TAPPES INTERVIEW September 1983
Tape #1

Q: First, we'd like to know what kind of work you did at the plant.

T: I worked in the Ford Foundry in the Rouge plant. I was a machine molder in the Ford Foundry.

Q: What does that mean--a machine molder?

T: Well, as a trade molding is a skilled trade, but in automobile production, you know, many skilled trades are broken down so that various facets of the trade can be performed on a multi-production basis. So machine molding where you use different tools for experimental molding, on a machine it's just a repetitive operation and the machine does most of the work.

Q: It's actually shaping the--

T: Well, they have a pattern that shapes the mold. What you do is you put a form around the mold and then you pull the hopper open and sand runs down and then you have a weight you put on top of that, and then there's a lever to turn the power on and that jolts the sand around the pattern tightly enough so that when the pattern is released the metal can be--the molten metal can be poured in there to form the casting.

Q: And you did that part of the type casting?

T: I did, no I only made the molds.

Q: You made the molds and someone else then worked on the casting.

T: And someone behind me put cores in there and then they set it on the line. The line went all the way around, well there was a battery of

machines. Each mold has two machines to form it, the upper and lower they call the cope and the drag--cope is the top and drag is the bottom. And when I finished the mold I had to turn it over and set it on a table behind me and that's where the core setter took over. He set the cores in and then he set it on the line. The line is continuously moving.

Q: The line is continuously. How much time did you have to perform that?

T: I made 85 an hour before the union, but after the union came in and the job was time studied it got down to about 54.

Q: From 85 to 54.

Q: Wow!

T: Uh-huh.

Q: Once it got on the line that's when the unskilled labor took over?

T: We were what was known as semi-skilled. Skilled labor didn't do any kind of repetitive work. It was all, almost single initiative. They could take a blueprint and build a mold and they didn't do small things like that. I was molding cam shafts and we also had pistons and let's see, engine heads and water pumps, flywheels, all that peculiarly was done at Ford's by the molding process. I say peculiarly because the Rouge plant was very unique and many things that were done in Ford shops on the outside at Ford's were done through casting processes. Flywheels are, is a forged thing, cam shafts are forged, crank shafts are forged but not at Ford's, not at the Ford Motor Company. And that was one of the reasons for his huge intake of money because of the methods that he employed in getting the product out and of course he owned so many of the natural resources.

He had extensive forests in Northern Michigan which I think the company still owns from which they got the wood for their station wagons--you know in the old days station wagons were made of wood--and he had two sawmills and quite a lumbering industry in the North. I think about five or six different cities where he had some method, some means of processing the lumber, and of course, a lot of it went for sale. And then that lumber was not transported by commercial interests, he had his own boats that would go up there and bring it right on down to the Rouge plant and, of course, if you have been to the Rouge you have probably seen the boat slip. Ford still owns about six ocean-going--

Q: Were they organized?

T: Yes.

Q: In what union?

T: First with us and then we turned them over to the National Maritime Union.

Q: When?

T: In 1943 I think, maybe '44.

Q: Did you guys organize them?

T: Oh yes.

Q: As part of Local 600?

T: Yes.

Q: What unit were they affiliated with?

T: The Transportation Unit which is the railroad and the truck drivers and all that.

Q: And this was not until '43?

Q: That's two years.

T: You see we were officially organized in 1941.

Q: Yeah.

T: And it was only after you get into negotiations for seniority rights and all this sort of thing that you discover that an industrial plant has no way of fully protecting sailors, you know, or even engineers on a railroad. See we had, it must have been about 700 people in the Ford railroad setup because he still owned at that time the Detroit Toledo and Irontown Railroad as well as the 1100 miles of rail systems in the Rouge plant. So--

Q: Why couldn't you protect them? I don't--

T: Well, there was no experience, there was no one among the leadership that knew anything about sailing, you know, heck, the guy's gone for a month or six weeks and goes to South America maybe three months.

Q: I see, they really were ocean-going sailors.

T: Yes.

Q: They weren't just working the boat slips?

T: No, there were a few who, there were three boats that went from Rouge to Northern Michigan, they got limestone and copper silica sand and lumber, but all the rest were ocean-going and went back and forth to South America to get raw materials of various kinds, aluminum, tin and copper and stuff like that.

Q: So it sounds like he had all angles covered there.

T: Yes, that was a real complex. There were, I think at one time there were, it was estimated that there were 16 different industries that operated out of Rouge. They had the Rubber plant where they made

tires, and the Glass plant still exists, and they had a Cement plant, and then, of course, there's Tool and Die and the Steel mills and the Foundry, Assembly, quite a number, quite a number.

Q: The Engine plant.

T: The Engine plant, the Powerhouse.

Q: Rolling mills.

T: Yes.

Q: You were in the Foundry all the time you worked there?

T: Yes, until I retired I was still under the jurisdiction of the Foundry.

Q: So the local officers don't have any arrangement where part of their time is off or did you work full time?

T: When I retired from Ford Motor Company I had 39 years of service. I only worked for Ford Motor Company about two years, all the rest of the time I was on the union leave of absence. But my time, you know, my seniority went on, accumulated.

Q: Uh-huh.

T: So when I retired from the UAW I also retired from Ford Motor Company.

Q: When you were an officer in Local 600 you weren't also working in the Foundry?

T: I wasn't working, no. I was on union salary.

Q: Because when I was going through the Executive Board Minutes there would occasionally be references to leave time and things like that.

T: Well, those were others. The four top officers, President, the Vice Presidents, Recording Secretary and the Secretary-Treasurer, were all full-time salaried positions and the four of us had leaves of absence

which were renewed every year on the anniversary of your first leave, and mine continued right on through my whole career because once I became a staff member at the International Union I also renewed my leave of absence every year.

Q: I see. I never realized that. I always thought you guys were working in the plant while being _____.

T: Well, that was the old system. There are still many, many, many, in fact I would say that probably 85 percent of the union officials throughout the UAW are still working in the plant. But in the big three and Ford led the way, I think the main reason was because the union people had such a great advantage over the management. They knew what they wanted and what they wanted to do, but management had to wait until we told them or had to react to what we did, therefore we were ahead of them and so we got many advantages. The first contract provided that, only provided that a steward or committeeman could leave his job to handle grievances.

Q: Did you say steward or committeeman?

T: Steward or committeeman.

Q: I didn't know you had committeemen that early.

T: Yes.

Q: What was the difference then between a steward and a committeeman?

T: Well, a steward is one who handles the immediate grievance on the job. He's there with the men. A committeeman has the jurisdiction over the whole unit, he would have unitwide jurisdiction.

Q: Didn't that system change later on so that committeemen sort of replaced stewards?

T: It changed at Rouge, but it still exists in Chrysler and General Motors. At Rouge every union representative is a committeeman or I guess in the vernacular of the day, a committeeperson. Then they had what they call a bargaining committee. Each unit has a three-person bargaining committee which is the overall unitwide and of course the unit president or unit chairman is the overall. Now the, all of those people in the Rouge plant are on full time. They work full time in their duties as union representatives.

Q: Always then, too?

T: It wasn't until 1942. The first contract did not provide that. It only provided that they shall have all the time necessary to handle grievances.

Q: So the bargaining unit was--those were full time on the union payroll.

T: No, they weren't.

Q: No, they were not.

T: No, only the plant chairman or building chairman.

Q: The plant chairman.

Q: Even in the small units like the Glass plant?

T: That's right. There were 13 full-time people at that time, 13 plant chairmen and plus Highland Park. Highland Park was part of the, of Local 600 until we were granted local autonomy and the right to elect our own officers. For a year or so we were under administratorship of the International Union after we organized although we did have the 13 plant chairmen structure, and once we were granted local autonomy and allowed to elect local union officers then Highland Park was divided and we were given a local union number. 600 represented the Rouge

plant and 900 represented Lincoln and in order to make it easy they gave Highland Park Local No. 400 because the number was vacant at the time.

Q: Did those numbers have any meaning?

T: No, they don't really. The advantage in, like 600 is the fact that it's easy to remember. Many Ford locals have the double zero like Canada is Local 200, Ford of Canada is Local 200.

Q: Is that the Windsor?

T: Yes.

Q: Can you tell us a little bit about the early struggles that helped form the union?

T: Well, the early struggles really go, they precede the UAW. The original union that I knew of was the old Auto Workers Union. I wasn't working in an automobile plant when I joined that union but they were not particular, as long as you were a potential auto worker why you could join the Auto Workers Union. It cost you a quarter to join and you were given a card, and I'm so sorry I didn't save that it would have been priceless nowadays. I think it was 15¢ a month were the dues, and if you were unemployed why you automatically were granted paid-up dues, there would be no charge. The Auto Workers Union for Detroit covered the, I suppose the whole State of Michigan was Local 1. And New York, I recall New York was Local 2 and that included I think based mostly in Buffalo, New York, because that's where the Pierce Arrow plant was. You never heard of Pierce Arrow automobile have you?

Q: No.

T: The Pierce Arrow automobile was probably the largest car ever made in this country. They had headlamps on the fenders which was very unusual for that time. I can still see those swooping like a swan's neck, you know, fenders. But, anyway, Buffalo is where they and then Indiana there was a car, I forget which one it was but later it got bigger because the Studebaker plant moved from Detroit to South Bend and then Indiana became quite a producer.

Q: This is not the AFL union is it?

T: No.

Q: Is it the one that Bill McKie was--

T: This was an independent union at first. Now I don't know whether the AFL ever embraced the Auto Workers Union or not, but this is the one that Bill McKie headed up. He was the chief organizer for the Auto Workers Union. Let's see, I was trying to think of the other person that was, he lives in California. I met him about six years ago.

Q: From those days?

T: Yeah.

Q: Wyndham Mortimer?

T: No, this is a different person. I knew Wyndham but Wyndham--

Q: Did you know him?

T: I knew Wyndham as a UAW activist but not as Auto Worker. This fellow is one of the forgotten men really of the organizers. I'll think of him.

Q: He's in California?

T: He lives in California.

Q: Try to remember.

T: He's a Detroiter, he's a Detroiter, but he lives in California.

Q: He's a Detroiter but he lives in California.

T: I'll think of it before you leave. I have a, in fact I have a tape, it must be 20 minutes long where I interviewed him.

Q: Really.

T: To get back though, the real strong and deliberate effort to organize Auto Workers began in 1935 and that was initiated by the American Federation of Labor, and I think Bill Green appointed a fellow by the name of Dillon. He put him in charge of the organizing and he set himself up as President. Their success was indifferent because the American Federation of Labor with their craft ideas made little effort to organize the ordinary auto worker, the production worker. They were interested in the electricians, the powerhouse people and the pattern makers, tool and die workers, and people like that, but the ordinary production worker they didn't want to be bothered with, so the indifference is what made it very difficult for them to have any kind of success. There was a convention held in 1935 in South Bend. I don't know whether they accomplished very much but at least Walter Reuther introduced himself while that convention was going on and somebody made a motion that he be given a voice. I don't know whether they ever made him a delegate or not but they gave him a voice, gave him the right to speak. But the next convention was in 1936, it was held here at the Hotel Fort Shelby.

Q: You were there?

T: No, I was not. I wasn't even, I wasn't working yet. I didn't get a job in the automobile plant until 1937. But there are a lot of us who

went down to the Fort Shelby out of curiosity. The peculiar thing about that convention was that there was one Black delegate in that group, just one, and I stumbled upon that very--

Q: Out of about how many delegates?

T: About 200, and they were from Michigan, Wisconsin, Ohio, Indiana and Ilinois principally, there might have been some from Pennsylvania, some few, but if there were, they were with the Ohio delegation, and this Black fellow was with, was in the Ohio delegation. Now I accidentally stumbled upon that. I was looking for people who had been blackballed, while we were organizing the UAW, and who had lost any chances of pension rights. A special fund had been set up at the convention in Long Beach in 1966 and this fund they raised approximately $150,000, and this was to be used to give anyone who could be found who fit the category of blackballed, being blackballed and who were now retired and living on Social Security or whatever savings they may have been able to accumulate, and we found altogether nine.

Q: All from the Ford plant or from all over?

T: No, all over, most of them were Ford workers though, Chris Alston and Paul Kirk. There were some that we could've very easily have been able to help but they had passed, but I can recall some of them that had gotten jobs at the International. So the initial monthly stipend was about $280 or $290 and the way it was set up the interest on the money was just about taking care of the monthly payout, and we were even able to provide a cost-of-living margin for them. But the fund, as we added more people the fund began to shrink and when it got down

to about $125,000 in spite of the interest and other things you could see the gradual depletion. So we decided we would have to do something else and we began consulting with actuaries and other people. We had run out of candidates, eligible candidates although we had many to investigate.

Q: What happened to this Black fellow that you were telling me about.

T: That's how I found him.

Q: That's how you found him.

T: That's how I found him. I was asked to investigate an applicant by the name of Maurer and when we located him we found, from him we learned that he had been one of the original Executive Board members of the UAW. He was the Ohio board member and in those days an Ohio board member, any board member worked just like the regular staff, you know, they organized and they got no pay. They got paid, if they were on the staff they got paid as a staff member but not simply because they were a board member or a regional director. Contrast that with a regional director's salary nowadays of $68,000 a year.

Q: Is that what they get?

T: Approximately.

Q: How do you get one of those jobs?

T: Pretty rough. So anyway I discovered this fellow Maurer, he was 91 or 92.

Q: Wow!

T: But he had his, you know, his faculties, he was very sharp. Physically he wasn't too well but mentally he was really there, so we had quite a chat. In fact, I taped that conversation, too, that's in the archives or somewhere.

Q: Then you've been doing some of your own research apparently, huh?

T: Well, you know, I get bugged by friends especially and relatives about writing, you know, write the story so I did put together a few things but I'll have to find a professional to do the writing. I don't have that ability.

Q: So you are working with someone?

T: Yes. Mr. Maurer told us about his experiences as an organizer in Ohio and Indiana and mentioned some of the political problems of the time. In fact, he was ushered out of his position as International Executive Board member through the political ramifications between left and right and I assume from the way he talked that he was left and was ousted by the right wing.

Q: When was this?

T: Ah, that would have been in 1939.

Q: And it was back in Ohio or in the Local 600?

T: Well, it would be, the convention was in Cleveland that year. It was in Ohio, in Ohio he was ousted as the Regional Director of the State of Ohio. But, anyway, he's the one that gave us a picture which is in the archives, one of those panoramic pictures that they take at conventions. And this was the first convention of the UAW, where the UAW was founded in the Fort Shelby Hotel, and this Black delegate is in just about in the middle of the picture but he couldn't remember his name. He was telling us how Dillon had berated him for bringing this "Nigger" to our convention as he put it, and he was just put out. He said, "Oh, he just reamed me," he said, "for bringing this fellow." He said he was a nice fellow. We worked with him, he's a member of

the union, he couldn't understand it. But that was the sense of the times I guess.

Q: But you yourself were involved in the organization of the union?

T: Yes, I was. I went to Flint, helped out up there; I went to Monroe when they had, well, you know, all unions helped each other in those days, a big paper strike; and I was a member of the organizing committee, Ford Organizing Committee for many years. Later on we organized what was known as the Negro Organizing Committee to give some special emphasis to the, overtures toward the Black workers in the Rouge plant.

Q: That's what I was wondering about, but when you were organizing in the beginning there, were you organizing White workers?

T: Everybody.

Q: Everybody.

T: In fact, I--

Q: How did they respond?

T: Well, most of the people who were pro-union it didn't make any difference to them who approached them, they joined. Those who weren't or who were afraid, it didn't matter whether it was me or someone else they just didn't join the union because they were afraid, you know, they were afraid for their jobs.

Q: But you didn't get, experience any of this stuff directly about being a "Nigger" and trying to organize a union?

T: No, I never had that experience.

Q: Really.

T: With any of the Ford workers.

Q: That's really amazing.

T: I never did. I remember once a fellow came up to me and he wanted to know if you had to be a citizen to join the union, and I said, no, just work in the plant, and he asked me could I come to his house because he wanted me to sign him up and his brother, a Polish fellow lived in Hamtramck. But the best was a Mexican fellow who wanted to know if they could join the union despite not being citizens, and I said, you don't have to be a citizen. He said, Mexicans, too? I said, why sure, and I'd say he's looking at me, you know. Mexicans, too? And so then he arranged for me to come to his house, and when I got to his house I'm telling you you never saw so many people in your life in one little house. These Mexican fellows who worked in Ford's and he had about 40 of them there, had brought their wives and their kids, you know, and you can just imagine me in this, all this Spanish, you know, language, and I didn't know what they were saying about me although I hear the word Negro, you know, which is the Spanish word for Black. I knew that they were talking about me, but I didn't know what they were saying. But I was well received and a--

Q: By the Polish workers also?

T: Oh yes, yes.

Q: Even immigrants?

T: Yeah, certainly.

Q: Did that change at all when the Southern--

T: In fact, I, oh yes, you had, listen, the CIO program in contast to the AFL program had a strong statement in its provisions, its constitutional provisions to organize all workers regardless of race,

creed or color. You know this was in the Constitution of the CIO and it was preached very broadly and it was very seldom

[END OF SIDE A]

T: . . . more concerned about getting organized and these little prejudices were placed on a backburner in many respects so that there were extra efforts made to show a brotherhood spirit. I can recall something happening, that the newspaper reporters would want to get a picture and you'd see two or three people standing there waiting for the picture to be snapped, and then one would say, just a minute, just a minute. Then they would run and find a Negro brother and put him in the picture with them, you know, just to show their unity, you know. It was done many times, I saw that happen many times.

Q: Do you think that's typical of all CIO unions or--

T: It was of most CIO unions in that day, in that day.

Q: Do you think that the large numbers of Blacks made a difference for the Ford union?

