ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

OF

HOMER MARTIN

Interviewed by
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Institute of Labor and Industrial Relations
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Oral history recording of Mr. Homer Martin by Jack W. Skeels, University of Michigan -- Wayne State University Institute of Labor and Industrial Relations, November 11, 1959. This recording took place at Mr. Martin's home, at 7405 Brookville Road, Plymouth, Michigan.

Martin: I was born on a farm near the little town of Goreville, Illinois, which is in the southern part of the state. My father's name was William Henry Martin, and my mother's name Sidney Frances. I was born August 16, 1901. I lived on the farm and worked on the farm until I was about twenty. Then I went away to school and finished high school by going to Southern Illinois Normal University, then on to Ewing College, and then on to William Jewell College, where I finished my A.B. degree, then on, for two years, to the Kansas City Baptist Theological Seminary. My background is one of the farm. My father was a schoolteacher, and all of the family were teachers. I myself was a teacher, having taught in grade school and high school. And I also had a background of the labor situation because the little town of Goreville is situated just south of the coal-mining areas of Williamson County and Franklin County. From my boyhood I knew a lot about the labor struggles of the miners and got some first-hand experience in many of the strikes that existed there in Illinois.

I left that area when I went to William Jewell College to get my degree. That's outside of Kansas City, Missouri in Liberty, Missouri. It is the oldest college west of the Mississippi River, and I didn't go back to live any more. I became a Baptist minister and was ordained in Goreville, Illinois as a minister of the Missionary Baptist Church. I preached during my college days and my seminary days, and then went into the full-time work as pastor of the Leeds Baptist Church, which is a suburb of Kansas City, Missouri. This is the background of my early career.

I was pastor of the William Jewell Baptist Church, which was a mission church. In the Depression, of course, I came in contact with the people who were

hardest hit by the Depression. I preached at the City Mission down in the slums of Kansas City. My church was located right around the corner from several charity institutions, a boy's home and a girl's home, which were supported by charity. And during that time, I became involved in the whole problem of what was happening economically and socially to these people who had been displaced by a depression over which they had no control. And being a practical minister, I felt that it was certainly a necessary to save souls, but one of the things to do was to help save bodies. And I saw no hope of bringing about any change for the better -- in changing, for instance, the social and economic structure. At William Jewell College, incidentally, I had studied under a professor who was a socialist; in fact, William Jewell College had a chair which had been subsidized by a socialist. Doctor Wayman was a socialist and taught socialism. In taking sociology I became a convinced socialist. But my own experience before 1928 until 1933 thoroughly convinced me that socialism may be well for a dream, but the hope of really changing anything for the better was do it by reform within our present economic and social structure. That's the reason why I went to Leeds Baptist Church, which is located in the same little town where the Chevrolet and Fisher Body plant of General Motors is located -- I was there from 1932 to 1933. Then I resigned and went to work in the plant. I, of course, had been active with the trade union movement prior to that as a minister. I had made many speeches for them, had worked with Dave Dubinsky's union and with the Teamsters Union -- that is, the beginnings of the Teamsters Union in Kansas City. So, I finally resigned my pastorate and went to work in the Chevrolet factory. I felt that my best opportunity to serve and do the things that I felt were necessary to do would be to learn exactly what the workmen were up against. So I did resign and went to work. And, of course, I was not there very long before I began actively talking about unions. I worked

there only about six months because I was fired for union activities in March of 1934.

By that time the American Federation of Labor had a number of small beginnings in the automobile industry. They had some members in Flint, Pontiac, Toledo, Kansas City, St. Louis, and other areas, but they were very small. They were called federal labor unions. And so I helped to organize a federal labor union in the Fisher Body and Chevrolet plant in Kansas City. And that was one of the first to actually get started. We had a very difficult time, of course, because the company used all the methods that were possible to squelch it. They fired me first. I was one of -- I think -- five or six that they fired. They picked out the leaders and fired us. And, of course, I told them that they were making a mistake. If they thought that they could stop me by firing me, they were making a mistake. So, we worked night and day. I lived on charity. I was at first elected vice-president of the local union. Then by agreement with the president of the local union who was not prepared for handling meetings and that sort of thing, but who was a wonderful guy, he resigned and they elected me as president. So, I became president of the local union. From that I came to a convention in 1934 in Detroit, which was held in the Fort Shelby Hotel, at which Francis Dillon was appointed president. I was ap pointed vice-president by Bill Green. Ed Hall was appointed secretary-treasurer.

Prior to that, the AF of L had called for a meeting in Detroit and had arranged for the chartering of the United Automobile Workers of America. I helped select a name, helped to write the constitution, because I'd been sent by the local union to Detroit to that meeting and was here elected as one of the Board members of the new organization. I was on the Constitution Committee, which wrote the first constitution of the United Automobile Workers of America, which was, of course, then totally an effort of the American Federation of Labor. That was all in 1935.

Skeels: Was there much opposition to the AF of L leadership at that time within the Auto Workers?

Martin: No; there wasn't any opposition to the leadership of the AF of L at that time because they were the only ones doing it. There were a few independent groups, but they had no leadership and no membership to amount to anything. A good many of them were headed up by Pinkertons and various kinds of stooges. But the AF of L leadership was accepted by the automobile workers by and large. There was some resentment, particularly by the socialists and others who had long disagreed with the policies of the AF of L.

The first gathering was called the National Council of Automobile Workers. It was more or less an executive board, but it wasn't called that. It was just a council. Bill Green, of course, was committed to industrial unionism; he believed in industrial unionism. He used all the leeway possible to set up the Automobile Workers. His first step was to set up a council and the second was to get a charter granted which would give them as much jurisdiction as was allowed by the rules of the AF of L. He himself, of course, was subject to the Executive Council of the AF of L. Many of them were craft unionists. But Mr. Green made no bones about it that he was out to build an industrial union in the automobile workers in the mass-production industries. And he proceeded to do that. When the craft unions would inquire about our jurisdiction, he instructed me to answer them and tell them that I had turned the letter over to Mr. Green and that he would take it upin the Executive Council. He said, "File the letter in your waste-paper basket and forget it; I will handle it from here. Go on about your business of organizing." The Automobile Workers began in '34, continuing in 1935 under the guidance and directions, primarily, of the American Federation of Labor and, particularly, under the personal guidance of William Green and others who were interested in industrial unionism. The drawing together of the Council first, then the appointment of the

officers finally consumated in the establishment of the UAW -- AF of L at that time.

Skeels: When the UAW became separate in 1936, there was no question that Dillon was not going to remain as president. What do you think brought about this feeling on the part of the auto workers that they did not want to have Dillon remain in office?

Martin: Well, there were a number of reasons. One of the reasons was that Dillon simply didn't understand organization. He was an old-time organizer and an honest guy. And, I think personally, a fine man. He just didn't understand the problems. No one that had not worked in the automobile industry or was not well acquainted with mass-production industry could understand the problems. He didn't understand the problems. He didn't understand the needs of the automobile workers, and he thought that this whole thing could be handled by just gradually doing the job, winning a little bit here and a little bit there. He was completely autocratic. Immediately upon our appointment (Ed Hall and I were appointed), we went back to the office, and he said, "Now, gentlemen, you can go home, and I'll take care of the situation." We said, "Mr Dillon, we didn't know that that was what is to be done. The automobile workers want their own union -- they're entitled to their own union, and we recognize you as president; but we think that you need help. If we go home, then it means that an AF of L organizer will be sent in, and they simply don't understand the problems of the automobile workers. We think we understand them better." So, he became very irritated, threatened to kick us out of the office, and even threatened violence -- to throw us down the stairs if we didn't get out. We said, "If you think that you're able, why go right ahead, but in the meantime we're going to stay." But he changed his mind.

We got ahold of Mr. Green and explained the situation, and Mr. Green told Mr. Dillon to keep his mouth shut and go on about his business, that he was

president, but that he wasn't a dictator. He didn't understand that here was a movement which was much broader than he had coped with. He simply wasn't capable of understanding the deep desire of the automobile workers for organization. He just couldn't get along with anybody unless he had his own way. And we went about to give him his own way in things that we felt were important, so that he simply lost the confidence of all those, including Mr. Green, in his ability to handle the problem. It wasn't because he was bad or because he was a racketeer; it was just a personal inability to adjust himself to a problem with which he was not acquainted.

We finally resolved the issue by appearing before the Executive Council in Miami, Florida, in December of 1935; we presented our case. We told Mr. Green and the Executive Council that Mr. Dillon was simply not the man for the job, and, as we told him, "We have no personal animosity towards the man; he simply doesn't understand the problem." He was an old craft unionist. The craft unions were run by business agents, and the business agent's word was law, and he simply could not understand the problem. And so the Executive Council told us to go back and run the union the way we thought it ought to be run -- so, we got their approval. And that's what we did.

Skeels: Had you and Mr. Hall gone around and indicated that the auto workers ought to elect their own president before the '36 convention? Did you have a meeting beforehand?

Martin: Well, we had many meetings. Of course, I and Mr. Hall were speaking all over. We spent our time organizing and talking to these people in various plants and the various unions, and we felt, definitely, that the automobile workers should have their own officers while still being a part of the AF of L. And we taught that, and we argued for it, so that when it came to the convention, we knew that we were going to elect our own officers. We didn't know who would be elected, but we

were definitely out to elect our own officers -- and that was a part of the campaign. We knew from our own experience, we had had two men, we had had William Collins as well as Mr. Dillon, they simply didn't understand the problems of the automobile workers.

Skeels: Was there anything here that explains this coming of George Addes to the forefront?

Martin: Yes. He was an officer of the Toledo Amalgamated Local, which was one of the biggest locals in the union, and it had been thoroughly caucused before, and the slate of officers had been drawn up by various groups. He was one of the men that had been chosen in the various caucuses as secretary-treasurer. And it had also been decided in those caucuses that Hall would be elected vice-president instead of secretary-treasurer. So, it had been thoroughly caucused.

Skeels: Was the CIO at that time very influential in the thinking of the delegates to the '36 convention? Were there indications at that time that you might affiliate with the Committee for Industrial Organization?

Martin: Yes. I had helped to set up the Committee for Industrial Organization. We felt that if industrial unionism were not to be finally frittered away by the powerful craft union group within the AF of L, we had to have some semblance of an organization. That was the reason why Hillman and Lewis and Dubinsky and the others organized the Committee for Industrial Organization. And they had raised a fund among themselves to put organizers in the field to help these new industrial unions, and to help them before the Executive Council, and so on. We were committed to industrial unionism as a matter of simple feasibility. There was no other way to organize the automobile workers; there was no way to break them up into crafts. And Bill Green was thoroughly agreeable on that point, but he didn't have enough power in the Council to keep the powerful craft unions from making their demands. So, the CIO, the Committee for Industrial Organization, was

organized for the very purpose of promoting industrial unionism in the AF of L. I believed in it. And I would say that ninety-nine percent of the automobile workers themselves believed that, so that there was no accident that we went for industrial unionism; it just simply is a matter of organization. That's the way the plants were laid out; we didn't lay them out that way. So, as Phil Murray used to say, "We met the exigencies of the situation by promoting industrial unionism."

Skeels: A number of organizations amalgamated later -- what do you think was the incentive for organizations, like Frankensteen's Automobile Industrial Workers of America and Arthur Greer's Associated Automobile Workers, to join your organization?

