ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

OF

MONROE LAKE

Interviewed By
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Oral History Interview of Mr. Monroe Lake by Jack W. Skeels, University of Michigan - Wayne State University Institute of Labor and Industrial Relations, December 10, 1959. This interview took place at Mr. Lake's home in Detroit, Michigan.

My birthplace was New York City some 53 years ago, but I have lived in Detroit long enough to almost be considered a native. My interest in the labor movement, since that is what you are primarily interested in, starts back at the time that I worked in the auto shops starting first as a metal finisher and later becoming what is known as a graduate metal finisher, if one can use that term for a person doing the same kind of work on metal bodies without injuring paint after the automobile bodies are painted. People performing this kind of work were known as "dingmen."

When I broke into the trade of "dingmen," an organization known as The Dingmen's Welfare Club was in existence. The organization, I am sure, had been formed somewhere in the early 1920's, or even before that. I remember the count of people engaged in the skill or in the trade of dinging bodies at that time. Members of the organization was 287 nation-wide, so that you had, a really highly skilled group, few in number, and having somewhat of a control over the source of labor and their particular skill. Because of that peculiar, particular kind of situation they were able to have a greater voice in their destiny in term of wages,

hours, and working conditions. Needless to say, the work week in those days was a 54-hour-and-more work week without any premium time paid for anything over 40 or anything over 48 hours or for that matter, anything over 54 hours. A 6-day week was a normal work week with a 9 hour day.

When I started, I started at Packards on the Boulevard. I broke in there by claiming I was a dingman. Not having to give too much of a background in the way of experience was able to go in and exercise the skill that I had developed as a metal finisher plus what I had learned from observation of other dingmen in body shops. In other words, I sneaked into the trade through the back-door, there being no such thing as an apprenticeship unless you could call metal finishing a knowledge of working metal as an apprenticeship. This was in the late '20's, I would say, about '28 or '29. I learned soon after getting on the job and finding myself able to do the job and learning from day to day that an organization known as The Dingmen's Welfare Club, which I had heard of, really was in existence. It served as a refuge for persons in the trade, if for no other reason than the exchange of information showing the availability of jobs when work slacked off, as it used to do seasonally in all the auto shops. I made contacts through other dingmen that I worked with at Packards, and was invited to join the organization and did. I became quite interested in it, and realizing for my own purpose, its value as

a union because that is what it really was even though it did not have any formal recognition on the part of management. It served a purpose that I felt was needed.

Skeels: Did it have any benefits to tie the members together? Was that the main connecting link?

Lake: The only benefits that one could look to out of being a member in the organization was one which I have stated: the availability of information; that is, the exchange of information between members as to location of jobs, openings and so forth, and although not completely agreed to or understood formally, a wage-rate, which was standard. If I am not mistaken, the wage rate at that time was $1.25 an hour. When we found tool-and-die makers, highly skilled people in the auto-shops, working for 58 to 60¢ an hour, our rate was in many cases double that of the highest paid skilled mechanics employed in the auto plants. So this, by itself, stood out as a good reason for a person engaged in the trade to belong and give support to The Dingmen's Club.

Another organization, also in the automobile body shops, had as its purpose the same objectives that the dingmen did. They were known as the Sword and Dagger Club. As dramatic as it sounds, it had a real meaning. They were the automobile body stripers. The name of Sword and Dagger comes from the shape of the striping brush which looked like a dagger with the hilt being the handle. And they were the so-called king fish of the industry at that time

because at the same time that we were making $1.25 an hour, they were making from $1.55 to $1.75 an hour, an unheard of rate in those days. But because of their skill and the shortage of persons able to perform the kind of work that they did, they were able to command this high price. And the fact that they had organization of one sort or another; namely, the Sword and Dagger Club, brought these high rates into being. And there was something of a liaison between the two groups, each understanding its others motives because they were identical.

Later on, I mention this in passing because nowadays you are going to hear so little of the Sword and Dagger Club and the stripers, it is interesting to note that they were one of the first victims of machinery in any of its forms, for the breaking down of a skill or a trade. A striping pencil with a wheel serving the steady hand of the striper came into existence and gradually the stripers found themselves without work. Nowadays, no striping is done. Chrome plating strips take its place.

While being actively engaged in the work of the Dingmen's Club, I became an officer and moved up through the official ranks until I ultimately became the Club's president. I felt what good organization did for those of us engaged in the dingmen's trade would be completely nullified someday in the future. Seeing before us the experience of the stripers, general organization was needed. To take a selfish viewpoint would be self-defeating. In other

words, should I have not looked into the future and said that other people have to be organized, then I would have been cutting my own throat because eventually we would be isolated, and maybe, by mechanical improvements, put into a position where our trade was no longer needed. So I always bent my efforts in the direction of trying to educate other people in other trades when I was in the shop. As a result of that I was known in those days as an agitator. We have other terms today for them: labor organizer, pork-choppers, and so forth.

I was dismissed from job after job because of my activities in that direction with other groups. I should say that the group I was most interested in helping organize were the metal finishers. I went from shop to shop. As I was dismissed, I went into another and employed the use of assumed names as a means of getting employment. Because it was impossible to get a job in those days if you were "black-listed," in one shop because there was a complete and thorough arrangement between the automobile shops and body building shops, exchanging information between themselves as to those who were "radicals." They were fighting and resisting organization in its various forms, and obviously they were not going to allow anybody to come into do that which they wanted to resist so much.

While I was president, Mr. Frank X. Martell now deceased, but then president of the Wayne County Federation of Labor, visited one

of our meetings, having requested an audience before the group of dingmen that I headed, and urged upon us affiliation with the AF of L and membership in the joint council over which he presided. An amusing sidelight -- he bought us a half-barrel of beer. And after we consumed the beer and excused Mr. Martell, we proceeded to vote on his recommendations and the vote was overwhelmingly against any affiliation. I have to say I was opposed to the majority. I was in the minority even though I was an officer. The feeling that brought about this defeat of any merger was that we were strong enough in our skill and few enough in number that we did not need strength on the outside. All we would be doing would be to swell the coffers of the Wayne County Council, the American Federation of Labor, without any immediate resulting benefits. In those days it was obvious that nobody could speak for anybody. What you were able to do on the job by your skill and the lack of available people at employment office to take your job should you strike was the strength we had. Based on that kind of thinking, they turned down Mr. Martell. The Organization knew my feelings then, that it would be not too long before we would have to join with the rest of the people who worked for a living in the automobile shops in order to protect our own interests. And I stated all these things from a very selfish viewpoint, looking for self-preservation. At the time that the UAW was being born, people finally, in the shops, particularly in the paint departments, where dingmen

are usually located, started to organize. Organization came in surreptitiously, growing and growing, but not too fast, but it was inevitable. One could see the inevitability of the total organization of the people in the auto shops. I think it is significant that organization usually in the automobile shops came about mostly in the body shops before it found its birth and insurgence in the so-called mechanical divisions. I think you know that the automobile manufacturer is broken down into divisions: mechanical, body, maintenance, and so forth. The birth of this so-called industrial unionism in the auto shops originated mostly in the body shops. I cannot give you the reason for it as I don't know the reason. Then it would spread to the mechanical divisions where the transmissions and motors were manufactured. Being in the Body Division as a dingman, naturally, I was exposed to pressures that would come about as a result of these people working in the shops trying to get everybody into the union.

I was at Hudson Motor Car Company working on the ding-line, along with painters, sprayers, and polishers; when the UAW really started to take form. And the pressures that came on at that time to the dingmen were quite strong because dingmen were located in between the polishers and the sprayers. No great group of dingmen was together at one time to resist the advances of any other trade, but rather interspersed with these other trades. At that time, the dingmen had their own meetings. From the various shops, we would

hear the same thing: "What are we going to do? The pressure is getting terrific in my shop and they are urging us to join with them. Now, if we do, we will lose our identity. Look at where our rates are now, just look. Our rates are high. We have been able to maintain these rates." At Hudson's we were up to around, on a bonus system, $1.75 an hour depending on the time of the year.

There was a feeling on the part of a lot of people that we could not gain anything by joining the other group, but that we would, to quote some of the people, "be sticking out our neck and protecting the interest of the lower paid people who didn't have fewness in numbers as their bulwark against the company as we did." There are those of us, however, who felt that eventually, whether we liked it or not we could not stand isolation with the growth of unionism all around us. If we were not isolated by management, then labor itself would isolate us. In any event, should any given shop become solidly union without the dingmen, it would not make any difference anyhow since the majority would rule and we would be a very small tail to a very big kite. Those of us who urged on the others to become active had our work cut out for us because of this long and successful background. A compromise was offered that each of us would have the right to make up our own minds in our individual shops, and in effect, engage in dual unionism.

We would not destroy The Dingmen's Welfare Club, but let it serve as a gathering place so that we could protect our interest. But at the same time should the individuals want to join the UAW, they were free to do so without being accused by the rest of the people of dual unionism. In other words, it was condoned, allowed, and in my particular case was urged. This was just at the time that Francis Dillon had been assigned to head the organization. At Hudson's, the paint shop, and the whole body shop as a matter of fact, was the seat of the union. Although at Hudsons more than any other place — I am given to understand, and I believe it is true, organization started in the mechanical divisions there almost simultaneously. This was not true in other shops. As an attempt to get some experience into the UAW from anybody who had knowledge of a union so as to guide them in their infancy, and also as a means by which to influence other dingmen at Hudsons, they came to me and asked my support. And I told them that they did not have to solicit my support because I had all along been in favor of industrial unionism even though I was a craftsman. I would do whatever I could with the other dingmen to have them agree with me to become part and parcel of the UAW.

Skeels: At Hudsons you had a federal labor union, which was part of the AF of L at one time. Also you had an organization headed by Arthur Greer, which was the Associated Automobile Workers of America. Which of these groups was approaching you?

Lake: Well, there was a switch over from Greer's group and the so-called company union, was the bigger force, as I remember. At least it was in the body shop and in the paint shop. Moreover, the idea of joining any union, whether it was a company union or any other kind of union, was completely beclouded in the minds of those people who worked in the shops. They did not know, for example, that a company union was a harmful instrument. When you say, "What group came to us.", it was the group that was interested in joining with the AF of L - CIO as an automobile workers union, a small group. What they did with me, they did with other members of the company union. Being a leader, they came to me and said, "We want to have you run for office in our union because you know something about it." They did the same thing with people in the company union. So as a result of coming to people such as Greer and myself, we found that the company union was weakened by people who were in the company union switching over and taking the constituents of that union into what was later considered a more democratic and representative independent union.