T: Well, yes, because when people become competitive why, you know, it's take your best hold and some, the losers would become disgruntled and the next thing you know you--I'm going to give you an example in reverse. A friend of mine is involved with a housing project and he's worked very hard on that. But because he didn't have any money--it's government sponsored--he had to go to Cleveland to find some people who would advance the money so that the government would put their matching, I think it was $9,000,000 they got from the government, but

he had to find something like $1,300,000 in order to get the $9,000,000 so he finally got it in Cleveland, nobody here would do it. Okay, so there was a meeting here not too long ago for the purpose of closing the deal entirely. The homes are practically built and they had to make decisions regarding the management, the layout of the streets, the naming of the streets and all this sort of thing, and the group who put up the money from Cleveland were unhappy with the name that he had given the project, he called it the Paul Robeson Homes, and they wanted to change the name.

Q: What year was this?

T: This was just about three weeks ago.

Q: Oh, this is after the reemergence of Paul Robeson.

T: So a few minutes of discussion on that and he got angry, and then somebody had made a remark that had been brought to his attention a few days before that he was holding out on these things that they wanted because he wanted something under the table and so he got, so he brought that out, you know. He says, I spent all my whole life, he says, working for people. He says, I could have been a very wealthy man. He says, now I'm in my sixties, I haven't got a dime and somebody accuses me of looking for a bribe. He says, at this late date, he says, a bribe wouldn't do me any good. He said, but all I have left, he says, is my integrity and now somebody's trying to steal that. Well here's what he said. He says, and that dirty Jew is the one responsible. I couldn't believe it, coming out of his mouth; a "dirty Jew," he says. This man is, well, you see that glass door there and that rim around it, he's as dark as that, you know. But so

I said that to say these things may come out in anger but I think for the most part people don't, at least they try to not let it come out, you know, to show these feelings.

Q: Did you grow up in Detroit?

T: No, my home was Nebraska.

Q: You came from Nebraska.

T: My, I had three successful elections in Local 600. I ran for Secretary of the Local and won hands down very easily. My campaign manager was a fellow named J. B. Jones. Now what is name was he never knew, all he ever had were initials so that should tell you that he is from the hills of Tennessee--

Q: Uh-huh.

T: An out-and-out hill-billy as they called him, but he was a dyed-in-the-wool liberal from his point of view of racial mix and all that sort of thing. He was 100 percent liberal and I believe that man would just have about laid down his life for me, that's the kind of guy he was. One thing he insisted that the candidate is not supposed to spend any of his personal funds, we're supposed to raise the money for him, you know. Those days are gone, you know, long gone. When the average candidate when he loses an election nowadays why he's in hock for a long long time.

Q: Really. What's your recollection of other Negroes in the union? Were they from Detroit? Did they come because of the auto industry from other parts of the country? Were they from the South? Because your coming from Nebraska must have been very unusual.

T: It was. Most of my friends and companions as I grew up here were from Georgia, Alabama, Louisiana, and Mississippi, and one of my close friends is from Arkansas. And most people didn't believe me when I told them I was from Nebraska because it was very unusual to find a Black person who was born in the North, but that's just one of those things. My father was from Mississippi.

Q: Your father was.

T: Yes.

Q: And were you a little kid?

T: When he was 14, when he was 14, he left home. His parents sent him away because they were afraid he was a little bit too outspoken and they were afraid he wouldn't live to be 21, so they sent him away, sent him to Memphis. Then this was when World War I was brewing and the nation was getting prepared and one of the industries that was preparing was the meat industry and so he heard that the, first he went to Chicago to get a job in the packing plants and couldn't make it there so he went to Omaha and Omaha at that time was the third largest meat-packing city in the country behind St. Louis. It was Chicago, St. Louis and then Omaha and St. Joseph, Missouri, these were the four meat packing. So he went to Omaha and he got a job there and that's where he met my mother. My mother is from Kansas and what had happened in her case was that her father had passed and she and her sisters were so happy to get away from the farm that they rushed to Omaha where their brother, their only brother, he left the farm as soon as he was old enough, you know, the old man must have been quite a tyrant. So the girls came to Omaha and she met my dad.

Q: So you were born in fact in Omaha?

T: Yes, I was.

Q: Do you think that, and, your father you said something about him having been too outspoken. That was a racial prejudice so-called?

T: Yeah, they were afraid that he would be lynched or something in Mississippi.

Q: Uh-huh. Did you learn from your daddy those sorts of things?

T: Oh yes, oh yes. My father hated the word Negro. He said you are Black.

Q: Then.

T: Then, you know, that's sixty years ago or more now. There was a story done about, two or three I guess, the Detroit News has carried the stories and the Free Press has carried them.

Q: But no scholarly studies that would have ...?

T: No, no, nothing in depth.

Q: Are you on tape there?

Q: Yeah.

Q: Because that strikes me as something very special in your background that while you were, from the time you were growing up that you had a father who was already a pretty independent, outspoken guy.

T: Right, right.

Q: And that it was in Nebraska at the same time. Was there a large Black community there when you were growing up?

T: Not a large one, but a pretty, well I guess a pretty well-established Black community.

Q: And you lived in a Black neighborhood?

T: Well, yes and no. There wasn't any really established Black neighborhood.

Q: There wasn't?

T: No. There were pockets where people, you know, sort of migrated together but generally speaking you'd go, I never knew what discrimination was, like movies and things like that, until I came here.

Q: That's really something.

T: When I came to Detroit I never will forget, I went to the Michigan Theater, the Adams Theater. I went to see Al Jolson in the first talking picture and he was, you know, black-faced, Sonny Boy, that's when he sang Sonny Boy, and they tried to get me to go upstairs, you know. I said, no, I don't like to go upstairs, I like to sit downstairs, and then we had a word or two but I still went downstairs and sat where I wanted. But--

Q: So you had equality in your blood in a real way there.

T: Yeah.

Q: Our school was, you know, the reason I say yes and no because when I graduated from the eighth grade I was the only Black boy in the class and there was only one Black girl in the class.

Q: Was that all your schooling--eighth grade?

T: No, no, no, I graduated from high school and went four and a half months to the University of Nebraska.

Q: Was your father involved with the union also?

T: No, he wasn't. My father disliked unions because his only experience was with the AF of L. My uncle was a bricklayer, this was my mother's

brother was a bricklayer, and he was a journeyman, and a journeyman is qualified at any time to supervise a job. You know the Bricklayers Union is kind of peculiar--everybody belonged, foremen and all, and superintendents. It depends on which contractor you're working for on a given structure as to whose the foreman because each contractor has their own favorite bricklayer foreman. So you may be a foreman on this job and you may be just a common bricklayer on the next job, see, depending on, you know, they move from contractor to contractor, whoever has got a job why they work for them. So my uncle at various times was the foreman, but he couldn't join the union. They have this system of work permits. See the union man would not work with a man who didn't belong to the union, so they would give him a temporary union status and he could work on a work permit. The difference between a union membership and a work permit membership was that you paid dues every week on a work permit and monthly on a membership. So that dues, I think dues at that time was, the dues were $5.00 a month but his work permit cost him $1.50 a week, so he paid a $1.00 more than they did.

Q: So you didn't have anything to do with the union when you were in Omaha?

T: No.

Q: Your first experience of it was with the Auto Workers?

T: Yes, with the Auto Workers.

Q: How come? How did that happen that you--whatever made you think the union was worth--

T: Well, I was still, I was still quite a youngster when I came here and I had never had a steady job.

Q: Oh, you hadn't.

T: No, and I attended all the demonstrations they used to have, the Unemployed Council and all that sort of thing and then you get worked up and you understand what's happening. There were three groups: there was the Communist Party, the Socialist Party and then there was a Proletarian Party who at various times would have demonstrations and big meetings, you know, you probably heard of Hyde Park in London but we had a Hyde Park here, that was the Grand Circus Park downtown.

T: Oh yeah, oh yeah.

T: Man, I'm telling you we used to have some real old, real, I don't mean a violent demonstration, I mean just speech making on a soapbox and there were no TVs to distract you. There were radios but, you know, you couldn't see anything just listening to the radio, and so the entertainment was one attraction, but then when you began to listen to the speakers why you got involved and I got involved.

Q: What in the world was the Proletarian Party? Was that the Shachtman people?

T: No, this was an independent Marxist group. Of course all those organizations are based on the teachings of Karl Marx, but they just had their own idea, you know, it's Methodist Church, it's Baptist Church.

Q: So is it local for Detroit?

T: Well, I don't know whether it was or not. In later years, in fact I own a copy of the Britannica that I bought in, way back in the forties

and I bought it from a guy who was also a member of the Proletarian Party. He was a book salesman but when we got to talking why then he started telling me about his experiences as a Proletarian, a member of the Proletarian.

Q: There was also something called the Workers Party later, active in UAW and I don't know if it was active in Local 600 or not. I think it was during the war that they, I don't know whether they were very important or not but they liked to take and, they were highly self-important and it was the Shachtman group that was fighting the no strike pledge or something. They played a, as I recall they played an important role.

T: Well I can remember the people who were fighting the no-strike pledge very vividly, but I really didn't know their politics. Larry Yost and--

Q: You were kind of brought into the union movement by one or another of these radical appeals that were being made?

T: I think that whetted my interest more than anything else, to the point where I would read and learned more than the average youngster that age would about unions and the rights of the working man and all that because, you know, when you're going to those demonstrations and things like that you hear, you hear names like Tom Mooney, you know, and Joe Hill, they would sing the song and "whose Joe Hill?" I wanted to find out, I found out Joe Hill, you know, at first you might think he might be a Black fellow, Joe Hill. But Joe Hill was a Dane or a Swede or something, you know, and his name was Hilstrom. But, anyway, this is how you get involved and then there were classes. I think the

Socialist Party for a long time was the one that would organize these classes, political classes, but the Communists didn't take long to get into it themselves, they were in it, too. So I went to classes and I got frightened in one in, Oakland Hall was on somewhere near Oakland and Holbrook and I remember going to a class on, let's see, political philosophy and this fellow got up and he said, I want everybody to know that I am a member of the Communinst Party of the United States. Now that didn't frighten anybody, you know, going to demonstrations and all that you hear that. He said, and we believe in the overthrow of the United States government by force and violence--that's just the way he said it. He scared me to death and I'm from out here where everybody is a Republican, you know, and--

Q: And he was probably in the ___?___ besides.

T: I think, here's a guy that got carried away with himself, a lot of Northern high school kids, you know, used to meet there a lot and, of course, they did have the Young Communist League and they gave dances at these halls.

Q: Were the classes and these events well attended?

T: I think some of them were. This particular one on political philosophy the hall was full. I was trying to think of that guy's name.

Q: And they held dances, too, you said?

T: They had a lot of dances.

Q: Was that a place you could go to meet women?

T: Yes.

Q: And vice versa?

T: So you can just imagine a young fellow like me, the main attraction was probably the dances and we had songfests. I learned a lot of workers songs that way and along with that I believe the Communists they had a workers camp, although there were a lot of people that went I believe it was actually sponsored by the Communist Party. Families would be encouraged to come out and have picnics and camp, you know, the camp had plenty of room for camping and barbecuing and just general fun and fun of all kinds. I don't know exactly where it was but I remember going there many times, many times.

Q: Were they good organizers?

T: You mean the Party people? I don't know. If--naturally if you're going to say were they good organizers, you mean were they good party organizers, you know, at recruiting and I would say not particularly because I never did join the Party although I was involved in many demonstrations and many activities, but I never had any desire to join the Party.

Q: What about workers consciousness raising and more general types of organizing, union organizing and getting politics in the minds of the workers?

T: I think that they concentrated pretty heavily on politics in order to be sure that the working people were conscious of their rights and how their rights were obtained and how they were taken away from them. I believe the--this was one of the reasons the CIO was so far ahead of the American Federation of Labor is because the CIO members had better political understanding than the American Federation of Labor did. The American Federation of Labor people were very staid and

conservative and to them the only important time to be interested in politics was every four years presidential elections so you go and you vote Republican and then you go on back to your job and, you know. But in the CIO they were classes at all times, there was political action, there were education classes. Local 600 is a good example. We had more than just a grievance machinery out there. We had a library with about, I'd say about 1500 volumes at one time. When I was Education Director I recall we had about 1500 volumes.

Q: You were Education Director at one time?

T: After, after my defeat as Recording Secretary I was appointed Education Director by one of the later presidents and we had classes in parliamentary law, grievance procedure, union administration, political philosophy, and I even had a, found a teacher who taught Spanish.

Q: Yeah, I remember seeing some references to public speaking classes.

T: Oh yeah, public speaking.

Q: And grievance negotiations and--

T: That was one of my, one of the classes I taught, public speaking and grievance procedures. But we did have a lady that taught Spanish and we had art classes there for a while. Oliver Le Gron was a sculptor, he taught--

Q: What year are we talking, years are we talking about?

T: We're talking about the years between 1942 and 1951.

Q: Marquart was Education Director.

T: Marquart, yes.

Q: But he was of the 600 or of the whole International?

T: 600.

Q: Oh, it was at 600 and you followed him or--

T: Yes, yes. I was an officer while he was--

Q: While he was Education Director, right?

T: Education Director. Later on he left--

Q: Then you succeeded him as Education Director?

T: No, no, there were a couple in between there.

Q: Because Reading the Executive Board meetings this morning I saw that Brother Marquart was there at virtually every meeting asking about something or other. Could we have a symposium? Could we pass out a leaflet?

T: Yeah, I got into a debate on incentive pay once.

Q: You were in favor of it incentive pay?

T: During World War II I was in favor of being paid for what we did, yes. Actually it wasn't--incentive pay per se, it was pay, well I'd have to get into the explanation of our program.

Q: That was very important because I think I find there's very little understanding about that.

T: There was a ceiling on wages.

Q: Right.

T: And many of the operations, the workers surpassed the expected norm in many cases because of their patriotism, you know, they were sold a bill of goods and the E flags for excellence and all that kind of stuff. So, but they got nothing for it, but the Company still got the profit, you know.

Q: Right.

T: Cost plus. Oh our government sure is a sucker for the, you know, cost plus, and so what did they do? Cost, you know, if it takes six people to get a product out they'd load the plant with ten people, and charge all those ten to the product that six people can get out, you see. This is the cost plus 10 percent.

Q: Does that mean less work for the workers?

T: Well, we'll say these fellows get $10 a piece, okay six people get $60, and the government pays the Company $60 for the men and then 10 percent for themselves, $6 for themselves. Now this is what the proper charge should be, but instead the Company would put ten people on the job and the government paid ten people $10 a piece that's $100, gave the Company $100 for the ten people and then gave them $10 as profit.

Q: How did that affect the guys working?

T: It didn't affect the fellow working. In most cases they didn't have anything to do, you just had a lot of boondoggling, you know. Now this was hoarding. Actually the company had a sinister purpose, they were hoarding this labor to make up for the attritional losses in the armed forces and things like that. Now the people couldn't go from job to job as they chose, they were all registered with the National Labor, no, the National War Production Board or whatever it was. So once the Company got them they had them, you know, it's like slavery I guess, you know, he's registered to me. But this was the kind of system that they were operating under, cost plus.

Q: So how did that affect the, there was a ceiling on wages and the worker couldn't earn more than a certain amount.

T: That's right.

Q: And the so-called incentive pay would have meant that if they worked beyond certain hours?

T: If he's supposed to make we'll say like I used to, I used to make 85 an hour, cam shafts. Okay, after the union came in, it was determined through time study methods and all that, that 54 was a fair day's work. Okay, and here comes the World War II, and the idea that, you know, all of this song and dance they give you, you know, got to win the war, patriot, patriotism, keep 'em flying. That was one of the slogans: Keep 'em flying. See that the boys get all the bullets and tanks and planes they need. Okay, so, well, I know good and well that I can make 85 an hour so as a little jolt of patriotism I'll get 85 an hour now, but I don't get anything for it, see. My fair day's work is 54, but I'm getting 85, so our program called for being paid an incentive for the extra production over and above a fair day's work, a fair day's pay.

Q: And what were the people who were fighting against the incentive wages arguing? They would just have the same old _____

T: Well, they say it's a Communist system and you recall that, a word that I had never heard before, the Bordeaux system, which I later learned. Naturally I learned to dig and see what are they talking about, they called me name or something, you know, the Bordeaux system. So I find out this guy Bordeaux was a piece work advocate, but a very scientific kind of a piece work. So but there under that system your hourly rate is reduced a certain percentage and then when your piece work rolls in why I don't know, it's a little bit

complicated but I then knew what he was talking about but he was really talking, they were really talking about out-and-out piece work.

Q: Yeah.

T: While we were talking about incentives, but the connotation they use if you read the convention proceedings was piece work, you know.

Q: Right.

T: And some of the most adamant delegates who we had from 600 at that convention were the Rolling Mill people, they to a man voted against that resolution and within three months they had an incentive system there and the Rolling Mill that still exists.

Q: They voted against the incentive pay.

T: Absolutely, they voted against it.

Q: Because they thought it would end up in speed up because some guy come in there and say you should be able to produce this much and unless you produce that much you don't get paid.

T: Well the claim is that once they get into the incentive and get producing this extra amount then the Company gradually creeps in and makes that part of the norm, you see.

Q: You didn't agree with that.

T: No.

Q: And what happened after the war, did it disappear?

T: I insisted that the union, the strength of the union would prevent anything like that from happening and the only successful Bordeaux system plans were operated in plants where no unions existed.

Q: Do you think you were right?

T: Yeah, I do.

Q: Because Reuther certainly used that as one of his weapons for climbing to the top of the union.

T: He sure did but the irony of the situation is that there were about 28 percent of the plants that we had under contract at that time had incentive systems and they would have garotted Walter if he had come in and tried to do away with those systems, especially in the agricultural implement plants--International Harvester--

[END OF TAPE #1]

TAPPES INTERVIEW
Tape #2

Q: How did people respond to you when you advocated that in your program?

T: Most people went along with the idea, we never got it through of course, but this was only for a temporary means of providing some fashion of getting raises, getting wages.

Q: So after the war ended did it revert back to normal wage scales?

T: We were always operating on a normal wage scale but after the war we were able to negotiate increases in our wages and do away with the wage freeze.