Martin: Well, the incentive was very clear. I recognized that here was a problem long before I was president and I began working on it. I recognized that here were independent unions; they were not just company unions; they were independent unions. Some of them were dominated by people who were sympathetic with the companies, but I wasn't afraid of that, if they were honest. I knew that we had to have one main union in the automobile industry, so that I went to work at that long before I was president. I first visited Reverend Charles Coughlin, the priest in Royal Oak who helped Frankensteen organize his group. I first had a conference with him, and then I had a conference with Frankensteen. I agreed that if I were elected president or if I had my say that Frankensteen would be put on the payroll of the United Automobile Workers. And so I simply made a deal with Frankensteen for him to bring his group over; he would be put on the payroll of the United Automobile Workers as an organizer or as an officer, however it could be arranged. I felt that we had to get a union of the forces within the automobile industry. So it was a matter of amalgamating all of these various forces, and we did it in the expeditious way: if it took a salary to do it, that's what we did. So we paid Frankensteen, I think, forty dollars a week, and he agreed to come in and use

his influence. And, of course, Coughlin had a large influence on that group, and he was convinced that one union was necessary. So, he used his influence with Frankensteen and with the other leaders of that group to bring them into the United Automobile Workers. Reverend Coughlin was a speaker at our convention and recommended -- and, of course, if Mr. Frankensteen hadn't agreed, he would have simply been without a job, because I am sure that the group would have done what Coughlin had advised. So that I simply made deals -- made deals with these various leaders, gave them positions. They had shown themselves to be leaders, and I didn't think that there was any shuffling-off these leaders who had shown ability -- why not put them to work?

Skeels: After the auto workers got their autonomy at the convention, how long was it before they actually became part of the CIO?

Martin: Well, I made the declaration at the convention that, without any question, we were going with the CIO. If we believed in industrial unionism and we felt that we should be associated with those who believed in industrial unionism within the American Federation of Labor. It was definitely determined in our caucuses before that we would go with the CIO, because we had CIO men there who were advising and helping us. They were good men; they were smart men; and they understood industrial organization much better than the old craft-union boys understood it.

Skeels: Who were some of the CIO people that were helpful in this period?

Martin: Well, we had Adolph Germer, who was sent to us, I believe, by Lewis. Leo Krzycki was quite a speaker, quite an organizer -- primarily a speaker. He was helpful in the organization -- there were others, but those two were assigned definitely to help us in the office of the Automobile Workers Union. And they were good speakers and they were smart. Adolph Germer had a very much better head on policies and on the activities; Krzycki was a rabble-rouser, good speaker -- fluent, but had very little conception of policies and so on. Adolph Germer was our

real advisor and then, was a good speaker, too.

Skeels: Right after the '36 convention, the auto workers were mainly organized outside of Michigan and outside of the Big Three auto companies. How did you select General Motors as your first target?

Martin: It was all done very carefully. The plan was well laid. We went about it as thoroughly as though we were going to war. We felt that we were going to war. We selected our target, General Motors, primarily because there had been a great deal of effort, and a great many people had been victimized. I suppose that there must have been ten thousand men and women who had been fired from General Motors on one pretext or another, primarily because of the union, however. Those people were living in Flint; they were influential in the community, and Flint was the heart of General Motors. Now, we knew that we didn't have any organization, never had any organization, in Ford. Chrysler we weren't worried about. We figured we could take them. We knew that the attack had to come in General Motors, and that if we knocked General Motors off, were able to get a contract with them, then it was a matter of simply cleaning up from then on. So, we carefully selected General Motors because of the fact that there was a union in Toledo -- the Toledo plant of General Motors, Kansas City; St. Louis; Atlanta, Georgia; and Cleveland, Ohio. There was also an organization in the Cincinnati plant. All of them were small, but hundreds of men had been fired; they hadn't moved from the community -- they had lots of friends inside the plants. In Flint and Pontiac -- there was a union in Pontiac, so that the experience of organization was there, and these people were mad -- these people had been kicked out. They were ready to fight, and we knew that we had an organizational advantage in the desire for organization in General Motors that we didn't have anywhere else. There was a bitterness which is necessary in a fight of that kind. You have people who are mad enough to fight before you get a fight. And we had a bitterness there from all of

these firings that couldn't help but ignite, and so we cast the die on that basis. We selected General Motors deliberately because of these and other contributing factors. The time for the strike to be called in General Motors was planned prior to the convention in South Bend, and it was to take place if Murphy was elected. If Murphy were elected, the strike was to take place two days before he took office, the first of the year. And we followed that schedule a hundred percent. There were many efforts made to get us off of our schedule. One of the efforts made was that there was a union in Atlanta, Georgia. Months before they went on strike in Atlanta, Georgia. Fred Pieper came flying into Detroit and wanted us to call a general strike in General Motors. So, we took Mr. Pieper in and told him that the plan was for the first of the year and that we were not going to be changed from that, and he told us about the terrible situation that they had to endure down there. I said, "Well, you've been enduring it for many years; there's no reason why you should pull us off of schedule. Now, we're not going to be pulled off of schedule, because we can't win unless Murphy is elected. It's impossible. So, you go back down to Atlanta, Georgia, and tell the boys to sit on strike or go back; we don't care what they do. But nobody is going to pull us off of our schedule." And, of course, he argued up one side and down the other, and I didn't know until after I had left the union that he was being paid, then, twenty-five dollars to fifty dollars a month by General Motors. So, they went on strike -- he came flying into Detroit with a story that he just couldn't hold the men; they just had to go on strike; nothing could prevent them, and I am sure that he and others had decided that this was the best way to flush us into a situation that we couldn't win. And we had definite proof,according to all the information that I had, that he was paid as little as twenty-five dollars a month and as much as fifty dollars, his house rent, by General Motors at that time. He came here arguing that we should go into the strike and wreck our schedule. He simply was playing the game, but he didn't succeed. We kept to our

schedule and didn't call the strike until two days before Murphy took office. The man who was then governor of the state of Michigan had the militia all mobilized, ready to go, but he didn't have time in two days. He could only hold office for two more days; so, he couldn't get the militia in action. We called the strike two days before, and the militia was never sent. But the militia would have been sent had we called it in September, and the strike would have been broken.

There were also other places where strikes sprang up. One was Kansas City where there was the attempt to have a strike occur. They did that in several places -- St. Louis the same thing. St. Louis wanted to go on strike and St. Louis had been on strike and they had lost their shirt. They'd gone on strike while I was still down in Kansas City, and I did everything in the world I could to prevent them from going on strike. They went on strike anyway as an independent union. They wanted us to go on strike with them. We refused to do it because there was no hope of winning. Now, we remained in. We did have a strike. However, when they fired 350 men, we had a strike, and we got some of those men back -- but not very many of them. And we held on with these men out of work for over a year, and they stayed in the union. They stayed around there, living with somebody else, and so on. But there was the effort made in the fall to start these spontaneous strikes over the country by pressuring the men, by firing other people, because they wanted to force us into a showdown. They didn't know that Murphy was going to be elected or not, but we were pretty confident that he was going to be elected. And I conferred with Frank Murphy night after night, alone, and I knew what he was going to do and I knew what he wasn't going to do. I had his assurance and I knew that he wasn't going to call the militia. And, so, we knew definitely that were he elected -- which he was -- that there wouldn't be a militia out there -- and there wasn't.

Skeels: Had you people planned to use the sit-down strike as a weapon in the

General Motors strike?

Martin: There were only two of us that actually knew when and where, and how the strike was going to be called. Now, of course, the sit-down techniques had been used before in Detroit, been used at the steel company. Bohn Aluminum, I believe, was one of them. There were two or three sit-down strikes. I think Kelsey-Hayes was later. But the technique, of course, of the sit-down had been employed before. But there were only two of us that knew the day and the hour -- and what the technique would be: it was Bob Travis and myself. Bob Travis I had sent to Flint to take charge. Incidentally, he was one of the smartest strategists that I have ever met, anywhere. He was smart. And he and I, alone, knew when the hour was going to be, and so on. And, of course, I didn't originate the idea of a sit-down strike. In fact, I didn't perfect the technique. That, of course, had been tried out in France under the communist leadership there. The communists and socialists were in charge of the operation in most of these plants. I didn't know it at the time, but I found out later that that was so. But, nevertheless, we were aware that there was only one way that we could win. We couldn't battle the "goons" and the strike-breakers that were employed by General Motors and by the people who were in sympathy with the company; they were too powerful. There was only one way to do it, and that was to get behind walls. There was no other way to do it. Thousands of them had been fired; they were walking the streets. But there was only one way to do it, and that was to be inside -- and that's what we did.

Skeels: That was a pretty awe-inspiring spectacle, I would imagine, from your position, coming to bargain with General Motors.

Martin: When I was elected president, we had less than twenty-seven thousand members. We told, for publication, that we had 270,000 -- we just multiplied it by ten. We actually had twenty-seven thousand members. But we knew the sentiment of the people in the plants. General Motors and the rest of the industry had simply

used the people they way they wanted to use them. They were autocrats -- complete, and they simply paid no attention to anybody. They ran it head on the way they wanted to run it. And the resentment was terrific, much greater than they had anticipated, but which we knew was there. And, of course, from a standpoint of winning an election, we knew that we would win, but we couldn't get an election. There was no thing as getting an election in those days. You simply had to do it by force -- I mean, you were fighting force. Four of my best friends were murdered in cold blood in Kansas City: one of them was murdered by a bunch of "goons," beaten to death with an iron bar. Another one was stabbed to death. Another one was shot to death with a .38 pistol, left dead in his car. I was supposed to be with him, but I didn't happen to be there by accident. And another man was murdered. Four of them were murdered there. Many, many men were beaten up by "goons," by squads. Now, many of those things were not done by the corporation, as such; they were done by the so-called loyal employees -- foreman, others that were operating for what they thought was the policy of the company, and they certainly didn't get reprimanded very much for what they did. They all kept their jobs and kept right on working.

This growth was a thing which was there. It jumped from less than twenty-seven thousand in August, naturally, on up until December -- we didn't have any more, or very little more until June, and we had 550,000. But the latent situation was there. It was a matter of judging a situation. It was a matter of looking, experiencing, knowing. And I talked to thousands. I spoke as many as eight times a day, as high as sixteen hours a day on the platform, speaking to these various groups throughout the country. So, I knew what the sentiment was. I was dead certain that I was right, dead certain enough to gamble that I was right, and it proved that I was.

Skeels: Would you like to relate the bargaining that went on within General Motors

when the sit-down strike was occurring?

Martin: General Motors at first refused for almost four weeks to meet anybody, under any condition; they just weren't going to bargain. They were sure that they were going to break the sit-down. They maneuvered every possible way to get the state government to intervene to throw the men out of the plant. Murphy adamantly refused to do it. Then they went to the Federal government; they tried to get the Federal government to intervene, and the Federal government wouldn't do it. They refused, utterly, to bargain.

It was thirty days before they finally got into negotiations, but the negotiations were farcical; they were not meaningful. One of the first meetings I had with the representative of General Motors was at the local plant and was typical: the law said that they had to meet with us; so we walked in with a committee. He said, "The law says I've got to meet with you and talk with you, but it doesn't say what I've got to talk about." So, he went over and raised the blinds up and looked out, and he says, "It's a nice day today; the sun is shining. I think it's going to be doing the same tomorrow." And, of course, I said, "I'm not interested in the weather; I'm interested in the conditions in this plant -- the men that have been fired." He said, "We're not going to talk about that. I'm not going to talk about it.The law doesn't say what I've got to talk about." Well, he thought that he had squelched the deal, but, when we left -- we didn't go back to our benches -- we went the long way around, through the whole plant, before we finally got back. The men knew that we were in the front office for the first time, and we told them about all this wonderful conference we had -- and we took in 1200 members the next day.

