasn't a big force there. Small force they had, but it was in-between on the different issues. It all depends on what the issues were. I see your husband's getting sleepy....Up until the present time. He went out on a limb guys like he, Gallo, many other whites, but Walter (Dorosh) played a hell of a role, and he was osterized, he was called a nigger lover. He was called a communist, he was called this, but he stuck to his guns. And I think he made, along with others he made a major contribution to the cause of civil rights and equal rights and promotions of Blacks to positions of leadership in Local 600. He got a hell of a history behind him. I admire the guy. He's been a friend of mine over the years. And I have seen him when it was impossible for a white person to do some things that he did. I will give you an example. In 1973, as late as 1973, when Coleman Young ran for Mayor of the City of Detroit then the UAW was pushed against the wall as to who it was going to support, you know the UAW didn't support Young when he ran. Walter was president of Local 600 at the time and he defied the whole international union and had Local 600 go on record as supporting Coleman Young. And at the endorsement meeting Ford Local 174 making decision who was going

to get the endorsement, Rabids (?) or Rabids was a white, you know. Walter led a line of people at the mic and Walter was the only White local union president in the whole Detroit metropolitan area who went to the microphone and made a public statement as to why Coleman Young shouldn't be endorsed by the UAW. He was the only one. Not one other white guy in the whole local setup in Metropolitan Detroit who was president of a local union, UAW, not only UAW, other local unions went to the white. And they didn't like it. But he had the support of the membership of Local 600 black and White. But you had some Whites in Local 600 who didn't support Coleman. But they were in the minority but they rushed to the stand. And I will go back to my statement that I made earlier it all depends on what the white leadership can do as to how the white membership will react. Give you an example: Mississippi, Alabama at the time that Kennedy was president at the time Johnson was president if they hadn't have took the stand in supporting Rev. King, it would have been a massacre in the South. When they said look dammit I'll get the federal troops out there they forced this on them. If the officials in Alabama don't do it, I will do it and they did it. And there has some resentment, there was hostility and I think that because of what Kennedy and Johnson and others did partially there was some success. It's not complete yet but it's not like it was once. Blacks can go to the University of Alabama. Blacks play on the football team. Blacks can go to all the southern colleges now. But before say, supposed we would have had presidents there at the time who would not have went that extra mile and said dammit it to hell the law says they are entitled to go there and to enforce this law I'm going to call out the militia. If

necessary and I'm going to take over the national guard in Alabama and I'm going to be in command of them. I'll send somebody, I'll send the Attorney General there to see that my order is enforced and those who violate that order will go to jail. And the same thing in the labor movement. You have to issue an order but you can let it be known that here is my position. As long as I am president of the Local 600 this is the way it is going to be. Now you may defeat me at the poll but I'm here for x-number of months, yes, but here is my position. This is the position that we are taking. And anybody who violate against this is violating my position as far as the leadership of the organization is concerned. So these are the things and I must repeat that we are not out of the woods yet. The labor movement is in a hell of a danger right now in my opinion. I could be wrong as hell, and I hope I am, the labor movement is in a hell of a danger. And I hope that it will turn around and I hope that they will be able to maintain and to continually exist but our strength has been diminished, our leadership has not been recognized and been respected like it was some years ago, gains we have made we had to give them up, I don't see any guarantee that we will be able to ever at this plant, I don't see any guarantee we will be able to recoup what we have lost because the papers come out everyday saying that some people who have been laid off will never get back. So membership has been declining. They are talking about robotics, we are talking about all these technical jobs, got to train them. Train them for what? Well, damn job, you are training them. Where are you going to program, you train them? you know. They shouldn't have ever given up what they had. I don't say that we shouldn't improve our way and technology and all this, yeah.

Okay. But not at the expense of the worker. You don't do that. You don't eliminate what you already have without damn sure having assurance or you are guaranteed that you are going to get something in return or more in return, either the same or more in return. Any further questions?

I: Yeah, I'd like to go back a little bit more to the period of the 40s, you were talking about the strong solidarity that was among the workers. Did workers that worked together in the plant usually live in the same areas or how did they socialize outside the plant?

R: Oh, yeah, they had different functions by the union and then I can give an example, Local 600, I am glad you raised that question. All of them did not live in the same area. Take the Poles, the majority of the Polish people lived in Hamtramack. The majority of Italians lived on the far East side. The Blacks lived in a little section out here called Black Bottom down here.

I: Where was that?

R: That's down across a place called Brashon, how it's an elite district down there. All the homes have been torn down, doctors and lawyers live there now, it was called Black Bottom. And Hastings Street up here by the super highway and you had people who lived in the suburbs like Dearborn, and Wyandotte, and no Blacks lived in Dearborn. No Blacks lived in Wyandotte. But there was all kinds of socialization going on. The Local was giving dances, Blacks and Whites dancing together. They would give picnics, the kids were there playing together, they would give, they would have choral ensembles, all of them singing in the choir together, they had bands, they played together, in the Labor Day marches all of them competed for prizes,

and this kind of thing. Even though they weren't living in the same neighborhood together they would visit each other and these are the kind of social activities I think that went on that helped elevate this brotherhood and togetherness more openly and more viable and more determined.

I: Did you have a big showing at those social events? A lot of people came out?

R: Oh, yes. Again I go back to Local 600. We had what we call one of the biggest halls there you know, during the winter months. We have all of our activities ^{out} inside during the summer months, we have events at Bel Isle. We would have them at some of the big parks outside the city, city-owned parks, like Rouge Park during the parades after the parades were all over guys would get together with their families, the kids down by the river down here go to Bel Isle, say, Local 600 is going to have a picnic, a Labor Day picnic after the parade. The parade was the highest big point in labor in the city of Detroit at one time. Everybody participated in the Labor Day parade in the streets. It was just something like the Mardi Gras in New Orleans and every local had their own band. They would compete you know, who had the best flying squad, who had the best band and who performed in the parade better, you know what I mean. The precision march or just slow march or whatever it was you know. And we all assembled down here in a place called Cadillac square after the parade is over. That's where most of the presidents would come Truman, Eisenhower, everybody would come to Local 600 on election year to make a speech. We would have 120,000 almost 150,000 people in this square and everybody stayed nobody left. They put all their instruments down and sat and waited

for the speaker to start. And this was the highlight of labor in this town. Everybody looked forward, when the Labor Day parade was over they started to building for the next year. Floats, beauty queens we had Black beauty queens, winning Black contests here in the city of Detroit, you know what I mean, labor coming from labor, Black women you know, nowhere in the country would you find an organization predominately Whites were sponsoring, that would select a Black woman for a beauty queen, you know what I mean. it was unheard of. But we had it here. Some of the leading performers of the stage and theater came here. Paul Robeson, Humphry Bogart, Dolphin Trombone (?), Kirk, what's the guys name?

I: Douglas?

R: Douglas, Kirk Douglas, he's the guy they would come to the Local 600. It was a good thing we had some real ...

I: How about participation in the meetings, unit meetings, did they turn out there?

R: You don't have the turnout anymore because I'll give an example: In the general council of Local 600 is the highest legislative body of the Local 600. The meetings would start at 9:00 in the morning and on every issue you would have people get up on the floor discussing pro and con whether it should or whether it shouldn't be, a democratic vote would be taken on it and that's the way it would be ruled. And these meetings would last from 9:00 in the morning sometimes for 3:30 and 4:00 in the afternoon. Now you go at a General Council meeting, the meeting starts at 11:00, 11:20 it's all over. The executive board of the Local 600 whatever recommendation comes out nobody questions the President, not any more, about the issues. It's just

automatically accepted you know. The membership meetings, you couldn't get in. We used to have to install loudspeakers outside of the building for members who was coming to the membership to hear what was going on inside the building. The auditorium would be packed. Now you call a membership meeting and I don't think a membership meeting was held in Local 600 in a hell of a long time. I don't think so. You wouldn't get 100 people I don't think out of the membership meetings of the local unless it was something real special. The constitution required you have a membership meeting every month and I don't think they had it. No, I don't think they had it. I could be wrong, they had one and I don't know. But the biggest turnout you get in any local now are the seniors, the retirees. Your active membership in the plant doesn't turn out for meetings anymore. If you go to a senior retirement meeting and it's overflowing these are the old guys who were thrown out. They put their blood and guts in the whole thing.

I: In the 40s the unit meetings were big. What kind of percentages do you think they got?