I believe that a great contribution in those days to the solid formation of what was ultimately the UAW, was Father Coughlin's outfit, even though I disagree entirely and so does everybody else, with what he stood for. There was an emotional appeal, which everybody remembers. There was a feeling on the part of people that they should stand up and be counted and be able to talk and say what they felt.

In the direction of Social Justice, a union was one expression that made its contribution, even though we now say that the program was fascistic in nature, and probably was. It did make its contribution towards organization. The fellow who came to me and asked me to do what I could to build this UAW and to strengthen it and bring the other dingmen in that worked at Hudsons was a very active member in Father Coughlin's.

I have forgotten, I think, the most important part the dingmen played in organization. Just about the time that Dick Frankensteen became very active in trying to form a union at Dodge's, the dingmen decided, for whatever reason which escapes me now, that it was necessary to strike the Chrysler Corporation. We did. We worked in every other shop but we did strike the Chrysler Corporation. I will never forget calling the dingmen out and having these few people picket a huge plant like the Dodge plant. Dick Frankensteen came to us and asked whether we could use what little support he had, and we said, "No, we were independent, and we would take care of our own battles." And I will never forget one day, having all the dingmen come out in force. It was on a Sunday morning and we marched down Joseph Campau to Hall where Dick Frankensteen was conducting a union meeting. Now, this was in the infancy of the UAW. There was Dick Frankensteen, I will never forget, standing up in front of a meeting. (We were invited to come to them.) When the dingmen marched into the hall, the dingmen who were picketing the Chrysler Corporation outnumbered

the number of people that were sitting at this so-called union meeting that Dick Frankensteen was conducting. Now, that would give you an idea of the kind of courage it took on the part of Dick Frankensteen to do the same thing that we were. At least we had something on our sides, our skill. Dick was conducting this union meeting with a few people who had nerve enough to come out. If there were 50 people there, that was a large number.

When we picketed the Chrysler-Jefferson plant, R.J. Thomas came out, and spoke to me. He came out of the plant in his dirty working clothes (he was a metal finisher) and walked across the street from the body shop to me on the picket line and asked me if there was any help that he could give us. And again we said, "Well, thanks just the same, we don't need it." We lost the strike. We dribbled back little by little into the Chrysler Corporation. And in the meanwhile, they had taken some metal finishers and broken them in to do our work, and some people never did get back as a result of the strike. Some did, and some did not.

Skeels: Was this the first strike that the dingmen had had?

Lake: No, it was not the first strike. We had had sit-down strikes. There was never an occasion to engage in a big strike with its attendant manipulations; such as, picket lines and soup kitchens and all that sort of thing. We were too small in number to begin with.

Let me give you an example of our method of operation. I was working at Briggs-Meldrum plant. The dingline was along side the ovens.

The bodies would come, after being painted, into an oven, go in one end, come out the other end, circle, and come down onto this so-called ding-line. So we had the ovens on one side and windows on the other, and it was terribly hot. And the dingmen felt that because of these poor working conditions, this terrific heat that we had to put up with, inspite of the fact that we broke all of the windows to get some air, they deserved more compensation than the company was paying us. Now, this was before there was any organization except our own in the automobile field. We were getting $1.35 an hour then. We demanded $1.45 an hour. We told this to the boss in charge of the dingmen, Harry Smith. He told it to the superintendent. We heard nothing. We did not hear that our demand was turned down, or approved. So we engaged in what later turned out to be something quite stylish in organization in unions; namely, a sit-down strike. And we put our tools in our tool-boxes, and we sat right down and let the bodies go right through without being dinged, not saying anything to anybody. We got an old door panel that had been taken off and fixed, sat down, got out a deck of cards, which we did at noon although nobody else in the shop was allowed to do this, and played cards. As soon as the inspector saw some of these jobs coming through, not being dinged, of course he notified his boss, and they came running in. Seeing us all sitting down, they asked what was wrong. We told them. Within five minutes, we had our raise.

So when you ask whether this was the first strike we ever engaged

in at Chrysler, the answer is "no." We had sit-down strikes. This was not unusual incidentally, as the sit-down strikes were all that we needed as dingmen to enforce our demands. I think we were fairly reasonable. Being the king-fish of the industry (by that time the stripers were out of the picture), we were the conservatives. Put a few bucks in anybody's pocket and he becomes a conservative. So that the occasions for any pressure, such as a sit-down strike, were very few, very few, but always effective.

Getting back to what happened after the UAW organization was formed at Hudson, I was elected an officer. I was second vice-president in charge of education and organization. And we then had our sit-down strikes. We were not the first, General Motors being the first, Chrysler second, Hudson third. We had to wait our time until these other people had gotten their contracts out of the way, and then we came in and followed what, by that time, became almost a stereotype pattern.

I was not a delegate at the first convention at South Bend. I was a delegate at the convention at Milwaukee, and this was the first large convention. At this convention political sides had been chosen by the people who were delegates of the convention with the exception of the local that I represented. Hudson local became known as the "fence-riders," politically speaking. You had the left wing or Unity group. You had the right wing or Progressive group. I think Greer was president until this investigating committee brought out information that he had been in the pay of Hudson Motor Car Company. Tracy Doll was vice-president. Gordon Wilson

was treasurer. Kirby Hatt was recording secretary. And then there were other people holding posts such as myself and trustees. We lost sight of the person that was then president and Tracy Doll as vice-president became acting president. Of course, he was later confirmed in that post by the Board of Directors of the union.

At that convention, sides were chosen in the forefront of the Unity caucus were the people who represented the so-called left wing party groups: the communists; the proletariats, represented by Emil Mazey; the socialists, represented by Walter Reuther -- in those days the communists by Nat Ganley and "honest" John Anderson. Wyndham Mortimer and Ed Hall, both vice-presidents, were part of the Unity group. Then on the other side we had Dick Frankensteen, R. J. Thomas and Richard T. Leonard. The person who did the Jimmy Higgins' work, the ground work for this right wing group was William Taylor from Chrysler, who I give credit to for having R. J. Thomas elected later on as president; of course, Homer Martin being very much in the forefront as the right wing leader. The Lovestoneites, a so-called left wing group, gave leadership, counsel, and advice to the right wing group because they were so much opposed to the Communist Party. And Jay Lovestone was in the forefront even though he was not a local person. The same person was just decorated in Germany along with Meany by Adenauer.

Incidentally, I was named chairman of our delegation and chairman of the steering committee giving me almost dictatorial powers over the decisions and the destiny of our delegation to the point that I

was able to maneuver our delegation to a position where we called the shot for the whole convention. Both sides being eager to find out where their strength was had a test vote. The lines were so clearly drawn that on this test vote it was quite obvious to the whole convention that when Hudson local voted, that we controlled the whole convention, an enviable position to be in. Immediately, both sides came down and tried to talk to the delegation and these emissaries were all referred to me. And they kept asking, "What did we want?" We knew that whichever group we chose would elect all the officers and all the new executive board members. So we really could have shaped the destiny of the UAW by casting our lot with either one or the other. And it was my decision that there was enough to be said for both sides. If we were going to keep the union together and not give occasion for any rump organization to secede we would have to be very careful to, at least, give to each side enough so that they would not be so minded as to leave the organization. It was a lofty motive, probably not the wisest when one looks back. But still, we were young then, and it was my decision to make, and I made it. When I brought this home to our own meeting of our own delegates, they agreed that it was the proper thing to do.

But in exchange, being politically ambitious for our local and wanting to be in the lime-light also, we selected Tracy Doll as our candidate and said that we were nominating him. Both sides said that they would support him provided we would join their group and support their candidates en bloc. We refused to do this and said, "We are just nominating a man. We have a right to nominate whomever

we want. Our votes will be cast the way we want to cast our votes." "Well, who are you going to cast them for?" "You will see at the regional caucuses." In those days regional directors were elected on a state-wide basis. So we came in to the state caucus and nominated Tracy Doll, knowing full well that both sides could not afford to vote against Tracy Doll in fear of angering us and driving us to the other side, and thereby, they would lose everything. So, as expected we received votes from both sides for Tracy Doll.

Although not making everybody completely happy we divided our votes and elected executive board members from both groups. So that we had a split, politically speaking, delegation on the executive board from the State of Michigan. And we take either credit or blame as the case might be, depending on one's individual outlook, for the situation that later developed into the kind of situation where Homer Martin did what he did in expelling all the board members, starting his own union and ending up with his own union. I have no regrets over what happened. I am sure that had we not done what we did, that we might have ended up with a completely split organization and would have had two unions in the field where only one should be.

Skeels: Was the influence of John L. Lewis felt at this 1937 convention?

Lake: Yes. In spite of what a lot of people think today, he did

not interfere with the close workings of the organization and the political fights that were going on. What he did urge upon us was to be together and to stay together no matter what we ended up with in the way of officers, and no matter who won what temporary political victory. His influence was unanimous as far as the organization as a whole was concerned. There is no question of anybody being against John L. Lewis.

I might say that John L. urged upon us to accept just the signature of a company in the sit-down days. We said, "Look, we have been sitting down, and we have done without these things. All of us have run up big bills. What did we sacrifice for if just to get an agreement recognizing our union. We want more than that. We want a huge wage boost. We did not want to leave the shops." Bill Taylor was one of those who fought against John L. Lewis's urging that we be satisfied to just get the company's signature on a collective bargaining agreement. And I will never forget what John said, "Do you know how long it took the miners to get where they are. Be satisfied to be recognized as the union, then you will work from there. You will become big and successful, but don't expect it all overnight." He urged upon us, this militant union leader, to take a conservative outlook on all of this. We thought enough of him, because of the support, financial and otherwise, that he had given to us, to follow his leadership and to do exactly what he urged upon us.

So we did not get much in the first contracts. All we got was the company signature that they would recognize us.