That was in Kansas City. But this was typical. General Motors finally met; they didn't say anything; they weren't bargaining, but the very fact that they met gave spark and fire to the hopes to those people out in the factories -- their meeting and negotiating. They weren't negotiating, but the men didn't know it, and my job

was, of course, to keep the plants in line, to prevent during these negotiations the morale from breaking down. And, of course, I spoke all over the country to every one of these plants, flew there, went by car -- travelling night and day, speaking on the picket lines and in the various meetings, and so on. That was my job. The negotiations didn't mean anything if the pickets gave way. If the morale of the union was broken, it meant nothing at all. So, my job was to do that and that's what I did. And I was in very little of the negotiations. I was there at the starting of many of them, left before it was over, went out to tell the men about the negotiations we were having.

It was a terrific spot, terrific fire, which kept them in hopes all the time. All that time, of course, they were bringing to bear all the pressures that could possibly be brought to bear with all of their wealth and all of their power; they simply were using every bit of force, and, of course, we were working with every bit of strategy we could conceive to meet them on every line. So, they went through the farce of negotiating, and I was out telling the automobile workers about the negotiations that were going on and keeping their hopes up and keeping their morale on the picket lines up, so that there was no serious negotiations at all. The final blow came when they finally realized that they were not going to dislodge the fellows out of the plant, that there was only one way to do it -- nobody but an army could get them out. They tried it. I'm sure that General Motors had plenty of hired men there, but they also had the so-called loyal employees, the Flint Alliance, under Boysen. Now Boysen was a company man.

There were pitched battles fought, and the ingenuity of the strikers and the courage of those strikers was a terrific thing to see. They were smart. Again, I give Bob Travis credit for being one of the smartest strategists. He was one jump ahead of General Motors at every turn. Of course, he had many good helpers, but he was the head of them. They held with one idea, hoping to the last minute to

break the strike, to get the men out by one maneuver or another: by force of the company men and the strike-breakers or by government. They failed in them all and finally came to the conclusion that they were going to have to bargain.

They tried one last ruse. At least I believe that they did it: I was offered fifty thousand dollars, in new money, if I would pull the men out of Fisher Body No. 1, with the promise that they would, then, go into serious negotiations and sign a contract, and my reply was, "Sign the contract, and we'll have a banquet and use the fifty thousand dollars in INA Hall -- have a banquet in which labor and management will get together and we'll celebrate the victory together." That, turned down, was the last hope. Then, they began to negotiate in seriousness and finally signed the contract.

Skeels: What do you think was the impact of the auto workers winning a foothold in the General Motor's Company? Did it help other organizations?

Martin: Sure. It was the key. Had we lost the battle with General Motors, organization would have been set back ten years -- no question about it. It was the key. Men took heart all over the country. The rubber workers were in a death struggle at that time; had we failed, they would have lost. Unions in the partscompanies would have folded up, had General Motors won in that battle. It was the key in the whole organization of mass-production industries; it all hung on that fight. Had we lost it, it would not have taken place in another ten years. I'm sure of it.

Skeels: Then, after you settled in General Motors the next big adversary was the Chrysler Motor Company. How did you go about organizing them? Was it any different from the General Motors situation?

Martin: Yes, it was different, but there was no need of the Chrysler strike at all. Chrysler was bargaining in good faith; they had agreed to put twenty-eight hundred men back to work; they had agreed to recognize the union. We were within two days of an agreement. Mr. Lewis and I were both in agreement that there was

no need of a strike in the Chrysler situation. We were assured by the Chrysler leaders, by Mr. Frankensteen himself, that there would be no strike at all. And before the plants went down, an hour before, Frankensteen was in my office and assured me that there would be no strike. It was all caucused and ready to go. So, I asked him to speak to Mr. Lewis because I was just talking to him on the phone, and I asked him to tell Mr. Lewis what he had told me, and he assured Mr. Lewis that there was no idea of any strike in Chrysler at all, that we were right within reach of a contact, which would mean a peaceful settlement, and so on. At one thirty the plants went down. So, there was no need of the Chrysler strike at all, and the Chrysler Corporation was ready to settle. They knew that had to; they didn't want the sit-down. And I didn't want the sit-down, and Mr. Lewis didn't want the sit-down. Because it had been overplayed already, it was time to leave that strategy, because we didn't need it. Chrysler was ready to sign, and ready to give everything in the world that we wanted within reason. And that's all we wanted.

There was a reason why it was done. There were two reasons: one was that the communists in the union and the socialists who believed in the "class struggle" thought that more hatred was created by these strikes, and was necessary to condition the labor class. So, they wanted the strike for the sake of the strike. They were also in positions of leadership in the union, and by leading these strikes their influence would be greatly increased, and so the party strength would be increased. Wyndham Mortimer, who was later proved to be a member of the Communist Party, who was the first vice-president, helped Frankensteen caucus the strike, unbeknownst to either Lewis or myself, and I had the general supervision of the union; Frankensteen was in charge of the Chrysler Department, and I had every reason to believe what he was telling me was true. But he had secretly caucused the thing with Wyndham Mortimer and the other communist leaders. Frankensteen was interested in getting publicity, I'm sure. This was a good

opportunity for doing the thing. And, incidentally, it was the Chrysler strike that brought more disrepute on the union than any other one thing because it was so unnecessary. And Chrysler, of course, himself was embittered. Mr. Lewis had called Mr. Chrysler and assured him that there would be no strike. On my word -- my word, depending on Frankensteen's word, they were going to settle the thing without a strike, and Mr. Chrysler was elated with the idea and ready to sign a contract, just getting the details out of the way. And, when the strike took place, of course, he was personally embittered: we had betrayed him. And I think he lived to his dying day thinking that we, Mr. Lewis and I, had lied to him, and I had lied to Lewis that he couldn't depend upon us. And it was personally an insult. He was a man of integrity and he thought we were too. We'd assured him that there would be no strike. So, he put up all the resistance he could, and the strike hung on and was carried out and became an explosive, dangerous situation in which the threat of evacuation came from the governor. The governor saw his political power waning in the State because of these unnecessary sit-down strikes and the continuous employment of the sit-down technique, when it was no longer necessary at all. We could have called a strike by having the men come out of the plants; they would have come out at that time -- had we needed a strike. We didn't need a sit-down strike at all. But it was all a part of the communist's technique of conditioning these workers with the hate and propaganda, conditioning them to be a part of the great "class army" that was to eventually take over. And, of course, Frankensteen was not adverse to getting all the publicity he could get out of it.Those, I think, are the two reasons why the Chrysler strike was called.

Skeels: Something that was speculated upon in the newspapers was that after the Supreme Court on April 12, 1937 had come out with the decision validating the Wagner Act, it was said that several days after John L. Lewis called a meeting in Washington in which he discussed the sit-down strike, and during which some

people indicated that the sit-down strike could be utilized much less now that the Wagner Act was validated. Is there any basis to that?

Martin: Well, I don't remember the meeting, but I do remember talking it over with Mr. Lewis. He was thoroughly in agreement with me that we had used the sit-down strike to the limit, and that it was something that should be abandoned in the interest of the labor movement itself. We didn't need it, we had a bargaining position. We had the loyalty of the working people. If we had a cause, we could depend upon their loyalty, and we agreed that it should not be utilized at all, that we could depend upon the loyalty of the people where a strike was needed. Now, of course, the communists and the socialists didn't want to give up that technique; it was a good technique for embittering people.

For instance, in the Chrysler sit-down strike, which was extended, terrible conditions in the plant existed -- where you had women, married women in the plant, their husbands on the outside -- husbands inside, their wives outside, all kinds of conditions of immorality -- at least thought immorality. You had people on the outside -- men on the outside with shotguns trying to get into fellows on the inside; you had a breakdown of morals, which was a bad thing from any standpoint -- not good for union, not good for the company, not good for the city, and good for nothing except to create more hatred and trouble and breakdown of morals. So that Mr. Lewis and I, talked it out thoroughly, and he was in hundred percent agreement, and Adolph Germer was in that agreement one hundred percent that the technique of sit-down strikes should be abandoned. It had outlived its usefulness. In fact, it had outlived its usefulness the moment General Motors signed. There was no need for any further sit-down strikes at all. Had they taken their time and been able to negotiate these agreements on the basis of collective bargaining, there would have been less bitterness. There would have been more respect between management and labor. The whole thing would have been much better. But, of

course, the forces in power in many of the unions were determined to carry it out as far as they could.

Skeels: What role did the wildcat strikes play in the various plants after the general settlement?

Martin: Now, General Motors was not converted overnight to unionism, and there were lots of provocations, I'm sure of that. There were provocations by the smaller bosses because they felt their jobs were in jeopardy. They were being moved out of their place of power. And there is no question in my mind but what there were lots of cases of provocation. But we had an agreement, and we could have settled those grievances. It would have been a longer way. There would have been probably no more suffering or maladjustment had we done it that way -- and certainly much better relations, public relations as well as relations with the company -- had we followed our agreement. But there were two groups responsible for the wildcat strikes: first were the stool pigeons, those people who craved favor with the companies and who thought by creating wildcat strikes that they would discredit the union in the public's eye. That was a very carefully planned strategy. I don't say that top officials of General Motors planned that, because I don't know. But I do know that many of the men who helped plan the wildcat strikes were what we called stool pigeons. They were company men who believed that the union hadn't gotten them anywhere. Whether they were convinced of that or whether they were convinced because of the money that they were getting out of it and favoritism, I don't know. I have no way of judging their motives.

But the other group were the communist and the socialist who wanted to continue striking. Wildcat strikes were a part of their strategy for creating more class hatred and more hatred generally. Now, we know, for instance, that in one of the wildcat strikes in Cadillac -- was planned by the Communist Party cell in Cadillac. We had affidavits on that; we had sworn statements of men who were in

that caucus, and the plan was to call the strike in order to recruit members for the Communist Party. They made no bones about it in their secret meetings. Bill Weinstone, who was State secretary of the Communist Party sat in on that caucus. The fellow who I had appointed an organizer and who was later a Democratic State senator was a member of the Communist Party. I didn't know it, of course, but he sat in on that caucus that planned the wildcat strike in Cadillac. Now, the reason was not to take care of any grievances. The whole thing was planned with the idea of getting members for the Communist Party. So, you had two groups.

As I remember the number, in one year General Motors had over a thousand strikes of fifteen minutes or more in the various plants. I wouldn't say that they were all useless, nor that all of them were not justified, but I would say that ninety-five percent of them were pure unadulterated planned strikes in order to further the interest of one of these groups or the other. And, of course, it did exactly what the boys who wanted to discredit the union wanted done. Number one, it created an impression of irresponsibility on the part of the public. It was primarily one of the leading factors that defeated Governor Murphy for re-election. And it also helped to further the "class struggle" theory and practice of the communist and the socialist -- and I say communist and socialist in the same breath because they were working together. You couldn't tell where one ended and the other began. They were all part of one caucus which later developed into what was known as the Unity Caucus. But the whole idea was to create these wildcat strikes, for that purpose.

Skeels: The Flint Local caused a lot of problems, is that right?