Q: Then never in fact went to an incentive system.

Q: Except for the Rolling Mill, right?

T: The Rolling Mill did but that was during World War, after the war really.

Q: And what about the issue of the no-strike pledge?

T: Well the UAW, I don't remember any other union ever doing that. The UAW called a special convention in Detroit and the purpose of that convention was to pronounce a war policy including, well, of course, we called for a ceiling on income--a $25,000 ceiling on income for the duration of the war for the wealthy--something about the system of paying these people for war products other than cost plus and a no-strike pledge. In return for all of these things, the union would pledge that it would not strike for the duration.

Q: Immediately after the bombing of Pearl Harbor there was a convention?

T: Some time after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, yes. It was the following Spring. I think it was in May of 1942 I believe.

Q: And the International called this meeting?

T: Yes, yes, it was held here at the Masonic Temple. So the no-strike pledge of course had to be, this policy had to be reiterated at the following convention and in those days our conventions were annual. So the convention, let's see '43 convention, Buffalo. It was Buffalo. See '41 was Buffalo, '42 Chicago, '43 was Buffalo, yes. There was, no this was in '43, yeah, the, I think it was '43, it had to be '43. Well, no matter, at the following convention which was Grand Rapids in 1944 there was considerable opposition raised against the no-strike pledge and the opposition among the rank and file was led by a Larry Yost who was from Local 600.

Q: Did he have support in the Local for that movement?

T: Oh yes, he had a lot of support. He had the McCuskers' and quite a number of others. Victor Reuther led the convention caucus against the no-strike pledge, in fact he was on the Resolutions Committee and I was on the Resolutions Committee that year and we had, if I recall we had a minority report. But to make a long story short--

Q: Victor Reuther was opposed as early as '43?

T: Oh yes, he was opposed, definitely opposed. That was--

Q: Mazey had been...

T: Huh?

Q: I knew Mazey had been...

T: Mazey was __?__ already cashiered in, put him in the army. So--

Q: So Victor took a strong stand against the no-strike pledge?

T: Oh yeah.

Q: But Walter wasn't, right?

T: No, Walter talked through Victor.

Q: And see what happens to Victor?

T: Yeah. Lamb to the slaughter. See Walter was a candidate for Vice President to succeed himself. See they had only had, only elected, reelected Vice Presidents in '42, the Vice Presidents had been done away with because of all the factionalism so they had, in '42 they decided they would try one more time and only elected two, one from, and they let each group select one: Frankenstein from the left wing and Walter from the right wing. So he wanted to be reelected, in fact he was making a move to test his strength, he ran Dick Leonard against Addes, you know.

Q: A certain irony there, too, wasn't there?

T: Yeah, yeah, because later on they joined forces, yeah. But, anyway, the no-strike pledge at the convention, oh boy was that fought, that was a hard fight. Finally, it winds up with a motion to have a referendum vote and it was just my luck to be on the Resolutions Committee that year because the committee had to take the referendum and that was really a job. We finally--

Q: Were you in favor of that referendum?

T: No, I wasn't in favor of it.

Q: Of their holding the referendum?

T: I thought they should have just had the vote and whatever way they went so we don't have a no-strike pledge. It didn't matter really because whenever they wanted to strike they struck, the International just wouldn't support them.

Q: Who struck?

T: Various wildcats.

Q: Did you have those in Local 600 a lot?

T: We had a few but they weren't for production, for the same reasons that the other plants were striking. We had two wildcats at the 600, one in the Pressed Steel and the other was in Transportation I think--it was about upgrading Blacks.

Q: Uh-huh, and you supported those didn't you?

T: We cut those off, well we cut right.

Q: Cut them off.

T: Right away, yeah. We moved right in on them, in fact they didn't last long enough to get any publicity, where they had one at Packard that lasted 8 days.

Q: At where?

T: Packard, Packard Motor Company. It no longer exists.

Q: No, but I thought you were saying it was at Local 600 that you had two wildcats.

T: Yes, I was just saying that the ones at Local 600 we were able to cut off right away, stop them, abort them.

Q: Were the grievances settled to the favor of the union?

T: Well, these people were striking against upgrading Black people.

Q: Oh, they were striking against, that's why I couldn't figure out what you were saying. I thought you were saying there was a strike for upgrading.

T: So they were told, see what we did, we brushed the Company aside and had a meeting right there in the plant, called all those people together and asked them why they were striking and they very openly

told us, they brought her to work beside me. These were women, this was the women the first group. They brought her to work beside--

Q: It was a women's wildcat?

T: Yeah, and--

Q: In where, the Pressed Steel plant?

T: And so we told them, listen, you don't have to work with anybody you don't want to work with, you don't have to work with them, just go to the Employment Office and turn in your badge and tool checks and quit. But these people have been put on those jobs and they're going to stay on them, just that, no more argument. You know we just said, the meeting's adjourned and walked out.

Q: This was a women's-led wildcat?

T: That one was. I think it was fomented by the committee people, men.

Q: Which department was that?

T: It was in the, I said Pressed Steel didn't I, Stamping plant, yeah. The other one was in the Transportation Unit. I don't recall the details of it but that lasted about a half a day and we got them back to work. There were some small minor skirmishes, you know, where people get angry with the foreman or something like that but they were really more insignificant.

Q: In that fight over the no-strike pledge was the leadership of Local 600 united around that issue or were there divisions among them?

T: The leadership was united, yes, but we had, the secondary leadership was, included Larry Yost and a few others.

Q: Where was he?

T: They made no impression really.

Q: They did not.

T: No.

Q: Which department, were there any departments in particular that were hostile, more hostile about the no-strike pledge?

T: Well, the unit where most of it was generated was the, what we called, at that time we called it the Aircraft Unit, they made the Pratt-Whitney Aircraft Engine. It's now the Engine plant, Ford Engine plant in the Rouge. The other was the Assembly plant, let's see what were they doing during the war, though, they weren't making automobiles--I forget what they were doing over there, more than likely some airplane parts of some kind.

Q: And they were hostile to the--

T: They were hostile to the no-strike pledge.

Q: But otherwise it was fairly--

T: Otherwise we didn't have any visible opposition, any organized opposition on the scene, any visibility anyway.

Q: Do you think your support of the no-strike pledge affected your chances of reelection later?

T: No.

Q: You don't think it had anything to do with it?

T: No, I don't think it had any.

Q: So why were you defeated?

T: Well,--

Q: You didn't lose your charm.

T: Every year, every year when we had elections I would have three or four opponents and I always won on the first ballot. I was one of the

few, there never was any runoff, you know, I always got a majority vote and no problem. One day, I don't whether this got around or not, but one day some guy said, how do you manage to, you know especially your opponents are White and 70 percent or more of the people who work here are White? I said, well, the opposition has been scattered to the point where if people voted on racial lines they still had three or four places to put their vote, and if my friends and the Blacks are voting for me along racial lines then it's very simple, very easy to see why I'm able to prevail. I said, but one of these days I'll be defeated, and he looked at me kind of funny, and I says, well, I'm going to tell you. All they're going to do is put one person against me and then they'll go into the plant and they'll start a whispering campaign and, you know, that's exactly what happened.

Q: What was the whisper?

T: Black, Black versus White.

Q: So they did use that.

T: One and the words, it started out with three opponents but they got to these fellows and some way or other they forced them to withdraw from the race.

Q: You never tried to put up the so-called right, never tried to put up a Black candidate against you?

T: No, no.

Q: Never occurred to them--

T: No, never did that. Now there were two who did on their own initiative run against me in previous years, but they were--

Q: The Blacks were pretty solidly identified with the left in the Local?

T: Pretty, pretty much, yes.

Q: So that's very interesting, you know, because I don't know if you've been following the new wave of interest in the Auto Workers or not, the book by Roger Keeran on the Auto Workers that came out a couple of years ago, he makes a big deal out of that and so does this, what's his name?

Q: Levenstein.

Q: No, it's the other one. It's a--

Q: Cochran.

Q: Well, they all do it. They all say that Reuther used the no-strike pledge as a, you know, he never quite repudiated it but he took a strong position against incentive pay and he used that to set himself up as militant. He then screwed around with the no-strike pledge in which he said, well, we're opposed to the no-strike, we're in favor of the no-strike pledge in the so-called defense industry.

T: Yeah.

Q: You know that bullshit, right?

T: Yeah, uh-huh..

Q: Right, but they all seemed to agree that the left's advocacy of the no-strike pledge played a crucial role in the whittling away of the base in the union and I--just one more thing this morning again, I'm reading the, when I was reading the Executive Board I was really surprised I pointed out to Judy that there's a vote at some point as late as June. It was like a June 19th Executive Board meeting 1945 and someone proposes, maybe it was McCusker, I don't remember now if he was on the Executive Board at the time, that it's about time to

repudiate--no, it's a guy with a long Polish-sounding name--it's about time, he says, to repudiate the no-strike pledge and the vote was everybody for ending the no-strike pledge, Bill McKie is still in favor of it, right, this is in June of 1945. So by then you were obviously voting against the no-strike pledge, too. That's already by the time the Italians have long since been defeated, the Germans I think were about to be, were about to surrender.

T: Was that name Ignaziak?

Q: That's it, that's it, geez what a memory, what an incredible memory. That's it, Ignaziak, right. Do you remember that meeting?

T: Andy Ignaziak, yes, yes, I recall it. I'll tell you, maybe the no-strike pledge was the catalyst but it was the other attendant issues that were advanced, one was special seniority for Blacks and women because they had, they never had an opportunity until the war came along and that when the troops come back and they get back to civilian production these people will have to leave. I was opposed to that, I had a real hard time about that one.

Q: That would have meant--

T: But that was advanced by the--

Q: Replacing the, so the returning vets would have replaced workers who had been there through the war years.

T: Yeah, yeah, and they tried to come out with calling this an unfair thing, you know.

Q: And this was a lot of women who got jobs during the war that way and Blacks who got upgraded or admitted into the work force?

T: That got jobs and were upgraded also, mostly upgraded I guess. So as I say that was one of the issues I think that--

Q: Did Reuther, Reuther side with that?

T: No, no, he was opposed to it.

Q: He was opposed to it.

T: This was one, this cross-cut the factional lines.

Q: It did.

T: Yeah.

Q: Because Reuther was not in favor of--

T: No, no.

Q: Displacing those workers.

T: No.

Q: What about the pursuit of grievances during the war? Did that change any with the concern with a lot of production? Did it slow down or did the left wing--

T: I think the grievance procedure did slow down but I think mainly because there was no, there was no demand for a lot of production on the part of management, they didn't concentrate on production and there was an overflow of--I'm just going by the Rouge, I don't know what went on in other plants--but there was an overflow of workers, they had more than they needed so there really was not enough work for all those people in there, you know. I'll give you an example. We caught a guy, did you ever hear of the newspaper, the New York newspaper called PM?

Q: Yeah, sure, I. F. Stone.

T: Well, we had to get PM to publish this story. We discovered a supervisor on the afternoon shift in what was then known as the new Steel Foundry, in later years known as the Dearborn Specialties Foundry, now he had written a note to someone stating in so many words, see if there are enough of this particular item to generate a strike, a wildcat, and he had crumpled it up and threw it in the wastebasket and one of the union fellows who was fairly alert got his hands on it and spread it out so we could see. Now this was a unit where we had this kind of trouble from time to time, where people would just refuse to work, it wouldn't go anywhere and, of course, in the plant women was a new thing and this unit most of them were quite young people, you know, quite young. So they had their little set-tos and we came to the conclusion that this particular supervisor and some of those under his wing were responsible for the problems that we'd been having over there. So we got PM to publish the story, a picture of him and everything, but nothing came of it. The Government didn't do anything about it.

Q: So you never felt like there was any lack of militance in the plant as a result of the war and that the workers resented your failure to process grievances?

T: No, we didn't have that trouble.

Q: On the contrary, if I'm getting you right, you're saying that the Ford Company had some kind of interest in having as big a captive labor force as it could--

T: Yeah.

Q: And so that there was in fact, there was in fact a larger labor force than was necessary to do the work that was going on.

T: Right.

Q: Ford was getting paid under the cost plus contracts in any case.

T: Yes.

Q: And so no one was feeling especially--

T: Pressed.

Q: Pushed or pressured during the war--

T: Right.

Q: In the Rouge plant. A very interesting different perspective on this whole matter you know.

Q: That's because we never hear anything special about the Rouge plant, we hear general stuff.

Q: Well, nobody writes about it, that's what, Local 600 is extraordinarily ignored, it's just amazing. It's one of the things we found out since we've been here, it's like we're pioneers, it's like nobody has bothered with Local 600, it's just amazing. One of the things that, did you ever meet Burt Cochran? Was he around in the auto plants when you where? He was a Trotskyist at the time.

T: I don't know. I might met him but I--

Q: Anyway, he has a book out that came out a few years ago, I don't know if you've seen it and it concentrates on Reuther's defeat of the left so-called.

T: Oh.

Q: In the UAW and that's one of the big things he makes of Reuther's climb is the no-strike pledge. On the other hand, he says that in the

what's it 248? the Allis Chalmers plant that Tom Cristoffoel, was it Tom? Cristoffoel anyway, I can't remember, Richard, James or something, what was is?

Q: Harold.

Q: And he said, there even though they were against the, although they were in favor of the no-strike pledge because Cristoffoel was in the Communist Party he said, he said they processed grievances there with continued and growing belligerence, so there was simply no question about the fact that the left there were champions of workers immediate improvement in their immediate working conditions and so forth. That's part of what we're trying to get at with the Local 600 but apparently that was not, you never felt pressured?

T: No.

Q: What were the issues then that they opposed? You were in the left caucus throughout the war, right?

T: Yeah.

Q: In the progressive caucus. Well what did those guys of the so-called right wing ever raise as issues then?

T: Well, many times they'd wait until we advanced the program and oppose that, you know. That's how incentive pay got to be piece work.

Q: Uh-huh, uh-huh.

T: Because we were trying to find out a way or a means through which people could get wage increases and so we thought that, okay, let's get a pay for what they do over and above the normal work schedule and so then they said we're trying to put piece work in the plant, and

very definitely, in the proposal was, "for the duration of the war" and because of the war system of wage freeze.

Q: They were also fighting against the no-strike pledge but were they in their own departments encouraging strike activities?

T: They encouraged strike activities so much so that when this--who was that guy in Chicago that they had to bodily take him out at Montgomery Ward.

Q: Oh yeah.

T: They had to bodily take him out of his office and the Government took over. Why they were so much against the no-strike pledge that they actually walked the picket line at Montgomery Ward's there in Dearborn. Ford workers would go, I think there was--I don't know what kind of strike or what it was going on at Montgomery Ward's but anyway they walked the picket line with the striking--

Q: Who did?

T: The leadership of the opposition to the no-strike pledge.

Q: As I recall, the unions in which the CP was in the strong position in the leadership like the UE condemned that strike and even called on the President to use some special means to put those workers back to work, right?

T: Probably, yeah.

Q: But then was that, that became an issue in Local 600, that Montgomery Ward strike, was that used as--

T: It became an issue but to the point of using it in elections against various individuals.

Q: Did it work?

T: Some were defeated, yes.

Q: What other issues did they hang on, was upgrading of the Black workers one of them?

T: Fortunately, we didn't have that problem in the 600.

Q: Did not.

T: No.

Q: No one fought that.

T: No.

Q: That's interesting.

T: Any uprisings along those lines were aborted and those few that we did have--I gave you an example of how they ran them.

Q: So what else did they pick up on, what other kinds of issues did they try to use against you? Did they red-bait straight?

T: Oh yeah, there was a lot of that, yeah, but I can't remember now anything of any effect because they had no effect because we were reelected. I wasn't defeated until after the war was over.

Q: How did the workers respond to the red-baiting?

T: Well, that wasn't a real successful thing in the 600. There might have been little islands of where it was successful, you know the ACTU was active in 600. Henry McCusker who was Joe's older brother was President of the ACTU.

Q: Oh, he was.

T: Yeah, Henry McCusker was President of ACTU, the chapter, 600 chapter, and then, of course, Paul Weber was the--I don't know what their exact structure was, but Paul Weber was either citywide or countywide or whatever.

Q: And Paul Ste. Marie, too.

T: And Paul Ste. Marie was a very active member. I think he was Vice President or Secretary or something, but he used some of that to project himself into the presidency of 600. They got active real quick in preparing for the elections long before we had local autonomy and I think this was the head start that Paul was, Paul got that made it possible for him to be elected President. I think one mistake we made, speaking of left wing, was in our failure to run Percy Llewellyn who was the President that surrendered his position so that the organization could take place without hindrance from many officers or anything. You know the officers gave up--

Q: When was this? I'm getting confused.

Q: In the beginning.

T: This was in the beginning.

Q: This was very early.

T: Yeah, '39 or '40. The officers of Local 600 surrendered their positions and turned the Local over to the International so that they brought in Mike Widman from the Mine Workers who was the organizational director of the Ford drive. This took it completely out of UAW so that no factionalism would interfere with getting the job done because that had been the hindrance in previous years. They realized that by Ford coming in they would get a quarter of a million workers into the union and it would be a power block for anyone who had charge of this group. That's the reason there is such a horse trading going on for the General Motors Directorship now. You see here's a guy who was already Ford Director and he makes a deal with

the new president to move in the GM Director, and then who did they appoint, some guy as Ford Director who knows nothing about Ford but there are three Ford people on the Board. You've got Odessa Comber, Percy, not Percy, I don't even know the name of the Black Board member, from the east side, and you also have Lofton--two Ford men and one Ford woman on the Board but still they get somebody from I don't know, I don't even know where Yokage(?) is from, what section of the union but they made him Ford Director. You see these kind of deals that they make with each other and then start playing checkers with the rights of the people.

Q: Yeah, I remember at one time it was an issue in Local 600 to have the Ford Director an elected position.

T: Elected, yeah, we fought that for a while but--

Q: What happened to that struggle?