R: A guy that wouldn't come to a union meeting in the 40s, he was almost ostercized, you know, the ^abuys in his unit would say where in the hell were you yesterday, you know. You weren't at the membership meeting. It would be packed. You take just a boring meeting. Sometimes we would say there were too many we can't get them we are going to have department meetings. Sometimes we would meet before work, or after work. Guys would be working the midnight shift but leave the plant and go to a meeting in the morning before he goes home. Or sometimes they would have it before he go in the plant, you know. But usually

we try to have them every month during Sundays. But it's just there. I guess I'm not going to say that the workers have lost faith. I don't think they have. I'm going to say that the leadership in my personal opinion is not demonstrating to the membership the type of leadership, the type of leadership that the membership wants. And not aggressive enough and not progressive enough. And they don't see anything that's being accomplished.

I: Do you think that there were big differences between the ways that the leaders of the union, and like the committees being elected in the different building units, negotiated or fought, or that their level of militance against the company differed from unit to unit?

R: The difference between the way they negotiated in the different units is that what you mean?

I: Yeah.

R: Oh, yeah, there was a difference, yeah. You take right then any plant a guy may, to give an example, a guy in the assembly plant may be negotiating on a certain issue, his negotiating team say well we want just for example more we want a wage increase for the people who put the spark plugs in the engine. A guy in another unit may be negotiating on similar work he's not putting the spark plugs in but he may be putting the pistons in. And he may be negotiating for a lesser wage and there is no coordination, like it used to be when you are going in to negotiate everybody knew what the hell they wanted. They discussed this months and months before negotiation started. Everything was bad. And that the company was refusing on then they were refusing on the issue defective assembly operation all the way around the plant. Try to, negotiations in Local 600 every plant was

required, every chairman of that unit was required to submit to the local union a list of demands that they wanted from the company. And they could not negotiate on those demands unless it has an approval by the local union. But now they have what you call unit negotiations and we had in the bylaws that no agreement can be accepted by the union or the company when they negotiate with these unit chairmen until approved by the Local 600. It has to be approved by the office of the executive board of the Local 600 before that agreement could be made effective. They don't do that anymore.

I: Is there a difference you think between the ways that the right wingers and the left wingers conducted their fights on the shop floor?

R: Compared to what?

I: Their struggles on the shop floor. For example, take a right wing vs. a left or the committeeman or somebody who is fighting for a grievance or even up to the officer stage.

R: Well, at that time when I was in the shop a right winger had to negotiate. Now he may did some things under cover not knowing whether we would find out, to stay elected to office he had to negotiate for the worker. I won't say that all of them got away, did it the same. Some people got away and I'm pretty sure some left wingers may have did some things that _____, but if it was ever discovered, he would never be elected again. That right wing committeeman had to be as aggressive as hell with the supervisor representing if he was a left or a right wing committeeman representing a worker, he had to be as aggressive as hell to see if he run that grievance on his side representing the workers prevailed. Now he may have put on a show, he may have got with the freman and said look I'm going to raise holy

hell with you but I don't think I can go anywhere. I got to make it look good, for my election I want to stay in this office, you know. And he had to do it. Not only him whether they are left wing or right, they had to do it. Now they don't do it anymore from what I understand. They don't file grievances like they did then, they don't follow through on the grievance procedure like they used to do. But every time difference of opinion would come up, and that's what the grievance procedure is for. If they can't resolve it with the supervisor verbally or, write in a grievance. And that's what the company don't like for you to do, write grievances. They do not like that, because once that grievance is processed and it goes through the procedure and it goes before the arbitrator, you don't know who in the hell is going to win, you know.

I: So you are saying that both right wing and left wing had to be militant.

R: Oh, yeah, they had to be, but the right wing had them--I will not go too far as to say the right wing did not represent them. I think they represented them, they had to, at the time that I was in the shop if they wanted to stay in office. Now they may not represent it as progressive and as militant as a left winger was, but they had to make a hell of a showing or either that, or they just didn't stay in office.

I: Do you think there would be a difference in the types of grievances that they would pursue? say a type that a right winger would be likely to pursue vs. the left winger? For example, would the right winger be more likely to pursue grievances like seniority or maybe wages or

something like that versus discipline or more tough grievances, like that?

R: Yeah. My answer to you is the same, will be the same. It all depends on that timing. If you are talking about the time.

I: Yeah. 40s and 50s.

R: Yeah, they would do it. Again it could be did in many ways. A right winger at that itme could represent a person on the floor once that grievance was filed he would raise hell on the floor. Now, once that grievance was filed, now when that grievance gets to the bargainng committee the next stage up, that right winger had to come in and say here is what has happened and give all the details on it. The guy is going to ask him is Judy is this all the information you got on Judy in her defense, and he say yeah, well they say well, I want you to go out and get some more. I want you to get some people who are standing around, I want you to get the names of the people who are standing around. Get their version of what happened, I want you to come back in here, I don't want you to bring anybody in here who is going to be against Judy. I want you to bring someone in here who is going to be on Judy's side, who is going to be a witness and I can put their name down and I can go out and interview them and they are going to give a favorable statement in favor of Judy. Now once he's told that and if he didn't do it and that grievance had to go out and the word got back that there was a witness for Judy and the Committeeman didn't pursue that, didn't make any effort to get that in a grievance so it could be looked at when it gets to the arbitrator, that guy just didn't get elected. And I would say compared to what it was in the 40s and the 50s when a right wing commiteeman vs. a left wing commiteeman, I think

both of them tried to do what was right. I think the left wing pursued it more aggressively and more diligently and with more extent than the right wing guy did. And he would not take any kind of answer from the supervisor that was not in favor of the person they were representing. I don't think the right wing pursued it as aggressively as the left wing committeeman would. And that was a difference in the political set up at Local 600. But a right wing committeeman in 1940 and 1950 and the early 60s would be considered a left wing committeeman today. He would.

I: So you had a building, say a building can be considered right wing, do you look at the president or do you look at the basic officers or the elect? Would the committeemen follow line usually if the right wing slate won in a certain unit, say transportation unit? Say they won election for all of the officers, would the committeemen also tend to be right wing?

R: No. Not all of them. Some of them would fight to the very end and some of them would make a deal and stay in office. They would say well, I'm going along with the president of transportation unit ⁱⁿ and Local 600 have been looked upon over the years as a right wing unit. We had a couple of left-wing guys there but sometimes a guy would go down to defeat, a left winger would. A left wing committeeman who was in a predominantly right-wing led building. Before he would give up he would go down and get defeated. Before he would side and go along with a right wing president. And that's the, your record shows that like transportation in a building, like the rolling mill, the steel mill, that was a predominantly right wing. We had left wingers in there.

I: Why do you think the rolling mill as so right wing?

R: Well, it was a building where number one, it was predominantly White, overwhelmingly White. That's where the most money was made. Those guys used to make 40- to 50,000 a year in the rolling mill and they still make good money there. And that was one of the buildings we considered kind of a reactionary, you got an island of democracy here with a little citadel of reactionary sitting over there in the Rolling Mill and the transportation unit and in answer to your question because number one, it was predominantly White; number two, the leadership of the building was a right winger and as I indicated before the membership has a tendency to go along with what their leadership says. But that didn't mean that all of them got along. We had some real progressive and real aggressive leaders in the Rolling Mill, took their licks. Some were defeated, some still were able to hang on. And when you get people in an outfit like that where big money is being made, they don't want to lose that money. They don't want to be friendly, they use the race issue and that's it. Look, give you an example, say Joe Blow is the President of this building. He don't want any of those niggers coming in here. If you get them in here they are going to get your job, man. Some of them guys from the foundry got 15, 20 years seniority. They are going to bring their seniority in here. And some of the guys wouldn't accept that. They said, look, I don't give a goddam who they bring in, if they got the seniority they are entitled to it. That's what we fought for, to get recognition of our seniority. They would have White guys speaking up for it. They would say I don't give a goddam if I got to go because of my low seniority, then I'll go, but I don't want to be B.Sed. I

don't want to be B.Sed out of here. As long as the guy got the seniority and he takes my job I'm willing to accept that. And that's the way it was put you know and that's the way we agreed upon when we were organizing. But some people won't accept that. Some people--

(To be Continued?)

Tape 3, Side A
David Moore

I: But they were left wing?

R: They were left wing.

I: Why do you think they were left wing?