Martin: Yes. I sent Bob Travis and I sent Wyndham Mortimer to help him. Both of them were communist. So, they proceeded to put the communist and the socialist in charge of every union in Flint, where they could get them ensconced. Every secretary of every local in Flint was either a communist or a militant socialist. So, we suddenly came to a realization of what we had: we have in Flint, one of the

most important areas in General Motors, a union completely in the control of communists and socialists, and with their theory of wildcat strikes, of course, it was made to order. And, of course, Mortimer was ambitious to be president. He was anxious to get control of the union for the communist, and, of course, he was playing up this whole business of wildcat strikes. I was a reactionary because I was against wildcat strikes. I wanted integrity of the union; I wanted them to show responsibility publicly and with the employers. If there were to be any irresponsibility, let the employer show the irresponsibility. Our position should have been of being responsible to our contracts, and working under those contracts, making the best of them. Had we been dealing with purely union people, and people in industry, and not a well-caucused, well-organized, well-schooled group of leaders bent on the "class struggle," we could have done it.

Skeels: Now, one of the high points of disputes between your ideas and, as you mentioned, the opposition group, the Unity group, occurred in the 1937 Convention. Would you like to mention some of the events surrounding the '37 convention or leading up to it?

Martin: The communist and the socialist had been trained in the various communist and socialist schools of the country. They had come from all over the country to go to work in the automobile industry as soon as they saw this happening in 1936. The Reuther boys went to work in the automobile industry. Nobody knew them, so they got jobs wherever they could. Wyndham Mortimer was elected first vice-president, a card-carrying Communist Party member. His communist name was Baker. And, then, you had Ed Hall, who was a fellow-traveller, sympathetic with their cause. You had Addes, who was working with them. I was the only one who was not somewhere in the line-up, so that this is how subtle they worked. They had started out with me as a stop-gap. I had become popular with the men because I could speak, and because I had proven my leadership in the Kansas City

situation, and so on. They put up with me only as a stop-gap measure. I was to be dumped, I learned later, as soon as they got over the organizational situation. I didn't know that Wyndham Mortimer was a communist; and I'd confided in him, talked with him. And, of course, I was working night and day.

I was working on an average of eighteen hours a day, speaking as high as eight times a day, and trying to run the union besides all that. And I was feeling the pinch, physically. So, he recommended a doctor where I should go for a check-up. I didn't know any doctors in Detroit. So, I went. The doctor examined me and he said, "I think you have heart trouble." And I said, "Do you think it's bad?" He says, "It's bad enough for an electrocardiograph." So, I took an electrocardiograph and I said, "What do you recommend?" "Well," he said, "your heart's very bad." He says, "You may die any time. You've got to have absolute rest." I said, "What would you recommend I do?" "Well," he says, "turn all the work over to your first vice-president. I think his name is Mortimer, isn't it?" I said, "Yes, it's Mortimer." He said, "Well, he's a fine man, dependable. You've got to rest. Otherwise, you're going to die, and," he says, "I recommend that you call Mortimer in right away and turn the whole thing over to him." And I said, "Well, thank you very much, doctor; I'll look into the situation." So, I went right on downtown, contacted another doctor, had an electrocardiograph. There was nothing wrong with my heart at all. That was one of the situations. They tried to scare me out.

Then, in the General Motors' negotiations, my job had been designed by Lewis and myself and it was to keep the men in line. We knew that nothing meant anything, as I have stated before, if the picket lines caved in. So, my job was to go and speak, was paying no attention to the negotiations. Lewis could handle them anyhow. Mortimer kept informing me about the negotiations, and I had seen Mr. Lewis, but he was worn out and I didn't bother him any more than I had to.

And I was on the run night and day anyway. So, Mortimer kept telling me that we're not anywhere near an agreement. So, a bad situation developed in Wisconsin. I got a wire suddenly one day, or Mortimer got a wire, that in Janesville, Wisconsin the picket lines were ready to dissolve and the men were ready to go back to work. Negotiations were dragging. I had better go as fast as I could go. So, I got on the train one night and started for Wisconsin. In the meantime, the negotiations actually developed at the pace where they were ready to sign a contract. They were so anxious to have me out of town that they concocted this story. There was nothing to the Janesville situation at all. Mortimer had gotten one of the communist stooges somewhere to send a telegram telling of the danger of the situation, then advising me to leave. I got as far as Kalamazoo, Michigan, and a telegram came. The conductor brought it back to me. Some of my friends who were close to the negotiations had gotten to Mr. Lewis, and Mr. Lewis had advised them to get me back as soon as they could because they were going to sign the contract the next day. The whole idea was to get me out so that I would not be at the signing of the General Motors' contract, so that I wasn't. I didn't get back in time. The contract was signed, and Wyndham Mortimer signed for the UAW. And he carried the pen around for months. "This is the pen that signed the General Motors' contract." I wasn't around. Of course, it actually makes no difference what they did. They overplayed their hand because the men knew that I was correct when I said, and Lewis was correct when he said, "It matters not what happens in negotiations if the lines are not held." So, while they were going through the maneuvers of negotiations, I was out meeting these men, taking care of their problems, answering their questions, making friends with them. So, actually, what they did by putting me out like that, keeping me out of negotiations while there was a little bit of sunlight of signing the contract and being the fellow who signed it for the UAW, didn't amount to anything because, actually, I knew the men on the

picket lines. I had met with them, eaten with them, slept with them, worked with them, talked with them, etc. They knew me. And I knew them. And it didn't matter who signed the contract; after all Lewis was in charge of the negotiations anyhow. But it was a maneuver, one of the maneuvers to get me out of the limelight, so that Mortimer could take over. So it developed that this whole Unity Caucus was built around that idea of getting rid of me, getting Mortimer installed as president, and getting the communist and socialist in charge of the union. And that was the plan of the whole thing.

There were other events that indicated an all-out effort of the unity people to try to eliminate me from the presidency. I was not aware of them. The first inkling that I got of it was this recommendation by this doctor who was recommended to me by Wyndham Mortimer. I checked with another doctor and found out that there was nothing wrong. Then, I checked the doctor and found out he was in line with the group. That was the first indication I had.

The second real indication was in maneuvering me out of position in the GM strike.

Then, of course, there were the activities of the Reuther boys in Flint, and Travis and Mortimer. We were discovering that every union in the Flint area was commandeered by a communist or a socialist. They were in charge of the apparatus. Later an independent audit of books proved that the communists had taken out about ninety thousand dollars of dues that should have been the treasuries of the Flint locals. So that the whole pattern began to reveal itself in the fact that everywhere, wherever they had charge, every officer, every person of responsibility, was either a communist or a militant socialist. So, every move that was made from the 1936 Convention on, including the 1937 Convention, was a move by this disciplined group within the union to take charge of it, to eradicate all

who were opposed, and to take charge of the apparatus of the union. And there was incident after incident. Lee Pressman and Maurice Sugar were both active communists. I didn't know that Lee Pressman was; I knew that Maurice Sugar was. But Pressman was going to Lewis and telling Lewis that I was no good, that I'd done things that I hadn't done at all, that I was against the Jews, (he was a Jew) and going to Hillman and telling Hillman that, planting the seeds of hatred and suspicion of me with the leaders of the CIO. He was the attorney, the counsel. Nobody knew that he was a Communist Party member. So, he went back with all of the dignity of his position and the power of his position to advise Lewis that I was undermining Lewis, that I was cutting Lewis's throat, that I was anti-Semitic, that I was a danger to "the great union movement," because I was anti-Semitic, which, of course, was an absolute lie.

I was not anti-Semitic. I have never been anti-Semitic in my life; my whole training was against it. I was a Christian, in the sense that I belonged to the Baptist church; but my people were not anti-Semitic. My father was not against the colored people. All the people down in that area were Southerners, but my father was not anti-Negro. He was a student, and he was a fair-minded student. And he had inculcated in our thinking those things. And many of the best friends I had were Jews. And I appointed, for instance, the first colored man on any executive board in the United States -- member of our executive board, over the protest of the Executive Board, and they finally agreed to let me do it if I would put him on my payroll, and I had to pay him out of funds that the union paid me. And, so, here you have a conspiracy that went two ways: number one, to get charge of the unions -- to get the votes, the delegates, and so on. The other was to turn the leaders of the CIO against me, as though I were conspiring against them, and giving them basic reasons why they couldn't trust me: I was anti-Semitic, I was narrow, I was a preacher and wasn't to be trusted with the great task of building a

labor movement; so that you had the cutting going both ways, because they simply had to get charge of this union. This was the most important union in the country.

Incidentally, I was invited, through Mortimer, to take a paid trip to the Soviet Union. Stalin sent it to Mortimer. I do not know why he didn't send it to me. I know now why he did not send it to me, but I didn't know then. He sent, personally, a telegram to Wyndham Mortimer inviting me and the whole Executive Board of the UAW to take a free tour, all expenses paid, from New York and return, to come to the Soviet Union as guest of the Soviet Union. And I told Mortimer that I wouldn't go under any condition, that as far as I was concerned nobody else would go from our union. I turned it down flat and told him to wire Stalin back and thank him for the invitation, but we weren't interested. But shortly after I was denounced on the front of Pravda as the Number 1 enemy of the working class in America, so that here you had the conspiracy working from all sides. I was the only one that stood in the way of their capturing the union -- not because there was anything wrong with my administration; not because I wasn't honest, because nobody ever accused me of that. I simply gave everything in the world I had to the union -- I got four thousand dollars a year, and I spent every bit of that back in the union, came out of it broke, five thousand dollars in debt. And they knew that I wasn't dishonest; they knew that I was an idealist. I was working for the union because I believed in the union, but they had to get rid of me and everybody else in the union who opposed their purposes of capturing and using it for their purposes.

Skeels: Several efforts were made by you and your sympathizers to minimize the influence of these groups that you're talking about. What do you think was the prime problem in not being able to minimize their influence?

Martin: Well, primarily because they were sticking out like a sore thumb. There was no question about who they were. That was being turned up by the Dies

Committee and others, and many of them were well known. And you just simply couldn't hide the thing under a bushel. Now, we undertook to play it down because of the bad influence it would have upon the union. We knew it was there. Lewis knew it was there. Lewis was of the impression that he could use them; Dubinsky was not. He knew full well and told Lewis, just as I told him, "You can't use them; they'll use you." We wanted to play it down in order to prevent public reaction. We thought we could clean them out. And we could have cleaned them out, had they not convinced Lewis that he could use them. That was where the battle was lost, right there. Had Lewis been as astute as Dubinsky, the problem would have been solved, because Lewis would have simply put his weight, his power, back of us. At first we simply would have refused to permit them to control these local unions. And, if necessary, we would have exposed them in the union, and they would have been voted out. They knew that they would have been voted out, see. But the crux of the matter came when they convinced Lewis through Pressman and John Brophy, who was the head organizer for the CIO, and Len De Caux and his wife who were in charge of the CIO News, all of whom were either communists or Marxian socialists. Lewis thought he could use them, and he couldn't use them. So, instead of helping us put the union in check, he simply fell for their trap and stepped into it over his head. And that's the reason why we couldn't clean them out privately, as we hoped to do. I had no desire, even at that time, to be punitive, to drive them out of the union. I didn't understand communism then. I had been a minister. I didn't understand until late in 1937 what the real objectives of the communists were in regard to the labor movement. So, what I hoped to do was to simply put the union in shape and keep our contracts. Had we lived so in the community that would have gained the respect of even our enemies.