T: Well the reason we gave it up was because every time somebody would mention who it might be we were afraid the International President would support Paul Ste. Marie, so--

Q: Local 600 had something like a quarter of all the Ford workers?

T: We had a third.

Q: A third.

T: Yeah. We had seven, let's see, during World War II our local union membership reached the high point of 89,000 members and we leveled off at between 50,000 and 60,000. Of course the 89,000 was the swelling of war workers and included, of course, were those who were in the armed services, see.

Q: Oh, you kept counting them?

T: Yeah, that all counted, see.

Q: Oh, so how many actually were in the plant do you think during that war period?

T: I would say production workers paying dues there were still about 75,000 of them, yeah, about 75,000. It's hard to realize how many people that is--

END OF SIDE A

T: ...in the Ruhr Valley there in Germany. First, to get back to the number of industries out there, they had a Foundry, Motor plant, Foundry machine shop, Glass plant, Rubber plant, Tool and Die, Pressed Steel, Rolling Mills, Transportation Unit and a couple of other smaller foundries, an aluminum foundry and the steel foundry. Now the average worker in the Rouge plant knew nothing about the rest of the plant, all he knew was where his job was and how to get there and how to get out, and no experience at all unless he was one of those fortunate enough to have been transferred two or three times during the course of his work life out there.

Q: Was that rare?

T: That was very rare. In my own case, I had no idea what it looked like in the other units except that on one occasion I went to the Greenfield Village and got on one of those buses that took, gave you a tour of the plant, and it was so funny going into my own unit and seeing what a narrow, restricted area they showed to the visitor. So then I made up my mind that I would see the rest of the plant in my

own way, just walk on in those different units during my off time, like we were on revolving shifts in those days--you worked two weeks days, two weeks afternoons, two weeks midnights. So in the daytime, if you're working nights, in the daytime you can come on in the plant as long as you came at shift changing and if you were careful you could see quite a bit of the plant before anybody would stop you or start asking questions. But when the work hour would become intensified, why then that was time to leave because they would know that, they would see that you weren't doing anything and they'd know you didn't belong there. That's the way I saw the plant.

Q: Now what does that mean? Was this because of the security during the Second World War?

T: Security, oh yes, the spy system, it was very rigid and--

Q: Did that have anything to do with the reasons why workers were not being transferred or was it that you hadn't gotten the seniority to bump upwards?

T: No, I don't think it had anything to do with not being transferred. The reason they wouldn't transfer them was because each foreman was so jealous of his own group and he had them so placed on how to get, in a way so that he could get the most out of them that he didn't want any of them to leave and he didn't want any strangers because you had to teach a stranger all over again to fit in the team so to speak and so--

Q: So people worked together for a long time?

T: Yeah, oh yes, and many people were out of place for a long time.

Q: Out of place?

T: I'll give you an idea. This is a digression but a fellow retired about ten years ago now. I got a call, I was on the International staff, I got a call in my office from the President of Local 400, his name was Thesio, and he said, Shelton, he says, I got a guy here that claims that he helped you organize the Foundry out there during, back in the early forties. He says, he claims he knows you well and so on and so on. I said, he does? I said, what's his name? He told me the fellow's name and I said, hold on a minute, see I had this little book in which I had the names of all the fellows who were active in organizing from the Foundry, see.

Q: Really.

T: And so I looked in the book and I found his name, you know, and I said, did he live on Garfield and I gave the address. And he asked the guy, did you live on Garfield? And he said, yeah; what is the address, and he told him. Yep, he worked with me. Okay. So he was retiring so he asked me to come out and do the honors for him which I did, but the story is though this fellow was working in the Foundry and his job was scraping all the __?__ and fins and things off of the cores after they came out of the ovens and smoothing them down so when the metal goes around it'd be a perfect casting--now that's all he did. That's menial work really, but as soon as the union came in and he had the right to apply for an opening it turns out this fellow is a journeyman tinsmith and a layout man. I just knew the fellow while we were organizing but, you know, a lot of fellows disappeared. You missed them for a while but then you would forget about them, and this is what happened in about three or four months after the union came in

why he was able to apply and obtain a job within his skill. Here is a man who was a skilled tradesman for all those years until he retired, but he still remembered his days in the Foundry, you know.

Q: So guys came into the Foundry and stayed in the Foundry.

T: Some of them. During World War II they needed some people in the laboratories. The Foundry has laboratories where they check the metal content and the tensility of the castings and all that sort of thing.

Q: Are those skilled workers or--

T: Oh yes, they were highly skilled, highly skilled, so they needed some, you know the war was just taking everything away from us and so they asked the union, one of the union fellows, do you know of anybody who was a college graduate. You know if they didn't know how to do these tests they would teach them, see, and he says, I'll let you know in a few days and so he went checking around through the department and he gave the guy a list, forty.

Q: Wow!

T: Forty who were college graduates of who thirty-odd were Black.

Q: You're kidding, you're kidding. This was just in the Foundry alone.

T: Just in the Foundry, and on top of it--

Q: That is very very interesting.

T: On top of it, three of them were skilled, not skilled, were metallurgists. They had learned metallurgy at Tuskegee Institute.

Q: My gosh.

Q: What was the proportion of Blacks in the Foundry? Was it higher than the--

T: It was higher than White. It was about 60 percent Black, yeah.

Q: 60?

T: About 60 percent Black.

Q: Forty college graduates.

T: Oh yes, there was--

Q: How big was the Foundry?

T: There was 44, 43, 44.

Q: How big was the Foundry and how many people were working there?

T: Well, these were just what they found on the day shift so--

Q: I know, but I mean so let's say on the shift.

T: Well, there were 13,000 in the Foundry.

Q: And he just went around asking people--

T: Just in the day shift in one or two departments, actually the department where the laboratories were located was the Iron Melting Department, they called it Melting Department. Then I guess there were about three shifts. That department probably had about somewhere between 2500 and 3000 people.

Q: Now you said you graduated from high school in Omaha, right?

T: Yeah.

Q: Now even that was certainly unusual for a Black man at that time.

T: Well that was unusual for anybody in the plant, but especially Blacks.

Q: Especially Blacks. And now you're telling us there were these forty college graduates.

T: There were 43 or 44 college graduates that we found on the day shift only in the Foundry.

Q: You worked on the day shift at the time?

T: Yeah.

Q: What's your impression as you remember that, now were there a lot, a relatively large number of educated workers at that time in the plant?

T: People took the job because it was the only job they could get. Things weren't like they are now. You go to a bank and see Black tellers and all that. Remember the only Black people in the bank in those days were the people depositing money and the guy sweeping the floor, that's all, and it's just ridiculous to even think about getting one of those jobs. You couldn't even borrow money, I couldn't even open a checking account in those days. Why if I did, who would take my check? What are you doing with a check?

Q: So you're not going to really know the answer to this one, I don't want to load it but--do you think as a result of that the Black workers were comparatively more educated than the White workers in the plant?

T: I would say, yeah, in those days in a given plant, in a given plant I would say that the average Black worker probably had more school years behind him than the average White worker, yeah.

Q: That's interesting.

T: I would say that, it's from my own experience I would say that because I did meet many people who couldn't even write, you know it's a rare thing nowadays but to find people who couldn't read or write in those days was not necessarily unusual, and there were many people who made their mark when they signed for their pay envelope.

Q: Now we're not just talking about recent immigrants when you say that?

T: No, no.

Q: When we were going through the, what was it? the Ford Facts they broke down the ethnic composition of the union and they had 60 percent Americans. And she goes, now what is that? Who were the other 40 percent.

T: Yeah, what's an American? An Indian, 60 percent Indians.

Q: But so when you're saying this, you're comparing this to all kinds of workers in the plant, not just recent immigrants but guys who would be around for years and years?

T: Oh yes, these were people who were migrants from the South, from the hills, Appalachia, and so on, and also Blacks, but I will say this, I found more White persons who couldn't write their name than I did Black people and they weren't necessarily foreign born either.

Q: No.

T: They were what we call hill-billies, but usually from Appalachia, Virginia, West Virginia, Southern Pennsylvania, Maryland.

Q: Did those people have any different outlook toward the union, were they more anti-union or?

T: Oh yes, they were anti-union and anti-Black too. I'll recite an experience. This was after I had been defeated as Recording Secretary before I became Education Director.

Q: What year was that?

T: '44.

Q: I think I asked you that again, before--

T: '44-'45, '45 and while I was, after I was defeated--

Q: Yeah.

T: I was granted a month's vacation by the union, the union gave me a month off with full pay.

Q: Get him out of here.

T: So I took the family and we went away for a month, and when I came back and checked into the plant I find out that they had had a special election. There were two vacancies for the Bargaining Committee and they, somebody run, put my name in and I was elected to the Bargaining Committee, and so here I am, you know, instead of going to work on the job I go to work in the union office.

Q: This is the Foundry?

T: The Foundry, yeah. So one of the first duties I got was a call from the Labor Relations Office. They said, Shelton, you know, we have a new method now whenever a fellow quits we don't allow him to quit unless there is a union representative present and we'd like for you to come down and talk to this fellow. So I came down and I walked in and he introduced me to the guy and told the fellow who I was and he said, now, fellow, before you say anything to me I just want you to know I just can't help it, I can't help it. I tried but I just can't help it. Tried what? I tried to work with them. Well, as it turns out he had been given a Black foreman, a job with a Black foreman and, of course, there were some Black fellow workers there. And he said he tried, I believe he did, he tried very earnestly, but he said my upbringing and I have never been around them and so on.

Q: And he's telling you this?

T: Yeah. I said, you haven't been around who? He said, the Ni- colored people. He quit, he just insisted that he had to quit, I don't want

to hold anything against those people or anything like that but I just can't help it, that's the way I was raised, so he quit.

Q: So you got, after you were defeated you got reelected to the Bargaining unit?

T: Yeah.

Q: And did you continue to function there, is that what happened?

T: I functioned less than a year because the regular local union elections came up and I got with a group of guys and we decided that we would support Carl Stellato for President and they depended on me and, you know, my knowledge of different people who were candidates. And I told them that I thought Carl was pretty solid and steady fellow and that he had worked for me one time at the Local. When I was Recording Secretary I had charge of the top committee, top bargaining committee who handled the grievances before they went into the umpire stage, you know. We supported Carl and successfully and, of course, then I went right on back in the shop, but I chose the night shift, I always preferred the midnight shift, you know fewer bosses around and then you got, they gave a midnight incentive, see 10 cents extra an hour. One morning about, I guess it must have been about four or five o'clock Carl Stellato walks in the plant and he told he wanted, he said, well I've been elected. He says, I'll be installed next Sunday at the General Council meeting, and he says, I've got to name my cabinet, and he said, I want you to work with us. I told him, no, I said, these people wouldn't let me work for you; I said, you'd have no peace. He said, well, why did you support me? why did you work so hard? and all that. I said, I wanted a good president, I just wanted

my local to have a good president. But he would have no part of it so that's how I started back.

Q: And then you were back as Recording Secretary as before, right?

T: First he put me in charge of the plant committee and then he transferred me over to Education Director . . .

Q: You didn't hold elective office again after that?

T: Never did in the Local, no. From there I went to the International. Walter had, believe it or not Walter Reuther sent for me.

Q: He wanted you out of the Local?

T: Yeah, sure.

Q: What do you mean believe it or not? He wasn't, he was a little smarter than you were.

T: That combination of Tappes and Stellato was a little bit too much.

Q: Yeah.

T: Here's a, this original paper was...

Q: Yeah, I've seen that.

T: You've seen that. Okay, now, this is the--

Q: What year is this from?

T: 194-

Q: Oh, this is a reprint.

T: Now this picture, I just wanted to let you know who these people were. This was the first group of Blacks to ever work on a UAW staff. There's one missing whose name is Paul Kirk, but this is Joe Billups. Joseph Billups was fired for union activity and the way they found out that he was a person they should fire was because he was running for Governor on the Communist Party ticket in 1932.

Q: Really, 1932.

T: This is Walter Hardin, he was the first full-time International representative to ever work for UAW and he was alone for many years. Now all these fellows were hired specifically to work on the Ford organizing campaign. This is Christopher Alston, this is Veal Clough, this fellow's name is--

Q: Clough, he's from 600? I recognize that name.

T: Yeah, Veal Clough was, actually he started out with Phil Randolph as a Pullman porter and he got fired by the Pullman Company for union activity, and got a job at Ford's and he continued his union activity so he got fired from Ford's. When the union was successful, then he got his job back.

Q: There's something I want to ask you about that after you finish with this.

T: Okay, this is Bill Bowman, he was brought down from Saginaw, he was a preacher up in Saginaw, but in order to get the ministers, Black ministers in this town behind the union they utilized his expertise. He had two brothers that worked in the Chevrolet plant up there and had worked in there himself at one time, but he had some good union background and they used him to make these ministerial contacts.

Q: Wasn't there another Reverend here in Detroit that did similar?

T: Oh yes.

Q: Charles Hill.

T: There's Charles Hill and there's also John Miles. Charles Hill was very stalwart, in fact he's an honorary member of Local 600.

Q: He's not still living is he?

T: No. This is John Conyers, Sr., father of the Congressman, and he's from Chrysler Local 7 and he and I were a team that they used on a special radio program that came on every week. On this program we would have a little dialogue between us, why people should join the union at Ford's.

Q: And here you are.

Q: He was one of the original organizers?

T: Conyers?

Q: Conyers.

T: He was, I don't know if he was one of the original or not, I doubt that but at the time, see Chrysler was already organized--

Q: Uh-huh.

T: And because he was active in the union at Chrysler and being Black, why they wanted to make this special appeal to the Black people and so he was one of those that they hired for that purpose. Now this fellow got beat up in the Pressed Steel plant, his name was--

Q: Walter--

T: Shakis, yeah, Walter Shakis.

Q: Now here's Nelson Davis there.

T: Yeah.

Q: I've been trying to get in touch with him but nobody answers his phone.

T: Nelson Davis. If he answers the phone, you run, hear. He's been gone seven years.

Q: Seven years. Maybe it was, it was some other guy. There's two--

T: Oh, was it Dave Moore?

Q: Oh yes, Dave Moore, Dave Moore, yeah.

T: You were trying to get a hold of Dave Moore, well have you tried the Congressman's office?

Q: No.

T: Crockett. He works for Crockett.

Q: Oh.

T: He's retired but George--now this young lady here, Cecil Whittaker, let's see, wait a minute, what is her name now? Her husband became a Councilman and he passed away not long ago. That's one of the disadvantages of getting old, your memory.

Q: I don't know, I don't notice it. You have 100 percent recall.

T: Names especially. This, I don't know if you've seen that picture or not.

Q: This looks familiar, yes. I think I just saw it today in fact.

T: Yeah, a large one, a blown-up.

Q: Well we have some pictures in the archives, some people have given their scrapbooks and things.

T: Oh yes, that's right. In fact, there the ones who made all the copies for me. I had the original which I gave them and they made a lot of copies for me and I had one blown up which I donated to 600.

Q: What's this guy's name? I just--

T: Oh, that, that fellow's name is Carbury, James Carbury.

Q: Oh, he's not the one I was thinking of.

T: He was President of the National Council of Senior Citizens until two years ago when he resigned because of health. Now these people here, one, two, three, four, that's all that are left, George Addes, Jim

Carbury, Al Bardelli, Jim Sullivan and myself and that's it. This one left here last year.

Q: What was the occasion here? You're signing the contract.

T: The contract was just signed.

Q: Oh.

T: That's taken in the United Miners Building in Washington, D.C.

Q: What did I say I wanted to ask you about? You made a point there that I don't want to lose. You were just starting to show the pictures.

Q: Yeah, about the Congressman's son, the father.

Q: Before that. Can you pick that back up on the tape because it was really important and I don't want to lose it?

Q: Yeah.

Q: Now you mentioned that that fellow had come out of the porters union directly into the auto union.

T: Yeah, Veal Clough.

Q: Did you know other Black workers who had been in the porters union? Was that a training ground at all for Black leadership in the unions because it was one of the few effective unions in which Blacks were not only admitted but in the leadership?

T: No, I didn't know any others. I do know that Veal almost worshipped Phil Randolph and he always made it his business to see Phil when he was in town. In fact, I appointed him to meet with the March on Washington group that Phil Randolph set up here in 1942, when he was moving around the country setting up chapters of the March on Washington which resulted in the establishment of the President's Committee on Fair Employment Practices. But to get back to the point,

the Pullman Porters Union had encouraged a lot of Blacks to take another look at trade unionism and because of Phil's success we were able to use that in man-to-man organizing efforts. I know I used it quite a bit and mainly because of Veal, and when they put Veal on the staff, the Ford organizing staff, he had a car so I used to ride around with him a lot and then eventually they put me on as a part-time organizer. Of course he was getting full pay, he was getting $30 plus expenses; I was getting $10 and carfare. But he used his experiences as a Pullman porter and explained to them that the protection that they have, they have that he didn't have in the NRLB. There was no NRLB when he was organizing for the Pullman porters, so they were able to make his discharge stick, but although he was fired by the Ford Motor Company for joining the union his case was pending at the time and eventually he won. Of course by then I had a case too, all of them were paid off at the same time but through compromise, we really didn't have, they didn't go to a court hearing, our cases were compromised.

Q: Was that the 29 who were discharged before?

T: Well that was the initial, they got all of their money but there were over 2000 altogether.

Q: Oh, wow.

T: And to wind it up the Ford Motor Company just said, well, we set aside $3,000,000 and we'll decide on a referee or whatever you want to call him and he will evaluate all the cases and pay them off based on their relative value to the total amount. In my case, I got $2,900.

Q: And how long were you off?

T: Almost three years, but he used the work time that I was able to get. See I had never worked a full year, I didn't know what it was to work a full year at Ford Motor Company.

Q: You had these man-to-man talks and you learned about the Pullman porter experience from Veal, what other kinds of appeals did you make when you spoke to other workers about or Black workers in particular, either?