R: With the leadership. That's another example. You take a guy like Dorosh, you take a guy like John Orr, you take a guy like Virgil Lacey, you take a guy like Vince Branada, Mike Rabor, all these were White. And they insisted that Blacks be on their slate when they ran. Some of them just put down. They were White, skilled trades was not open to Blacks. I shouldn't say wholesale, they had a few but the going was I would say 99 percent White. But these guys insisted and these were the old time organizers and Local 600, Dorosh and these guys that I named, they insisted that Blacks run on their slate, they insisted that Blacks be part of the general operation of the Tool and Die unit. They insisted that Blacks be elected to delegates to the convention. It wasn't enough. Blacks in there elected Blacks, but the Whites would vote for them and defeat other Whites who were running against them. And this goes back to what I said again, it all depends on the position that the leadership takes. And if the leadership resorts to, say hell no we don't want them the membership has a tendency to follow this line. And I won't say all of them, but that's overwhelmingly they will do it.

I: Why do you think in the Rolling Mill, you said there was a few progressives and of course they had a progressive slate running against the right, in the Rolling Mill?

R: In the Rolling Mill, yeah.

I: Why did the progressive keep on losing in the Rolling Mill?

R: In Rolling Mills?

I: Yes.

R: Because they changed leadership. Number one in Rolling Mill you had a guy there one time by the name of Blaich. Blaich was a right winger. But Dorosh, Lacey, John Orr and all these guys were riding herd all the time on them, Mike Rabor you know. And he couldn't get away with the things that the right winger usually wanted to put forward as far as the policy was concerned, they would challenge him on it, at Board meetings, membership meetings, general council meetings and discuss it on the floor but overwhelmingly as time went on and again you go back to the McCarthy era they began to use the issue of communism. Then the membership out off fear began to go along with the right wing leadership in the Rolling Mill and it stayed that way. Still that way today. The Rolling Mill is a predominantly right wing building today. And that's something that we wasn't able to overcome as far as the right wing. As I say, the Tool and Die and Rolling Mill, that's where the most money is made. Tool and Die and the Rolling Mill and if the membership is prepared to understand certain things about membership in the organization which all of them belong to they are susceptible to accept the leadership's version of what's going on of how he wanted it to be. That's why you had such going on in the Rolling Mill even today.

I: What were some of the lower paid buildings? The Production Foundry, was that one of the ones low on the wage scale?

R: Yeah I would say that. But where you say a lower paid I would say they were lower paid in the sense of the conditions that teh guys had to work under. The foundry workers worked under some real hazardous, backbreaking, death, I would say conditions. Naturally, their wages was not as high as those were in the Tool and Die or the Rolling Mill, or in some cases in the other plants. But where they could find a similarity of operation or classification they would find aseembly in the foundry was getting a dime or a nickle less than assemblymen in the assembly plant or in the engine plant they would write a grievance and they would win. The contract called for hte classification or assemblyman classification should be paid the same rate. but then you have to have aggressive committeemen. They, you take in the foundry and most of the leadership in the foundry were Black. They had some Whites, but most of the leadership in the foundry was Black. Yu take a guy like Shelton Tappes. Shelton Tappes fought like hell. And all these guys who came along after Shelton left, and this was a big issue in Local 600. We die, the death rate in the foundry is six tmes greater than that in the other buildings. Ford Motor Company right today if a guy says well I got ^Silicosis, they'll offer him \$20,000 we will give him \$20,00 if you don't take us to court. Sign the paper you got your \$20,000. You don't need a lawyer they will give you trade. They admit to, but if a person works in a foundry from 1 to 3 years he has ^Silicosis. And they would be willing to make an out-of-court settlement with you right away, Ford Motor Company would. But the Local say well we got a legal department and we got our lawyers in. That was ²naother phase. We used to lawyers. The committeemen took care of that. Well the lawyers want a piece of the

pie. Not only do they want a piece of that worker's pie, they want something from the Local treasury. They got all kind of, well you would be surprised, you got all kind of I would say so-called experts who moved in.

I: What were some of the other buildings that had bad conditions besides the production foundry?

R: Well, you had the foundry, some places in the Rolling Mill that they gradually eliminated all in the Rolling Mill. The Rolling Mill being predominant White, the foundry being preeminantly Black they give less than a damn about Blacks than they did about Whites. After a certain, one particular guy ⁱⁿ and the foundry became president then they built ^{this} they new foundry out here at Woodhaven. Suppose to be the most modern foundry in the world. The foundry operated down about three or four years and they closed it down. There is ^{no} foundry now. It's sitting out there, big place. There is no foundry. You said other buildings. Oh well. I don't know. The other buildings were predominantly White so you know foundry was the only building out there that it was predominantly Black at the time. Some of the other buildings had become predominantly Black now. You got the Black unit presidents, the executive board is more heavily populated by Blacks down there.

I: Would you say that the production foundry was predominantly left wing during the 40s and 50s?

R: Oh yes. Oh definitely. Oh yeah.

I: Can you tell me about some of the politics, I have a list of the different units for back in the 40s . . .

R: A list of different what?

I: The units that were--

R: Units?

I: Can you tell me about the politics, is there anything special that comes to mind about them like the aircraft unit, during the war they had the unit that made aircraft, is there anything?

R: Yeah. Well the aircraft unit was a unit that most of the work was government work. Pratt and Whitney motors were built there. The aircraft was receiving some of the highest wages, long working hours you can work as long as you want to. Nobody can refuse it. Some guys used to just, would have their wives bring their lunch out and meet them at the gate and go on back in and just work around the clock. Some guys would sleep there. Sometime you go home and stay a day, a day and a half and come back and work in the, and that's the way the aircraft operated. Now the other part of your question was what?

I: What were the politics there?

R: The politics? You had a combination of politics in the aircraft. You had some left wing politics, and you had some right wing politics. You had guys in there who, and the elections in the aircraft at that time was almost in balance. If a right winger would win as president he had to confront a predominantly or almost predominantly left wing executive board. If the president was a progressive or left winger, it was almost what you call teeter totter in the aircraft. It was never a solid left wing bastion, it was never a solid right wing bastion. It was always tipping the scales one way or the other.

I: Were the workers highly skilled?

R: Not necessarily so. Most of them who went into the aircraft building at the time came from other buildings some were hired out of the

streets and they were assemblers that's all. They were assembling planes and I don't think it was anything that was highly skilled.

I: Why do you think they got higher wages, was that just because there was a war on?

R: All of it was war material they were making there and most of these, a lot of it was work that had been let by the government and the government had no, during the war, I'll give you an example, the Ford Motor Company was getting this money from the government and hell they worked, the government was paying, the Ford Motor Company couldn't give a damn. All they wanted to do is we kept this contract for x-billions of dollars, we are going to produce so many planes for you. You are giving us this money to do it, you know. And that's what the Ford Motor Company did. They weren't paying, they weren't losing anything. That money was coming from the government. And the wages were tops. I think it came about because when you need a product you are willing to pay for that product, you know especially when it's coming out of the taxpayers' money. The government didn't give a damn how much they raised the wages, you know. But they did put a freeze on except in some cases where it was necessary to raise them.

I: Maybe since that was, I just thought of this, since it was a new production that the wages were determined before the War Labor Board came in.

R: Yeah, well before the War Labor Board came in. That's right, you are absolutely right there.

I: Okay. What about the Jobbing Foundry.

R: The Jobbing Foundry was once upon a time the Jobbing Foundry all of it which was one. Shelton Tappes was the president. Shelton Tappes was

the president 17,000 people between the Foundry and the Jobbing Foundry and the coke ovens. All of that came under one jurisdiction. Shelton was the most mightiest(?) guy out there. As far as each building was designated so many representatives to the general council. So many to a convention, based on the population to that building. Some of the bright chairmen got jealous as hell and Shelton Tappes was the president of 17,000 people and they had to cut it up. They made a motion and there was a big fight on the board about it. but surely democracy was, the prevailing vote was that, they voted that each one of these units should have autonomous.

I: When did they vote that?

R: When? This was 1946, I think, 47 or 46, 45. 45, yeah. 1945 or 46 either 46 or 45.

I: So were the foundries pretty similar after that?

R: Yeah it was similar work. All dirty hot, greasy.

I: Same political?

R: Same thing.

I: So it came from, originally there were all the foundries together, then it broke up into Production, Jobbing and what else?

R: Coke ovens.

I: Is that Open Hearth?

R: Yeah. Open Hearth? Yeah. I see you have been getting some good information. Dorosh gave you all of this?

I: Well I have been looking at the archives. You know you get some here and there.

R: Oh yeah, well the place is .

I: How about the Motor and Engine plant.