We had a good chance to do it because Bill Knudsen (this is not known and

I think this is the first time that I've ever said in public) was very much in favor of the unions. He was a Dane. In Denmark the unions were strong. My first inkling of this came in one of the negotiations. The boys would stop off for beers, and that sort of thing. I didn't drink. So, I went on up and Mr. Knudsen would come in (he was always ten or fifteen minutes ahead of time) and sit down with his hat on at the head of the table, and sit there figuring on something, until everybody got there. I usually came on up to the negotiating tables and I'd sit down at one end of the table, and he'd sit down at the next. Sometimes we passed words. Sometimes we just sat there in silence waiting for them to come in. But on this particular occasion he said, "Homer, I've got something to tell you and if you ever tell this to anybody, I'll say you're a liar." But he says, "I'm very much in favor of the unions. I believe in the unions, but I'm not president of General Motors. I'm just a glorified office boy." He said, "If I had my way about it, we'd really go along one hundred percent with the unions. And if you will live up to your contracts, if you keep your contracts, you'll help me in winning General Motors over to a full acceptance of the union." He said, "I can't do it by myself. If we had unions all over the country, like you've got in Kansas City,..." There we made peace with management, when we licked them. We got our union. Then, we had a big picnic: management paid the entertainment; we paid for the refreshments. We all got together and got acquainted, so that management and their wives and the union men and their wives got together for this all-day picnic. And we developed a friendship and mutual respect. It didn't lower our resistance to injustice. We simply had a job to do -- they were running the plant, and we were working in the plant. Well, we raised production; we cut down debt. We made ourselves worthwhile. We didn't become subservient or anything of the sort. We'd fight when the time came for fighting. Then, when the time came to make automobiles, we made automobiles -- and we sold automobiles. We sent a team of men out all over Kansas and Missouri, teams

of them, advertising General Motors cars and telling all the unions to buy General Motors cars. "We have a contract; we work here; we want you to buy our cars." Well, Knudsen was in favor of the union. His heart was right. He said, "If you say this, if you tell anybody this, I'll have to deny it; but this is the way I feel: I want you to have the union, I want you to bargain, I want you to do a good job of it. I know you will, but you mustn't tell anybody because I'm just a glorified office boy." So that our position was that we would win public approval of our position and we would win approval of the companies. I didn't feel that I was selling anybody out.

On the other hand, it was building a public relations which had to exist in a society such as ours. When the union says, "The public be damned" and "We don't care what the public thinks" -- when any union leader says that, he's a fool, because, after all, the public is the boss, regardless of what they may think. And there's enough of fairness in the American people that there is nobody powerful enough to go against them. And I knew that, and the communists did not care.

Skeels: It is interesting to try to figure out what actually happened to Mr. Frankensteen. He had been part of your group, and all of a sudden he had decided to move along other paths. Is there any explanation for this?

Martin: Yes, I think there's a very good explanation. Frankensteen was a politician. He was a politician when I hired him to come over. I first put him in a position where he could hardly refuse, by getting Coughlin's assent. Coughlin had more influence than he did. Then, I offered him a salary. Now, he was a politician. He dreamed of being governor of the state. In fact, he announced to me and to others in the union that we would be the next governor after Murphy. He was a politician; he thought the tide was running against me. It was a good time to leave the ship. According to our records, he joined the Communist Party in Boston the week before he announced his sudden change of heart. I went with him to

Washington by car and on the way he put his arms around my shoulders. He says, "Homer, everybody can desert you, but I won't." His speech was already planned. His strategy was already lined out. The day before the Daily Worker had blasted him; the next day he was a hero -- two editions: one day condemning Frankensteen; the next day he's the big hero. He announced his change at the end of the trip to Washington, during which he had sworn undying loyalty that he would be the one guy who would never desert me. Everybody else could do it, but not Frankensteen. So, he was a politician; he jumped. He thought that the ship was sinking, and the thing to do was to save his hide and he jumped -- I think.

Skeels: Even after the time when he changed sides, you had a very substantial ma jority on the Executive Board, up to the point where in the summer of 1938 you suspended the five officers. Was there anything at that particular time which tended to make you see that this is the way to do it?

Martin: Well, of course, we knew -- for instance, the Pontiac strikes, I've forgotten now when that was.

Skeels: That was late in 1937.

Martin: At that time, of course, Reuther and Mortimer completely showed their hands. They had caucused that strike with the Pontiac men. This bunch of hoodlums had gone down the line with wrenches and pipes, and so on. About a hundred and fifty of them had simply driven everybody out of the plant and taken possession in violation of the contract and the agreement. Wyndham Mortimer and Walter Reuther caucused that strike. They held out on the Board. I didn't declare a wildcat strike until I called the Board in, and for two days we fought on the Board with Mortimer and Reuther trying to get us to authorize it. We refused. I finally won the vote of the Board, and we refused. That was a complete showing of their hand. I went into plant and negotiated the fellows out of the plant. They had pledged in the convention and Lewis thought he could depend upon it. Lewis

simply didn't know the boys. He was being misled by Pressman and Maurice Sugar. They never stopped conniving. The next day; it was never over.

I, actually, would have gone on and worked with those fellows through the year, but they wouldn't have it that way. They were out to get it one way or the other, and they never stopped conniving: wildcat strikes, all kinds of maneuverings to put me in the wrong light -- I mean, outright lies, deliberate falsifications, misinterpretation of events -- all aimed at descrediting me. I couldn't tell them anything.

They'd go to the newspapers, leak so-called information to the news, and let the newsboys carry the story. And on the Free Press there was a communist, on the News there a communist, on the Times there were two or three. These boys were feeding this stuff to these stooges who were on the newspapers, and many other newspapers in the country. They were feeding to these boys that they were letting it out to the public. Every move I made, no matter how I made it, how sincere, how honest, everything misinterpreted all the way through. No matter what I did, it was a constant warfare. They didn't mean to get along. They meant to have a truce, like Khrushchev has a truce now. He wants a truce to build up his own program. It's warfare to the end. You take advantage of these truces, these breathing spells. All the time you have the breathing spells, the other fellow is off balance. But you're digging in. You're improving you position by misinterpreting the other fellow's position and by building up your own. There wasn't a single one of those fellows in whom I could have any confidence at all. I couldn't talk to Mortimer; I couldn't talk to Hall; I couldn't talk to any of these fellows because anything I told them would be misrepresented, and the newspapers would have it the next day. Many times I did it to be sure that I was correct. I would tell them something in confidence; the next day it would be in the papers. I would only tell it to one so that I pinned one after another down, until I knew that every one of them

was leaking this information. I told it to them as though it were general information, but it wasn't. It was to this one, and I pinpointed this one and I pinpointed that one. I pinpointed the next one, until I knew that those fellows could not be trusted with any kind of union information. No matter what it did to the union, they didn't care. All they had for their objective was to get control of the union operations with the backing of the CIO; and then they were all set. So that you worked in a vacuum. You couldn't depend upon any of these fellows for anything. They had a goal. They were going to reach it. No matter how they had to misrepresent the facts, they were going to reach it.

I knew that it was coming. Then, I had a conference. Two hundred and fifty men went in their own automobiles (leaders of the various unions of the country) to Lewis at the United Mine Workers' headquarters. We sat there all day. I put the proposition up to Lewis. I said, "Mr. Lewis, what would you do? Here is what they've done." "Is that so, gentlemen?" "Yes." "They told you so and so?" "Yes." We brought the case right out until Mr. Lewis saw the whole picture. "Now," I said, "Mr. Lewis what would you do?" He said, "I'd kick every one of them out of the union. I would let not a one of them stay in." "And," I said, "if I do, I get the Board to do this thing, will you back us up?" He said, "You have my word of honor that I'll back you up." And he pledged that to two hundred and fifty representatives, that had made their way to Washington at their own expense to get this thing straightened out.

When Pressman, Brophy, Len De Caux, and Krzycki got through with Lewis, he faded. He backed right out on his pledged word to the two hundred and fifty representatives, an overwhelming majority of the leaders of the various unions in the country. So that when we did operate, he didn't back up the operation. He told us what to do; but when it came to carrying through, he didn't do it.

Skeels: After you had come to this point where you had carried out the operation

and were supposed to have the backing of Lewis, they began exerting pressure on the other side. And Lewis made a proposal for a compromise at the time.

Martin: Well, that was later on. That was at the instigation of Pressman. Then I went to Washington and met Lewis. I told him to send in Murray and Hillman or whoever he wanted to send in. And, of course, that was a mistake on my part. I should have walked out and said, "Look, we're running the automobile workers. If you want a referendum on it, we'll see what the automobile workers want." And that's what I proposed. I proposed a referendum: "Let's take a vote, a secret vote of the automobile workers. I will abide by the decision of the majority. They want these men back in, let them vote." They wouldn't have that. They wouldn't dare have a referendum because they knew that they would be voted out. But I was willing to abide by the majority rule.

When Hillman and Murray came here, Murray inferred that Lewis was an autocrat. It was the first time I ever heard Murray say anything critical, and so did Hillman. But Murray, particularly, was critical of Lewis. He said, "I've got my job to do. Lewis sent me here to do a job, and you know when he wants something done, he wants it done. So, you've got to do this." So, they made a proposition to me. Hillman was the one who made the proposition. "You can be president of the union as long as you want to be. There will be no candidates run against you. We will see that no candidates run against you." And I said, "You're going to give me this, not out of a clear sky. What's the price?" "Keep your mouth shut about communism; it's none of your business. We'll take care of the communist situation." And I refused. These are enemies not only of the union, but they are enemies of my country. I told both Murray and Hillman that they are not only boring from within this union, but they've implanted themselves in every position in government that they can possibly get into. And I pointed out the fact that Nat Witt, who was secretary of the National Labor Relations Board, was a

Communist Party member; that five of the regional directors of the National Labor Relations Board in the United States were members of the Communist Party; that many of the government attorneys who were preparing the cases for the National Labor Relations Board were members of the Communist Party; that they were in the State Department; they were in every other part of government; that they had gone to the place where under-secretary of state and the under-secretary of the treasury. They were catapulted into position by the CIO influence, largely through Hillman and Lee Pressman. I don't think Lewis even knew because I think that they had flattered him to such an extent that he simply couldn't conceive of the wide ramifications of the conspiracy. I simply refused. "I won't compromise with them under any condition. You can kick me out and you can lick me, but this I will not compromise on -- period -- end of conference." And they said, "Well, you're a nice boy and a natural leader," and so on, "but you have to go." And that was it.

Skeels: What happened after the settlement concerning the five suspended officers? What role did Murray and Hillman play in the final upheaval that occurred at the beginning of 1939?

Martin: Well, by the time Murray and Hillman got through making their position clear that I was to keep my mouth shut about communism, under the threat of being removed that I would either accept that plan or else; then, I realized I couldn't go along. It was impossible for me to vacate the position that I'd taken and the convictions that I had. Here was a conspiracy aimed at the heart of America -- not only at the heart of the union, but at America, too. And I believed then, and I believe now, that the conspiracy was much greater and much more dangerous than even Lewis and Hillman thought it was. I think that my concept of the threat of the conspiracy in the union and its ramifications nationally was correct. Theirs was incorrect. And I think it later developed to prove that. I made up my mind that regardless of what they promised, they were not able to carry it through. If they

were going to tolerate these fellows, if they were to permit these fellows to go on and have a place in the union, it just wouldn't work out.