T: Well the main appeal I had was almost magic, no more layoffs unless your seniority calls for it. Then I always used the example I had, whenever it was time for a layoff I always knew because my foreman's cousin would come down on the job and he took my machine and I left, you know. As time went on and I accumulated seniority he still took my job and I left, and there's no such thing as me bumping one of the lesser seniority fellows on my line I just had to leave because my machine was occupied with someone else. The cousin had an easier job, he was a sand mixer and he was always upstairs, all he had to do was walk, kept walking and watch the belts as the sand went into the various hoppers above the machines, that was his job.

Q: That was still in the Foundry plant?

T: Yes.

Q: It was above the molding?

T: Uh-huh, of course, you know, you just walk and look and pull the lever to send the sand down a certain shute.

Q: Where there White workers up there and Black workers down here?

T: Yeah, so when production was reduced then there wasn't a need for a full-time man up there, just when a hopper got clogged or the sand was

running dry or something like that, then he'd run up there and put a little more oil in it or a little more bond because it would probably make it stick better and so on; in between, why he ran the machine just like any of the others. So I used that as one of the reasons, that was a good example.

Q: Did that practice in fact stop once the union was organized?

T: Oh yes, oh definitely, yeah, because the only way he could get my machine was he had to have the seniority and I 'd had to, I would have had to have been laid off because I didn't have the senority to stay there, and then the machine is open to whoever had senority to work on it. There is no way for him to lose out anyway. He was quite senior, much senior to me.

[END OF TAPE #2]

TAPPES INTERVIEW
Tape #3

T: . . . me a chance to exercise my seniority at all, the foreman just by rote, out I went and had to wait until I was recalled. But Veal was a very, he was not a learned man, in fact I don't think he had finished grammar school, he was a--his English was very bad, but he was so sincere that it was one of those things you could overlook and he had a tremendous following, tremendous following.

Q: And he was in the same unit as you?

T: Yes. The amazing thing to me was that he had so many White friends, just hosts of them, and they believed in him just, oh, he was a great guy, he was a great guy. In fact, I spent the night of the strike, when the strike was called my wife and I moved to his home, we spent the night in his house in order to get up early and go to the picket line because we would otherwise, would have had to come out there in a taxicab or a bus, I didn't have a car. But by spending the night at Veal's house we were able to go to the picket line.

Q: Was he much older than you?

T: Yes, Veal was about 15 years older than I.

Q: So he was sort of an example for the men, of a guy who had already been in union struggles--

T: Right.

Q: And knew the payoff. What other sort of things did you talk about when you talked to them about joining? Did issues beyond that in some--I don't know how to put it exactly--I mean if you translate the

question of layoffs into abstract terms? We're talking about greater equality for Blacks obviously.

T: Yes, well, of course--

Q: Did you talk about those kinds of issues?

T: Yes, to Blacks you did have an extra appeal where to Whites it was more economic and, you know, but to Blacks there was a special appeal, equality and a chance to advance. I think we had one Black foreman in the whole plant, but we had about 80 straw bosses, Black straw bosses.

Q: What was the difference in straw boss?

T: Well, a straw boss is a fellow that the foreman would select from the group to do his work for him, carry his time sheet, you know mark attendance and deploy the relief men and all that sort of thing. In fact, the first big grievance that we had in the Foundry after the union was established was straw bosses, and we went to the Company and said, now, I think there were 76, something like that. We had a whole list of names from the various departments and of the group more than half of them were Black, and we told the Company that these people could not belong to the union because they gave orders and they could actually recommend that a guy be disciplined and so on. He says, what do you mean they don't belong to the union? They don't belong to the Company, they belong to you people. Okay, if they belong to us, you put them on a job and they work like the rest of us, but if they're going to give orders then they belong to you. Well, he said, he would get back with us in a week or so and it took him longer than that, it took him a month and when he came back with us there were 38 of these people were made foreman, 38.

Q: Wow!

T: 38 made foreman, and of the 38, 32 were Black and of the 4 Whites one of them was one of our staunch union supporters--

Q: I can imagine, you got him promoted.

T: When he became a foreman he had, he had a reputation as the best foreman in the bulding and when he retired there were more hourly rated union people at his retirement party than there were relatives and bosses.

Q: Was that true of the Black straw bosses that got promoted?

T: There were two, two that were very popular, very popular.

Q: But the rest of them were not outstanding?

T: The rest of them were just foreman, you know. They got innoculated with the Ford blood and--

Q: That's what happens when you become a foreman so. Any other issues that had a special appeal? Did the--

T: Oh, speed up, yeah, the speed up, that was a big issue, yeah, and wages. You see Ford wages had fallen behind the industry because the organized workers were able to put their wages above Ford and we were running about, I guess about 20-25 percent under scale. The average increase was about $2.00 a day I guess. What did my wages go up from? My wages went from 80 cents an hour to $1.25 so that would be 35 cents, 45 cents.

Q: Yeah?

T: 45 cents an hour. See that's over 50 percent increase, yeah $10 a day.

Q: Can I get back to you and Stellato?

T: Stellato, yeah.

Q: I mean he continued to be a "thorn" in the side of Reuther for a long time as did Local 600, and the only thing we know about Stellato, except I remember when I was a kid my father voted for him, but when reading through the Ford Facts, shortly after Stellato got elected he turned on the left.

T: Yes, he did. He and I almost broke on the way in which he did it, but Carl was really a Reuther candidate when he was elected, he was elected as a Reuther candidate. The right wing put him up for President, but quite a number of we who were left-wingers supported him because he started out as a left-winger and, secondly, it was he or the other guy, you know, so we went for him and when he was elected, after he became elected then he embraced the same program that he had always followed previously. But there was no factional, there was no real factional rift in the Local, he was the commanding personality and he handled the local union program quite well and there were a lot of things that he and Reuther could talk about. What happened, the next time around when he was up for election it was convention time and Walter was advancing a program to increase the dues.

Q: Oh yeah.

T: And I had never been opposed to dues increases, never was, whether the left wing was for it or against it I always supported it because I feel that if the union asked for money they must need it, you know, because the UAW never was a racket union, that's one thing we can say pretty proudly. So they needed the money so we supported it, but it's

a very popular demagogic approach that many people take, used to take in those days on dues increases because we had to ask for one almost at every convention. If your opposition supported dues increase, then automatically you were supposed to oppose it; and I don't know why, you know, you're paying only $1.00 or $1.50 a month and they're asking for 50 cents, I don't know why an issue like that could generate so much support for a guy.

Q: He fought against the increase.

T: Now--

Q: Yeah.

T: Anyway they, no, Stellato favored it.

Q: Oh, he favored it then.

T: Yeah, but when--

Q: He favored the increase.

T: Yeah.

Q: And Reuther favored the increase, too?

T: Yeah, but when the opposition in 600 began to generate, see we're going to have a local election as well as delegate elections at the same time--

Q: Uh-huh.

T: So you, you know, you had to tread easy. So we're wracking our brain and I'm speaking of the Stellato forces, we're wracking our brain how are we going to get around this one, it's real tight, the primary was real tight, the opposition was within a thousand votes of us and they were generating more and more steam, see.

Q: Who was the opposition at this time?

T: Joe Hogan was the opponent.

Q: He was the left wing, right?

T: Yeah.

Q: I'm getting confused.

Q: The left wing were the ones that were opposing the dues increase in Local 600.

Q: At that point.

T: See because so many of the left-wingers were Stellato people, there was, you know, this kind of a clash, left against left.

Q: It was a clash among the--

T: Yeah, left with right and left against left, you know, they eventually found a name for the Stellato supporters, they called Mugwumps, you know, middle-of-the-roaders or whatever.

Q: Well, was there some sense that by supporting the dues increase it was going to end up in Reuther's hands, did that have anything to do with the left's opposition to it?

T: No, they were just opposed to it, just something to grab and, you know, get some votes hopefully, they were against paying more money, always against paying more money--you know the same attitude, taxes, you know, people vote against taxes anytime. So we finally worked out this gimmick, we will support a dues increase provided they'll put some of the money into a strike fund so that they're guaranteed benefits during a major strike. We had had a couple of those quickies, you know, out there where they were off a month or six weeks, something like that, and they didn't get anything; they could go to the strike kitchen and get a meal but that was it, so by pumping

away at that we were able to skin through by I think 760 votes we won by.

Q; Was this at the same time that there was a debate over who was eligible for the strike fund money, whether you are eligible by seniority or?

T: That happened at the convention, yeah. Because we after winning the election, we sent our resolution in to the convention which was a couple of months later in Cleveland and then the grand debate on, let's see by need or by right.

Q: Yeah, I never really understood that too much. The Ford Facts doesn't elaborate too well on need. Need would be whether you're without funds or whether your wife works and whatever, something like that?

T: Yeah, the right was the fact that you are on strike, the money's in the fund and you're entitled to it as a dues payer. The others they wanted to base it on need.

Q: Who took that position?

Q: The left took the seniority, or Local 600 took the seniority position.

Q: By right.

T: By right.

Q: Yeah.

Q: That's interesting.

T: So, anyway, Reuther was livid. He said it's a principle issue and you should fight it on the principle, and we said, yeah, fight it on the principle and lose the election. So, anyway, Mazey laughed at us, pie in the sky--International Strike Fund. Of course, we said $100,000,000 Strike Fund. He said, $100,000,000, this is ridiculous,

you know, but we sure washed his face with it. As soon as that strike fund got to $200,000,000 I went down and sat right across Mazey's desk from him, I said, Emil, I said, I remember you using the expression pie in the sky. I said, all we want you to do is be sure that you divide that pie up and whenever these guys are on strike you give them a slice of it. I said, because that pie in the sky is way over $100,000,000 now, it's $200,000,000.

Q: That strike fund was established as a result of that particular struggle?

T: Oh yes, oh yes.

Q: That's incredible, I didn't know that.

T: And a lot of people out of 600 don't know it and they don't realize it. In fact on the anniversary, I called Stellato when the first time it hit 100 million and said, well, your prediction came true and so on and so on. What prediction? he said. I said, haven't you read Mazey's report on the International Strike Fund? Yeah, he said, well, what about it? I said, Carl, boy, the way we fought. I said, hey, fellow--

Q: You had to remind him.

T: Yeah, pie in the sky, I said, ridiculous. Oh yeah, he said. Boy, we sweated over that. We really sweated over that. So your dad was a Stellato supporter?

Q: Oh yeah, that's the only thing I can remember. He got in a lot of trouble for supporting Stellato because most of the people in the neighborhood were Reuther supporters. But he was always moving back and forth between the left and Reuther but he always, he inched toward

Reuther then he ended up kind of being independent of Reuther and so did Local 600.

T: Yeah.

Q: Why did Local 600 stay so independent?

T: Well it got a good start I guess.

Q: A good start.

T: See Thomas was President of the union when we were organized--

Q: Uh-huh.

T: And Reuther was sort of a loud mouth, he was considered a demagogue because he was always coming out with a plan and all this. Of course this was all part of the strategy, you know, let the people know you; then I don't care how much you talk about me, just mention my name when you do.

Q: Yeah.

T: This was his thing and it worked, and I will say this that although I was a rabid anti-Reutherite once he became President I had to respect, you know, the achievements that he made. It was just tremendous and so much, our achievements were so much that we were able to give Chrysler $4 an hour out of our pockets, but not that I liked the idea but, well--

Q: So Local 600 sort of--

T: Well, I'll tell you, in two days I'll be getting two checks: one will be a pension from the Ford Motor Company and one will be Social Security, together those checks will surpass a year's earnings when I was, before the union, when I was working at Ford Motor Company, before the union. The checks that I get in one month will surpass a

year's earnings as a Ford worker and I have to give the UAW credit for it, and most of that achievement was under Walter Reuther's leadership.

Q: Wasn't Stellato a big pursuer of the pension issue in the early fifties?

T: Yeah, so much so that when it looked like we were going to have some problems, why we raised a special fund to fight for the pension, we had over $400,000 we had out there at Local 600 and they finally decided to give it back to the people. I think Tommy Thompson started all that and, of course, you know, people would--do you know anybody that would vote against giving himself $5? That's what it amounted to, about $5 a person, and so they voted to give it back to the people. I was opposed to that, I thought you got $400,000, $5 will not help me do any more than buy a few packages of cigarettes or something like that, but in that treasury, in the Union treasury a lot of good can be done with it, well they won and so when I got my check I just tore it up.

Q: What sort of other issues kept Local 600 and Stellato independent of the Reuther leadership? Did Reuther pick up issues that came out of 600 and then take them on as his own? Were there programmatic advances that came out of 600?

T: I'm trying to think. They observed 600 very carefully and Reuther attended more of the Westside Regional meetings and caucuses after Stellato was elected President than he ever did in previous years, but I think, oh the Strike Assistance Department. You know before strike benefits were dispensed by the local unions, they just sent the money

out to them and they dispensed it. But one thing we insisted that they set up a department to handle the strike fund which has been done and, of course, I think they have a crew of about 18 International reps and whenever there is a recognized strike going on they send a crew there to set up the procedure for paying benefits and handling all of the attendant problems that go along with the strike, especially taking care of the insurance payments and things like that, energy problems people had, house payments, and all that sort of thing. There were several problems dealing with the skilled tradespeople that Local 600 gave some leadership to, but I guess all in all whenever there was a proposal made that had some merit to it why Reuther would be very quick to grab it.

Q: Pick it right up.

T: And when he spoke that was his program, you know.

Q: The ideas that came out of the Progressive caucus it seems were important in that respect.

T: Yeah.

Q: When they were fighting for the 30-hour week and against the decentralization plan and in favor of pensions and all those things that they wrapped together in one program.

T: Yeah, the pension was strickly a left-wing proposal, and I can remember people saying, you know, how silly it was to think that, well, they used General Motors, they said, General Motors with 400,000 employees do you think you're going to--can you imagine General Motors pensioning all 400,000 people? I said, no, they'll never do that. I said, because all 400,000 wouldn't retire at the same time. I think

General Motors has something like 35,000 retired now. Ford's got 20,000, there are about 10,000 out of Local 600, 10,000 or 11,000, 11,000 retirees.

Q: Good pool for a survey, huh?

Q: That's right.

T: And, of course, the only strike of any significance that we had around the retirement question was the Chrysler strike that lasted over a hundred days and that was on the funding principle.

Q: When was that?

T: See these companies wanted to, okay, we agreed to the pension and we'll pay the fellows when they retire or the women when they retire, and the other benefits that we have agreed to we'll pay those. Well, we said, you'll pay them out of what? They wanted to pay them out of the general fund, while we wanted the money set aside and that was the principle: that there be an account established for every individual worker who is eligible to be a pensioneer and that this account will grow through the years based on the formula that's established in our negotiations, which means that me, I had 39 years and I guess a Foundry bonus of 20 percent which put me at 46 years service, credited service, and from, if I live to be 140 I still will get my pension--the money's there, it's already there. Of course, the fund is just astronomical now and the earnings are, I don't think they even use the earnings of the money.

Q: The bonus for the Foundry is because it's harder work?

T: Yeah.

Q: And that came out of Local 600?

T: Yeah, we--I think that was put in our contract in 1957, 1954 contract.

Q: Aside from the fact that they knew that Reuther, thought of Reuther as a demagogue and they were a union local that went through their own struggles before Reuther emerged, what else contributed to the independence of the Local?

T: I think the wealth of leadership, trained leadership put us at, you see we had a full-time education department in the local union and we had classes going on at all times--union leadership classes, parliamentary law classes, contract classes--and whenever a new contract was presented to the Ford workers, 600 immediately got into contract studies and for a long time we had annual educational conferences in the Local and each unit sent delegates. I'll give you an example. When I was Education Director I was unhappy with some of the grievances, the language of the grievances, and I just thought that a lot of the committee staff needed some study on how to prepare and how to handle themselves before the company. So I asked Carl to see if he could negotiate with the company that each of our active committee people be given an hour a week from the company, an hour a week from the company, and then when we were able to get that, the system was this. The day shift committee personnel would turn their business over to the alternate and they would come over to the Local union and they spent two hours, one hour on company time and one hour on their own, in educational classes and that was quite an undertaking. I'm telling you it almost wore me out, but once I got started I had to go through with it. This was seven weeks, eight weeks, eight weeks of classes and this was around the clock: the day

shift in the evening, the afternoon shift before they would go to work, that was 12 to 2, and the midnight shift in the morning when they got off. And of course, I think we had about 400, 3 or 400 committeemen in the shop altogether and--

Q: Just in the Foundry?

T: No, no, this was the whole plant.

Q: Oh.

T: I was the Education Director of the Local union and this was the whole plant. I was so glad to get through with that but it--this was, that's what I was doing at the time that Reuther asked, sent Jack Conway out to ask me to come on the International staff and I told him, no, I'm busy, you know, and that was, I thought, the easy way to get rid of it, but they persisted, and finally they gave me this proposition. Okay, you got your classes to finish, you agree to come on the International payroll and we'll allow you to stay there until the classes graduate and then you come to the International. Okay, s now this was in December, the early part of December and--

Q: Which year?

T: In 1950, 1950, and so I went on the International payroll in December. Now all through December classes were suspended, December until after the first of the year, so around the middle of January through April I was running these educational classes at Local 600 but I was, my check was mailed to me from the International.

Q: Weren't you afraid that by going to the International that you would get cut off at the knees if Reuther decided to...?

T: That was the reason I hesitated, that's the reason I refused it, but the reason that they insisted that I be the one, I know there was a sinister reason too, they wanted me split away from Stellato--

Q: Yeah.

T: But the other reason was Stellato and a group of his staff members including myself, had gone down to Reuther's office and requested that he place at least one Black representative on the National Ford staff. The National Ford staff at that time had seven people besides the Director and they were all White and so Reuther agreed.

Q: You talked yourself into that one.

