

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

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Interview on the Boston Store Strike of 1934

for

Service Employees International Union

Now as I understand it, you're interested in a labor dispute that occurred late in November, 1934 involving the Boston Store and the Truck Drivers Union and the Retail Clerks Union.

During September of 1934 the Retail Clerks issued a charter in the city of Milwaukee. In August the Building Service secured a charter for Local 150. There was in existence a truck drivers union, Local 347, which was in the process of organization, broken up into smaller pieces and other charters issued. After months of negotiation with the management of the Boston Store, it was finally decided due to the fact that the store refused to recognize and bargain with the union that a strike was necessary in order to accomplish a union agreement. And a strike therefore took place at 9:00 on the Friday morning after Thanksgiving in 1934. This strike ran for a period of six weeks. On the first

morning of the strike more than twelve hundred sales people, truck drivers and building service workers picketed the building and the warehouse and garage. After two weeks of striking, Federal conciliators led by Father Hoff, secured a meeting of representatives of the union and the management. Said meeting was not fruitful insofar as settling the dispute was concerned and the strike continued.

At the commencement of the second week, help from many sources was offered to the three local unions that were on strike by such groups as the Workers Alliance, a so-called organization known as the League of Women Shoppers and other groups.

Question: This Workers Alliance, was that industrial unionism?

The Workers Alliance in my opinion was an organization of unemployed workers who were attempting to better their conditions while employed on WPA projects. Many of the leaders of this Workers Alliance, in my opinion, were Communist Party members or at least were sympathetic to the Communist ideals. The representatives of this group and other groups commenced meetings with from fifteen to forty members of the Clerks Union in various kitchens and basements of the persons involved and started to sell them on the theory of the futility of continuing the American capitalistic system, that the only system that would give

the workers any favorable result was violent revolution. A government of the proletariat, patterned along the lines as espoused by Moscow . Through the activities of the^Sgroups the morale of the strikers was gradually broken down. at the end, after six weeks of winter weather, the Retail Clerks Union had disintegrated to the extent that a few hundred of them were still left on strike. Between the persons attempting to sell the members of the Clerks Union foreign ideologies and good old Wisconsin winter, you can't really blame these women who knew very little about a labor union and who were very ill prepared to walk a picket line during a bitter Wisconsin winter for capitulating and going back to work due to the many fine promises that the management of the store gave to them.

Question:

What was Turner doing during this period?

Turner, during this time, was president of the Retail Clerks Union, I believe the number was 1284. This strike drew national attention. A reporter from leading newspapers all over the country were in Milwaukee at various times, covering all phases of the strike, including labor leaders of note among whom was Sidney Hillman from the Amalgamated Clothing Workers. Various Federal officials in the picture, were/attempting to effectuate a settlement. The Post Office Department was interested due to the fact that the

management, when they experienced great difficulty in making deliveries, attempted to use the substation Post Office in the store in order to send out parcels to Parcel Post. The entire labor movement gave wholehearted support to this long, drawn out strike. The International Clerks Union had representatives in the city during this time, chief of whom was one of the vice presidents, Mac Seedy(?) from Belleville, Illinois.

Question: What before you started on that, when you first came in? That should also

You mean about the Clerks Union getting started? Well the Clerks Union at that time - prior to that there had been numerous charters issued during a period of years here. They never did catch on and never did maintain a going organization. But in September of 1934 clerks employed in Sears Roebuck's northside store and southside store, both, with the initiative coming from the northside store, did organize into a union and did petition for a charter which was granted. The president of the union was Phil Turner, who is now Vice President of the International Union, a very dynamic sort of individual who by trade was a tile setter but because there was no building construction going on at the time, had to secure employment at Sears Roebuck

sporting goods department. Under his leadership this union grew by leaps and bounds. I was present at a meeting at the Odd Fellows/^{Temple}at which six hundred people were initiated in one evening. This was early in October, 1934.

Question: All of these people Boston
 No, they were from Boston stores - Gimbels, Schusters and Sears and Roebucks.

Question: Did you have a closed shop or...
 We didn't have an agreement. Our first effort for an agreement was at the Boston Store. There was a long discussion as to who was going to be confronted with the first demands as far as a union agreement was concerned but it was agreed that the Boston Store was the best organized store and because they had been doing business for years with the Milwaukee Building Trades and Construction Council, it was figured that they were the people who would be most susceptible to doing business with a union due to the fact that Schusters and Gimbels and Sears at that time did not employ union building tradesmen. The Boston Store was the only one that employing them.