While Murray and Hillman were in Washington, these guys would be conniving. They'd be pulling every string that they could pull. They'd be building up their positions in the union. It meant a question of violence and everything that was associated with it, if we didn't clean house and didn't do it the way that it should be done. With their help it could have been done, but their own statements convinced me that they had no idea of the extent of the conspiracy, nor were they prepared to take the measures necessary to do the job that had to be done for the sake of the union as well as for the sake of the country, too. So, I simply rejected the whole proposition. I said, "As far as I'm concerned, it's not workable. The house is divided against itself. You have two ideologies that are completely at variance; there is no reconciling the two positions. Either they are conspirators that are interested in using the union for their own purposes and will never be content, or they're not, and I'm convinced they are. And, if we compromise with them here in the UAW, they will be able to go on using their influence in the country. We might as well expose them here now and do what we can to get rid of them. Or a long fight which the nation must put up against this conspiracy, will be much longer drawn out and much more dangerous. If we're able to clean it up here, it will go from this union to the other unions. Their influence in the labor movement will be curtailed all the way down the line. Their stooges in government eventually will be uprooted. If we pacify the situation, gloss over it, then the hope of bringing the issues to light in a crucial struggle is gone." That's the reason why I turned down the compromise situation.

Skeels: What do you think brought to a head the final split within the organization?

Martin: Well, I felt that with Lewis' position of feeling that he could handle the communists. I knew he couldn't. Just as Dubinsky knew he couldn't. Dubinsky

had already gone back from the CIO to the AF of L. I thought then, and I think now, that with Lewis taking that position there was no chance of doing it within the CIO. That had there been a different alignment in the CIO, had they been aware and not have been under the advice of John Brophy, Lee Pressman, Maurice Sugar, and these other fellows, there might have been a hope of doing it within the CIO. And that was when I determined that I would take what I could back into the AF of L. And I did it, thoroughly conscious of the fact that it was a move, at least, to take as many out of the entrapment in this communist dominated thing as I could.

Skeels: Back in January of '39, were you convinced that you should go into the AF of L?

Martin: No. I wasn't convinced as a matter of strategy. As a matter of strategy, it should not have been done that way. I was forced because the AF of L was paying the bill. We had no money. I had no money, and the CIO had money. The AF of L was very reluctant to part with any money. The only money I could get was to borrow from Dave Dubinsky. I had to sign a note for twenty-five thousand dollars, a personal note. It was borrowed from the AF of L, but Dave Dubinsky turned the money over. My position was that we should go independent for the time being, and, perhaps, remain independent. But the attitude of the automobile workers was such that to force them into the AF of L at that time was a mistaken strategy. The hide-bound politicians of the AF of L couldn't see the light, and I preferred to go with what I could in the AF of L rather than stay in the CIO. But it was a mistaken strategy, one against which I fought, but was not able to put the point over. It should have been an independent movement for the time, out but friendly to the AF of L, until the strategic time came when they could join together. That it wasn't a bad move has been proven by the fact that Reuther and Meany finally contrived a union of the AF of L and the CIO. So, I was just a little bit ahead of the game. But I felt that it should have been an independent union to begin with, then gradually

brought the forces together. Let them get acquainted, not put them in the same bed at that time. And that was my plan. Bill Green was willing to do it, but other members of the Executive Council were not. So, they forced our hand into the open, which was not good strategy -- very poor strategy.

Skeels: Another area that you might like to comment on is that concerning the negotiations in '39 with the Ford Motor Company. I believe that there has been criticism made in this area.

Martin: Yes. The criticism, of course, was one of desperation. The fact was that I had built good relations with the Ford Motor Company for instance, in the parts situation. I did not know the Ford Motor Company nor did I know the officials of the Ford Motor Company, but I was not willing for the union to be used by competitors of the Ford Motor Company to destroy the Ford Motor Company. One situation in point was the fact that out of a clear sky, the managers of the Motor Products Company called the union man. We had good relations with the company; we had a good solid union there. Out of a clear sky the manager fired five or six men and cut the wages ten percent, giving no reason for it. The men said, "You can't do that; if you do that, we'll go on strike." They said, "Go on strike. Perfectly alright with us." When the boys came to headquarters, I couldn't understand why the manager of the company should take that sudden position. So, I said, "There must be a reason. What are you working on? What are you doing now? What are you producing?" Come to find out, they were just producing cowls for the Ford Motor Company. Within about two days Ford Motor Company would go on their national show. Without the cowls there would be no Ford cars in the display. All the preparations had been made; everything was done except the cowls. They were ready for the show. They had to have those cowls in order to get their product in that show. I had no relations with the Ford Motor Company and knew nobody at the Ford Motor Company. But I thought the union was being

used by somebody in the competitive field to stop Ford from getting his cars. So I immediately called (the first call that I ever made to the Ford Administration Building) and asked for somebody in authority. They put Harry Bennett on the phone. It was the first time I every spoke to Harry Bennett. I asked him if the Ford Motor Company was in any way hurt by a strike at the Motor Products Company. He said, "Yes, we're hurt. We've got to have cowls. Unless we have those cowls, the show won't go on." Then, I explained to him what had happened. He said, "Let me call you back." In about thirty minutes he called back and he said, "If we don't get those cowls, we won't have a show." I said, "Well, then, I think that explains it." So, I called the National Labor Relations Board, got the director to call Motor Products Company. I got the union men in and we went down to the headquarters of the National Labor Relations Board, called in the manager of the company and told him we were ready to settle the strike. He said, "Well, we'll talk it over." I said, "We want to get this strike settled. We want to settle this afternoon." He said, "with a-ten-cent-an-hour cut." I said, "No. We want to go back to our regular pay." "Well," he says, "there's nothing doing; you're going to accept a cut." And I said, "What about the men being fired?" "Well, they're fired; they're going to stay fired." I said, "Then, there won't be any work -- period. You have no reason for doing what you've done." I said "Will you excuse me." I went out and called the Ford Motor Company and told Harry Bennett what he'd said. He said, "You go back into the conference and I'll call." So, in a few minutes a call came through for the manager, and he went out. When he came back in, he was red-faced. So, we talked a little bit more and he said, "Well, okay if you want, go back at the same price." About that time a call came for me. It was from Harry Bennett and he said, "Don't you settle that strike on the same conditions. I just told him that if he didn't settle the strike under the terms that you set that he'd never get another order from the Ford Motor Company as long as the company is in

existence. You go back in and tell him what you want. You have my assurance. That's my position." I went back into the conference and I said, "Well, we're ready to settle the strike on your conditions except that instead of ten-cents-an-hour cut, we want ten-cents-an-hour raise, and all the men put back in their positions." "Can't do it." I said, "Well, suit yourself, I don't care. You have no reason for doing what you've done and we're not going to settle the strike otherwise." So, he took his men out and conferred a few minutes and came back in and agreed to the ten-cents-an-hour raise. So, that was the first contact I had with Ford Motor Company. Now of course, this was related to Mr. Ford by Bennett.

We began our organization drive against the Ford Motor Company and I went to New York. We announced it the day before. I got off the plane in New York and there were probably forty, fifty reporters at the plane waiting for me. The first question was, "What do you think of Henry Ford?" And I said, "I think Henry Ford is a great American. I don't agree with him on his labor policies, but I think he's done a lot for America. I think he's a man of genius, a man of integrity and I have nothing personally derogatory to say against Mr. Ford at all. I think he's a great American." I said just what I thought. I didn't hate Henry Ford; I didn't hate anybody else. I was in disagreement on the labor policy. So, when I got back, the next morning I had a call from the Ford Motor Company. It was Harry Bennett. He said, "I want you to come out. Mr. Ford want to see you." I said, "I'm sorry, Mr. Bennett, but I can't come out by myself." He said, "All right, bring whoever you want to bring." I said, "Fine, give me an hour." And I gathered together Jack Swift, from Kansas City, Walter Williams, who had been on strike for three years against the Ford Motor Company -- there were five of us in all. We went out and met Henry Ford. He was in for a few minutes, came in and shook hands with me, said, "Homer, I know what you had for breakfast. I've just got a report from a team who have been investigating you for the past two months.

They know your family. They know your father. They know your mother. They know where you were born. They know your whole history. I don't believe that you want to destroy the Ford Motor Company." I said, "That's right. I want to make a contract with you." Just like that. He said, "Gentlemen, write up the contract." He turned around and walked out.

For eight hours we sat there and we negotiated. We got everything in the book. We got all the men back to work that had been laid-off for three years, with seniority from the time they were hired. The plants that were on strike were to be shut down, everybody discharged, and the representative of the union was to sit in the employment office. They were all to be hired back according to seniority from the time they were hired in the Ford Motor Company in the first place. Every plant in the United States in the Ford Motor Company was to be organized. There was to be no objection from the company. This was to be a memorandum agreement of the event, later to be written down there point-by-point, to be signed; and then, later on to be put in complete agreement form with all the details that we agreed on -- ten major points. Their Labor Relations Board cases we were not to deal with. Whatever they owed the men, they would have to pay. We were not to be involved in that. The union was to be recognized as a sole-bargaining agent. Everybody was to join the union in every plant in the United States, and a man was to be sent to every plant. Ford himself was to pay the transportation fees of the union men to go to all of these plants in the United States. Complete one hundred percent union shop right down the line, with Mr. Ford saying, "Boys, this is it." For eight hours we negotiated. We came out with the best agreement in the history of the automobile industry. There was nothing like it.

Well, of course, that meant that I was ensconced as president of the union as long as I wanted to be. This was a victory unthought of, unheard of. I never dreamed of it myself. The eccentricities of Henry Ford were responsible. He sent

out this team of guys to trace me all the way through. I owed him nothing, he owed me nothing -- except that I wanted to be honorable. I didn't want to be used as a tool. He was convinced that I and the men with me were not interested in destroying the Ford Motor Company. We were interested in fair play, we were not going to be used by competition to destroy him. I'd done that inadvertently because I was not interested in doing that. I was interested in preventing that from being done because I had no desire for the union to be used as a tool by some competing company to destroy another one, which would have been farcical and a detriment to the union. So, he was convinced and when he was convinced, he believed in doing things and doing them right. And he just decided overnight to make the agreement with the union. Now, that he was sincere about it, showed in the fact that he said that he agreed that all the National Labor Relations Board cases we wouldn't even deal with them. We'd let the National Labor Relations Board deal with it, and he would do whatever the National Labor Relations Board said. We were to go right ahead prosecuting our cases under the National Labor Relations Board. People who had been fired would get back pay, but in the meantime they would be working. They would have their seniority; their families were to be fed and they were to be back on the payroll.

Of course, I didn't do this alone. I didn't go there alone at all. I took five men that were involved in the strike, Ford men. And then when I came back, I told the fellows we were going to have a meeting. This was all independent -- the whole thing depending upon the acquiescing of the various unions in the Ford Company itself. So, we planned to take the committee, first, to the River Rouge plant to get all the men there to go back to work and then to go to Kansas City and have these union folk there. All these unions in the Ford Company to vote whether they'd accept it or not. That was a part of the contract, part of the agreement -- which was good democracy. In other words, I didn't just settle it, nor our

committee. We're going to put it up to these men. "Do you want this?" And, of course, we knew they'd want it. There was no question about that. Well, of course, when they saw that this was the procedure, which it should have been, they said, "No, No, we've got to have a meeting of the Executive Board of the union to vote on whether they're going to accept it or not." I said, "What do you mean? The Executive Board of the union will not accept what the Ford workers want to accept? They're the ones involved? They've been on strike for three years? Are you going to sit here and dictate to what they're going to want? Let them vote, then bring it back to the Executive Board for approval, but let's find out what the Ford workers want first." Then, without consulting me, they sent out (secretly) telegrams to George Addes and all the Board members throughout the United States. They came flying into Detroit. And then, they proceeded with eight days of interrogation, lying, leaking out information to the press, for instance, that I had gone alone, (that it was a complete sell-out). That was one of the stories they told without giving any of the terms at all. They kept that up for eight days solid. While we were all pledged to a secrecy, they were leaking this out to the press, At the end of eight days the Ford Motor Company and Mr. Ford himself said, "You haven't got a union. These fellows don't have to have a contract with me or the Ford Motor Company -- you can't control it; they're going to run it, and you don't have anything to say about it. And we simply can't go along with that kind of a union." So. he went to his office and took back the contract. Then, at the end of eight days they, then, very graciously said, "Well now, go ahead. Go ahead now and sign it up, and do it." After all of this damage had been done: the union had been plastered and I had been plastered in every paper in the United States, with every kind of a vindictive, lying innuendo that could possibly be told -- I was a sell-out, a fraud; I had gone out there alone; Harry Bennett connived to set-up a company union. All of that was put in the papers, not a word of it true -- not one

word of it. And, finally, Ford was so disgusted that he simply said, "You haven't got a union. I like you, I believe you're sincere, I believe the boys that were here sincere, but these fellows are the guys that are running the union and they don't want a contract with me." And he was right, of course.