Now to get back to the conventions again. We came out of that convention, if anything, with the basis for the most disturbing kind of factionalism, more deeply embedded in the very structure of the UAW than one could ever imagine. The fight in the convention had been bitter. The lines were so closely drawn that there was an impact on the daily life of every officer, any person who ran for office, in every single one of our local unions. There was no such thing as "Look, I don't care about either side." Willy-nilly, you had to get in on one side or the other, with the exception of Hudsons because of our position in the convention and not having gotten in the fight. But, eventually, they got to us too, from the outside. We became kn own as a conservative local, more right-wing in nature than left-wing, but not completely so either.

I am mindful of Tracy Doll's speech. When we were deploring this factionalism, and he was much of a factionalist later, expecially after Homer Martin kicked him, Addes, Thomas, and the whole bunch of them out as executive board members of the UAW. People would say to him that factionalism would wreck the union. He said, "Yes, we start in the Milwaukee convention, two-hundred thousand members, and the factionalism ran rampant. And we go back to the next conbention, and with that awful, awful factionalism

getting worse and worse and worse, we find ourselves with 350 thousand people. And then at the next convention with this factionalism still governing our daily lives, we come back and we have got a half-million people. And if we do not watch out, and we let this factionalism keep on as it is, the first thing you know, we are going to end up with two million members." I have never forgotten that speech he made. And that is exactly what took place, strangely enough. Apparently these people, in their factionalism and desire to control the thoughts and minds of people, also helped to organize people, if for no other reason than to get support for their side. It was certainly one of the big reasons that people were as imbued with the spirit of organizing the unorganized. Certainly the need for organizing existed. People needed unions. Let's not kid ourselves, the contribution that the New Deal made to help us get organized does not discount the value of this factionalism in the direction of organization and helping to make a big union.

Skeels: Did your contract at Hudsons follow the pattern that had been established at General Motors and Chrysler?

Lake: Yes, they did. I was on the bargaining committee when we first set up our wages. Of this I am very proud. As a member of the bargaining committee, I met with my dingmen and said, "Now, we are going in. The company said we have so much money to distribute in the way of wage raises. What part do we play in this? Now, you have got sweepers working for 50 to 60 cents an hour.

We are making $1.50, $1.60, or $1.75 an hour, depending on bonus. Now what should we go for. I urge that we take a back-seat and if there is money left over, we will ask for some. If there is not, we bring up the lower paid people to a higher level. At least let them have food on their table." And I am very proud of these guys, who not so long before then, were so selfish about their own union, they did not need anybody else, said unanimously at Hudsons, "Well, we would like to have more dough, but you are right. Go ahead." And when people on the bargaining committee, from both management and labor said, "Now, going down the list alphabetically, what about the dingmen. What do you fellows feel that you should get out of this kitty? Don't forget, there is only so much money to divide up." And I was able to say, "Well, you leave us for last, and let's take care of the other guys who need it more than we do." My fellow bargaining committee members were just as much astonished, I am sure, as management was. Of this I am very, very proud showing that the spirit of unionism does come into people. But I am sure that what I said there took place in many places. I think it brought out something good in people. It eliminated some selfishness, I think.

From a political standpoint, I do not think I have to tell you anymore. I think you know the more modern history of the politics in the UAW. Maybe you would want to ask me some questions.

W.P.A. Came into existence as a result of the Depression, and

you know the history of that. I went to work for WPA on the administrative staff. We had three divisions. We had the administration under the Federal Works Agency. They are the ones who did the assigning, payroll, accounting, classification work, building of projects, designing of projects. You had the supervisory staff, those were people who were not referred from the different welfare departments of the community, but were hired because they had supervisory experience or were supposed to have had skills in certain fields, particularly construction. Then you had the wage-worker, who was usually a person referred by a relief agency to WPA where he was given work.

They were experiencing labor trouble in District Number 4, which comprised the lower part of Michigan in the early days of WPA. In other words, people would stop work, engage in all kinds of stoppages, organized and unorganized, because they felt they had nothing else to lose. They found a new found freedom. They had the Federal Government to contend with and no boss who could hold it against them later on. So that there was a lot of unrest on these WPA projects. The district manager, at that time, came to the UAW and asked for some help. He wanted to assign somebody with knowledge of labor relations. In those days, you must remember that there were no experts in the field of labor relations. The only place you could go to find a person who knew something about it would be in the ranks of labor. I was referred by the UAW to WPA, and they employed me as a field investigator in labor relations problems. When a grievance

would come in, it would have to be investigated and a disposition made by a person in charge of labor relations. I was promoted from that job until I eventually became chief of assignment in labor relations for this whole area for WPA, and as such, had under my supervision labor relations advisors and classifications experts and all the clerical staff that had to do with the conduct of the WPA program with the exception of Finance and Projects. In other words, all personnel problems were under my supervision.

I relate this as one of the reasons that Ford was organized. Because in my experience, both as a labor relations investigator, later a labor relations advisor, later chief of assignment and labor relations, I could see that all these men coming into the WPA program got to know union organizations. A knowledge of unionism was coming to people who had never been exposed to it before. Let me be specific: We had what was known, in those days, and recognized by many people as a communist front organization, the Worker's Alliance. One could realize that they were the best educated in the field of organization, having a political history in the field. They did not lose an opportunity, of course, of getting into an area where recruitment might be quite easy. Here was a made-to-order source of membership for a left-wing union. So the Worker's Alliance built quite an organization, elected officers, and did everything else that a union usually does. The UAW felt that it had to get, for obvious reasons, into the organizational field of WPA workers and

created a WPA and Welfare Department supervised at one time by George Edwards, our present Supreme Court Justice and at another time, I think, prior to this by Dick Leonard. As people came onto the program they were exposed to these various organizations.

The factionalism that came from the UAW found its way into the WPA program,but not to the same extent. In the first place,there was not time,I believe,to enjoy the luxury of factionalism because they had a bigger job to do: get the people into the union first. These unions represented their people and had a regular grievance procedure which they used to settle grievances for their people. Grievances would come into my department. We would investigate them and give a decision. The value of the union became quite apparent to people on the program, especially those who had not had previous experience with the union. They discovered that if they were paying 25¢ a month to the union (that is all the dues were in those days) the union did something for them, and at least they had a spokesman and representation. Particularly, if a grievance was won, because they were unjustly treated or improperly treated, the word would spread on a project -- on any project -- as to what occurred in this given situation. So that people, unexposed before to unionism, were exposed and saw its values. And I attribute to that very procedure the organization of Fords, than I do to anything else no matter what credit anybody wants to take. When I say this, I have in mind the fight on the overpass with Frankensteen and Reuther

both being man-handled by the Ford servicemen.

Reluctantly as I have to say it, I must say it, that the communists made the greatest contribution towards organization, even though I fought them as long as I was in the union. These are facts. One fellow, now deceased, Bill McKie, who came up through the ranks of the Salvation Army in England, and then feeling that prayers alone were not enough to satisfy the needs of the people, became a member of the Communist Party, an idealistic member. He worked night and day in the interest of organizing Fords. People liked Bill McKie. That does not mean to say that the other people who were opposed to the communists did not make their contribution. They did also. I played a part, not in the original organization of Fords, but after it had been organized.

I was still on the WPA program when I was approached by Dick Leonard, who was a regional director and the Ford director for the UAW to leave my post with the WPA and come to work for the union. George Edwards had asked me to take his place, prior to the time that Dick Leonard came to me. I refused. I stayed with the Program. Somebody took his place, and he was then made, if I remember, Housing Commissioner for the City of Detroit. Ed Jefferies gave him the job. It was quite a bit later that Dick Leonard came to me and asked me to go to work for him. I agreed and was hired by the UAW as a staff member assigned to the Ford Department under Dick Leonard. At that time this famous Ford Local 600 did not

have its autonomy. It was under the supervision of the Ford Department with Dick Leonard as administrator.

My first assignment, rather than being put right into work on the Ford staff, was to go to work in the campaign office of George Edwards, who was then running for council member of the City of Detroit. So, I went to work for George and became his campaign manager. Another proud moment in my life was that he became the first UAW member elected to the Council. If you will remember, there was once a labor slate of five people who ran including R.J. Thomas and Dick Frankensteen. The whole five were defeated. Here we finally got a UAW man in, and I was the campaign manager.

When this job was over, I went right out to the regional office and was given various assignments by my boss, Dick Leonard, working with the Ford workers. I repeat they were not autonomous then in their government. We ran the local for them. Now, at Fords there were several units. In those days, I think we had well over 80,000 people working there.

Some interesting side-lights as far as my assignments were concerned might help to point out some of the history of the Ford local. The war came along and there was a question of people being cleared to go to work on war work. They were all right to go to work on civilian work, but not all right for war work because of alien background or whatever it happened to be. A department was set up to go into that question and get clearance for those people who were

unable to speak for themselves and did not know where to go. There was a fellow by the name of Harry Ross, a staff member, doing that work. Emil Mazey and I worked opposite each other, he on one side of the desk, me on the other, but we worked different assignments.

In those days, it was not unusual for a department to feel that it was under paid and all on its own to shut down a department. Because of the interrelated operation, the whole plant would shut down. So we were in constant hot water with these unauthorized sit-down strikes. I am mindful of the time that Dick Leonard got a phone call from Harry Bennett that a strike was taking place in the Payroll Department, and I rushed over with Dick. And we got up there, and the group in the Payroll Department had barricaded themselves. Bennett was up there, raving and ranting and accusing Dick Leonard of being responsible for all of this because these people were not supposed to be in the union. They insisted on being in the union and wanting all the protection and benefits afforded by union membership. They did this all on their own. I can tell you they did it all on their own. At this late date I could tell you if it was otherwise. They did it on their own. As a matter of fact, the first time that they wanted organization, Leonard told them that they had no right to it as payroll people for obvious reasons, which later were proven correct.

So Bennett broke a glass in the upper part of this door that

was barricaded with his elbow, reached in and opened the door-- reached in through the broken glass -- and confronted these strikers. They defied him and told him that they were not getting out of there until they were allowed to join the union and that they were not going to be excluded. And Bennett turned to Leonard and said, "What the hell are you waiting for? Take them in?" And Leonard said, "You are making a mistake. These people should not be in a union. We want people in a union, but you are making a mistake." We took them in. Later we found that committeemen were being discharged because they were in collusion with people in the Payroll Department. They would go into the Payroll Department and have their own rates of pay changed. That was the very thing that Leonard was afraid of in the first place. It was then that Bennett accused the union of setting up this whole thing. So those people were dropped from the union as they should have been in the first place. If they wanted to form a union, let them form one of their own, but not one where they had a working relationship with the people whose pay they had put together.