R: Well, the Motor and Engine plant it was predominantly White but you had some good left wing leadership there. You had Boatman, you had Bill Cooper and who else did you have there at the Motor building? But the height of the leadership the height of the activity there was Boatman and Bill Cooper. And Stellato was in the Motor building for awhile. Before he went on the international staff. The Motor building was always looked upon as a real progressive and left wing building. You had right wingers in there. And as time went on again I must tell you that the struggle got to a point where it was in doubt about who was going to win because of the hysteria that had been created. One year it would be a left wing president, we used to hold elections by the way every year so a guy get started, again it was election time. So when he got elected that first day he was installed he started his politics all over again, you know. But the Motor building under the leadership of Paul and Gallo, Ed Lock was in there once upon a time, Harold Robinson Black guy, Ray Sull was a Black guy and they were looked upon as a left wing building. But we had some right wingers got elected in the 40s late 40s and the 50s and the 60s also.

I: What about the Maintenance building?

R: Maintenance that was another mixture. You had a guy, Art Speed, Nick Maconovitch, they were all left wingers. Art Speed was definitely a left winger but he later on he began to get more of a middle of the roader to a certain degree and Nick Maconovitch always lined up with us. But he, politics as usual sometimes on different issues, he would, what we used to call, desert ship. But it had a history I would say it was not a history of always a strictly left wing because

they had right wing people that got elected there and but there were always left wingers who was in the lower echelon of the leadership such as district committeeman, bargaining committeeman, executive board members who at meetings would challenge and raise hell because no one as I indicated before in these particular types of buildings had no assurance that he had that title forever. He had to struggle to hold that title.

I: Was that just a basically mixed unit in terms of skill levels about the same as the other units?

R: The maintenance?

I: Yeah.

R: Yeah. Most people who worked out of there were electricians, plumbers, millwrights, things like that.

I: Oh they were skilled?

R: Yeah they were skilled tradesmen. All of them. Most of them were skilled tradesmen.

I: Did they also have higher wages than the average?

R: Yeah they were along, aligned with the Tool and die. They had some high wages, yeah.

I: They were one unit that didn't have a physical building, right, that they were pretty much spread over.

R: That's right they were spread all over the plant. They still are to a certain degree. Yeah they got a building now but it's spread all over. Just like Tool and Die, they got a centrally located building but you may have a tool and die maker over in the engine plant say for instance the maintenance you have plumbers and you have electricians and you have millwrights, you have machine repair.

I: Now are those the tool and die makers inside other buildings also members of the tool and die unit?

R: Yeah, they are members of the main Tool and Die unit. They vote in all main elections of the Tool and Die building year. They can't vote in any other unit.

I: How does the communications work between guys that are spread out all over?

R: Oh it works--telephones and during elections they had to all their meetings they go to their own meeting say a Tool and Die meeting is called, those that are not working on that date they come to the regular meetings. Decisions are made there and after the meeting is over, during the work day they are back in their respective building. But communication you say, well if a guy, Judy is district committeeman, and you have another building other than a Tool and Die you may represent Tool and Die workers in the engine plant, you may work and represent Tool and Die workers over in the Assembly plant. And you go, you got your car or you drive from one plant to another, around the complex out there, and you share your office with that same building say if it's an engine plant, that's where the engines are made that Tool and Die committeeman go up in that committee room up there if he got a call from another one of his constituents in another building, why he goes over there and find out what the hell the trouble is.

I: Okay what about the Miscellaneous unit?

R: That was a building that also was a swing building. It was not predominantly left, it was not predominantly right. We had a combination and one of the presidents that I remember, there was a guy

named Joe Berry, he's not there anymore. Joe is retired and he swung between a left winger and a right winger but he was a right winger but on some issues he would go along with the left wing. But he was loyal to Walter Reuther, he espoused most of the right wing policies. But on some issues he would go along with the left wing. There were guys who challenged him, left wingers. There were guys along the bargaining committee who were left wing, there were guys in the district committee who were left wing. And he didn't always get his way of doing things. That shows you how as I indicated to you before how the membership responded to the leadership, they didn't accept in some cases totally a right wing president. The majority may have voted for him but they didn't accept all of his, well you say I want my slate elected with me you run a slate of guys and he may get elected and some of his guys on the slate would get elected, left wingers may get elected on there too. Sometimes he had to confront a majority of a left wing executive board. And that didn't help him worth a damn. He may have been the president but when the decisions are made on the board, he had to carry out that decision. That board predominantly left wing and voted with x number of people should go to this convention or to this conference or that this fellow is going on record supporting for example the Russian delegation to the UN that's the way it went. He may oppose it, he raised all the hell about it, but the board went on record, the majority of the voters went and voted against the president.

I: How often did those executive boards meet, the ones that were representing the units only, did they meet all the time, how often.

R: How often did they meet, once a month.

I: Once a month?

R: Once a month. They are required under constitution and the bylaws of the Local 600 to meet.

I: That was beside the unit meeting?

R: That's right, yeah. Sometimes the unit, the board would meet just before the membership meeting. Sometimes they would meet three or four days before. It all depends on the issues coming up.

I: You mentioned earlier that Transportation was basically right, those guys were, where was it in the early 50s, they had that controversy over whether to affiliate with District 50 of the UMW, the Transportation unit.

R: Oh yeah. That was a big fight that went on at the Transportation to affiliate with District 50.

I: Yeah what got that started? Were they upset with the Local as a whole?

R: Yeah. It was a predominantly right wing building. And at that time Stellato had broke with Reuther and there was a move to go on the, it wouldn't have gotten any place. I don't think even Reuther would have supported that at the time because you don't give up a unit where you got membership dues coming to your treasury you know. But it didn't last long. They tried. But you had different leadership there and some people said let's get the hell out of Local 600 we want to go to District 50.

I: What were the groups in there that were leading the Transportation unit?

R: It wasn't the group it was some individuals.

I: It wasn't ACTUs?

R: No. That was a suspicion and there was even accusations that ACTU was a part of it. But I could never see the proof of it. There were individuals who wanted to leave Local 600, go to District 50. All kind of movements were going on in Local 600 by individuals. Of course you got to understand in Local 600 you had every element of society in a human being in there. You had all kind of people who were espousing different political formulas and doctrines and dogmas and whatever you want to call it. But that was on an individual basis. But the dominant factor there was a Communist and the progressives and the right wing and the liberals so called. And those who could not get their viewpoint across individually, they would try to get lined up with someone who would listen to their cause or be part of espousing what they wanted or accepted rather what they wanted to get out of it. But actually 600 was made up strict down the line of left vs. right.

I: Okay the next plant is the glass.

R: Glass? Well, again there you had a combination of left and right. You had Andry Robinson there you had what's that guy's name. Leo, Leo Ausay I think his name was.

I: Orsage.

R: Leo Orsage yeah. Now Leo Orsage was strictly a left-winger but he, pressure and some things made him, he had a tendency at times when the heat got hot to kind of more liberalize his stand on different issues and whatnot. He had got elected but a right winger came along and defeated him and then exchanged hands over the year you know. We used to have elections every year you got to understand. And then it went to 2 years and then it went to three years you know. But here lately

I don't know what the hell they have now. But before a guy could get deeply entrenched good, he had to, the election was on him again. Some say well I don't have time enough to serve my membership before I have to start politicing, motion was made to have elections every two years. A bitter fight took place over it. Some wanted and some didn't. But one thing in Local 600 it was a democratic union, a democratic Local. Once a decision is made you may not like the decision and you raise hell about it on the board and you raise hell about it in the membership meeting, you raise hell about it in the general council meeting and it's too bad that you couldn't have come along in those days if you want to hear some real orators and if you wanted to hear well, . This makes William James Bryant and some of those other guys long years ago look bad. You could get guys and they knew what the hell they were talking about. It wasn't just a rebel-rouser(?) saying things incoherently and didn't know what he was saying. These guys knew what they were saying.

I: Where did these guys get all the skills to get out there--

R: Where did they get the skill?

I: Yes to talk to people.

R: That's a good question. They got their skills by being an individual who was suppressed by the Company, and they knew what happened to them. And they knew how they had been affected and no one could express it no better than they could. And they made a point once the union was organized they made a point of knowing every word--we had guys when our first contract was signed it was about that thick. Now our contract, you can't get it in one damn book. You have to have all kind of, a book on wages, a book on benefits, a book on this, and a

book on vacations and all of that. But that book had in there the language was so precise and the understanding was so clear that most guys, if you got on a vacation this one, article so and so chapter so and so verse so and so said the vacation period starts at this time and so on and so and so. That's how articulate and that's how versed they were on the issues confronting them. And the question you asked I must say again they got it because they had been kicked in the rump. They had been looked upon as not even being humans by the company and they had been treated as not being humans. And those guys were determined, I'm going to be frank including me. I was determined that I was going to know every goddamn thing about whatever the union was about. And I wanted to know every damn thing I could about what we had agreed to. And not only me there were guys who had been elected to positions when they go on the floor they knew what the worker would ask them or certain things about the contract yeah, article so and so, section so and so.