T: So when we get back to the Local, yeah, when we get back to the Local Reuther says whoever you want, he says, we'll put on. We said, we can't name your staff for you so we sent him a list, you know, of eligible people but didn't put my name on there and we didn't put Jimmy Watts name who was also out there at the time, so, yeah, seven people. They called all these fellows down one by one, you know, and interviewed them and went over their background and so on, and to our dismay they didn't hire any of them and said none of them are acceptable enough because we feel that the first one should be somebody that is beyond reproach, you know, nobody can say he can't cut the mustard. He's got to know the contract, he's got to be somebody that we can set up an example and not be somebody that would set us back and there were some Ford plants where a Black representative better know what he's doing when he goes, you know.

Q: Yeah.

T: So, okay, so we sent--

[END OF SIDE A]

T: . . . Blacks in Ford plants all over the United States so pick somebody, you know we can't tell you who to put on staff, we just don't want to. So about a week later here comes Jack Conway and he said he wanted to spend some time with me and I won't interefere with your work, I'll just sit with you, we'll go to lunch together and, you know, for two days he really pressed me. So, finally, he got the three of us together, Carl, myself, and Jack and we got in that office and he said, and Jack laid it out to us, he said, Walter insists that Shelton be the man. He's got the experience, he's well known and there can be nobody who would be able to say that he couldn't do the job, and he would be received by the other Ford locals no matter where they are he would be received because they all know him and they know his reputation and that's the reason Walter wants him.

Q: That was almost, he made you a deal you couldn't refuse.

T: Yeah, so--

Q: Under those circumstances.

T: So the only thing I could say is, well, Walter knows what my politics are and unfortunately all the years that I've been a delegate I've never voted for him. Does he expect me to change, you know? Well, he knew that I was going to raise that question and he says, Walter's prepared to accept you as you are with one condition and that is you do no politicking as an International rep, whatever your opinions are

you don't get on a soapbox, you know, so to speak. Well, that's understandable, after all, you know, he signed your checks.

Q: Well he sure got you between a rock and a hard place, didn't he?

T: Sure did.

Q: Because he did effectively silence you as a voice of the opposition.

T: Yeah. So, well, Carl, Carl is the one that really hammered the nail in place because he said, look, he said, I was down there running my mouth and I requested they put a Black on and he said, now they're willing to do it. He said, how will it look? I'm the advocate, how will it look if my own staff member refuses to take the job? Okay, there I am.

Q: You said something earlier about, if you've got questions, you interrupt me and ask your own.

Q: Yeah, I have some but go ahead.

Q: You have got to give Reuther credit for the achievements of the union after he became President--

T: Right.

Q: Do you think that had he lost and the left had retained its leadership in the union it would have done worse than Reuther?

T: Well, that's conjecture I guess. I don't think I could say that we would have done worse, I am sure we would have had a pension because that was the left wing's, advanced that proposal. I am sure we would have advanced on the wage front because that's the nature of a union to improve along those lines. The difference would have been, you see Reuther did nothing alone, it was the general leadership of the union that was really responsible for the achievements. You have to give

credit to the chief because I guess he's the one that tolerates the leadership, you know he appoints them and he eliminates them if he feels inclined to do it. So while giving him credit, we also have to recognize the secondary leadership who did the burning of the midnight oil and did the thinking and all this because the President of the UAW is really in many respects a figurehead, you know, he appoints somebody that does the work for which he gets credit and somebody else writes the speeches that he makes, which is true of the President of the United States as far as that goes so. But I think Reuther stands out as a man of vision but I also feel that the UAW as an entity, as a power institution would still have made great strides without him because we have continued to advance since he died.

Q: But there are a lot of people who will argue that in fact a lot of the grass roots militancy and democracy in the union was eroded as a result of his smashing of the left, that he no longer, there was no longer a standing opposition in the union afterwards and the five-year contracts were a result of Reuther's leadership too.

T: I'm one of those who contends that, the elimination of a strong opposition has been a deterrent. I opposed putting a gap between conventions, a three-year gap between conventions, in fact I was opposed to the two-year gap until I realized the cost, we wouldn't have been able to meet the costs of annual conventions but two-year conventions was not out of the question. The proof of the fact is that in the first three or four terms Reuther had this in-between educational conference that was just as big as a convention.

Q; Uh-huh.

T: But they were finally able to get away from that, and I think after we had that big Ford strike that was so costly he was able to get away from that in order to make up, you know to catch up in the bank account and so they just never did get back to the educational and then, of course, the costly purchase of Black Lake. You can't have $10,000,000 educational conferences and at the same time pay for Black Lake.

Q: Were the guys in the left caucus they called themselves lefties, you know, and then the guys on the right, I mean it was a strange thing because the so-called right-wing caucus had a lot of people in it who were Socialists like Reuther who was so proud to show his old man off after he got elected as a Socialist and so forth. Were there a lot of Socialists on both sides or did the left have people who thought of themselves as Socialists aside from the Communists?

T: I think most of the people in the left who were Socialists were those who disagreed with the incumbent leadership of the Socialist Party but who weren't ready to go as far left as the Communists, so they were the kind who would silently acquiesce to a lot of things that they didn't believe in wholeheartedly but preferred this instead of the right. The right were people who were rabid anti-Communists type of Socialists which very easily embrace, you know you find some very peculiar marriages: ACTU's, Socialists, Socialist Workers, and others of that ilk. I remember one guy handed me a circular and I often wondered did he know what he was handing me. It was a circular that had the kind of phraseology that you would read if somebody handed you an America First or a John Birch Society leaflet, sort of in between,

and of course he's a right-winger. This is a fellow who is retired by the way that handed me this leaflet. He said, I got this at a meeting last night. I looked at it and I looked at him and then I said, he doesn't know what it is, so I never did talk to him about it. You know it put me on caution and I watched him ever since--very peculiar.

Q: So that most of the people on the left could be considered close to a Socialist perspective you think?

T: Yes, in many ways.

Q: With a small "s".

T: In many respects, yeah.

Q: But how did they differ, how did the factions of the left differ? I mean, can you distinguish the Communists from the fellow travelers or the--

T: Yes, you could distinguish the Communists from the fellow travelers, because when the Communists got into a strict party line issue then the fellow travelers would waver and wouldn't go all the way out with them.

Q: Would all the Communists stick closely to the line?

T: They'd adhere to the line, yes, they adhered very strictly to the line. They--I think that had a lot to do with dissipating the strength of that wing was the rigidity with which they adhered to the line at times.

Q: How about the people who dropped out or were kicked out of the Communist Party? Did they normally turn to the right or stay with the left?

T: No, they stayed left, they stayed left even though, oh let's see, who do I know that was kicked out of the party? Let's see there was Paul Boatin.

Q: Boatin was kicked out?

T: Yeah.

Q: When was this?

T: I don't know when but--

Q: Did you know that Judy?

Q: No, I didn't know that. It must have been late.

T: Who else? John Anderson, I don't think you know--Jimmy Anderson, you don't know him.

Q: No.

T: Not always for policy reasons. Sometimes it's for their personal habits and deportment, but anyway they continued to vote left, well, Joe Billups was thrown out of the Party.

Q: Who?

T: Joe Billups, he was I told you was the candidate for Governor back in '32.

Q: Romano is an exception.

T: Well, Romano is. Lee Romano is Lee Romano.

Q: What happened there?

T: I have never understood Lee Romano myself. I never understood him so I wouldn't know what happened. I wouldn't know how to tell you. Now there were other people like, it was Archie Acciacca, he was a member of the party but he got out. Who else do I know? Unless they tell you they were a party member you wouldn't know.

G: Johnny Gallo.

T: Johnny Gallo, he stayed with the party.

Q: He stayed, he's the one that resigned because he wouldn't sign the Taft-Hartley.

T: Yeah, yeah, Johnny Gallo.

Q: Did some people actually split with the party over the question of the non-Communist affidavit and whether to sign it or not? Was that issue at all because the Local 600...?

T: Well, it was quite an issue in the Local but I don't know anybody who left the party because of it. There were a lot of us who got pretty badly painted, treated because we stayed with them, but, no, I don't know anyone that left the party over the issue.

Q: Did Local 600 continue to support the refusal to sign the non-Communist affidavit?

T: No.

Q: No.

T: Tommy Thompson forced the issue and won.

Q: What led to your own differences with the party?

T: Threats and an effort to force me to join. I described the meeting at the hearings, but it actually happened that very few of the people who were there actually denied it. But in later years they sent a committee to me to apologize and this fellow James Jackson who at that time was the Michigan party head for a short time, but it was during his regime that this all happened. They called a meeting at the--one of the meeting places on Michigan Avenue and Allen what was his name?.

Q: William Allen.

T: Bill Allen, yeah, Billy Allen was presiding and I never understood that but still not being a party member I wouldn't know why he was presiding but anyway he was presiding. But what angered me was they asked me to come to this meeting and they didn't tell me why, what it was about or anything. Then when I got there, they had me in the outer hall there cooling my heels, you know, for about an hour, a good hour, it was the summertime, a summer evening. I got there about shortly, oh about 7:30 and I didn't get into the meeting until 9:00 o'clock, and when I got in there I see all these fellows from the Local, you know, different units and I'm very curious and every chair is occupied except one. There they are, they are fanned out like this. The door is down like that so I come in the door and up here is a round table. Allen is behind it and there are two people flanking him and then the chair's in front. It's like an inquisition. So I'm shown the chair and I sit on it, and the coolness, you know, from guys that I'm always received with a lot of congeniality bothered me, I was concerned. Allen very austerely says, Shelton, he says, you see your fellow workers here and we've invited you because we have some questions we want to ask, and then he named three people who had been assigned as he put it to work with me to see that I signed an application for membership in the party. He said, each one of these people failed and then I remembered the different times when these three people had almost adhered to me, you know, for days on end and while, you know, they talked about the party and all that I didn't remember any of them specifically insisting or asking me to join the party. Okay, so I took that in and he said, you have consistently

refused. He said, we have supported you all these years and you've been elected and while you haven't been 100 percent we have appreciated, you know, the kind of support we got, okay. And then, oh, he went along this line for quite a while and then he said, now don't get the idea that we're picking on you only. He says, this goes for other people that we have supported, he said, George Addes, W. G. Grant and others. Well, I was pretty sure that they didn't call them in for an inquisition like they called me, but, anyway, this is the way it went. So he finally wound up and then several people got up and spoke their piece. I guess this was all pretty well staged and then they asked me for my answer. I told him, the only reason that I never joined the party is because I didn't want to, and I said maybe some of it has to do with my background. I was born out West where everybody is very conservative and Republican and maybe some of that brushed off on me. Even though my family is Democratic and I've been a Democrat all my life if there is any such thing as belonging to a party but still, I said, if there ever is a Communist Party that's strictly an American party and we're talking about things that are wrong in America and we're not necessarily attached to what happens to somebody in Russia then maybe I'd, you know, would think about it a little closer, but other than that, I said, no. Then I went on to tell him that I've never had any grief for people who joined any party they wanted to, to each his own. Some of these fellows here are my good friends, the fact that they belonged to the party has never phased me one way or the other and I never, I was never bothered about it and I'm sure that they weren't bothered by me because nobody

insisted on me joining the party. I'd been asked, you know Bill McKie asked me once and I think Byron Edwards asked me, maybe Boatin did, I don't know whether he did or not but Bill McKie was the one who, oh yeah and there was another fellow, he was a barber over on the East Side I think. But Bill McKie right after I was elected Secretary of the Local, with that Scottish brogue of his, you know, he said, you better be thinking about coming among us, boy, you better be thinking about coming among us, boy.

Q: Who said that to you?

T: Bill McKie.

Q: That was McKie.

T: But I think, well of course I was subpoenaed, you know, and I could have used the Fifth Amendment and probably would have if I wasn't so angry, I was just angry at those people.

Q: They had just done that recently?

T: Yes, well, not too, you know Bill Johnson was in his first term I think, and they deliberately continued to postpone our caucus meetings and it was so close to the election it was almost ridiculous that we hadn't put together a slate. But the committee that was bringing in the names for the various positions on the slate continued to bring my name in, and every time they brought my name in they would find some reason to delay action on the committee. But all of this was being caucused within the party itself and brought into the left-wing caucus and so, well, I knew what it was, especially after the committee had even changed my position from Recording Secretary to Vice President and they still rejected it. And the committee had also accepted a

name that they had advanced from the floor and put it on the ticket but my name was still on there, so they had just enough power to keep rejecting the report of the committee.

Q: They thought they'd convince you to join that way?

T: Well, no, this was just retaliation for my attitude and my refusal.

Q: Did you ever figure out why they went after you like that in the first place?

T: I never have, I never have, so, anyway, I told Bill Grant and some of the other fellows, I said, now, listen, I said, we'll never get a slate together as long as I keep going to those meetings. I said, I'm going to stay away and go ahead. He said, but if they leave you off? I said, if they leave me off, I'll be the campaign manager, let's get the thing on, you know. So I stayed away, they held that meeting up here at Northern High School. There were 603 people there at that caucus and I wasn't there, and the committee came in with my name on the slate again.

Q: They did.

T: So they nominated Bill Johnson from the floor and Bill Grant stood in for me, he nominated me and he stood in for me and they had a, well they had a, they took two votes by sound and by raise of hands and it was unclear, so then they had a division of the house, everybody in favor of Bill Johnson on this side and everybody in favor of Shelton Tappes on this side. The Chairman didn't vote so that, wait a minute, how was it, there were 602 people, so the chairman didn't vote and it turns out 301 for Bill Johnson and 300 for me, and so they--

Q: What year was this?

T: 1946.

Q: Peculiar, very peculiar.

T: Now Jim Jackson in arranging for the apology at the meeting that they held where they were arranging for this committee, to set up this committee to apologize to me, Jim Jackson confessed that he made a mistake and he said, unfortunately the mistake resulted in cutting off the career of Shelton Tappes, you know, which it did, it aborted a career. Now I don't have the problem of--what happened to me, it's not that it bothers me, because I never took any position I ever had as mine, I thought it belonged to my people and my achievements I thought was the elevation of Black leadership. You know Black people were moving up and assuming their place, and so when I was, when my career was aborted the way it was those who followed were not forward, they weren't as forward as I thought they should have been although this guy Bill who had did, they knew he was there and that's the way I always put it. I said, they may not have known who the other officers of Local 600 were at a given time but they sure knew who was Recording Secretary because, and I've often said that I was only able to say that once after I left there and that was when Bill Hood was Recording Secretary because if you remember he helped organize the National, the Negro Council and no it wasn't, who was it, he and actually Mayor Young was a member of that--

Q: Coleman Young.

T: Yeah, Coleman was a member of that group.

Q: He didn't come out of the 600 though did he?

T: No, he was with the Public Workers Union, the old Public Workers Union. But Jim did admit, you know, that he done that and it was a mistake, he's sent, Jerry, did you--have you run across the name of Jerry Boyd at all? Well, I don't know what union, Jerry was an artist but I don't know what union he was with, it might have been the Office Workers Union, who took in a lot of people like that from different offices and companies. But Jerry was an active member of the party and I think he was on the State Central Committee, and he was the one they selected to head up the committee that came to apologize to me and they offered and I said, well, I can accept the apology. I said, I don't think that I've been hurt nearly as much as the rest of those people out there in that plant who now don't have anybody who has enough thrust behind their convictions to really do the job that should be done, and I said, that's all I wanted to do.

Q: When do they apologize?

T: It was around about the fall of 1951. I went on staff in '50. It was I would say about three to four months after the hearings.

Q: And they came and apologized then?

T: Yeah, although there, oh everybody didn't feel like apologizing because, you know, they call you, what is it? A stool pigeon. But I told them, I said, a stool pigeon is somebody who stools on his fellows, you people were not my fellows, I wasn't a member of the Party. I said, furthermore I was subpoenaed and I don't know if you've ever listened--let me tell you something. Contempt of Congress is easy for those people, it's easy. They had a stack of books, you know those steno notebooks and each one had a year on it, had my name

on it and had a year on it, and when--they didn't ask me questions, they told me. This was the preliminary hearing, the public hearing is just show.

Q: Right, they rehearse you before you go in.

T: The hearing is held in privacy in a room with one Congressman and a battery of people from the Attorney General's office, FBI and the Attorney General's office. And you are there, you talk about Star Chamber, you are there sweating and they just keep giving you coffee, you know.

Q: What are the steno notebooks about?

T: They got a, this record of you.

Q: Oh of all your activities.

T: Reports they got from people and all that over the years. They had down there 1938, 1939, 1940, 1941, just, he had a stack of them. They'd ask questions and I would answer, wait a minute, he'd say, you know you would get half way through your answer and he'd say, wait a minute. Then he would take his book and he would go and find it and then what did you say, and a couple of times he would say, it wasn't just quite that way, Mr. Tappes.

Q: So they scared the shit out of you.

T: Yeah, they sure did and then, of course, I was involved in divorce too, I was getting ready, I was divorcing my first wife and there was a big question of custody of the children.

Q: Oh boy.

T: And I wanted custody of the children but I was really, I was really frightened on that.

Q: And you would have never won the custody if you hadn't testified.

T: Yeah, probably not.

Q: I had a close friend that went through the same thing.

T: Yeah.

Q: Also a Detroiter, it's the same thing.

T: The same thing, huh.

Q: The same thing that happened. She brought, she brought into the custody trial the fact that he had been a member of the Communist Party and he turned around and looked at her from the stand and said, but you were too. The judge was looking at both these people, but it was really tragic.

T: But you were too.

Q: So that would have been the real, that would have been the real loss, they couldn't have done much to you worse than that really.

T: No.

Q: So what happened, they'd trot out these names and say, was this guy a Communist? was that guy a Communist?

T: Well, they didn't do it that way. They'd say, Mr. Tappes, on October 23, 1939, there was a meeting at St.--

[END OF TAPE #3]

TAPPES INTERVIEW
Tape #4

T: Do you deny that the meeting was--no, I don't deny it. It probably was held. Then if you feel that it probably was held, then do you remember that so-and-so said such-and-such and such-and-such? I don't know. I don't know. And you said, so and so and so and so? It's possible. All that kind of stuff and it just goes on and on, they drone and drone and drone. This went on for about six hours I guess with a break for coffee that's all or relieve yourself and come right on back. And this guy, I'll tell you who was the subcommittee was this guy Potter who defeated Blair Moody for Senator. You know Blair Moody had been appointed by Governor Williams.