The plant protection men insisted on a union. It is history that the plant protection men at Fords were looked down on. They had an unenviable record. So without too much opposition when I was given the assignment, to meet with a committee of these plant protection men who insisted on seeing somebody about becoming part and parcel of the UAW, I turned them down. I told them that we

want no part of them. "If you want a union, you make your own. But you are not going to be part of the UAW -- not as long as I have a breath in my body." They went over my head. R. J. Thomas called me in and asked me what my reason was for turning them down and why I would not recommend a spot for them in the UAW. I explained to him that it was not a good thing to have people who were supposed to be the policemen belonging to the same union that the people that they were supposed to police belonged to. As a matter of principle, it was good for the union to keep them separated. In any event should he and the Executive Board feel differently about it, then let them form another local union, but keep them separate. I even advised against that. This is not necessarily a forerunner to the Taft-Hartley Bill which by law separated these people; but it was the obvious thing to do and the right thing to do.

Skeels: Do you think, while you were at Ford, that there was any attempt by Harry Bennett to try to take over the Ford local?

Lake: Definitely. I not only think so, I remember instances that led to but one conclusion in that direction. Prior to the recognition by Ford of the UAW, Homer Martin had gone in and visited with Harry Bennett. Bill Taylor stayed with Homer Martin when the union split up and separated, and Bill Taylor got to know Harry Bennett. When Martin folded up, his whole union folded up. Bill Taylor was out of luck. Now Bill had always been a very active person in the organization of Chrysler and was the person directly

responsible for R.J. Thomas at least being elected as a vice-president of the UAW in this Milwaukee convention. Bill was a natural leader. Those of us who were right-wingers in the union felt that even though Bill had stayed with Homer Martin that there was a place in the UAW for him, and that he should come back home.

So he was advised to go out and prove himself. Bill, having the ability that he still has, went into a plant, went to work there, organized it, and then came to the UAW and said, "I have this plant. Do you want it?" Always hungry for additional members, we said, "What is the deal? What do you want out of it?" "Nothing except membership." So, he was no sooner back in the fold of the UAW in good standing than his ability, by itself, compelled those who had need for services for a guy like that to put him on the staff. His first assignment on the staff was under Dick Leonard's supervision at Fords. So, he was there at the time Emil Mazey, Monroe Lake, Harry Ross, and Joey O'Connor, the state representative were on this same staff. We had quite a staff. Each one of us since then has risen to something else. I like to think destiny was on our side for the whole group of us, even though we had divergent opinions. Bill Taylor, because of his previous dealings with Bennett under Homer Martin, was again the one guy who could walk in to Bennett anytime and sit down and negotiate with Bennett. And the danger in that was that Bennett, through a leader in the organizational staff, had a voice way over beyond what a member of management should have in the operation of the union. Now, by this I

do not mean that Taylor would have done anything that was not in the best interest of the UAW, but there comes times when decisions on fine borderline cases have to be made, and you just want to be a little more sure in those decisions that the interest of management is completely out of the picture, and that the interest of the union is paramount. A fight between Taylor and his boss and my boss, Dick Leonard developed and Taylor was moved out. But while Taylor was there, a group, again a right wing group (Bill was always an extreme right winger) was formed. This group, without mentioning names now, stayed with Bill so that if, and I am not saying that this is so, there was any influence, recognized or unrecognized by Bennett or Taylor, this would be felt through the people who stayed with Bill Taylor and who were leaders, some of them building chairmen, in Ford local.

He was let go. Bennett refused to talk to Dick Leonard after this happened, and he said, "I will only talk to one man. I will only talk to Bill Taylor." -- which indicated, rightly or wrongly, that Bennett had a nickel under his foot in fighting so hard for Bill. Now maybe this is completely unfair to Bill Taylor. Maybe Bill felt that he could do more, and I think he did, for his people by having good relationships with Bennett, the one guy who could say "yes" or "no" to anything that the union wanted.

Since Bennett would not talk with Leonard, there was a need of liaison of some kind since that was the one man in the Ford

Motor Company that we could talk with to get anything done. So Bennett was asked, "Well, you are going to talk with somebody or at least give us somebody to talk to." And Leonard said, "Well, I would like to suggest Monroe Lake." He gave him my background. And he said, "Yes, I know of him." Now, this is Dick Leonard telling me this. This all takes place over the telephone, incidently. So, I am sent in. I would not do what Taylor had done before: go in alone. I always wanted to have somebody sitting with me as a means of protecting myself, so that nobody from a political standpoint could say, "I made a deal," the charge that had been made against Bill Taylor when he went in alone. Well, I would bring somebody with me. I will never forget that I brought Harry Ross, and Bennett looked up from his desk. He says, "What is the matter, don't you trust me?" I said, "Yes, I don't trust myself." So he said, "Well, the man is not going to sit in here." I said, "Anytime you are ready to talk, Mr. Bennett, you have got our phone number." and I started to walk out. He said, "Just a minute. Leave the door open. Let him sit right at the door." (He had to save face). So here this guy sits right at the doorway on the other side of this threshold, and I am sitting there doing business with Bennett. We negotiated some contracts with Fords. I was in right from the beginning, except the first one, on every contract up until the time I left.

Skeels: Those were yearly contracts weren't they?

Lake: Our experience with unauthorized strikes was so bad that the Ford Motor Company insisted on writing into the contract those provisions which would not only strengthen the Company's hand in preventing sit-down strikes -- unauthorized strikes -- but also the union's hand. And it was getting so that we did not look so good as a union. The union would have eventually destroyed itself had this continued. There were somewhere between six and seven hundred unauthorized strikes in one year. And it got so that the job of the international representative, working for Dick Leonard, was mainly going in and stopping strikes and putting people back to work. And it was a ridiculous situation. In other words, we had ourselves a bear by the tail. The war came along. The tool and die unit in a great big new tool and die building, beautiful building, was a very important part of the war effort, particularly as it concerned Willow Run where they were making the bomber. The wing fixtures were being made in that tool and die unit.

Again, factionalism rears its ugly head with the so-called left wing or commie element. In the UAW it signifies something altogether different. I should distinguish: left wing might mean a guy who happens not to agree with Walter Reuther today, that does not mean that he is a communist or a socialist. He may be a Republican and be a left winger. The commies had a greater control in that tool and die unit than anybody connected with the union would like to see. And it was obvious that any shutdown in that unit would reflect on the whole union and give us a terrible black-eye. And it was also understandable that as the war effort pleased or displeased the Soviet

Union, so would the operation of the tool-and-die unit proceed or be retarded. So that if the party line changed, even though Russia was supposed to be an ally — for political expediency the party line might call for a sabotage of the war effort. R.J. Thomas placed me in that unit as administrator. I fired all the officers of the unit with the exception of one person, who was the secretary of the unit, and this fellow today happens to be the regional director on the West Side, Joe McCusker. I removed every officer and appointed committeemen to replace those who were there. And I was there sixteen to eighteen hours every day for six months.

An amusing side light is that when R.J. Thomas gave notice that an administrator had been assigned and that it was Monroe Lake, I told the group that represented these people that I would start my work, I would be in there at 6:30 in the morning, Monday morning when the shift started, and that I would start taking care of their grievances and problems. I would be there the first thing in the morning and make sure that they had committeemen, representatives. And as I walked through the door, lined up on both sides were apprentices, and as I walked between them they clicked their heels and stuck their hand up over their head and said, "Heil, Hitler." That is just to give you an indication of the factionalism. I stayed there about six months, settled their grievances and then gave them back their autonomy. In the meanwhile there was not one single shutdown, of which I was very proud. I would get information about what the

commies intended to do in one place or for that matter, once in a while, non-commies, who were not even associated with them, were dissatisfied over something and would shut it down. I would get down and see who the ring-leader was. By cajoling him,threatening him with the loss of his job, or whatever the means I needed, I was able to keep the operation on an even keel. At the same time I instituted a grievance procedure with which they are still working today and which they like.

The Ford local was finally given its autonomy. I had the biggest job connected with this whole thing -- that was running the first election for officers. And because it was such a spectacular event, largest local union in the world holding its first election, getting its freedom, and so to speak, becoming a self-governing body -- that it deserved recognition. So with a little bit of "ham-bone" in me, I rented the area at Wyoming and Michigan and got the City of Detroit Election Commission to rent us voting booths (I think I had over a hundred of them,) and displayed the largest sign that I could find money to pay for along Michigan Avenue: "Democracy in action! Local 600 votes here." That was my doing. I was put in charge of the election, and the making of the rules. We had a committee with which to work. The election started. And the candidates at that time were Paul St. Marie, now deceased, a member of ACTU -- Association of Catholic Trade Unionists, and a distinct leader of the so-called right-wing group as opposed to Pat Rice,

I think. We held the election. I will never forget that we trusted nobody. We had the sheriff's office come out. We hired deputies from the sheriff's office to come out and pick up the ballot boxes every evening, seal them, take them down to the county jail, and deposit them in a cell guarded by a couple of deputies until the election was over, at which time we had ready a firm of certified public accountants to do the counting so as to insure a good, honest, democratic count. Paul St. Marie was elected. And the factionalism that had existed all through the UAW now could raise its head and be very proud because it found another seat in which to operate Ford local 600.

The contracts that were negotiated were negotiated by management people who were completely and thoroughly inexperienced in the field. It would have been more to the advantage of the union for the company to employ the services of experienced people. In those days we still did not have people too well experienced in labor relations. But no, Harry Bennett would have representing him somebody, a hockey player, for example, Stu Evans. Stu came from the Red Wings, or whatever team he played on last, to head up plant protection, and later to move up through the Ford Motor Company. All of a sudden he finds himself heading up the Department of Labor Relations and heading up the team to negotiate the contract. And those are the people with whom we had to deal. We were experienced. They were inexperienced. And we got contracts which gave freedom

to the union at the expense of some management prerogatives. In retrospect, I can truthfully say that this was so. If the local union was more experienced and had settled down, that would have been all right. But with an inexperienced union and with people breathing deep for the first time in their working lives, now they could say what they wanted to say and not be fired for spitting tobacco juice on the floor or have their livelihood threatened at every turn as it use to be. So the pendulum swung the other way and now these people felt that they could do no wrong and that anything they wanted to do was proper. They now had a union. They now had a protector and the hell with the Ford Motor Company. The result of that was very bad.