End Tape 3, Side A

David Moore
Tape 3, Side B
Depression '30s

R: The dedication, the understanding the honor and the determination all a part of these representatives to do a good job. They were dedicated. They were just, it was something they had never had before. They were determined they was going to make the best out of it. They were determined they were going to be honest with their constituents. And they were, most of them. I don't care what group you get, you are going to find some rotten apples. But in most cases the representatoves out at Local 600 were basically honest with their constituents because they had to be as I indicated before they wasn't. In the old days you didn't last but one term. And in fact you were subject to recall. They caught a guy or the rumor got around that a guy and they had the goods on him. They would recall you by signing a petition and a person had to be a good representative. Now some guys got elected and they weren't and they didn't last but one term and they were gone and forgotten. And for a worker to let you as a representative see you smiling and a foreman got his arms around you that was the kiss of death. You couldn't when you confronted a foreman you couldn't show any smile on your face. The best thing you could do if he started to explain to you or something like that, you could just stand there and look at him and say well look I want this did, understand Fred. I don't want any more of this, you harrassing her or him. Now if I have to come back in this department goddamit your production stops. Then they instituted and that would happen. The whole department would stop. Management wanted to know at that

time why that foreman wasn't getting that production out and especially at the time when production was needed so bad, and they would tell him, if you can't get along with the guys down there, goddamit we are going to get a guy who can. This was management saying this some of these foreman would want, Ford Motor Company you would think, not only Ford all of them, they didn't give a damn about the work. All he wants is the production. Whatever it takes to get it Judy, you are the supervisor in this department. We want x-number of pieces of production coming off those machines every hour and at the end of the shift we want this many in. Now you are the supervisor and you got to give a reason why you don't get it out. Now some supervisors was real slick. They would, look, Judy this machine calls for you to get 300 pieces out of it in an hour. Now if you run your production and get 400 pieces within the hour goof off. I'll come down and take production count. That's a feather in his cap. People would do this. We had to go to guys and tell them you screw it up. You don't do this you know that foreman is going to use that against you. When that time study guy came around to time study your job, they are going to increase that production instead of getting 300 they are going to require you to get 350 or 400 you know. Then some foremen really knew how to get the production. Some of them tried to use their own system and whatnot and that's when all this difficulty arrived. But in the main committeemen and the workers had something going together. They were more closely knit. They understood each other. A committeeman would tell a supervisor if you want your production if you want some peace and harmony in this department, you better get off that kick you are on or I'll be the one to push the

button and stop your department. And you won't be able to penalize anybody. And the company got pretty well behind that, what they did, they got an agreement with the negotiators that only authorized strikes would be conducted and that anyone who participates or instigate an unauthorized strike can be discharged well they found ways of getting around that also. Union guys it didn't affect them, they walked out.

I: How did they get around that the no-strike clause in the contract?

R: How did they get around it?

I: Yeah.

R: Many ways. I'll tell you right now. There were all kinds of ways a machine can be taken advantage of. Years ago when we had it, anybody can short-circuit a machine, the electrical wires. Anybody can cause a machine not to cut the stock properly. The job setter, you got classifications who, say you are totally responsible for keeping the machine your classification as a job setter. That, that lathe is your sole responsibility, operator don't have a damn thing to do but operate it. You the one that keep it in operation. You are getting paid for that. You can go read your books as long as that machine is running you get your pay. You go to the telephone booth, you can goof off as long as that machine is running you are producing that stock properly. Now the operator will be running it. And if the foreman has gotten to a point where he is giving guys a hard time, the job setter and the operators, all those machines where they are available, okay, tell you what that stock is supposed to cut, that machine is supposed to cut that stock 45 percent depth. Now it may go deeper than that, that mean that stock is scrapped, it's putting out scrap.

There are many things they could do. They have all kinds of ways of getting back. And these were some of the things that the guys used.

I: How did foreman's union that was organized for a couple of years in the 40s change that relationship?

R: They started to organize and they wasn't together. The company used the old divide and conquer rule. And they buy some and some of the foremen kept working while others were out and that was an unheard of thing among union pepole you know what I mean. some foremen kept working while the others were out on strike. And that kind of situation you are not going to win. So they ousted it, it was simple as that.

I: So they weren't very union minded.

R: No. Well, they were to a certain extent. You still had those foremen there at that time when they tried to organize who was loyal to the company. It's been that way since day one. They didn't know anything else except the company and given that it's a hard way to go. Some of these guys who had gotten to be supervisors say what the hell we are not going to get anyplace unless we organize a union just like the workers did. And some of them went out and tried to organize. But some of them never did get back. They got fired and never did get back.

I: Okay let's see what about the Press Steel unit?

R: Well, that was a strong left wing stronghold for awhile. And then it began during the hysteria stage of McCarthyism era that began to change, from left to right.

I: In the 50s or late 40s?

R: During the late 40s and early 50s. But prior to that it was strictly left wing building. You had your Lee Ramano's, you had your Archie Accaicca's you had Willy Washington, you had Art McPhaul you know he was over there. But as the hysteria began to come it was tipsy turvy. Sometimes you got elected, sometimes you didn't. It was not a definite I would say foregone conclusion that the left was going to control or the right was going to control. We had a combination of both.

I: How about the B building?

R: Well the B building that's the assembly plant, and that was a predominantly left wing building for awhile. But it also began to have a swing attitude toward it. All of these buildings with the exception of Transportation, the Rolling Mill and with the exception of Maintenance from time to time. They were predominantly left for awhile. But as time went on they began to swing one way or the other there was never a definite way of saying that there was going to be continually controlled by left wing or right wing.

I: So you are saying--

R: The whole thing I'll tell you without going item by item on the whole situation and Local 600 began to become an imbalanced thing when the McCarthy period started. Even back in '47, '48, '49 . But they always had an assemblance of left wing individuals there who stuck to their guns and would run for office and get elected. The right would be challenged or vice versa. The left would be challenged by the right wing. It was never a foregone conclusion of any individual or any group. In some parts of Local 600 it was going to come out of election when the complete left wing or right wing slate.

- I: So there was no, even though you said there are three that were basically right wing the whole way through, there is none that stayed left wing all the way through?
- R: No. Not all the way through.
- I: Okay the next question I'm going to ask is kind of different. It's about the type of appeals to the workers that the left wing would make in terms of like politics and solidarity, class consciousness and this kind of thing. Were those kind of issues talked about on the shop floor?
- R: Oh yeah, oh yeah. On the shop floor, around the machines, during the lunch hour breaks, guys used to come down I'll give an example. The guy McPhaul got fired for talking in the lunchroom during lunch break about the rights of workers and what you had to do and those things. The appeal as you put it, was made about solidarity, stickers sticking together, what your rights are, these are the things we got agreement on. Don't you let nobody take them away from you. If you have any doubt about it you think you're wrong you ask that foreman to get you a representative. He is obligated to do, which they were. If I'm not in that department if your field rep. is not in that department, you tell that foreman you want a union representative and have him call the office and somebody will come down and explain to you what you are entitled to. But never let nobody give you anything that you have any doubt about. You have a right and they would talk about the contract during lunch hour they would talk about the different issues they would go up in the lunchrooms. They would have debates in the lunchroom about Taft-Hartly. They would have debates in the lunchroom about Joe McCarthy. They have had debates in the lunchroom about the