Q: Was it Williams? Was Mennen Williams already the Governor?

T: Yeah, yeah, because Hart was Lieutenant Governor and Blair Moody was appointed Senator in sort of an interim and then a few months later they had to have the regular election and this guy Potter who was a legless veteran.

Q: Right, right.

T: He won the post but the next time they washed him out, you know, and who was elected? Hart. Anyway, he was washed out, but, anyway, he was the subcommittee chairman and one-man committee really that held that hearing with me, but when they got before the TVs they had Wood and three or four others were there. Tavener I think was the name of the attorney.

Q: Judy, did you want to ask something, we're keeping Mr. Tappes a long time?

Q: Yeah, I would like to just go back a little bit to the issue of how the left differed from the right in terms of their activity on the shop floor in terms of pursuing grievances, not necessarily in the wartime but just generally. If you could distinguish between the way that the right conducted their union affairs as opposed to the left.

T: Well I wouldn't indict the right wing for the way in which they handled grievances because I think for the most part union representatives in the Ford setup were pretty diligent in handling the problems. For me it's easy to say because, remember the days that I was in and around the shop the union was still very new and there was a lot of enthusiasm and, therefore, there was an anxiety to make the union work--

Q: Uh-huh.

T: That depreciated as the years went on until today I think most of it is personal aggrandizement that motivates people more than anything else. But the right wing and the left wing I think generally they applied themselves quite well. Now there were times and I can't say this of the left wing, there were times when a left-winger getting in trouble might have some problems with right-wing opposition taking up his grievance for him but this was more in leadership. The rank-and-filers were not as easy to distinguish as far as their loyalty within the union was concerned, so rank-and-filers, their problems were attended but leadership having problems he'd have to face some difficulties, especially if he was a left-wing leader depending on right-wing representation.

Q: So you mean the left-wing shop floor leader?

T: Yes.

Q: And there was a higher officer who was on the right?

T: Yeah, for example, suppose you had a left-wing committeeman who had some problems with the foreman and possibly be, chances of being disciplined.

Q: Himself personally?

T: Himself. His right-wing top committee he may or may not take up the case or if he is, say, anti-Black as a committeeman he may not take up a grievance just because the person is Black. I can recall one case where it was a very glaring case and the unfortunate part of it is that step by step higher up the ladder they took the same attitude that the floor, the committeeman did on the floor and they let the company lead their thought on the grievance, which is always fatal, you see. Now here is a case a woman was charged with ringing the time card of a man who they purported was her boyfriend. They said they saw her make two passes at the time clock and each time she made a pass she had a card in her hand, and they said that they never saw this fellow ring the card out but later they saw she and he walk out of the plant almost arm in arm. They let the grievance go up and I just happened to be in the unit visiting and they told me about the case. They said, of course, we didn't take it up. They said, we're going to, we're not going to appeal it. I said, how much time do you have on the case yet? They said, oh, a couple more days. I said, appeal it. Let me turn it down. Well it was Ford department C ? and I handled that unit's grievances on the umpire, at the umpire level. So, anyway, I checked this grievance out and I found out that

the foreman who claimed he had seen this lady make two passes at the time clock, the place where he said that he stood and watched her was so far from that clock there's no way for him to have been able to say what cards, if she did have two cards, which ones she rang out. Therefore, as far as I was concerned, the man was innocent and now we've got to prove that he didn't see her make two passes or if she did make two passes she had the same card which was pretty easy to do. Sometimes the clock, you know, the old clocks, you know you'd hit it with one hand and hold the card with the other, but these new clocks you put the card in and--

Q: And it's supposed to automatically.

T: So if it doesn't do it then you'd do it again, okay. So then on this arm and arm stuff, and then, of course here is the story. I find out that these people ate lunch together every day and she brought the lunch, a beautiful lunch, and she'd spread it out and they would eat. Then he'd go back to his job and she'd go to hers. Of course she had a husband and he had a wife otherwise, and this went on every day, and they did leave the shop rather intimately, okay. The one thing though that hadn't been brought out was that this fellow when he got her out of the plant he deposited her in a car with her husband.

Q: Boy, you had to be a detective and a lawyer and--

T: Now wait a minute. He was Black and she was White. Now here this is the problem, you see.

Q: The man whom she had lunch with--

T: Was Black. She was White. Well what they didn't know was these two people had been kids in kindergarten together and had been raised all

their life, their mothers were friends, their fathers were friends, and they had been raised up together and the husband was just as much a friend of this guy as she was because the two families had fun, they even took their vacations together and all this, okay. So anyhow I unraveled all of it and we won the case by the way.

Q: I would think so.

T: He was restored to work with all back pay and everything and she was restored her job with all back pay and everything, but she didn't come back because of the nasty stuff that was going on around about her among the other women. But here was a case where the union, the company insinuated that there was something off-color going on and the union picked it up and carried the ball.

Q: And they wouldn't have if you hadn't been there.

T: And if I hadn't been there they would never have made it.

Q: What unit was this in?

T: The Assembly plant or the B building as it was known in former years, Dearborn Assembly. One of the committeemen, in fact the committeeman who told me we are not going to take it up was Black, Roscoe Lewis.

Q: Was he a right-winger?

T: No, but he was one of those who succumbs to the majority around him, you know. He's not one that will get on a soapbox if he's surrounded by the opposition.

Q: And he also probably just assumed that what they were telling him was right.

T: Was right.

Q: Instead of going and looking.

Q: Was the B building generally a right-wing building?

T: Yeah, it started out as a right-wing building, in fact when the, when we were organizing, one of the issues we used was the fact that the B building, the jobs in the B building, the soft jobs in the B building were not for Black workers to work on. The only thing that a Black worker could do in the B building was haul material to the line, he couldn't work on the line.

Q: Hm.

T: And when I stood out for a system of seniority that would give a person plant-wide rights, the chairman of the B building accused me of trying to build a tunnel from the Foundry to the B building.

Q: Who was the chairman at that time?

T: Marty Jensen. I was trying to find the picture so I could show it to you and I told him, you're exactly right. I'm trying to build a tunnel not only from the Foundry to the B building but to all the rest of the units around this plant.

Q: And did you win the plant-wide seniority at that time?

T: Sure, it's the basis of, it's a basic plant-wide seniority, you know the labor pools where you do have bumping rights on a plant-wide basis in the--

Q: When was that won?

T: That was developed in 1945 I guess, '44, '45.

Q: Did that mean a lot more switching around of workers when that rule came into effect?

T: No, see they're already laid off and then they exercise their seniority against lesser senior people than they and it's pretty easy to do. It operates fairly easy.

Q: Did that mean that workers were less likely to stay in their same unit for a long time? Was there more movement out of units as a result of that?

T: Yes, yes, that helped spread people throughout the plant and diminished the concentration of Blacks in the Foundry.

Q: It did.

T: In the Open Hearth and other places like that.

Q: Did that break down solidarity, too?

T: No, not necessarily, because you see at the same time you, people were getting acquainted with each other and more confidence is built in the Black leadership among the Whites and I think it's all for the good. Oh, here's the picture. In my time there was just no way that you were going to elect more than one Black president of a unit and that would be in the Foundry. And until I became an officer of the Local there was only one Black on the Local union Executive Board and that was me from the Foundry, and then after I became an officer of the Local the fellow who succeeded me made two Blacks on the Local Executive Board. But now you have seven unit presidents who are Black in the Rouge plant, see, and that's because of the spread and permeation of Blacks throughout the plant.

Q: How long did it take for this transition?

T: Here's the fellow that was president of that unit, Martin Jensen. He's the one that accused me of trying to build a tunnel through the Foundry to the B building.

Q: It looks like he has a Fu Manchu mustache. Is that just his cheek line?

Q: Is that Kennedy on the other side?

T: Yeah. That was taken at the NAACP Freedom Dinner. I'm perennial chairman of ticket distribution. Boy, 5,000 people we seat at that dinner every year.

Q: I noticed you were active way back during the war going to NAACP meetings.

T: Ted Kennedy was our speaker that year. You said he looks like, oh yeah, I see. That's a shadow under his jaw. I guess he did have a mustache, yeah he had a mustache.

Q: So how long did it take before Blacks started becoming more prevalent in the chairmanships of the units? I know, Nelson Davis and Joe Hogan, where were they? Hogan was in the Foundry, right?

T: No, Hogan was Gear and Axle plant. He was in the same unit that Andy Ignasiak came out of. Nelson Davis was vice chairman in the Foundry under me.

Q: Oh.

T: And he remained, well he never ran for president that I recall, but he was, anytime he ran for vice president he was elected. There were a couple of times when he didn't run, but he was already a committeeman in his, on his job anyway.

Q: Was this guy Ignasiak identified with the right?

T: Yeah, strictly, strictly.

Q: Could you make an estimate, your overall impressions during that time as to whether, where the left was stronger or weaker in the different units?

T: Yeah, I can do that.

Q: Okay, I have a list here of the units.

Q: Just happen to have.

Q: Just happen, yes.

Q: I have a list here, Mr. Tappes.

Q: Just answer yes or no. Aircraft which then became Parts and Accessories right?

T: All right, now the question is, was Aircraft left or right?

Q: Yeah.

T: Okay. Aircraft was right.

Q: Okay, and if you can think of any other characterizations that you can say that typified the unit.

T: Now that unit was made up of a conglomerate of people from various units that were going down out of civilian production into war production and it was initially manned with White workers, preponderantly White workers. In fact, I don't think all during the war they ever had more than 2 or 3 percent Black.

Q: Is that because they were good jobs?

T: Yes and they were jobs that Blacks had always been denied, machine-type work.

Q: Is that more skilled labor?

T: Yes, actually semi-skilled, generally semi-skilled work, machining, lathe, chamfering, bulard(?) operations and all that sort of thing.

Q: Now that was the building that later becomes Parts and Accessories, right?

T: Aircraft, no, it's Motor plant. They tore down the old Motor plant and they moved that operation into the Aircraft.

Q: Oh, is that when they combined it with the Engine, Motor and Engine?

T: Yeah.

Q: So the workers, what happened to the workers that were working in Aircraft after the war?

T: Well, most of them went back to their old occupations, a lot of them were teachers and, you know, different professions.

Q: Also, they weren't normally Ford workers that were going in there?

T: No.

Q: Oh.

T: Quite a number of them weren't Ford workers. In fact, one of the presidents of that unit right now is a business agent for the Teamsters Union, another one became a deputy sheriff, Gordon Tray.

Q: And that's where Yost was too?

T: Yost, Larry Yost.

Q: Did he come from the Local or was he from outside?

T: He was from the old Motor plant before the war. He was a Ford worker.

Q: How about the Steel Foundry.

T: The Steel Foundry was left.

Q: Anything specific about the proportion of skills or--

T: No, the Steel Foundry was a counterpart of the old production or Dearborn Iron Foundry, just like you'd take part of the Dearborn Iron Foundry and move it in a different place in the plant. They had a different product and they used a different type of steel. It was a harder kind of steel because it was used to make tank parts and things like that.

Q: So would you say that most of the Foundry shops were pretty similar in their production methods and politics?

T: Pretty similar.

Q: The Iron, the jobbing, the Production, Steel?

T: Yeah, those, all those plants were left wing.

Q: And how about Open Hearth?

T: Open Hearth was Carl Smith, sometimes left, sometimes right. He was a middle-of-the-roader. He was objective but more middle of the road than anything else.

Q: That was one of the hardest units to work in, wasn't it? The dirtiest work or the hardest work.

T: Yeah it was dirty work and hot work because of the antiquated methods utilized there, but the pay was good and I guess that unit was maybe 55 percent White and 45 percent Black.

Q: So the same guy was reelected over and over and it was his politics that went back and forth?

T: As long as he wanted to, Carl Smith, yes.

Q: Was that left-right split similar to the Black-White? I mean you have 55 percent Black and 45 percent White. Were the Blacks primarily the basis of the left in that?

T: Uh-huh, and they had a lot to do with keeping Carl out of the right wing strictly, you know.

Q: Okay, the Motor and the Engine plant I know was left.

T: That was left.

Q: Yeah, Boatin was there most of his time.

T: Well, Percy Lewellyn was the original president of that unit, and Percy was left from the soles of his feet to the top of his head but never a member of the Communist Party.

Q: He wasn't?

Q: What happened to those like Boatin and those guys that were kicked out by the Local or, you know, those five--Nelson Davis, Boatin...?

T: They were reinstated by the International Union and they were, see they were really kicked out of office, you know, they weren't allowed to hold office but the International restored their rights.

Q: But they couldn't run for office.

T: They could but they didn't, they just didn't. I think Dave Moore did run for convention delegate and got elected a couple of times but other than--

Q: Why did the International restore those rights?

T: Well, you know it's, it was too severe a sentence. You know these people, I think Reuther had a lot to do with it. Reuther almost learned what he knew from the knee of Bill McKie. When he was President of Local 174 Bill McKie was his mentor so how could he--sure he played the game of redbaiting and all that, but I don't think he meant it all that harshly as some of his followers did. You know the worst of the Reuthers was Roy, if Roy was living today he would be in Washington trying to find something wrong with George Crockett, you know, that's the kind of guy he is, see, okay.

Q: Victor was to the left of Walter.

T: Well, yeah, Victor he was to the left of Walter and Victor didn't know too much about auto workers, the auto plants anyway because he never worked in any.

Q: So they had their rights restored. I don't understand. Do you mean when they were thrown out because they refused to sign the non-Communist affidavit?

Q: When the administratorship came in, they investigated to see who the troublemakers were and they took five people out and they said you can't run.

T: They had them on trial.

Q: And then they got their rights restored.

T: Yeah.

Q: Yeah, I never heard. When was that, when they got them restored?

T: Well they did do it very quietly somewhere along in the sixties.

Q: Oh, so it was way on.

T: Way, way late.

Q: So is there anything particular about the Motor plant? Was there a lot of, was there a high proportion of Whites and skilled workers in there too?

T: It was--the Motor plant was a very busy unit, a lot of leadership grew in the Motor plant and you had a strong right-wing leadership and you had a strong left-wing leadership. See Henry McCusker came out of the Motor plant and Walter Bell and this guy James O'Rourke who was Recording Secretary.

Q: They were never elected in the shop itself were they?

T: Yes.

Q: They were?

T: Their slate won over Boatin's?

T: Oh one time. Let's see who was it? No, I guess not. No, no, they never won in the unit. They won the committee posts and like that but they never won any of the important positions like President or Recording Secretary or anything like that, no, no. One significant thing about the Motor building or one outstanding thing that happened there was the trials of O'Brien and Fitzcassey(?) who were midnight shift committeemen who had gone to one of the White girls and ask her why she was always having lunch at this table where the Black girls sat and ate, and when she told them that they were her friends why they started some kind of a movement with the supervision, some kind of plot with supervision and they got her fired. Of course she was pretty astute and she informed the day shift and explained to them everything that happened, so it winds up at a big meeting at MacKenzie High School on Sunday and they asked me to come out there. Gee that place was jammed with people standing along the walls, you know, and Paul Boatin was at his best that day. He made a speech I'll never forget, oh he roasted those two guys, so he recommended that they set up a trial committee and these fellows be kicked out of the union pending trial and everything he proposed went over, you know, and of course the Local had to put them back to work because they hadn't been found guilty. So we said until they're found guilty, but we took their committee posts away from them and they had to go to work. So anyway they had the trial and these fellows were found guilty and I forget what the sentence was, but they were suspended from the union for some length of time, couldn't hold office but they were allowed to work because, you know, a little patriotic thing, being wartime and

stuff. Then later on one of the fellows, O'Brien, sued the union for a quarter of a million dollars and he named Bill Grant, Paul Boatin, Bill Cooper and myself and the local union. We had a trial that lasted about five weeks, and I was on the stand for three days myself. It was so funny, the lawyer he had was Davidow. Have you ever heard of Davidow? Davidow was first a--

Q: How do you spell it?

T: D a v i d o w. He was the original counsel for the UAW before Sugar.

Q: Before Sugar.

T: Before Sugar and he was fired by R. J. Thomas for his right-wing tendencies, you know extremist tendency. The first question Davidow asked me, are you a subscriber to the Daily Worker? Well, anyway, the case, we won the case, directed verdict, so we never even had to put our case in. He exercised his right under the statute to call the defense witnesses and the judge explained to him that he has a right to do that, however he has to accept their testimony. So he called, you know grandstanding, Walter Reuther, R. J. Thomas, George Addes, all International officers and then Local Union 600 officers. What they were hanging their hat on was, we had, when the matter left the unit after the unit made its decision, it went to the General Council and the General Council debated that thing for an hour or two and they finally upheld the decision of the unit. My secretary through typo failed to put the motion had passed, all she put down "motion made" and then under the motion she said "supported" but she--

Q: But not carried.

T: Never put carried. It was an oversight because everybody in that meeting knew that the motion had carried because I think we had a division of the house and all kind of howling going on, points of information and all that jazz so but anyway that was what he was trying to hang his hat on. The left and right got together on that one, you see. Even though the right-wingers were the ones who had voted against the adoption of the unit's report, when they got down there in the court they all testified that the motion had passed and that there had been a fair decision and all that sort of thing, so when it comes to defending the union why they all move together. Now the next unit.

Q: Tool and Die.

T: Tool and Die. Oh that was another fifty-fifty thing. Originally Jim Couser was President, it was pretty well left wing. Jack Orr came from there and quite a number of other well-known people, Tom Jelly.

Q: What about the race composition or the skilled composition?