My biggest job as was the job of all other international representatives was seeing to it that people stayed on the job and did not strike. For example, in one of the smaller foundry units, I went in there, stood on a stairway to get some people back to work and addressed them from the stairway. And here were these fellows with zoot suits and great big wide rimmed hats in a foundry, dressed up to kill. They are supposed to be in there working. The company was holding us responsible for all of these things. We said to them that you cannot hire people promiscuously from the pool halls down on Hastings Street (this was during the war) so that these guys can get out of being compelled to go into the service, and then hold us responsible for the caliber of people

by just throwing them in the union and saying, "They are yours." You have got to be more choosy in the kind of people that you put to work.

There was a shortage of manpower. We were able to, with the Ford Motor Company, set up procedures that no other company would have permitted. We wanted to transfer over people from civilian work to war work and the big example was the Aircraft Building, a beautiful new building, designed to employ somewhere between 15 and 17 thousand people. It was a cost-plus operation. So when the chairman of that unit went in to negotiate, he was actually afraid to agree with the company on some of the fantastic rates that they were only too willing to put into their rate-schedule, because it was cost-plus. When a civilian work would shut down, through a union committee in the employment office, we would route through these people, provided they were eligible — alien-wise and all other things — into the Aircraft Building on war work. Here comes a guy at a certain rate of pay through the employment office, into the Aircraft Building and finds himself making 50, 60, 80¢ an hour more for exactly the same kind of work. In other words, we were building ourselves a headache, and the Ford Motor Company was so short-sighted that they did not see it. The hunger for that extra buck on a cost-plus job motivated their actions as obviously as I am sitting here. So the Aircraft Building built up with people going over there. They built these aircraft engines, and the Ford

Motor Company got other work.

An interesting side light is when our people were being laid off because they could not build cars, we found that we could not get any war work, because the administration was mad at Ford Motor Company. But in being mad at the Ford Motor Company, UAW members were being put out of work. So we found it necessary for the union to go to Washington. The Ford Motor Company tagged along, I use that expression advisedly, and we made the plea for work. I was one who went there. And we came back, I think it was with a 2 by 4 or 4 by 4 truck order. I have forgotten which. At least it was a job that we were qualified to build without too much change-over and keep some of our people working. At the same time, I think everybody knows that General Motors was getting all the work it could handle. It was an interesting side light, but here is one place where without the union, the Ford Motor Company was really sunk because of national politics.

To get back to the contracts. When we sat down with the company and after they had this bad experience on sit-down strikes, they compelled the union to agree, as they should have, to certain protective devices -- not fool-proof completely, but at least something in the direction that both the union and the company wanted. Then we got to the grievance procedure, it was a question then that if you knew the boss well enough you could get a grievance settled; if you did not, you could not; and you would finally end up in the

employment office sitting down with the line coach for U of M, now in charge of the golf course out there. He was a hell of a swell guy, but with no knowledge of labor relations. For him the way to have a good record of labor relations was to give the union what they wanted. Until he learned a little more about it, then he would only give them 80% of what they wanted.

It became necessary to institute an arbitration procedure. We had a fight with the Ford Motor Company over a contract and because a war was going on, it was the law and the rule that you would, before striking, use the National War Labor Board. A panel was set up by the National War Labor Board headed by Dr. Harry Shulman. And Harry Shulman, sitting as chairman of the panel, helped the parties come to an agreement with the exception of this one thing. It was our belief that to protect both parties, and the union too, and to avoid these costly shutdowns that we would have to have an arbitration procedure of one form or another, preferably an umpire set-up because the pattern had been established at GM. The attitude, one not unexpected, was that, "We don't want any outsider coming in and telling us what to do." I think I am quoting them word for word. They felt their strength. If they wanted to, they had a right to fire a man. "Let's take it up to the grievance procedure." But what to do in the final step? You say, "No," and we say, "Yes." Then there is only one thing to do: if you do not have a terminal point where both sides can be represented

in an impartial hearing and a decision rendered by an impartial person, then you must have a substitute. That is the use of economic force, the strike weapon. "Do you want us to give up the strike weapon?" "Well, we don't think you ought to have the right to strike." "All right, we will give up the right to strike, but give us a chance to go some place and get an answer from an impartial person." The umpire, through powers of persuasion which we witnessed, finally had the company agree. So we agreed to an arbitration procedure, an umpire set-up.

The most natural thing to do, having experienced the wisdom, the procedures, and the methods used by the panel chairman, was that we decided that he should be the person. Now this time the Ford Motor Company did not argue. They were in full agreement. So it was left to a small committee, I was one of them, to work out the finer details. And we set up our grievance procedure, having as its final step the umpire set-up. At that time he was Sterling Professor of Law at Yale University. So we asked him if he would serve. He told us that he would under no circumstances resign his position at Yale, but that if we were willing to accept him under his terms that he would be willing to serve. His terms were that it would not be considered a full time job, that he would not take as much money, incidently, as we offered him (this is the truth), and that he would be free to associate with either side on a social basis if he wanted to without anybody ever raising a

question about bias because they saw him drinking in a bar some place with a member of management of vice-versa, and that they also recognized his right to engage in mediation rather than arbitration if in his judgment he thought that that was the better way to operate. Under those conditions we employed his services. It was one of the finest experiences of my life. I think it made certainly a better person out of me in every respect, from having been associated with him, He is now dead. I think the respect that I expressed now is shared by the Ford Motor Company. He did exactly that. He did something in the field of arbitration that is so seldom done by other arbitrators for whatever reason -- he engaged in mediation quite often. He felt that before the parties would get in to a knock down-drag out fight and become bitter over their opponents respective positions that it was in the interests of both parties to have a closer working relationship with a give-and-take attitude. This give-and-take attitude to be found more readily in a climate of mediation rather than in one of so-called court proceedings where one side is bitterly opposed to the other. This is a technique, which to me, is so important, so valuable and I think so lacking today, because we don't have little guys, mild tempered guys, but with guts like Harry Shulman. They let the fights go too far.

Anyhow, as to be expected in having cases before Harry Shulman, we were feeling our way. Every case became a precedent. It is just

the same as if lawyers in the field of law had just been put into a picture where there had been no picture before, where cases could be, for the first time. It was the same thing under a contract. We had to test and try out the various clauses, not in the light of who had the greatest strength and whether automobiles were selling good so that the company was not in a poor economic position strike-wise, or on the other hand, when they were not selling many cars and therefore were in a good position so that the union was weak bargaining-wise. All this was thrown out of the picture. So that at one time you did not have the kind of an atmosphere in which the company was the boss and they would win the most grievances depending on economic times, and the other time the union was the boss. Do not forget that it is only most recently that we do not have the annual, seasonal drop-off that we always experienced up until quite recently. This precedent that was to be established would govern for all kinds of times, good and bad. And I think I can safely say, and I think most people experienced in the field of labor relations would agree, that the precedent established by the umpire in all of these cases is a real milestone in the field of labor relations. For one thing, you do not see unauthorized strikes anymore. I do not know what better proof anybody would want as to the workability of arbitration, but there it is. For another thing, as these rulings were more widely known and better known, the rank and file worker would have a clearer understanding of what the contract meant to him as an individual

and as a part of the union, and his part as an employee. So that you would end up eventually with a better educated -- I say educated in the sense of the contract, employee and a more enlightened management in the field of labor relations so both make a contribution to better economic growth of the enterprise they are both engaged in.

I could relate many stories, some amusing, some a little bit heart breaking, of the cases that he helped to decide.. One that was a heart breaker to me because it almost meant my job, and he knew that it did, was the famous Edgewater Case. We had a union shop in the contract. Any person that was expelled by the union would by virtue of the contract automatically lose his job with the Ford Motor Company. Now, the Edgewater plant in New Jersey where a Navy truck was being manufactured, I think maybe an Army truck too had test drivers. And a couple of fellows who had a history of being, to quote the union, "company stooges," were assigned as test drivers. They proceeded to make tests of these trucks at a rate far in excess of what the other test drivers were making. To use an expression used by the people who worked on the job, "They were killing the job, and they were setting a work standard that was in excess of that enjoyed by the other workers." The result was that they were accused of consorting with the company to the detriment of their fellow and brother union members. They were brought up to trial in the local union and expelled from the union. The company was sent a notice. From a technical standpoint the company was compelled

to discharge these people. But here we are at war -- grievance was filed when the company failed to discharge these people in accordance with the contract. We came before the umpire. We held our hearings right at the plant. We had witnesses from both sides, with the union witnesses making the claim that these people were resorting to conduct unbecoming a union member by language used to other union members and fellow workers, and that this question of "killing the job and exceeding work standards normally recognized" was not the real issue. The company, on the other hand, claimed that was the real issue and that the intent of the contract clause insuring the union shop was being perverted by the union to reduce the work standards. The company, expected a certain production figure. If this prevailed, all the union had to do was say, either on that charge or any other charge, that "You, Joe Blow, because you met with the company's desires and did increase your production, you are fired from the union. Therefore, Mr. Company, you must fire him under the terms of our contract." The term of the contract was being perverted as I said before. The umpire asked, "Well, if you say that that is not the real reason that these people were expelled from the union, then what took place at the secret trial held in the union?" I said, "I am not at liberty to divulge that." "Well, then, you must let rest with me you last statement that you are not at liberty to divulge, and let me make up my own mind about who is telling the truth about the true reason that these fellows were

expelled from the union." And I said, "Suffice it for your purpose that these people were expelled from the union. The contract is explicit. You may not, as an umpire, rewrite the contract. We say that you may not. Both sides say you may not. All you do is rule on that which exists in the contract. Now, you must rule that these two persons have to be fired from the Ford Motor Company." "Well, I will rule what I want to rule, and I think I will rule properly. But would you want to have a little caucus with your own people before you say that you will not divulge what happened at the union meeting?" (Put the heat on in otherwords). So I got on the telephone and called, I think, Los Angeles or San Francisco where the international executive board was in session. I asked Dick Leonard to raise it with the international board, and he did. And I was advised, "Nobody has a right to find out what takes place in our meetings. -- say that you will not divulge that." So I did. We lost the case. Just about that time we had a convention and Dick Leonard was defeated. He was my boss, and here I had just had a big loss under my belt. Privately, when I spoke to Dr. Shulman about this, he said, "My ruling against you, in my humble opinion, will save you from anti-labor legislation in the Congress because this case had received nation-wide publicity and a war was on and the attendent hysteria thereto;" and he said, "If I had ruled any other way, you would be the sorriest people in the world. This way, you still may have a union shop. There is a

serious question in my mind, had I ruled as you wanted me to rule, whether or not the union shop would be a legal device. There would be a low proposed and probably passed outlawing the union shop. Now there is no occasion for such a law with my ruling." And in retrospect, I have got to say, as much as it hurt me, he was right. You know the mother spanking the baby saying, "This hurts me more than it does you." -- not in the same place. Well that about brings us up to as far as some of the interesting things that I can remember. There is more, but it does not come to mind. Any questions?