Korean War of 1949 war. Whether we had a right to be there, whether our forces should be pulled out, what caused it. These are the things that, you got to understand at that time in the late 40s and early 50s, the mid-50s, and in the late 50s you had the workers in the shop who were there at the time the union came in. Most of the guys in the shop were veterans of the strike, and the veterans of organization there. And during the 50s, wait a minute, during the 60s, late 50s and early 60s that's when the work force began to change. They began to get younger people in who had never been exposed to struggle. The mistake that the union made I say it was a mistake maybe it was deliberate. I don't know. They didn't educate their workers about the struggle. A few struggles took place. Walter was a real good speaker, talking about we got to do this and got to do, you know. Convention even, and those things. But they discontinued the Labor Day parades. They discontinued all the social things the guys used to get together and their families . People didn't attend, began to drop off attending membership meetings and as of today as I indicated before this is where we are. You don't have that dedication and that loyalty the understanding that you had with the veterans of the 30s and the 40s in certain parts of hte 50s late 50s and the early 60s and just its gone now. You got a completely different man and woman in the shops today. Occasionally they will be shwon what happened and some of them will tell you I'm not interested in what took place in 1940 and 50. What's that got to do with me? But that's because you call it brainwashing or whatever you want to they were never kept aware in my opinion the leadership of the UAW did not keep pumping home what happened and why it's possible this young

guy of 19 and 20 years old is operating that machine today. It wasn't given to him by the Ford Motor Company. Certain things had to happen. Because you are on that machine today. And he didn't know, they don't know this. Occasionally a guy would talk about it; what the hell, what 1950, 40 what happened, I don't know. You mean to tell me you used to work for 36 bucks a week. Sixty-two cents an hour, I wouldn't have did it. I wouldn't have accepted it. Tell a guy, I have neices and nephews. I tell them I used to work for 32 cents. He would say what! Worked for 32 cents! You got to be crazy! They don't believe it. Well hell that was big money. I got 62 cents an hour from Ford, 36 bucks a week I was looked upon as the most eligible guy in my neighborhood. Every woman in the neighborhood want me to marry her daughter. But in the struggles they have not been through any struggles. They have never had to battle the police department for their job. They have never had to battle company goons for their jobs. I mean when I say battle I mean physically. They never had to do that. They never had had a foreman come up to him calling him a black son of a bitch do this or you hill-billy dog, and these are the things they used to come and tell you. They would say look, if you don't want this job nigger I got some hill-billys right out there on Miller Road ready to come in here and they would go to that same southern guy and tell him look you cracker, if you don't want this job I got a boat load of niggers right out there from Hastings Street ready to take your job. This is the way he used to do. Pit one guy against the other. And this is a matter of record. It's not what I'm trying to exaggerate or anything. This is what they used to do. And they would tell them, look, if you was a (?) born guy I got

a lot of Mohaks from Italy can't speak two words of English but they are ready to move on this job. Not if you don't want to work in here you get the hell out. And they would pit one against the other or try to. But I think as I indicated before that most of the guys who was in the forefront of the organization at Ford, this is one of, the some of the things they highlighted and were determined that they would not be any division among the workers that they were trying to organize and to a great, I would say to a degree they were successful, I won't say it was 100% but I think the education that the Ford workers received from the organizers of the union at Ford carried over and some semblance of it is still there today. Because Local 600 used to be looked upon as an island of democracy surrounded by a sea of reaction. That's what it was. We would go to the convention and we were just surrounded by people from other locals who was opposed to us. They weren't ready to accept our way of doing things. But we stood firm but as I say we battled for it. Had many fights on convention floors on different issues. But the Ford workers I'd say, to me were the best educated as far as actually knowing what true unionism met.

I: Well they got up a lot of guys from the South. How did they respond to the union?

R: The people from the South?

I: Yeah.

R: You had some who--let me give you an example. When they conducted the vote out at Local 600 for election of whether they wanted a union there are not, there was 20 some thousand that voted against the union. Around 80 almost 90 thousand people in the Local 600. There was about

21 or 22 thousand voted against the union. But in answer to your question about the people from the South, at that time when we were trying to organize the UAW the Depression was all over the country. It wasn't no longer confined to Detroit. Even though with so many racial prejudices in the way of thinking in the South were those who came here and whatnot. They had no choice. But there was still some who didn't believe in the union you still have some today who don't believe in the Union at Local 600. Based on against what I have said before the willingness of the organizers to take positions to get the people who they were trying to organize and to realize and understand what it meant to have a union and the way they presented it. It was acceptable to some of the people from the South. Because we had some southern guys who were working at Ford at that time, they were good union people. They helped organize it you know and some of them came right in and became real good union leaders at the Local 600. The bottom line in answer to yur^G question you get heavily pressured and I hope you and your husband never had to go through one. I don't think you ever have witnessed people eating out of garbage cans. They say the recession is on now, but where 90 percent of the population of a city as large as Detroit was out of work. There wasn't /any work, you know. Where families whole families were on the move all across the country. I'm coming to New York to get a job, people in New York coming to Detroit and there are no damn jobs, you know. And when shanties out in the boondocks are built for whole families to live in, people living in cars and people going around to these markets where there was a possibility of food, picking up rotten potatoes cutting the rotten off to salvage some part of that potato that may be good.

And they would bring them home and put them in water to cook. No meat in them, just cook them in water you know. I have seen this happen. And you see people don't have any clothes to wear. A guy will wear, you wear a pair of shoes to go someplace and you come back and let your brother have them. I did this with my own brother. I have had brothers, we had three or four pair of shoes for 9 people you know. And these are the kind of conditions that would make a person want to (?) . To be frank and it has been said, and I agree with it if Roosevelt had not been elected there would have been a different form of government here. Roosevelt hadn't beat Hoover. If Hoover had stayed in, it would have been a different kind of political system in this country. I believed that. Because people were ready for it and they didn't give a damn what it was they were going to get it, you know. He did a heck of a job. I'll have to say Roosevelt saved this country in my opinion. I don't know what form of government it would have been but I'm damn sure it would have not been the one we exist under today. I don't know whether it was the communist government, I don't know whether it would have been a socialist, I don't know whether it would have been a dictatorship, I don't know what it was. but they were damn sure ready to scrap the one we had and the only reason why they voted for Roosevelt was what Roosevelt said he was going to do. He said you want to change your president want a change and I'm going to tell you just what I'm going to do. And these were the things they wanted to hear. I'm going to create jobs. I'm going to have the federal government provide jobs for you and your family. If you elect me I'm going to guarantee you a job and if you don't have a job then you vote me out at the next election. He kept his promise.

He wasn't getting a hell of a lot of money for it. But they went to work. CCC, WPA, PWW, everything it was. Artists, actors, just common workers they had something to do. They were getting paid. But before they didn't have a damn thing coming in, and nowhere to go to get anything. Nothing. And again I say I hope that you and your husband will never have to go through a depression like it was that I've been through. You want to see mass suffering, if you want to see some real indignities as far as human beings concerned (?) not because they wanted it but because they had nowhere to go. And whole families lined up. Big open fire hoping somebody around would give them something to eat, they didn't have any place to stay, soup kitchens and you could just imagine what it was to be able to buy a whole slab of smoke bacon like that wrapped up for 35 cents. A whole slab. But where the hell were you going to get the 35 cents. You could ride the street car here for 6 cents anywhere all over the city. Where were you going to get the 6 cents from. You could buy any kind of property you want for \$500 but where in the hell were you going to get \$500 for it. You could go in one of the most beautiful restaurants up in downtown Woodward Avenue here and get a steak dinner, rib steak dinner and mashed potatoes, apple pie, coffee for 20 cents. A steak dinner. But where in the hell was you going to get that 20 cents. If you ever want to see it and I hope you don't want to see it and I don't think you do, if you live under a major depression where everything is down, the money that is available, only a few people got it and they will not let it go. Money it's available, they got it. And when you see women going to do housework for 50 cents a day, they scrub floors and cook meals for these people,

wash their clothes and iron them, take their kids to school and come home with 50 cents. That happened right here in the city of Detroit. Well, 50 cents was better than nothing. Some people ask why are you so bitter. Well, what in the hell do you want me to be? Do you want me to laugh about it and say I'm happy this way. I know damn well that if that condition comes again I don't think that the American people, not this generation of people will stand for it. I don't think so. I know what was happening when it finally did, as I told you before when Roosevelt got elected. The revolution was in the making. The whole country was on the verge of taking. To give an example, people who fought in World War I who the government had promised they were going to give them a bonus and the administration under President Hoover refused to give it to them. They marched on Washington. These are guys less than 10-15 years or a little longer had been out of the Armed Services of their country. They went to Washington and what happened. They turned soldier against soldier. Some were killed they were ran out. They ran over with horses and here are people who had committed themselves to give up their life for the events of the country by an order of a president who had never been near a damn gun or none of his family had ever picked up a gun to defend the country. He was turning another soldier against the other to keep these rebel rousers out of Washington. I guess you read about it. I'm pretty sure your grandfather, your father could tell you some things about this I don't know.

I: In 1948 when Wallace was running for president was there much activity in Local 600 about trying to get out the progressive vote?

R: Yeah some people got punished for that also. When Wallace ran for president I was accused of going against the UAW policy, I supported Wallace. So did Coleman Young, the present mayor and there was some activity. There was a lot of people in the Local 600 who supported Wallace. There was those who didn't.