When I came into the union board meeting, all kinds of questions came at me from every angle by these guys. They put themselves around in this position and that position so they shot questions at me from all sides. All the committee was right there with me. We answered every question to their satisfaction. But in the exchange I said to Walter Reuther, "What do you want, Reuther? What do you fellows want? Do you want a contract with the Ford Motor Company or don't you want a contract? Do you want these men who have been out for three years back on the job, or don't you want it? Which do you want?" And Walter Reuther said, "We don't want a contract." I said, "What do you want to do?" He said, "We want to drive him out of business." And I said, "And suppose you drive him out of business, and you drive Steel out of business, and you drive General Motors out of business, then what happens, Walter?" He said, "Then the Government will step in and we will run the Government." I said, "That's what you want. You don't want a contract with Ford Motor Company." "That's right." I said, "You're making the right steps in the right direction to get that. If industry can't operate then, Government will have to take over and operate it. And if you can control Government, then you can control industry, and you will have what you want."

So, for the eight days they did nothing but leak all of this stuff to the papers because they knew that if this contract went through, their hopes of ever getting control of the UAW were shot. They were perfectly willing to have men who had been out of work for three years to keep on walking the streets. They were perfectly willing to have no contract with the Ford Motor Company in order to save their own positions, in order to control the union. And that's the story. And I have

all the papers to prove it, and witnesses that are living today that know that that's true. Jack Swift was one of those fellows. A man that I met at the very beginning of the union, one of the smartest men in the union, one of the most loyal, one of the most honest that I've ever known in my life, was Jack Swift. He went through all those years from 1934 until 1940 with me in the union, from Kansas City. Elmer Dowell and others that had gone with me right from the very beginning, knew my life was like a book. They were with me. They knew what the contract was. And there was no part of anything except to prevent the contract from going into effect. And we went to those same people and told them what the agreement was, and men and women broke down and cried -- it was to be two more years before they got back to work. Most of them lost their homes; they lost everything in the world they had. But that was alright if these boys could have their way and capture the union. So, that's the story as it actually happened.

Skeels: I wonder if you would like to indicate what your impressions were of the various people that were important in the union during the time you were there. What kind of person was George Addes?

Martin: George Addes was an efficient secretary-treasurer. George Addes was not a communist; he worked with them. He was a part of the Unity group. He was not a good speaker. He could make a talk, but he was no orator or anything of that sort. He was a man of capability, very secretive. I never knew him very well, actually. He was very hard to get acquainted with. I can honestly say that I didn't know George Addes. He did a good job of keeping the records, and so on; but his personality was a very hidden one.

Skeels: Did you get to know Ed Hall at all?

Martin: Yes, very, very well. Ed Hall was a big blustering nincompoop. I mean, Ed Hall was a bluff for one thing, a loud-mouth. He was a man who liked to bawl the waitresses out when everything wasn't just exactly right in the restaurant -- and

have them take their food back and bawl them out loud enough for everybody in the dining room to hear him. He was unscrupulous as far as union funds were concerned. He spent eight hundred dollars in the 1937 Convention for whisky, to feed the various delegates, and to win them to his side. Ed was not interested in the union as such. It was a good racket for Ed. He had very good judgement on the matters of strike, when and how to strike, what to do. He was very smart in negotiations. He was witty and was up to any kind of argument, but he was a shallow person. Far from being courageous, he was a blusterer, a bluff -- nothing really deep-down sound about him at all. That was my impression.

Skeels: What was your impression of Mortimer?

Martin: Mortimer was a strange combination. He was an idealistic communist, a man of extreme integrity with his family, a man of honor in everything except when it came to the party-line, a man that I liked personally, a man that, before I realized how deep he was in the conspiracy, I held to be of great integrity. He was a committed communist; he was an idealist. He actually believed that communism was the hope of the world. He was not a gangster; he couldn't be bought. He was not a person that could be used, except as a party member and as an idealistic communist -- a tragic person in reality. In his heart he was interested in the sufferings of humanity. He had a goodness about him that was remarkable. He was the type of fellow that you would think of as being sympathetic and deep down committed to a cause because he thought it was right. He was not especially effective as a bargainer. He was above the average. He was not very articulate. He was a personable sort of fellow and smooth, but he was not especially keen on counter-bargains, not quick to take up the arguments of the negotiators. He was not especially shrewd as a negotiator.

Skeels: Another person who probably hasn't been mentioned a great deal, but

played a role is Hugh Thompson. Do you remember him? What type of person was he?

Martin: He was very a very personable fellow, a man of great loyalty. He was an affable fellow. He was a typical trade unionist and he had no axes to grind. He did his job. He was quite shrewd in negotiations and quite shrewd in conduct of union affairs. He knew how to get around and get at the point of trouble. He was a good trouble shooter, completely loyal to the trade union movement, as such. He had no other alliances at all. He was anti-communist, truly anti-communist, and intelligently so. So far as I know, he was not anti-Semitic of anti-anything, he was pro-trade union.

Another man that has been often forgotten and who was a great man, in my opinion was Jack Kennedy. Jack Kennedy was one of the first organizers I put on. He was an old-time trade-union man from the Carpenters Union. He had been one of the organizers for the Carpenters Union in Canada. He was a terrific fellow for courage. He had the courage of a lion, and he was shrewd. He was not a very good speaker, but he was a very good manipulator. He knew how to negotiate, and he played a very good part. He gave his life, actually, for the trade union movement. In the strike in Canada he was kicked by a horse of a policeman and one of his kidneys was ruptured. It was taken out and he had one kidney. And then, he worked himself to death in the union. He went night and day against the doctor's orders, against my persuasion, and finally broke down under the strain. His other kidney gave way and he died of uremic poisoning, as a result of overwork. So, Jack Kennedy is one of the martyrs of the cause. He was a very remarkably true, honest guy who believed in the trade union movement as such, and who was completely honest and reliable. If Jack told me something, it was true. I never knew him to lie. Whether the thing was favorable or unfavorable, he told me the truth.

Skeels: What was your impression of Adolph Germer?

Martin: Adolph Germer was a man of great intelligence. He was a disillusioned socialist. He at one time had been idealistically mixed up with a radical movement. Then he became a socialist, and then became disillusioned with the socialist movement. He was a trade unionist and very shrewd -- a good speaker, a man of good integrity. He was the one that helped me prevent the situation developing in the height of the Chrysler strike. He was the one that advised me against the Chrysler strike in the first place, was adamantly against it, because he felt it was unnecessary. And then, in the height of the strike, when there was so much danger of a riot, at which time I appealed to the President of the United States. I went to the White House to see him because the situation was dynamite: we had thousands of people who were mad and they were threatening to march on Cadillac Square without permission from the mayor. We wanted to hold a meeting, and Mortimer and some of the others were holding the meeting regardless of what the mayor said -- we were going to hold it anyhow. And Adolph Germer helped me to get a vote of the Board not to hold it unless the mayor assented to it. We got an appointment with the mayor and had a nice conference with him. He was at first pretty antagonistic. Frank Martel went into that meeting with us, and we got the mayor's assent to the meeting and it went peaceably. The Police Department, that day, were armed with machine guns. They expected a riot and they were prepared for trouble. The wrong move that day could have been another massacre. Had it not been for the good sense of Adolph Germer, I might not have been able to hold the tide and there might have been bloodshed in the streets of Detroit. So, Adolph Germer was one of the best men that I had the opportunity to meet in the labor movement -- shrewd, capable, good speaker and honest, and his integrity was for the labor movement.

Skeels: What was your impression of Frank Martel? What role did the Detroit

Federation play in the early organization of the automobile workers?

Martin: Well, Frank X. Martel, of course, was a very, very capable guy -- smart and shrewd. He was president of the Detroit Federation of Labor when it had nothing. And by playing a Machiavellian role of balancing the loads on two shoulders, he was able to hold a semblance of the labor movement together. I know nothing about his personal life at all. I know that in the early days, when I first came, Martel was friendly and helpful, did everything in the world he could to help us. There wasn't very much he could do. He arranged for Bill Green to come here to Detroit and was instrumental in getting the American Federation of Labor to help organize the automobile workers. He felt the need of it and went to the Executive Council and pleaded the cause of the automobile workers. So, Martel was a very capable guy in the time when the labor movement didn't amount to anything. He made it much more effective then its numbers warranted, due to his shrewdness. He had been accused of being a racketeer -- I know nothing about that. All I know is that he simply was a very shrewd man.

Skeels: Another person that I'd like you to give your impressions of is Richard Frankensteen. What type of person do you think he was?

Martin: He was a football player: he played to the stands always. I think he had no serious commitment to anything. He was a politician, he dreamed of being governor of the state, he dreamed of pomp and glory. I think that's correct. I don't say that he didn't have any real commitment to the principles and ideals of the labor movement. He seemed to simply never get over being a boy. He was a good speaker. I believe that he was above reproach as far as being paid off by management, or anything like that. I think that he was simply a boy. He was a football player and he kept playing football. He kept playing to the stands all the time instead of, it seemed to me, getting down to the basic propositions of, "Here is a job to be done for the sake of the job to be done" not "How many times the

grandstand cheered." He showed his political yen by watching constantly which way he was going to come out on a situation. Sometimes when you're in a cause, you forget about yourself. You lose interest in what's going to happen to you because the cause is bigger. Frankensteen never lost sight of himself, it appeared to me.

Skeels: Do you remember Walter Wells?

Martin: Yes. I remember him very well. Walter Wells was an honest fellow, very inept, could not speak and did his thinking on about the same level. He was simply a fellow who had been president of a union, and he was put in because he represented that union. Walter was a good guy. He was a good fellow. He was honest; he was truthful, and he was clean. He wasn't a leader and yet he was not dishonest. He was simply incapable of doing anything; but he had integrity and honesty -- and proved that in all of his relations with me.

Skeels: What was your impression of R. J. Thomas?

Martin: Thomas, I hired him for forty dollars a week. I put him on the payroll. He agreed to go along if I put him on the payroll. And R. J. was a man of no capabilities at all. He was just a big blusterer, more like Ed Hall than anybody in the union. He was not a negotiator. He was not a bad guy; he was just simply without capabilities. I don't think for a moment that he was dishonest in the union. He simply was a fellow that was better being led than for leadership. He simply couldn't make up his own mind. He had no education and had no real native ability. My impression of him was that the reason why he was put in was because he was the least obnoxious to the communists and most easily persuaded by the CIO leaders, who want to control it. He wasn't going to kick up any fuss no matter what they said; he would take orders.

Skeels: What type of person in those days was Walter Reuther in your contacts with him?