Skeels: Did you attend any of the union conventions in the '40's?

Lake: Yes.

Skeels: You were working with Mr. Leonard and he went into the 1942 Convention as one of the key figures in organizing Ford Motor Company. Was there any pressure at that time to make Mr. Leonard one of the vice-presidents?

Lake: Dick Leonard, going into that convention, had about 90 to 95% of the votes. We were to select two vice-presidents. Those of us who had worked with Mr. Leonard and knew the sincerity that he brought to the labor movement and the sacrifices that he had personally made without the fanfare of any fights on any bridge or any over-pass, which incidentally was not entirely politically inspired, but I want you to know that there was a political fight going on at that time over who was going to control the Ford workers once they were organized. Frankensteen represented one faction, Reuther represented

the other. I happened to be associated at that time with the Frankensteen faction. They were good union men and wanted to organize -- both of them did -- but at the same time, as an individual, I feel that there was some political inspiration inherent in that whole situation.

Skeels: Why don't we go back to the '41 Convention first of all? I think that is the one where Dick Leonard ran against George Addes.

Lake: Well, Dick was part of the right wing caucus. When I say "right wing," you must understand that the terminology of right wing and left wing as it applies to the UAW after a certain date is not significant of any political leaning. Now, I want you to understand that. Left wing is a designation that might be used instead of red or blue. Starting out, originally in Milwaukee the left wing did represent the socialists, the communists, the proletariats -- left wing party groups and their sympathizers as opposed to the other ones who were opposed to these people. Now when I use the term left wing and right wing I want you to be very clear as to the meaning. Reuther became part of the right wing group, and the Socialist Party was part of the right wing group as distinguished from the left wing group in which you had Communist Party members, their sympathizers, and many people who did not want any part of the Communist Party or their sympathizers but who were opposed to Reuther for other reasons, whatever the reasons were: either feeling that there was lack of organization or that they were miffed about something that Reuther

did or did not do. The designation of left wing and right wing, as it applied in the later days, only served to distinguish between those for whatever reason they were in these separate groups as being separate from the other side. And that is all, with exception of the communists who were always in the left wing group.

Now, in the '41 Convention, if that is the time in Buffalo that Leonard ran against Addes, the factionalism was quite high. There was a feeling that Addes was representing the Communist Party and the Communist Party line and that he fought for it in executive board meetings. At least that is what the right wing group was told by the right wing representatives on the executive board. I was not there, I do not know. As one of the leaders in the right wing group, and a person recognized as being a very, good sound trade-unionist, and rather good looking guy, which does not hurt a candidate, Dick was chosen by the group to run against Addes.

I do not know if you know the results of that convention, but it was pretty bitterly contested and deals were offered. There again I represented Dick Leonard in a political situation where I was his political lieutenant, so to speak, when the Communist Party came to me. I will never forget that a representative of the Communist Party wanted to see me. We went down to the bar in the Statler Hotel, and I surrounded myself with witnesses so that I could not be accused of selling-out and he did likewise. We had maybe ten people sitting around the table and we were drinking

beer or whatever it was, at which time he proposed that a deal could be made and that Dick should not run against George Addes. What would the deal be? I have forgotten all the details, but that Dick would be in line for moving up on the other side, not on the financial side of the operation of the union, but rather on the administrative side either as vice-president, "We will create a new vice-presidency for Dick." -- whatever it was. We turned that down. Dick ran and was defeated by 71 votes. In those days, I think, each delegate was allowed, depending on what local you represented and how many in a local, eight votes. So there was about six or seven delegates that made the difference -- no half of that made the difference, maybe five delegates, six delegates in the whole convention.

Skeels: Was there any problem of his getting support out of the Ford locals because the communists were an influential group there?

Lake: No, as a matter of fact, one of the reasons the right wing caucus felt that Dick Leonard was a good choice was because his home base at that time was Ford local, and that he could bring to the caucus a lot of delegates, who although from a factional standpoint might be considered left wingers, rubbing elbows with their fellow Ford delegates, might be compelled because of association to go for Dick Leonard. And it was true in many cases that some Ford delegates who might not have gone for anybody else on the right wing slate would vote for Dick. Well, that was one of the reasons

he was chosen as a candidate because he would bring with him a big block of votes.

Skeels: We could talk about the '42 convention where, I think, there was a head of steam built up at the time that Dick Leonard would run for the one of the vice-presidencies, is that right?

Lake: That is correct. We were told that there were two open. We tried to compromise and get three, but could not do it. Whether this information is correct or not, I do not know at this time, but the word was that the delegates would not go for three vice-presidents, that we were taking too big a jump, but that they would go for two. And by this time, incidentally, if I am not mistaken, Dick Frankensteen was now a left winger, and Reuther was a right winger. Now, I am not sure of this, I think I am right.

Skeels: Yes. In the '41 convention, was Frankensteen with Reuther to some degree?

Lake: If that was the case, I think they were on a deal basis that, "I'll give you votes to get you elected, and you give me votes." At least that was spoken about.

Skeels: In '42 the lines were pretty clear: it was Frankensteen and Addes on one side, with Reuther and Leonard on the other.

Lake: That is right. As a matter of fact, one of the reasons that I am able to say that Leonard probably was going into that convention with about 90% of the vote for vice-presidency is the resentment on the part of delegates. Do not forget, these guys are, at least

in those days, full of pep and vigor, and "Don't tell me, I will make up my own mind". One of the things that he stood for is that he would not be dictated to, and even the right wingers and left wingers in the convention, the delegates, resented being herded into a camp for the purposes of voting for a vice-president. And, of course, it came to the front about this so-called deal, of which I was not part of it, so I am not sure of it. But some of the resentment I heard and some of Dick Leonard's strength was that these guys arranged between them, even though they belonged to two separate caucuses, to throw enough votes to elect the other one, so that there would be no double cross that Reuther would pick another right winger and have him elected along with himself or Frankensteen might do the same thing. And in that climate, Dick Leonard, along with being a popular guy, and along with the fact that he almost beat Addes, and some of Addes's supporters remembering this close election and feeling that, "If we can push him over on the other side, at least he is one strong guy we don't have to worry about." So, all of this helped Dick Leonard to really have this huge support.

Skeels: Why didn't Dick run then?

Lake: Now, comes a very interesting story in which I am vitally concerned. I not only know the reason, but when I relate this to you, you will see why I had to know the reason. I conducted a caucus independent of right or left wing groups of the Ford workers from all over the nation. And I think we had almost a unanimous

attendance in which they pledged unanimous support for Dick Leonard -- and not only pledged their support, but each in his own region would make as a condition of support for whoever wanted something politically in that region, that they would also support Dick Leonard. They felt their oats and they wanted to exercise them, and Dick Leonard was the Ford boy for pride and one could understand this. And when the results started coming in from various regions, from people who I expected never would have voted for Dick and saw that they were pledged for one reason or another, the pressure apparently, that these fellows expressed that they would apply being successful. So that I was convinced that I had me a shoo-in candidate. Well, as happens in all conventions, people, as soon as the business of the convention is over, adjourn to the nearest pub. I think it was in Chicago. Well, wherever it was, I will never forget. I was walking through the lobby of this hotel and somebody was saying, "Where have you been? I have been looking for you. There is a big bet." Yes, it was in Chicago. It was in the Sherman Hotel. --" Now, listen: don't you let me get my chin out now because there is big money being bet in the bar here that Dick won't run." Now, I had left Dick Leonard maybe two or three hours before this caucus. I had just come from this caucus where we got our boys together and everybody would report how two or three hours before this caucus. I had just come from this caucus where we got our boys together and everybody would report how you are doing here, how you are doing in this district, and so

forth. The reports were so good that I came down from this caucus flushed with anticipated victory and I was confronted by this fellow just coming out of the bar saying, "I have been looking for you. Now look, this is big dough and don't let me down. Lake, is he running? If anybody should know, you should know." "He is definitely running." "Well, when did you see him last?" I said, "I don't know, three or four hours ago, something like that." "Well, was he running as of that time?" "Yes he was, definitely running." "Well, how did he appear? Was he happy?" I said, "Very happy". And he was. So he says, "Well, then I am going to bet this money, but, boy, you better be right." I said, "Look, I am telling you what took place." And I related the conversation. So this guy goes back. Of course, this kind of stuff spreads like wild fire, you know. And I am going across the street to get me a drink and get away from the mob because I am tired by this time. I am confronted by several people on the way to the door each saying the same thing about Dick not running, and by the time I got to the door, I was frantic. I said, "There can't be this much rumor without some basis in fact." So I asked them, "Well, have you seen Dick." "No, no, haven't seen him." So I went across the street to this bar owned by this referee that gave the long count in the Dempsey-Tunney fight. I walked into the bar and there is Dick Leonard physically suffering no pain for having been there for some time. So, I ordered a drink, and I said, "Do you have anything to tell