End Tape 3, Side B

Tape #4, Side A
David Moore

R: I said supported my, I mean . . .

I: Not the whole local?

R: No not the whole local. Some people supported it and some of the nits and the individuals in the local supported it. The local as a whole did not support it.

I: Do you think you got a pretty good vote form Ford Workers for Wallace?

R: When you say a pretty good vote I would say if those who say they vote when you can never tell what a person will do when they vote. I can't say whether it was a pretty good vote or not. I would say it would have been a pretty good vote if they had voted for Wallace when they went behind the curtain I don't know what they actually voted for. But there were those who were openly supportive of Wallace.

I: I think in the general population the Wallace vote was very small, nationwide. The percentage of the vote Wallace got was 6% or something like that. But do you think it was much higher than that at Ford's?

R: Say that again.

I: Wallace got about 6% of the vote nationwide. Do you think he got a higher percentage form the Ford workers?

R: I don't know. To answer your question to be truthful about it, I wouldn't know. I couldn't say whether he got more than 6 percent form the Ford workers or not. I would imagine he would, based on what I believe, what I saw rather openly displayed by the leadership out there, you know whether the membership supported the leadership of

those leaders rather who supported Wallace. I don't know. I wouldn't want to make a guess.

I: But Wallace did come to speak to you.

R: Oh yeah he came to speak here in Detroit.

I: Did they have a lot of people show up?

R: Yeah he had quite a few but some were frightened away it wasn't as much as I would say that I guess Wallace wanted or some of those who were supportive of Wallace wanted, but there were quite a few people in the labor movement in Detroit who supported Wallace. some of them didn't openly do it. Some said "Look, I'm with you, but I would rather not be publicly identified." And you must understand that at the time that Wallace ran the hysteria was on at that time. Truman had dumped him, the Red scare was on. People would be called before Un-American Committee and in general overwhelmingly the labor movement was against Wallace.

I: Except for some of those progressive unions.

R: Right. But I say overwhelmingly now I said well you take some locals in the UAW I think the ILWU was supportive of him. Some sections of the UE, the United Electric Workers, and the Butcher's union, the meatcutters union and Packing house workers.

I: What kind of effect do you think that the, you were talking a little bit earlier about that House Un-American Activities Committee and later on the Senate Committee came and of course Reuther's administratorship over the local. How much of an effect on local activities do you think they had? Did it stifle it?

R: Yeah. It had a devastating effect on the left. They would have never got in the place except the government the committees had the support

of the unions, had the support of the UAW. They ultimately supported them. I'll give you an example. When they had us at the convention our trial at the convention they had the FBI sitting up in the audience and I can prove it(?) and I can remember a time a leader, they would permit a government agent, police to come into a convention he would have been thrown out and tarred and feathered, you know. And it was a hysteria sweeping the country at that time and the labor movement here and the UAW and I make this openly, my accusation, they were part of it and the record shows that they were part of it. The speeches that were made by some of the UAW leaders at that time the extent they went to eliminate opposition with the accusation of communists. You don't see any damn thing in the labor movement's history at that time where they ever took issue with the government on the House Un-American Activities Committee or J. Edgar Hoover. Nothing. Nothing at all where you read any publication that the UAW ever put out that they disagree took on or say it was wrong. And with that kind of a situation in your organization with your own leader supporting it, just think what kind of a hell of a chance for example Judy would have. And I say this with that recorder going I wish I could say more determinedly than I am and I don't know what I can do, to say again yeah that they openly supported the Un-American Activities Committee in eliminating opposition. They furnished records to the Un-American Committee of people.

I: And then afterwards do you think that had a big impact on the level of democracy that could exist within the local because all these left wingers were being persecuted.

R: Oh it had a hell of an impact on it. It discouraged people. It frightened people so the people went into a shell. Some people didn't want to be identified and those who stood their grounds they were punished. Some were deported, some families were broken up. Neighborhoods turned against you, friends that you had over the years didn't want to associate with you, they would see you coming and turn and walk the other way or pretend like they didn't see you. Guys would come and tell you, you are all right with me but don't come by my house anymore. Whisper to you I want you to know that individually I think you are a good guy but they tell me you belong to this or that and I can't be associated with you anymore. Guys in the labor movement who supported you will come and tell you I'm going to vote for you but when I come up to vote for you, don't hand me one of your slates. I don't want to be embarrassed by not taking the slate, I'm not going to take a slate from anybody. When I come in the voting booth I'm just going to keep my hands in my pockets. I'll vote for you when I get in there. Guys who you'd helped. Guys who came to you for favors. Guys who you would take flowers to the hospital when his wife has a baby, you know. Guys that you take up collection for his birthday, it was a hell of a deal. I didn't like it at the time but I came to understand it. They were under a hell of a lot of pressure. The old saying, it takes, the Black people used to say, it takes a brave fish to swim upstream. Any damn fish could flow along with the current. But it takes a brave fish to swim upstream. And some of these people you got to understand they were immigrants here. Their mothers and fathers came here. Some of them that came here themselves and they deported them. They deported them. They broke up families. They turned son

against father, daughter against mother. In answer to your question, yes it had a hell of a devastating effect on the left. And they haven't recuperated from it yet. I don't know whether they ever will. They have not.

I: Here is a kind of different question. I know that being a union member you have to spend a lot of time and spend a lot of energy on union affairs, how does that affect your family life and your time you spend with your family and all?

R: Well, it did have an effect. I have seen families divorce, separated. Me, I didn't have a problem. I wasn't married and at the time that I got involved I was on the verge of getting married but I had two young ladies tell me whatever you are involved in you love it better than you do me. I don't know I got so deeply involved I never have run away from marriage but I never did get around to it. I have seen the effects it has on some and then I have seen some survive. You take a guy like Dorosh, he and his wife have raised a family and he and Rose are still together. A guy like Johnny Gallo, he and Anita stayed together until he died. Take a guy like Bill Johnson, he and his wife are still together. They reared kids. They have got grand kids and great grand kids, but it all depends on the individual and I think a lot of women whose fathers had been involved in the union movement and married, ~~they understood because their fathers had been involved in the union movement and married,~~ they understood because their fathers gave them a lot of education on it. And when they got involved with a guy and married a guy who is involved in the union well that man is out there taking care of union business so it will make it possible for you and his kids to they are going to have a

good wage you know this was the attitude. This was the most union town in the world I believe for awhile. If another union was on strike, you wouldn't dare walk across the picket line. You walk across a picket line at the risk of your life, and if another community well you are going to help that union out. You say hey UE is on strike over at Chairman Stocker(?) okay. Even though guys with me they work and go right to the picket line. Just leave their job at Ford and go to help the guys that stay in the picket line 2 and 3 or 4 hours walking you know. And the same thing would happen to us. But back to your question again Yeah it did have some effect on families. Some who were not prepared for it some women were not willing to accept their husbands being away for long periods of time and not coming home when she got dinner ready, instead of beng home at 5 o'clock he didn't get home until 8 o'clock. And he's in a meeting and some of the guys they were leaving and some guys would use it as an excuse and I think now that a woman understands better because a lot of women involved in union activities in war work at that time. Women played a hell of a role. Out at Local 600 we have what you call a woman's auxiliary. They were wives and daughters or sisters of men who were actually involved. And women played a hell of a role in help organizing Local 600. After we organized they played a hell of a role in some of these things I mentioned to you for some of the social activities--organizing choral groups. We had what you call Local 600 choral ensemble. We had what you call, we had baseball teams, we had basketball teams. All integrated. We had golf teams, we had track teams, we had bowling contests and everything.

- I: Do you think most of the women that were involved in the auxiliaries themselves had come from union homes?
- R: Most of them had what?
- I: Come from union homes where their fathers--
- R: Yeah, most of them were yeah they come from union homes. And one of the first sit down strikes that took place right here in the city of Detroit was staged by women. It wasn't staged by men. It was staged by women right down here on Woodward Avenue candy company. They shut the door and wouldn't let nobody in and they wouldn't come out. They shut the boss out and wouldn't let him in. For three days they stayed in that candy company down here on Woodward Avenue.
- I: When was that?
- R: 1927.
- I: Whow.
- R: Walked out with a mouth full of cavities.
- I: That's way before the other sit downs at Flint or anywhere.
- R: Yeah that's what I'm saying one of the first sit down strikes that ever occurred in the state of Michigan actually that has been authenticated. And it's a matter of record. I'll bring it, sometime when you are back in Detroit, I'll bring some pictures I have. The women you take up in front. I don't think would ever have been a success if it had not been for the women's participation.
- I: I think I saw a film on that. And it showed the women bringing the food in.
- R: Oh yeah. They would bring food to the windows. One woman she had a restaurant and her husband a woman recruited other women to cook food for the strikers, donated it for them. Evidently Bob Travis was one

of the guys that you read about. Did you ever hear of this book Many and the Few?