Question: And were you working at the Boston Store?
 No, I just on August first of that year left the city of Milwaukee where I was employed as a foreman in charge of construction in the parts department where I had been employed for fifteen years. But on - when I went to work

for my Local 17 as a business representative it was with the understanding that I would spend some of my time trying to organize building service workers employed in private lines of endeavor. Because up until this time the only building service local in Milwaukee County was the one that consisted exclusively of park employees, Local 17. On August 27th the Local 150 charter was issued by the Union. And naturally, in our organization efforts we organized the building service workers in the Boston Store, in Gimbels and some in Schusters and in office buildings.

The big strike at the Boston Store nullified all efforts of organization. We can truthfully say that at the end of six long weeks the agreement, which was an open shop proposition that we went back to in the Boston Store situation, was not as fruitful as it might have been and did not hold out much hope for our members or prospective members as far as the union being a going organization was concerned. The fact of the matter is with the guarantees that were not made whole by representatives of the government and by the management of the Boston Store, it was a very poor settlement.

Question: Did all three unions get a contract?

All three unions had a memorandum of agreement. All of our people went back to work without penalty and we did get increases in pay and while my organization didn't

fare too badly. In fact, it fared very well. There was terrific heat after they went back to work. I. Stanley Stone(?) who was then chairman of the Board and the general manager of the Boston Store made a hobby of collecting union books, particularly so from who were given promises by him in individual interviews that if they turned in their union books they'd be taken care of. And the union over a period of time did, to a degree, disintegrate. The Retail Clerks had extreme difficulty. Clerks that had worked in one department for many years prior to the strike, on being taken back were transferred to another department. And anyone who knows the department store operation knows that a person who has worked for many years in silver and who knows the line has an extremely difficult time as a salesperson in yard goods. And vice versa - a person who worked in yard goods certainly has a difficult time trying to sell furniture or silverware. And all of those things did take place.

Unfair labor practice charges were filed with the Compliance Division of the National Industrial Recovery Act but sorry to say, that Act was declared invalid through the Chapter 6 case and therefore the government never went into the charges of the union in reference to unfair labor practice. And the union, so to speak, died with the of the NIRA as unconstitutional law.

Question: To what extent did the store operate, especially from the figures that you gave that twelve hundred went out on strike, I would gather that you must have had almost 100% success in

The first week of the strike the store operated with only a skeleton division of part-time extras, mostly older people. But as the strike gained momentum they gained more converts. All housewives primarily were replaced with the wives of city-county employees who went in there to work, primarily the police and fire departments.

Question: Wives of city and police and firemen. What attitude about the strike did the city administration take?

The city administration was very sympathetic. Max Raskin(?) was City Attorney and naturally we were in one argument after another with the police department as to techniques and everything else, although there was an agreement before we started picketing as to how the picketing was to be conducted. Namely that we would walk in a circle and we would not walk across any doorways, that we would leave plenty of room on the sidewalk for any pedestrians that might want to go in. From time to time there would be zealots who came down to help us picket, most of whom in my opinion were communistically inclined. They used to try to start fracas. On the Friday before Christmas the Federated Trades Council asked all of its

affiliated unions to help us picket. At 2:00 on that Saturday afternoon there were more than ten thousand pickets around that store by actual count of the police department. In this group you can imagine that very nearly every group was represented, radical and otherwise. At one stage of the picketing that afternoon persons in the lines had convinced clerks that in order to stop people from coming into the store - there was snow on the ground and there was a lot of slop in the doorways - approximately sixteen clerks laid down in the doorway on 4th and Wisconsin Avenue and the strikers dared the police department to take the girls away. By seeing this situation develop I immediately made the girls get back into the picket line and picket the way we always did, not across doorways, but to walk in a circle near the store window. Then Captain _____ and the deputy inspector, Joe _____, attempted to get the girls to get up prior to my intervention and they refused. The picket line immediately around that doorway were in my opinion persons who would like to have started a revolution that afternoon and had they started, you can rest assured that there would have been a good riot because there weren't enough police to take care of the situation with ten thousand people around the store.

During that particular afternoon there wasn't any room on the sidewalk for pedestrians. The pedestrians

had to be on the other side of the street or walk in the road because the sidewalks were completely filled with pickets and it was a situation that I can honestly say I don't think the police department could have controlled had it got out of hand at any time.

Question: What about deliveries to the store?

Well they didn't have any trouble getting deliveries into the store because they had plenty of police to open the way. There was no effort made to block the alley. They could back the trucks in. They had a crew...

Question: (inaudible)

... picketing the warehouse and they had extreme difficulty in/deliveries of merchandise to persons' homes after they made the purchases. The reason they had difficulties was that they had trouble getting strike breakers because they used that the strike breakers they had were loyal enough to them to bring merchandise from the warehouse to the store and were very few insofar as getting people to deliver anywhere.