me?" He said, "Yes, I do." I said, "If it is what I have been hearing," I said, "you have just lost a staff member." And he said, "Now, don't take that attitude." I said, "Then it is true." He said, "I am not running." I said, "I suppose I should not waste my time asking you why you arrived at this decision and left me way out on a limb holding a caucus and getting a report and being made to look like a damn fool, and not only that, not a few minutes ago I tell guys who ask me and they are placing money on you, based on what I tell them, and I am your lieutenant and you don't even tell me." He said, "Well, I have not had a chance to. Very frankly, I was over here getting some courage so I could tell all my friends." I said, "What happened?" He said, "Well, Walter got hold of me after I saw you and told me that he could not tell me not to run, but he called to my attention his contribution to the labor movement and what he had done and the sacrifices that he had made and the work within our own caucus that he had performed, and that as he was recognized as a leader of the caucus and as such, it might hurt the right wing group for him even to stand a chance of defeat." And I said, "Did you suggest to him the possibility of the three of you running and let the best man win?" And he said, "Yes, but as I told him, he said, 'Let's not kid each other.' It might be Walter Reuther. Because if I ran, then Dick Frankensteen, representing the other group being the left wing representative, would be a natural. You represent the right, him being the left -- so you know how delegates

are; the independents say, 'Well, give them each something.'
So Walter stood in danger if I were elected of not being elected."
So, I said, "All right then it reduces itself to a question between you and Walter. What contribution has Walter made that you have not made? And if he is the leader of the caucus, he is in the right wing caucus because we brought him into the caucus. We persuaded him to leave the commies and to come into this caucus when he was the leader of the left wing caucus. It is true because he is vocal that he has been recognized as the leader of the caucus, but you have been here all the time. You have never been over in the other caucus. So, why should you bend a knee when you have got the votes. So, you represent the right wing group on the Executive Board and Walter Reuther gets beat. I can't see it that way." I said, "Did you give your word?" He said, "I did." I said, "Bye, I am going back to Detroit." So, I headed back, and he gets with Leon Pody, who was his assistant in the region (He had both the region and the Ford Department). They got hold of me up in the room. And they go to work on me. They order a bottle. So, by the time we saw the bottom of the bottle, my long friendship with him -- so, I didn't go back to Detroit. And I stayed and faced the music. Boy, what music! Here is a guy who, I am sure, had he been elected vice-president, would have been president of the union today -- no question about it in my mind, absolutely none. Whether we would have been better or worse for it, I don't know.

Skeels: Then Phil Murray did not play a significant part?

Lake: Not in that one.

Skeels: In 1943, now there was still the war period and the big issue was the incentive wages. And that is again the convention where Dick ran against George Addes.

Lake: I don't remember too much about that. The incentive issue was not as great a one as people would like to make it. As a matter of fact there were not too many issues. So a little issue being the only issue would become a big one.

Skeels: There is quite a bit of common agreement on the issues in general then by the both parties?

Lake: Well, what happened is the Communist Party line was, at that time, collective security. I can almost rattle them off like the commies can: equality of sacrifice, collective security, and all of that. Well, in the interest of the war effort, they had sacrificed the labor movement and all of its principles, no question about it. And they claimed that in order to further the war effort, that their production had to be increased. And one way to increase production was to engage and reinstitute the thing that the unions had been fighting so desperately against and that was the incentive programs for the various operations at Fords. Fords never had too much of it -- none of it, I think, but General Motors had it. That was the commie line, and, of course, the right-wingers were fighting it, that you could do what you were supposed to do as good, loyal Americans in the interest of the war effort without giving up that which was part of the American scene. And what is

part of the American scene? The American labor movement is just as much a part of it with its policies and programs. And what were we fighting for? The very fact that we were able to eliminate incentive programs was part of the thing that made an American labor unionist feel that he wanted to fight for his country. So you are giving away those things that were the incentives for loyalty.

Skeels: Do you think it was very effective in whittling down George Addes as a candidate?

Lake: Yes. Well, when you say effective, I do not think that anybody at any given time can directly attribute George Addes' defeat to any one specific thing. I do not care what anybody tells you. I do not care what the convention proceedings show. You have to live and breathe it, and you have to know all the machinations. You have to know all the trickery and all designs that were part of this whole picture, and you get a feeling of the gradual loss of prestige by George, not in any one given situation; but an accumulation of them. Well, it is the old story. If you stay in office long enough, as good a job as you do, you must say "no." The longer you stay in office, to those people who you probably love and you want to help them in good conscience you have got to say "no" to certain things that they desire. And if you say "no" often enough and the longer you are in office, the more times you have to say "no." You gradually create a group of dissidents to whom you have said "no." Put them all together after a long period of time, and you have got yourself a sizable group of people who are going to go against you at the first given opportunity. Now, that is

true unless you have complete political control to the extent of an autocracy in any given movement including Reuther's own position today. Now that is where machine politics help to preserve those in office. And also, if enough people, as is the case of the UAW, retire and move to lesser positions -- the people who have had to take a "no" answer from Walter Reuther as an example -- so if that is a constantly changing picture, at least, it is not cumulative -- so that I can snap up and hit him in the face some day. But George Addes' defeat is not the least of which of the reasons, is his constant sponsorship of those programs which originated with the Communist Party. I mean, it became so obvious that the uneducated auto worker who became imbued with UAW political science by being exposed to it gradually, becoming more and more educated, started to understand that when he stood up and took a position which was recognized as a commie position in his own shop, he knew a Communist Party member, he tolerated him. He would say something: "This is the way this should be." Then he heard George Addes say the same thing through the press. Then you have Emil Mazey's famous statement, "Whether a guy is a commie or not a commie, if you hear a creature -- if you look at a creature -- it waddles like a duck and it quacks like a duck, the natural conclusion is it is a duck."

Skeels: In 1944 Leonard was running for the vice-presidencies, I believe.

Lake: Oh, do I remember that one. Frankensteen is elected, and now the contest between Reuther and Leonard takes place. We had

walked out of Reuther's caucus, either walked out or did not, in the beginning, associate ourselves with it because they would not consider Dick Leonard -- or that he had been told by somebody within the caucus to sit still and not rock the boat. We had a group of people who, counting noses, felt that Dick Leonard could win especially since there was support from Dick Frankensteen pledged, not by Dick himself, but by all of Dick's supporters. Flushed with victory, these people were able to elect Dick Frankensteen. They would throw their support behind Dick Leonard. Well, with what Dick had on his own that he would take with him from the Reuther caucus and with the support of the complete Frankensteen caucus, it was obvious that Dick was a winner. A meeting was held at which time Phil Murray and Allan Haywood came into Grand Rapids. And Phil Murray got Dick Frankensteen into this meeting and told him that he would have to support Walter Reuther. The feeling between Frankensteen and Reuther had reached a bitter point, and Phil Murray's statement to Frankensteen was along these lines: "Dick, it is one thing to engage in a luxury of political fights within a union movement, and it is another thing to destroy a union movement as a result of these political fights. You can win, and you can get Dick Leonard elected. Everybody knows this, but if you do, the danger that exists is that Walter Reuther will walk out of the UAW. I am not saying that he will, but it is a danger that I, as head of the CIO, have to look to. Dick Leonard is a friend of mine, and I like

him, and he would make an excellent leader. But in the interest of the union movement, I have got to say to you that you have got to go back to the people who supported you and will follow your lead and tell them that they must vote for Walter Reuther." R. J. Thomas was sitting there, and Phil was urgent enough in his presentation that Thomas, as president, took the position with Dick that he had to do that, leaving Dick Leonard out on a limb.

In the meanwhile, there was a meeting held of some of the leadership behind Dick Leonard, Paul Silvers, one of those, urging Dick Leonard not to be swayed. But after Phil had taken this position or while he was taking it, Allan Haywood got his staff there to call a meeting of the commies who had representation and were able to influence more people than their numbers really justified, but nevertheless, they were leaders. And there was a meeting held in room 666 or 606 in the Panlan Hotel at which time the leaders of the Communist Party was met by Allan Haywood's staff and urged to go along, in other words, to make Dick Frankensteen's job easier than telling the caucus to go along with Reuther. A statement I heard, and I only repeat hearsay, was that Walter Reuther's own statement to this same group that he had been bitterly fighting the commies, that he was a fellow Marxist and was entitled to their support over a fellow who was nothing, politically speaking, such as Dick Leonard. I say it is hearsay. I was bitter at the time, so I remember this thing. It may not be true. I am not prepared to say. Allan Haywood got a hold of me and told me what Phil had

done and what he had done, and he said, "Dick, I am telling you that Frankensteen has agreed to not win. Tell Dick Leonard not to run." So, I checked with Dick, and I said, "Did you talk to Frankensteen?" And he said, "No, but I know that this is true." I said, "Then you can't win?" He said, "It is impossible." I said, "Don't suffer the humiliation of a defeat if that is the case. Just don't run." I came back and I said, "Well, Allan, he is not running." He said, "You are sure? No tricks?" I said, "I just spoke to him." "Come on, we will go out and have dinner." So Allan Haywood and I went out for a dinner. And on the way back we saw people -- there were no people on the streets, where were they? We had a lot of convention delegates in town. By this time Reuther should have been elected, being the only candidate, and the convention should have been adjourned, and these people should have been on their way to the beer gardens and wherever they were going; but there was nobody on the street. We got near the convention hall and one delegate by one delegate was coming out, and it was obvious that they were calling a rule on some sort of a vote. So we stopped one delegate: "What is happening? You fellows still in there?" "Yes, we are voting." "Well, what are you voting on?" "Oh, on Dick Leonard's election." Allan Haywood turned to me and said, "I thought you said that Dick was not running." I said, "So help me, Allan, he told me he was not running." I found out, later of course, that Dick Leonard on his way to the rostrum, was derided and booed by some people, and at that split second he made up his mind he was going to run, the hell with it -- that the booing did

that to him. And he did run and lost. I will never forget sitting in Dick's office on the Boulevard as his administrative assistant (I held two jobs then. I was also representative for the Ford workers all over the United States before the umpire, and I was the only one. They now have three or four.) Dick was on his way to the first executive board meeting after this convention. And there was a lot of bitterness. Dick, by this time was now part and parcel of the so-called Addes-Thomas caucus. It was after Reuther was elected, one of the times. The question of the educational director came up. Incidentally, Reuther did not control the vote on the executive board. It was controlled by the other group of which Dick was part. But it was close enough so that Dick's influence and his vote could make a difference. And he got talking about the educational director, Walter wanting Victor Reuther to become the educational director. Now here we are, new members of a different caucus. Now we are left-wingers all of a sudden. And when Dick raised this question with me, and he said, "Now the big issue, of course, is going to be the election of educational director." The educational director has a lot of influence in any union over the political destiny of that union. Delegates are formed in all these classes, you know. So that this camp, for example, CIO camp, was recruiting ground for the Reuther forces, no question about it. I taught there, conducted classes. I was a speaker, lecturer. And knowing the union movement as well as I did, even after I was out

of it, I saw what I saw. So it was obvious. There is nothing wrong with it, I mean, but that is the way it is. You must recognize that an educational director wields a lot of political influence. So obviously the fight was on for who should be the educational director. Here we are now with Addes and Thomas, and Reuther on the opposite side wanting his brother as the educational director. And rightly or wrongly I convinced Dick Leonard that he should vote for Victor Reuther for the good of the union, knowing full well its political implications, but by the same token being bitterly opposed to any candidate that George Addes might come up with even though now we are buddies, politically speaking, because strangely enough the Sweets and the other fellows recognized as the carriers of the Communist Party line would end up as candidates. That I did not want to see. The other reason was that the best qualified person in my humble opinion for that particular job was Victor Reuther. I have no reason, even at this late date, to change my thinking about that. That did not help Dick. Here, he just came out of a convention, first convention, part of a caucus, full support behind him of that other group and finds that the very first important issue he has got to go against it. "What kind of a double-crosser are you?" He might find himself way out in left field without the right wing, without the left wing caucus, an independent completely all on one vote.