Martin: Walter Reuther in those days was a-one-hundred-percent collaborator with the communists, no question about that at all. Walter was idealistically a Marxian socialist. Walter Reuther was a shrewd organizer. He was fundamentally interested in the working people and their problems. He was not a fake in any sense of the word. He honestly endeavored to do what he thought was best for the working people. He was a good speaker, not as good as he is now, but he was a good speaker, a good organizer and had he not been steeped in the traditions and ideals of Marxian Socialism. He would have been at that time a man I would have loved to have had on my side. In fact, I put him on the payroll myself. I paid him out of my funds, as president of the union. I paid him forty dollars a week. I got credit for getting all that money, but I paid it out to these organizers because they had to pay the president, so, I paid them out of my funds. They criticized me because I got sometimes as much as eight hundred dollars a week in expenses and salary, but I had as high as three men on the payroll -- that came out of their expenses and my expenses, besides the office help that came out of that. All of my office expenses were taken out of that, and I came out at the end of the week with nothing. I came out sometimes with forty, sometimes with fifty dollars a week, over and above my expenses, which were paid out. He was one of those who was on my payroll. I paid forty dollars out of my funds per week. About his integrity there is no question in my mind at all. He was not a racketeer; he is not a racketeer today. Walter was simply committed. He believed, as his letter from Russia indicated, that the communists had the answer and he was willing to work along with them. However, he was shrewd enough not to be identified with them. He played in the background on many of the instances. For instance, when the communists picketed my hotel, according to sworn evidence, he was one of the ringleaders in organizing the pickets, but he didn't show up. He was never a member of the Communist Party. I'm sure he never was. Although I'm also sure,

according to sworn evidence that we have, that he helped to organize many of the wildcat strikes with the communists, and that he worked with them one hundred percent. However, like Wyndham Mortimer, he was an idealist. He wasn't a conniver in the sense that he was after money or something of that sort. He had an integrity about him, like Mortimer, that was different from most people. He was honest in his sincere efforts, just as Wyndham Mortimer was, in trying to do something for the workers of the country, the people of the country. I had no quarrel with his sentiments; my only quarrel was with his methods. It's not a question of where you're going often. In this case it was. I was in disagreement with the ultimate objective and in the methods used in getting there. I wanted the same things for the working people as he did. I believe that instead of getting what he thought they'd get, that socialism would bring slavery and the denial of all the things. He was convinced otherwise, but he did it honestly. My method was that of doing it in such a way as to win confidence and appease their hatreds, and win friendships; his was the "class struggle" technique. But Walter Reuther was an idealist, and I think, perhaps, still is.

Skeels: Could you give us your impression of William Green?

Martin: William Green, to me, was a great man and a good man. He was very capable. He was a man fitted to his job. He had to get along with the Executive Council, and they were as varied as those tempestuous characters could possibly be. Bill Green was the man who, after all the fuss and all the furor had died down, got easily what he went after -- not always, but he came out with pretty well his ideas intact. He was a man of great integrity, as far as my relationship with him. He never lied to me -- he kept his word. He was definitely interested in the labor movement as such and in the automobile workers in the mass-production industries. He was committed to industrial unionism. He realized that he had a problem of winning over the Executive Council, because, after all, they paid his

salary. They were in control of the situation, not Bill Green. But altogether Bill Green was a magnificent man, in many, many ways a man I deeply respected.

Skeels: What was your impression of Philip Murray?

Martin: Philip Murray was a very shrewd man, a man who, by his confession, differed very deeply with Lewis. Yet, he was a shrewd negotiator, I think, far more shrewd than Lewis. Philip Murray was a very shrewd operator, and I think that he had a lot of integrity. I know that he was honest, an honest man, and a man of good character. He was fooled, like Lewis, by the communists. Lee Pressman was his man, not Lewis's. Lewis thought that Lee Pressman was his, but that was not so. Murray played a very smart game and was ahead of Lewis on most everything, at least that was my conviction of the situation. I think he's one of the shrewdest men in the labor movement that I ever met. I think that he was quite a bit influenced by his religious convictions. I think his integrity of character largely came from his religious convictions -- I've always felt that way.

Skeels: What was your impression of Sidney Hillman?

Martin: Oh, Sidney Hillman was the Machiavellian type. He was a conniver, a very shrewd fellow, probably the shrewdest man I've ever met in the labor movement, in the sense that he was crafty. In the overall picture he was not wise, in many instances; but he was shrewd. He was a complete dictator of his own union. He ran it with a ruthless hand. For instance, his attitude with the communist was, "We can get along with them in your union, but in my union we shoot them." And that's just what he did, according to the records -- at least what I've learned about it. He was a man who had little integrity; in fact, I don't think he cared about integrity. He had a job to do and he'd do it any way that it was handy to do. But, no doubt, he's one of the master connivers -- if that's a good word for it, that the labor movement ever had.

Skeels: You had a number of contacts with John L. Lewis. What was you feeling

about him as a person?

Martin: I liked Lewis very much personally. Regardless of whatever may have been said about Lewis, Lewis was intensely interested in the problems of the working people. He was not nearly as shrewd as he made himself out to be. He was as shrewd as a lot of people thought he was. He was no master-mind. But he was a man of great courage. His courage was the outstanding thing about him. As far as speeches were concerned and originating wise sayings, he was smart. His greatest weakness was his own inflated ego. He had quite a bit to be inflated about, but that was one of his weaknesses. That's the way his enemies finally got him out of the CIO -- by playing on his ego, making him think that he could elect the president of the United States, and whatever he said that's the way the workers would vote. And Lee Pressman kept telling him that until he actually believed it. And so he made the public statement that if Roosevelt was elected, he would resign from the CIO. Of course, I'm sure he was convinced that when he resigned, the workers would reject his resignation. Of course, Lee Pressman and Phil Murray and R. J. Thomas had it made up beforehand, so that as soon as he resigned R. J. Thomas got up and made a motion that Phil Murray be elected in his stead. And in a matter of minutes Mr. Lewis was no longer president of the CIO. So, he fell for an old trick. He wasn't nearly as thorough in his understanding and so on and appreciation of all the facts as many other of the labor leaders that I've met.

He doesn't compare, for instance, in stature with Dave Dubinsky. Dave Dubinsky is, in my opinion, the greatest labor leader since Gompers, and perhaps greater than Gompers. And Dave Dubinsky is a man who has absolute integrity. He is a union man, not a political shyster. He had foresight enough to understand the communist intrigue and told Lewis that. When Lewis said that he could control them, he told Mr. Lewis, "You're making a mistake, John; they'll control you" -- which they did. But they didn't control Dubinsky. Dubinsky built his union, took

them away from the communists. They had it lock, stock, and barrel. He beat them at every game. He built his union into a service union. People belonged to the ILGWU because they wanted to belong, not because they were forced to belong -- lots of services. He had the wisdom to work with employers, not against them. He saved the little employers, loaned them money, gave them advice, gave them technical help, hired technicians to work with them so as to save the jobs of the men and women who were working in the factory who were members of his union. When he went to employers with a suggestion, he had two ideas in mind: first, the working people themselves, and second, the industry in which they worked. He realized that democratic capitalism is a deep-seated thing, that it has a lot of vitality because it has freedom, because it plays on initiative. He was committed to that freedom and much wise than most labor leaders, in my opinion. He was head and shoulders today above the labor field.

Skeels: Now, within your organization, the UAW, there were a number of other people who have not gotten a great amount of note. There is, for example, a Mr. Michel.

Martin: "Jap" Michel was one of the very fine men. He was a man of absolute honesty and integrity. He was not too good a thinker; that is, he was not a great brain. But he was a great spirit and a man of good character and good intentions, very loyal to the trade union movement as such. He was not an idealist in the sense that he was committed to some cause other than the labor movement, but a sound, hard-working, self-sacrificing labor leader.

Skeels: A person that you've mentioned earlier that I don't think is familiar to many is a person that served with you and this was Dowell.

Martin: Elmer Dowell was one of the boys that started in the union with me. He was elected secretary when I was elected president. Elmer Dowell was a very shrewd individual. For his educational background, he was a man of exceptional

understanding. He didn't make too many major mistakes. His advice was sound. I counseled with him a lot and always respected his integrity. He was a man of complete integrity. I never knew him to do anything in all the years that I knew him that would in any way reflect on his integrity as a union leader.

Another boy that was one of the wisest of the boys that I met was a fellow by the name of Howard Thompson -- not the other Thompson that we talked of. He was from from Wisconsin. He was a General Motors' man out at the Janesville plant. He was a man of exceptional judgement. There were three men actually in the UAW that I respected their judgement more than anybody else: Jack Smith, Elmer Dowell, and Thompson -- those three. There were others, but these men were exceptional down-to-earth workers that came right out of the plant, that had exceptional ability and great integrity. They sacrificed in an unlimited fashion to the cause.

Howard Thompson had very exceptional ability. I remember when we had the strike in Flint against General Motors, the very last thing when they struck against the CIO, I fought against that for three days. I didn't want it. I knew that it was a mistake, and it would probably be a fatal mistake, and I couldn't convince the group that it was a mistake. The only man that stood by me and told everybody that it was a mistake was Howard Thompson. He saw the picture as it was. It couldn't be done that way. In many other instances his advice was always good.

Skeels: I think your appraisal is necessary here to fill out the picture for Lloyd Jones.

Martin: Lloyd Jones. Yes, I remember Lloyd quite well. Lloyd was a hillbilly. preacher. We always called him a jack-leg preacher. An ignorant, uneducated, uncouth fellow. He just got into the labor movement by accident. How he ever got elected to office is an amazing thing, but he did. He was honest. He was just an average guy that couldn't make a little speech without butchering the king's

English while he did it. He was a man that didn't have any vision or didn't have any judgement. He was just another board member, as far as that's concerned. And he had been, for some time, committed to the communist's cause. I don't think that he was probably a member of the Communist Party, but he was working with the group and was actually committed along their lines. He didn't know what it was all about, but they wanted a fight, and he wanted one too. So, he had it.

Skeels: What do you feel were your greatest accomplishments in the Auto Workers Union?

Martin: I feel that the labor movement is a necessary part of a free-enterprise system. Industrial dictatorship, as it was, without a union, is no good. No dictator is good enough to be a dictator. Much of the ills of the Depression were brought about by the sweat shop conditions; the competition which forced the cutting of wages and bringing on the Depression, the deepening of the Depression. You simply can't have a free-enterprise system without a labor movement. I helped to break up industrial dictatorship. I helped to develop the labor movement. I helped to give the workingmen their constitutional rights to organization and to collective bargaining. It was a necessary thing. It had to be done. It was right that it should be done, that there should be unions. And I feel that the thing that I did was that I helped to break up the industrial dictatorship that was no good for this country. It was in violation of the constitution. It was in violation of the individual freedoms through compulsory non-unionism, which was the rule of the day. It is a fundamental violation of individual freedom and of the constitution. And I feel that in helping to break that dictatorship and establish the rights of the working people to organization and the position of organized labor as a part of the free enterprise system is something worthwhile, and I feel that I helped to raise the dignity of the individual working in these plants. They, at least, have the rights of individuals that they're entitled to under the constitution. In any concept of individual freedom,

basically it's Christian that there are certain unalienable rights that people have as individuals, as God's creatures, and nobody ought to be empowered to abuse those rights, abridge them and take them away. There just isn't any hope of the development of freedom where that sort of thing exists. Whether it's done by industry, or whether it's done by the union, makes no difference. But I feel that that is the contribution that I helped to make and I'm glad that I had the opportunity to do it.