I: Yeah, I have looked through it.

R: You should get that book. Bob Travis.

I: Oh I thought that was Gitlow's.

R: No, it was written by Bob Travis, the Many and the Few and his wife is still in (?) . You should try to get in touch with her. She has a lot of background.

I: The guy you told me about earlier, Chris Austin, was he also involved with the Local 600?

R: Yeah, yeah. Chris was on the Ford organizing drive and Chris was editor of the Ford Facts for awhile.

I: At the beginning?

R: At the beginning. Yes he is one of the first editors we had. He is real sick now. He had a couple of heart attacks and I saw him, I talked to him here about a couple of weeks, two or three weeks ago. And Chris was a leading figure in the organization at Ford and other places as well. We did a documentary in this office here about three weeks ago, a video tape documentary on Blacks in the labor movement here in Detroit. The whole afternoon the guy shot (?) . And he and I, I have been knowing Chris ever since he was going to high school, Northeastern High School. He used to be one of, inf act he got Eddy Torn and the guys who used to run the 100 yd. dash in 9.6, 9.5, Chris was on the track team at Northeastern High School. And he got involved in the work councils and began to take on the police department, I mean the (?) department here in the city by organizing a squad to go back and set people in, back in after they'd

take them out. He was one of the guys that got me involved in the movements. But he's a guy that I think you should talk to. He has a world of background.

I: Is he here in Detroit?

R: He lives here in Detroit, yes.

I: Are there any other people you can think of that are important?

R: Huges(?) Mason, you should talk to Huges Mason.

I: Mason?

R: Mason. You should talk to Dorothy Knight.

I: What were these people? What were their positions?

R: Huges Mason was an organizer of the UAW and he was one of the first Black local union presidents in the city of Detroit. He's got a history of in some cases I would say real violent, doing things as far as defending workers you know and taking on the police department, the goons and the scabs and whatever you want to call it. And you should talk to John Conyers, Sr., that's the father of Congressman John Conyers.

I: That name sounds familiar to me, from the archives what's--

R: You probably saw his name in there. Have you been over to Wayne State?

I: Yeah.

R: You don't remember seeing anything in there about me do you?

I: Oh yeah. No, no I do. They have records, they have correspondence in fact today I was looking at the Reuther file. And they have got all his notes and everything that were in his file.

R: Those that he wants you to see. Or that they want you to see.

I: Yeah there is something--

R: If I sound bitter, I am bitter. I got to bear a hell of a lot of scars some of my own folks from the labor department, from the labor movement. Some who got there because of some things I helped do. I don't say I did them on my own. And I told the guy from ABC he wanted to do a documentary, I told him look, don't waste my time, don't waste your time. I started to tell you this, and I'm going to tell you why I didn't tell you this because you told me I'm going to use this as a dissertation and whatnot and you not a reporter and I have told the reporter don't waste my time if you are not going to print what I say, and I don't expect you to print word for word, but if you are not going to give the true facts and I challenge anybody to tell you or to say that what I tell you not true. If you don't want to accept the truth all right don't come around. If you want to go back and check with the UAW and say well here is what he said and they tell you well don't print that, go to hell don't waste my time you know. Had a guy from Life magazine wanted to do some things.

I: Yeah that's why it's important. There is a new trend in history and (break) for rank and file retirees and I got permission from the UAW's international to use their list of all the people that are on the retiree's list and I want to get some, I wanted to ask some questions so I can get some ideas about how much they participated and what they thought about their leaders and you know try to compare the different units against each other and so on and I got a preliminary version of the questionnaire written up. I showed it to Dorosh last night and he didn't like it at all. He told me it was too-- He told me it was too inquisitive, asking too many questions. Take a look and see if you

think that rank and file guys would go along with it. I'm going to have to shorten it I know that. It's way too long right now.

R: I'm up to question 15 now and I have to agree a lot of people are still affected by the Red scare. And some of the people wouldn't give you this information. You'd be surprised. There was a hell of an effect it left on some people. Especially some of the old-timers.

I: What I'm going to try to do is I'm going to try to impress on them that their names are not going on anywhere and it's not going to be connected with--

R: Oh now the names are not going on it? Well they are still suspicious.

R: I don't know what Walter told you but it, I was a guy not knowing what I know now do you know what I mean and had to answer these questions I'd say who the hell are you working for the FBI.

. That's exactly what he said.

I: We did some, in 1967 I think somebody did a survey, I think the UAW itself did a survey of some of the political views of the union members and all. I'm going to try to get a copy of that and see how they phrase the questions and all. Do you think the way I'm doing it is too abrupt, the way that I am asking the questions there?

R: I, as I said before some people a lot of people were affected by the Red scare and some of their families, younger generation has come on since then their mothers and fathers have told them what had happened and they are reluctant to answer and give, even though you don't bother to give the names you know. I think you should kind of revise it, in what way I don't know as of now. I say I got to question 15. I haven't got any further. But I think most of them will give you an answer if it wasn't such a direct question you asked. I'll give an

example: Did you ever go to a rally of the unemployment council. Well, the unemployment councils was as far as the Un-American House Committee was a communist outfit they called it.

I: So they would be scared to say.

R: Yeah. Some of them were and some of them wouldn't. They would say hell yeah I went. And did you go because you were a communist? Hell no I didn't go because--I went because that was just something that was trying to help me better my condition. I would not answer.

I: I want to ask that question because it seems like it's important for raising the consciousness if they went through that period except

R: You would find some who would. I won't say all of them. I won't say all of them. But just like the guy from ABC told me over the phone from New York he said look I am having one hell of a time even getting people to admit that they even took part in the demonstrations in the 30s, you know what I mean. I can't think of the guy's name. He wanted to come out and do about 3 months. Well, I don't know but I have to agree with Dorosh I didn't know you had had his kind of conversation with him but though you want to get that, that's your copy right.

I: If you want it you can keep it. I have several copies.

R: Yeah I'd like to keep a copy. Well like a couple of suggestions he had said was like question No. 3. He said even if people were fired he said they aren't going to put that down. And I said nobody is going to put out that they were fired. He says retired you know if they are on the retired list, then oh the ones who quit early that's what he said.

- I: If on a pension they could be--
- . But he was saying that question No. 2 what was your last year at Rouge. He said ask what is your seniority date which is a lot easier. Which is a lot easier--
- R: Yeah, they are at home, they don't have anything to do and they want, they would be glad for you to ask them these kind of questions you know what I mean. Others would be reluctant. I don't think when I say this I think you should give it a try. I agreed with Dorosh. Some people who have been (?) wouldn't want to answer. And you find others they will say yeah I was at the unemployment council once. some of them will say what the hell I got one foot in the grave and one in the undertaker. So ain't a damn thing they can do to me now. Some of them are in their 80s and late 70s early 80s or 90s you know what I mean.
- I: Do you think that it's the local or international had their name on my letter saying that they would, and they said that they wanted to look it over before I send it out and I'm going to send it out through their mailing service.
- R: Some of the old guys are still as suspicious as hell of the UAW.
- I: How about the local.
- R: Well if you say the UAW would be willing to put their name put the international union's name on your letter then go ahead that may help.
- I: That may help.
- R: At least they would feel it was a UAW sponsored thing and supported by the UAW. That would help. Wait a minute I'm going to ask you a direct question.
- I: Sure.

R: When you went to the UAW to ask certain information say on this for example what you just told me that they are willing to let you use their official name, did they put you on any restrictions?

I: Yeah well it was a hard time getting it. The way that we did it, my, the professor I'm working with knows Sheldon Freidman who is the educational director and he wrote Freidman a letter asking him if it would be possible for us to use the list and from him it went to the regional director, 1A, Region 1A.

R: Ernie Loftin.

I: Yeah Loftin. And it sat with him for a long time and I was in contact with George Schwartz who is Freidman's assistant and I was calling back and forth and finally after I think about three months he called back and said that we can use it that they were not going to give us a list they were just going to give us the permission to use the mailing service. So we tell them give them the stuff and say what we want to do and then they will mail it out so we don't get to see the names or anything like that. And the other restriction is that they want to look it over and approve it before we send it out.

I: Give it a try. If it will help you. I hope in your efforts to get information together you can get people to talk.

End Tape 4, Side A