T: Very, very, very small number of Blacks, maybe about--

[END OF SIDE A]

T: People who were running from the political situation in Ireland so most of those that were active to any degree in the union were, I would say were left. The Italians were, it was a mixed group, but most of the Italians I knew that were active in Local 600 were pretty, pretty much left too. Only the very conservative or adherents to the church policies they were pretty much right, but the free thinkers

were left-wingers. I guess it's sort of like you have over there in Italy right now, you know they go to mass every Sunday morning and then every afternoon they're at the Communist Party meeting.

Q: Right, that's right.

Q: Then about Maintenance and Transportation, those were the two that were not really grounded in the building, right? They were all over the plant.

T: That's right, all over the plant and most of the time I'd say the Maintenance unit was left in our time but in later years they became pretty much right and the last few years they've been middle of the road, the last eight years I'd say, eight or ten years they've been middle of the road. But they were right up until then and left in the beginning we called them, Pat Rice.

Q: How about the Transportation?

T: The Transportation has always been right wing.

Q: I know that when they had that attempt of a move to the Coal Miners Union that that didn't work. When was that, in the late forties when the Transportation workers attempted to move?

T: Oh yeah, District 50, the United Mine Workers.

Q: Yeah, but they came back right again and elected another right-winger, right?

T: Uh-huh, yes.

Q: No matter.

T: Jack Pellegrine.

Q: What was the racial composition of the Transportation?

T: Very few Blacks, very few. It was a different kind of work, you know, no line to follow. You got to drive out of the plant a lot and around the plant.

Q: Is that more semi-skilled too?

T: Yeah, just truck driving mostly and railroad work, track maintenance and stuff like that.

Q: Why should they have supported the right?

T: I don't know why but the guy on here, Gus Newman, he was an engineer. Well, you know, the railroad unions, the basic core of the Transportation Unit is the railroad and railroad unions are very separate. Let's see the brakemen have their own setup, the engineers and firemen have their setup and the--what is the other one? the conductors, the conductors have their own setup. They have this separate type of seniority, what they call on the ground or in the cab. All right, on the ground is the brakeman and then you move up from brakeman to fireman and from fireman to engineer and from engineer to conductor and you carry no seniority with you. You can accumulate all your years on the category immediately below you, but you carry none up with you. It was very very peculiar seniority and it wasn't until we mastered that and was able to administer it in the UAW that they agreed to stay with us. So although they retained their membership in the railroad unions--

Q: Oh, they did.

T: Because of their pension rights and their insurance, some kind of an insurance policy that they have that--

Q: So they were in both unions?

T: Yeah.

Q: Really. They had dual union membership that way.

T: Yeah, they had a special concession of the International Executive Board.

Q: The Miscellaneous and Glass plants and Tire were pretty small units, weren't they?

T: Yes, they were. Miscellaneous was left and still is, the Glass plant depended on who was president although I still feel that it was basically a left-wing unit with right-wing leadership. I think the rank-and-file was left.

Q: So how come they never won the leadership?

T: Well, there are some units that always voted for individuals and didn't allow any slates.

Q: Really.

T: The best example is the Foundry machine shop, no slates--they never allowed any slates. The leadership was composed of four left-wingers to--well I'd say about three and a half left-wingers to every one and a half right-wingers and that was the way they would elect them for years and years.

Q: What other--that's an important point. I had missed that. Were there other units in which slates were not allowed by the units themselves? This was up to the unit to decide how they'd carry out their election?

T: Once, you know, they sort of established that, I don't know how they were able to do it, but anybody, any group that got together and put out a slate in the Foundry machine shop they were doomed to lose.

Q: Oh really.

T: They just didn't make it. This clique, you know, some way or the other they were able to get that through and it was--

Q: So it was an informal sort of thing.

T: Yeah.

Q: And then the same with the Glass plant?

T: Yeah, I think the Glass plant was the other one.

Q: How about the Pressed Steel and Rolling Mills?

T: The Pressed Steel was left and the Rolling Mill was right.

Q: The Rolling Mill had a high proportion of Black, didn't it?

T: They had a high proportion on certain jobs. There were pockets of Black in the Rolling Mill, but there were many many jobs that Blacks couldn't get on.

Q: How about the Pressed Steel? Was that--

T: The Pressed Steel was left wing and Blacks, the second unit in which they found freedom was Pressed Steel. I think it--

Q: You mean after the B?

T: Yeah, I think it had a lot to do with their leadership, Lee Romano and Arch Acciacca.

Q: That was the unit that--

Q: They were in the Rolling Mill?

T: I'm talking about the Pressed Steel building.

Q: No, this is Pressed Steel. After Romano quit the party, didn't he make it a point to turn the leadership or get it away from the left and--

T: He tried but he didn't make it.

Q: Oh, he didn't.

T: No, he didn't make it.

Q: Oh.

T: In fact they just about ran him out of there. They had to give him a job on the International because, see, first they ran him out of there and pushed him up to the Vice Presidency and then when he lost that, why he went, the International took him over.

Q: And then the Plastic and Tire plants were two also that were small.

T: The Plastic and Tire plant was small but it was left most of the time. There were a couple of terms of right-wing presidents, Paul Good and who was the other one? Nelson Samp, but all the rest of the time they were left wing.

Q: And how about Spring and Upset?

T: Spring and Upset was more of the middle-of-the-road kind of a union. It--actually I think more left than right, more left than right.

Q: Then the Stamping plant, is that sort of similar to the--

T: That's the same, that's Pressed Steel.

Q: That's Pressed Steel. Okay, how about Rubber?

T: Rubber is the Tire plant.

Q: That was just a tire plant?

T: Tire, plastic, all the same.

Q: But they'd do the same sort of work as anybody in the Rubber plant, the rubber workers did?

T: Yes, they did. See we're speaking from my time, you know.

Q: Yeah.

T: At that time they made tires in there.

Q: They actually made tires there.

T: Yeah, they made tires, steering wheels, and distributor caps. The plastic was steering wheels and distributor caps made of the Ford soybean process and the tires were regular rubber tires. In fact, they moved all that machinery to Russia and they're using it right now making tires in Russia with the Ford machinery.

Q: They moved all that machinery to Russia.

T: Yeah, they sold it to them.

Q: When was that?

T: Oh, let me see now. Before World War II.

Q: Nothing like these arch capitalists who were willing to sell things to the Soviet Union.

T: Yeah, these terrible Russians.

Q: As long as there was a buck in it.

T: And even sent a crew there to teach them how to operate it, set it up and operate it.

Q: Yeah, and Lenin coined a term called _____?_____. And so the Rubber plant was left did you say?

T: Yes.

Q: Yes.

T: Except for two terms: Paul Good and Nelson Samp.

Q: And then the Iron and Aluminum Foundries.

T: Those were left.

Q: Did both of these, did all the foundries have a higher proportion of Blacks?

T: Yes.

Q: And then Parts and Accessories.

T: I think most of those units were right wing, in fact they all were.

Q: So looking down over all of these left predominated in most of the departments over the years then, the right just had small pockets of success. It seems like looking at it here, a lot of the smaller plants, the Transportation, was Parts and Accessories a big plant?

T: No.

Q: It was a small one. I know the Tire was small.

T: They're just more or less small warehouses, you know, for packaging small orders. A large order would be like 10,000 or 5,000, the small orders would be like dealers. You know a dealer would, if he was going to order hub caps, he's going to order 100 or 50, or water pumps half a dozen or a dozen, two dozen, and so on. But a dealer who was assembling automobiles would order 1,000 or 5,000. Ford made parts for many of these companies Chrysler and even GM, and there was an exchange because the first Lincolns had GM transmissions in them.

Q: You're kidding.

T: Yeah, I had one.

Q: That's the end of mine.

Q: Were these all repetitive work? You made the point early in the, five hours ago, were these all in one way or the other workers on the line in these different units?

T: Yeah, for the most part except Tool and Die of course and Transportation, but the rest of them were pretty generally people on the line with the daily or even hourly production output to meet.

Q: So aside from the relative difference in the number of Blacks that were working in the place, was there anything that was a clue to

whether a place would be left or right? You as an organizer and a leader in the shop?

T: I don't think you could take that by units, and actually get a clue from them.

Q: They didn't differ that much.

T: You could get a clue from the skilled trades, you would know that their income is 50 percent higher than the average of the other people and they're probably more conservative, but other than that why. Or the railroads where their influence comes from the old line unions, you know, but other than that you wouldn't be able to.

Q: Do you think size might have been a factor, the smaller buildings tended towards the right more and the larger towards the left?

T: It's very possible because people have more time to talk with their bosses, you know, and the job being, a small plant would usually mean light jobs, light work, and the more rapport with the supervisors which in turn would have some influence on them. Where a larger unit you're far removed from the supervisors, and there's more distrust and ill feeling generated from the group because of the kind of work they have to do and here's the guy that's cracking the whip. Small units probably didn't have any moving lines that's for sure, you know, production was more of a lackadaisical operation; but the bigger unit they're cutting the mustard, they're really getting it out.

Q: Were they, I don't really remember all those special locations of the Rouge plant, but were like the big units likely to be by other big units and the small ones by small ones?

T: Yes, because one fit into the other, see. An ideal plant, well for example, the Foundry and the Foundry Machine Shop, the Foundry made the castings and the Machine Shop machined them, refined them, made them ready to place into an automobile. When the Machine Shop got through with the motor block it went to the Motor building. The Motor building made the motors, assembled all the motors and the motors went to the B building. On the other hand, you had the Spring and Upset, well you had Tool and Die first making the forms which then went to Spring and Upset and Pressed Steel, and Spring and Upset was making transmission housings, gears, and things of that sort. Pressed Steel was making the body parts, see, and assembling them, and so the idea was here's the Foundry and the Engine plant getting the finished product to the Assembly plant. Then over here was the Tool and Die, the Pressed Steel, the Spring and Upset, Gear and Axle, putting together all those body components which would meet with the engine in the B building, and, of course, the upper floor of the B building, the body from the Pressed Steel went to the upper floor of the B building first because this is where they had to put in the cushions and the top and all that sort of thing and make it ready to come down on the frame and, of course, the engine is shot in there. Did you ever see a car put together?

Q: Just on a film.

T: It's really a sight, especially when you have the advantage of seeing a plant like Rouge where everything is made, you know, it's really something to see and the way that's, the way, you know, the brain of man if you just didn't have to use it to make guns.

Q: Is it still integrated production like that?

T: No, no.

Q: They got decentralized, right?

T: Yes, the last figures that I got from the Rouge plant, there's 17,000 people there.

Q: That's all, huh?

T: Yes.

Q: There was never a comparable GM plant with that kind of industrial concentration?

T: There never was. The closest they came was Chevrolet in Flint where they, but still the bodies, see what we call Spring and Upset and Stamping is Ternstedt which ships them in by truck, and then you've got AC Spark Plug and those other plants that make other parts that are shipped in by truck to the Chevy plant.

Q: Uh-huh.

T: So what you have at the Chevy plant are the bodies, everything else comes in--the motors, the engines and everything else comes in. But they are a large complex, they had, in their heyday they had from 20 to 24,000 people working there, that was the biggest GM plant they had.

Q: Was that a left plant the GM?

T: No.

Q: It wasn't.

T: No.

Q: One I forgot to ask you about was the Gear and Axle plant.

T: Gear and Axle was really almost a part of Spring and Upset, they were so close together and their work was so interchangeable. But here was another unit that was basically left wing but at times they did elect right-wing unit heads; like Ignasiak came out of there but so did Dave Moore if you can understand those two guys coming from the same place. Ignasiak was conservative right, he worried about Poland right into his grave, you know.

Q: That made a difference, boy it sure made a difference.

T: He made three trips there after he retired, three trips to Poland so he could bring the word back how badly they needed America's support and help. I think he had a lot to do with electing that Pope even from his grave.

Q: All right, what have we missed? We've only kept you--

Q: Until all our tape's ran out.

Q: I warned you.

T: I just don't believe we've been here this long.

Q: Have you read Naming Names?

T: No, I haven't.

Q: Well sometime you might want to read it, it's a beautiful book by--what the hell's his name? He's the Editor of The Nation magazine and it's about the Hollywood ten. He went around and interviewed all of the people on both sides, guys that got blacklisted during the fifties because they were supposed to be Communists or something and ones who had named names. He argues throughout that book although most of the time it is the other people who are speaking that there was a moral issue there, it didn't have a damn thing to do with whether or not you

were pro-Communist or anti-Communist, whether you liked them or you didn't like them, that when an inquisitorial committee was asking questions it was a moral imperative to tell them to go stuff it. That's a kind of a recurrent question which he asks in there. What allowed you who all your life knew damn well that these committees were one way or the other part of the whole union-busting apparatus, was it that very personal fear that you were going to lose your kids that put you in the position to?

T: That and my anger at these people that would actually try to force me to--I was just dismayed that all of the things that I had stood for and things that we had accomplished during the administrations that I had been a part of that meant so little to them, that the very fact that I would not join the party would be a factor in determining whether they would support me for that position again or not. I was hurt, very hurt, and I just couldn't understand what it was that a person could do to be respected. I was just real bitter as a result of that, not because I thought I had to be Secretary of Local 600, that wasn't it. That wasn't it at all. It was just the fact that that happened and I was burned inside for want of revenge and it's something that, no way would I ever do it again, no way. I would have sat there and took the Fifth Amendment and told them to go blow. I really would have. Because I've never had any fears like that, you know, any threats. Contempt of Congress that didn't bother me at all. I wouldn't worry about that although they did grab McPhaul and put him in, you know, sent him to jail. I think he was in six or seven years.

Q: Who was that?

T: Art McPhaul.

Q: That's somebody we've got an interview with.

Q: Art McPhaul.

T: Yeah. But I wasn't worried about that, I was just, I guess that was my weakness, the desire for revenge. What did I do? I took it out on myself as much as I did them.

Q: You know I heard that before. Just two weeks ago I was in Montana and I interviewed a guy named James O'Leary. I don't know if you ever ran across him. He was a longtime International Vice President of the CIO and he had been in the Mine-Mill and he was on the right in the Mine-Mill. I said, you fought the Communists tooth and nail, why? He thought and thought and then he said, I didn't like them. I said, what do you mean you did't like them. He said, Well, they knew damn well I wasn't a racist. He says, I've been called a nigger lover when I was in the South organizing in the iron mine in Alabama and then when I told them that I didn't think it made sense to try to go for parity in the Mine-Mill leadership in every local, that you couldn't have an artificial fifty-fifty thing--

T: Oh, I see.

Q: They called me a racist. He says, well, when they called me a racist, I said oh. It's interesting. I've been finding this over and over again that very often things that were quite personal, attacks on a man's integrity almost.

T: That's too bad, that's too bad, and a lot of people thought it was McCarthyism, you know, but I don't think people were afraid. I don't think they were afraid. I think it was the FBI, people were planted

in unions by the FBI. I was finally told who it was that placed my name on their list, I mean somebody you ought to go after and it was very surprising to me. There was a woman who was active in the Communist Party, she was not an auto worker at all, just an active Communist, and she was Black. Her name was Woodson, Matty Woodson. Once in a while she would have a little social gathering at her home and she'd invite friends from the community that she knew and many times I went to her house and at other affairs I would see her. I never had any fear of attending a meeting or social gathering that the Communists gave, you know, to heck I mean these are my union member buddies so it was very easy for them to plant me in the party because--it's a funny thing they never plant you, you know you can go to all the Socialist gatherings that you want but go to one Communist meeting and oh, oh, the Reds have got him. But, anyhow, she had a son who sold the Daily Worker, that was how he made his little pocket change by selling the Daily Worker, and he remembered me because at that time I used to get a lot of publicity, you know the Secretary of Local 600, making a lot of noise. Maybe they don't approve of the noises but I was making them and so whenever anything of labor portent that happened it wasn't unusual for one of the labor reporters to call me and ask me my opinion on these things and so they'd quote me on this stuff. So then when you went to a social gathering like that why the people would talk to you, hey, I read your statement and so on, and this little kid, you know, he'd drink all this in, see. So he had no, they got to him and--

Q: They got to the boy, huh.

T: Yeah, to the boy.

Q: Not to her, she wasn't?

T: No, no, they didn't get to her, they got to him and he emptied his gut to the FBI and one of the people that he named, he thought I was a member of the party because he saw me so much. So he named me to the FBI as a party member, and the FBI told me, he said, Listen, we haven't been able to put you in the party. With all of our investigation we have never been able to put you in the Communist Party. So they said, what do they call it? cell. What cell did you belong to? I said, I didn't belong to any. And he looked at me kind of funny, you know, and I guess he was thinking, who had told him that I was. Later on I learned that there were three people altogether who had named me as a party member, but in each case they didn't know they just thought I was because they saw me so much. Then there were some Party guys in recruiting who in order to recruit--

Q: They said you were a party member.

T: They'd say that, why, you know, your leader Shelton Tappes is a member, so they'd believe him. Yeah, so that's very interesting about this fellow in Montana though.

Q: Yeah. He couldn't remember, he thought there were two things. One, he says, they kept shouting about the Second Front. He said, we had a First Front to fight. I says, was that it? And then he told me this other story and then it turned out that he was still a man of the left certainly in the way that he thinks today. He's a man in his late seventies, early eighties, and he started out after Kissinger, it was about a day after the Kissinger Commission appointment. He said, how

can you put a man like that in charge? It's like putting a fox in charge of the hens. This guy overthrew Allende in Chile. He was going on and on like that and I said, wait a minute, now, you're supposed to be the right-wing here. He says, yeah, well, you know, the right wing in the Mine-Mill that was the left wing in the labor movement.

T: Yeah, that's right. What about your experiences with any of the UE people?

Q: I haven't myself yet interviewed them.

T: No.

Q: I interviewed three, three people and one of them would not talk about politics at all because he had changed from, he had been named as a Communist Party member. He sort of skirted the issue for a long time and later became a capitalist himself so he wouldn't talk about it. The other guys were: one was a rank-and-file leader of a VE local in LA and the other one was, let's see, he was the regional director and president of the local, he more or less came from a more skilled background and later became a teacher. The rank-and-file guy had a lot of things to tell about his

[END OF TAPE]