Knowing the full danger of that, I thought that he still should vote for Victor and he agreed with me and did. And it was almost the demise of Dick Leonard, politically speaking, but it was the right thing to do.

Skeels: How about the 1946 convention? Did the GM strike help Reuther?

Lake: You may find that his very strength coming into that convention was the strike, which fooled an awful, awful lot of people. Contrary to a popular belief that a union leader, having his people out on strike this long and then facing a political test would have his ears pinned back, the opposite was true. When you are out on strike, you create relationships with the strikers, who although suffering privation, have a common cause with you. They may not even agree on the techniques employed in the conduct of the strike, but their objectives are identical and it makes a brotherhood of people who may have, going into the situation, divergent opinions. So you are driven together almost by the necessities of the situation. It was something that surprised everybody, and I think, if I can remember, surprised the politicians in the UAW who were not on Walter's side. The opposite affect than what was expected was really enjoyed by Walter. I have got to say this: there are those people who were never Walter's strength, they were opposed to him, but they were a militant group. Now, I don't know vote-wise what they did.

I can't remember now. I would assume they went against Walter on general principles because they always did. But I think that it was with less strong feeling that they would because they are the John L. Lewis local you know. Of course there is a great antipathy, or was, between Lewis and Reuther. The Lewis forces in the UAW were centered at the Buick local, always being against Walter, but mind you, always being a very militant union group up there. They would be less vociferous in their opposition to Walter although they have a basic difference, politically, with him because they were thrown together in a situation that they both, for their own reasons, supported in their various ways.

Skeels: Now you have, in the '46 convention, actually three people comprising one caucus: Dick Leonard, Thomas, and Addes. Now do you think there was any disadvantage to having Thomas as the president?

Lake: There was a disadvantage to Thomas. It is natural to want to get, either in a caucus or a political party, prominant figures into your caucus. Rightly or wrongly it is an assumption that having the head of the union in your caucus must necessarily bring to that caucus political support from those who may be wavering in their political allegiance. So from that standpoint, I say it may be right or it may be wrong, if only for the temporary satisfactinn of having the president of the union in your caucus. Thomas played the role of a middle-of-the-roader for many, many years. He had been accused,

and in my personal opinion deserved the tag of being a middle-of-the-roader who served in the capacity between two warring groups, neither one strong enough on his own to predominate. And that as long as he could keep these two factions fighting each other that his position, politically speaking, was right in the center -- keeping them opposed to each other until such time that one side might declare against him and thus force him to look for political support. You ride the fence just so long as you can get support from both sides. You join one side the moment you feel that you need the strength that their numbers will provide--and that is what happened to Thomas. He went as long as he could in this middle-of-the-road position, sitting between these warring factions that were at each other's throats until such time as the pressure mounted that it was obvious that Walter was going to run against him. Whether it was this year, next year or whenever it was, he had to join forces with people, who would be delighted in the absence of anything else, of having the president of the union in their caucus. So the guy that really got hurt, no matter how it came out, was not the caucus itself in my opinion, I don't think it made any difference. The caucus certainly did not lose. It may have gained some of the independent voters who wanted only one guy, and that was the president of the union, as their leader and did not want to be party to a caucus. So the caucus might gain a little bit.

While on that subject, you must remember that the Reuther

caucus, at that time, felt its oats and felt that it was time to move because the pattern for Reuther's movements into the presidency certainly had been established years before -- no question about it in anybody's mind. I don't suppose even Walter himself would deny that.

Skeels: Would it be a fair characterization to say that Dick Leonard was strongly impressed by and very loyal to R. J. Thomas?

Lake: It would not. In my opinion, Dick Leonard was loyal with whomever he worked with; but Thomas, having ridden the fence for so many years and being in between, almost drove loyalty away from him -- not deliberately. It was to be expected that if you ride the fence and you are not vehement in the projection of an idea of philosophy on one side that you have -- it is a lukewarm attitude that you display and that you have, and you get what you give. Does that mean to say that Dick Leonard did not like R. J. Thomas? No, it means that Dick Leonard liked R. J. Thomas very, very much on a social level. Does it mean that he did not recognize Thomas's limitations as compared to Walter Reuther's? Let me make one thing clear, and I think I know: that at no time did Dick Leonard in any comparative analysis of Thomas and Reuther not recognize that Reuther had qualifications necessary for the leadership of a big union like the UAW, that were lacking by Thomas. He recognized it even when he was on Thomas's side. It was not personal loyalty to Thomas that kept him there in spite of this, but loyalty to a group of people

that found themselves in a given political situation.

Skeels: When you went into the 1947 convention, did you feel, at the time that this was it?

Lake: I knew it was close. And so did Reuther's forces. Since then -- and I am speaking with information that I did not have at that time, but I do have now. Reuther needed 135 votes of the Studebaker local to put him over. He got the votes. That was the difference in the convention.

Skeels: What do you think was the chief weakness of George Addes? Do you think, as you mentioned before, his alliance with the communists tore him down because Reuther kept hammering at this particular point?

Lake: Are you speaking of politics, the political situation affecting George Addes or George Addes as a secretary - treasurer?

Skeels: Well, actually both here.

Lake: George Addes's personal appearance as a dignified, rather nice looking fellow, but not meaning to show aloofness, which was a part of his physical appearance, had something to do in some quarters with alienating the support of at least the middle-of-the-road delegates. People might have wanted to go with him, Communist Party affiliation or a sponsorship or program sponsorship to the contrary not withstanding, but George had that appearance of being aloof. Now, he was not aloof, but he had the appearance of being that way. And that, from my personal observation, was one of the contributing reasons that there was not the warm feeling that, strangely enough, Walter can generate in a lot of people. There was not the drive of program.

Now, underlying all of this, if you want to analyze this whole political situation, I can give it to you in one word: it is "program". It is one thing to engage in a fight or in a battle on general principles that you don't like the other guy and let's beat him, and it is another thing to engage in a battle and have a standard, a flag up in front of the army forever onward and forward, giving inspiration to the followers. And the difference between the two, I think, is the answer to Walter Reuther's success in the UAW. Never once, on Walter's long history in the union movement, has he been without a program, a design, a place to go, and I think that in almost every case, a method by which you get there. Now, people want that in leadership. They need it. And that is what a leader is supposed to do. Having presented a program, a design, a philosophy then it rests with the people, the supporters to examine this program, analyze it, amend it, criticize it, throw it out if they feel that they are against it, or, and in many cases, if they have enough confidence in a leadership and not examine it too closely, but because of this confidence back the program and the leader. Never once, and I repeat it for emphasis, was Walter Reuther without a program. Other people were fighting rear-guard action. See, it is not enough to say that because Walter Reuther stood for a certain program that the other people, just because it was Walter's, had to oppose it. And that is what happened so often. The lack of program by George Addes contributed, in my

bpinion, to his gradual falling away in power and prestige in the UAW. As I remember it, their programs, coming from his group, were not new initiated programs, but many times, if closely examined, were the result of programs initiated by some other group that he was defending because he was being pushed to defend them. And, of course, I speak of the Communist Party. Walter's programs may have been lifted in some cases. While we were in the depths of a political fight, accusations would fly back and forth that Walter never had an idea of his own, for example. Completely untrue! Walter had plenty of ideas, even when I was opposed to him. He had something to do with me losing my job -- well, he had everything to do with me losing my job in the UAW, but I can't fly in the face of facts. That the guy always had a program whether he took it from somebody else or from three or four people, and out of the combination of thoughts put together one program which he called the Reuther Program or not. The fact was that he provided a platform from which to operate. And to me, the UAW is richer because of that kind of thinking on his part.

The pension program is one exception. I say it even now, at this late date, that the pension program that we had negotiated with Fords with the development of that self-same program to this date would have meant an all together different approach to the whole pension program in the United States, one so much better, in my opinion, for the workers, and, I think, so much better for

the country as a whole and the social security program. That program was sabotaged and we made a bad mistake.

We believed in democracy when we presented this program, and it kicked us in the teeth. Now, let me be specific. We came out with the pension program negotiated with the Ford Motor Company. Meetings were held by people loyal to Walter. Walter, and I am quoting other people -- I was not there, was supposed to have said, "To me this looks like a good program." Somebody was supposed to have said, "Well, Walter, if this goes over, this makes Dick Leonard the biggest man in the UAW, and you must lose thereby." He says, "It is still a good program." And it was at this point that a statement was supposed to have been made that, "Well, then it is up to us to make up our own minds on what we are going to do about it." The person who was supposed to have said that was a fellow, one of Walter's supporters, belonging to the caucus that supported Walter at Ford Local 600. But we do know that the mistake that we made in putting out two packages. A mistake that nobody should make. You either give leadership and you say, "This is what we think is best for you, defeat it if you are against it." But you don't give the rank-and-file a choice. I hesitate to say this, but it is true. They want to be led. They may disagree with you, but they want to be led, and they want you to help make up their minds. That's why they elect you to leadership. We made a terrible mistake when we did that. That pension program was sabotaged, no question about it, and if you speak privately to some people still connected with the UAW, they will tell you that. They

told me since that time.