During that summer there were many strikes in Milwaukee. And it just so happened that prior to the Boston Store striking that a strike of about three months at the Campbell Laundry had just been settled. The Campbell Laundry had developed a crew of strikebreakers who made these laundry deliveries in these small trucks - some thirty or forty people - young husky unemployed kids going

to school or otherwise not working at all, who immediately went over to the Boston Store and went to work for them, and they kept the goods coming from the warehouse to the store. But they weren't able to get as many persons as they needed in order to make home deliveries.

After the second week of the strike there was a meeting arranged with the deputy inspector of the police department whereby the unions involved informed him that between the hours of seven and nine on the employees' entrance on Fourth Street - that we would picket across the entrance - that after nine o'clock when the store opened that the pickets would be withdrawn from the entrance. Deputy Inspector of Police, Joseph refused to agree with this type of picketing. And so a test was made. And on a Monday morning on about the fourteenth of December, eighty pickets covered the entrance on Fourth Street where employees, under the normal operation of the store, were required to enter and punch time clocks from this entrance. The police immediately demanded that that kind of picketing stop. We refused to stop that type of picketing, insisting that it was our right as long as the picketing was peaceful and walked(?) across the doorway. Several arrests were made although the case never went to a court trial to determine whether or not that would be done.

But during minor fracasess that occurred, one girl

gril picket received a brain concussion due to being hit with a policeman's billy club. Several of the persons involved in the strike felt that the policeman guilty of this act should be prosecuted although no prosecution was ever forthcoming and the young lady turned out to be o.k. But it was interesting to note that during this activity that the YMCA housed some thirty to forty policemen in their gymnasium and who were available for any disturbance that might have occurred.

In the time during this strike most of the policemen were very courteous and were very easy to get along with and there was, considering the number of people involved, in this dispute very little, if any, disturbance of the peace. In fact, there was no violence of any kind. There were a few exceptions where seeing these policemen after many months of picket duty, long hours day in, day out, without any days off, because during this year of 1934 there were approximately 104 strikes in the city of Milwaukee, all of which required extra police work, (there were no extra policemen to do it?). This being now late in December of 1934, one can readily see where these policemen who had been working these long hours without any extra pay, without any days off, were really on edge.

Question: The police then did break up your picketing of the employees' entrance after a few days?

Well they broke it up within an hour.

Question: Within an hour? What happened?

Because they got the call for more than the thirty or forty reserves that they had in the YMCA gym. The thing started to get a little out of hand...

Question: Didn't the mayor have any control over the police?

We never went to the mayor. The only dealings we had with the police were directly with Chief who was very fair and who in my opinion was the best chief of police Milwaukee ever had. Because when we finally went to him with the complaint where management of the store had given all the policemen Christmas gifts, he immediately caused an investigation to be made and I imagine that his department did raise a lot of hell. Because shortly thereafter there wasn't any more crabby policemen on the picket line. They were all happy and jovial and even the few that used to try to pick fights were either happy or they weren't there anymore.

During all of this picketing - six long weeks - when arrests were made, none of the strikers were found guilty of any charges that were lodged against them. And I believe that there were some thirty people arrested during this period, including one building service worker who was charged with hitting an officer, which went to a jury trial. The building service worker that was arrested weighed one hundred and forty pounds and the officer, Sgt. , weighed two hundred and forty pounds.

And the jury, upon viewing the two persons, just felt it was preposterous to think that this two hundred and forty pound sergeant was hit by a hundred and forty pound building service worker. And after deliberating three ^{unanimous} minutes, returned the/verdict of not guilty.

This was one incident where one police officer in my opinion went out of his way to make trouble. We did have some other people who came to help us in these picket lines and on several occasions certain police officers made demands (me?) and others who were leaders in the strike to remove certain individuals that they pointed out that were walking in the picket line, saying that they were Communists. Our reply always was that everyone that was in that picket line who was a member of the Truck Drivers or Building Services or Retail Clerks Union had a union button on and that they had our permission to remove from the picket line anybody who didn't have an identifying button. They at no time removed anybody from the picket line except to make an arrest. And I distinctly remember the Saturday before Christmas when Harold Christofo came down to help us. He immediately started to walk in the picket line at Fourth and Wisconsin Avenue and shortly thereafter one of the bay windows crashed. They found a brick wrapped in a Milwaukee Journal and they took Christofo off on the premise that he was guilty of disorderly conduct. He was then defended immediately and bail was put

by the Milwaukee Civil Liberties Defense Committee and Max _____ represented him as attorney. All of this unbeknownst to us. And it was quite a revelation some ten days later when we got a bill from Max Gilean(?) for attorney's services representing Christofo in this arrest, for \$150 and it came at a very inopportune time due to the fact that the union didn't have fifteen cents, much less \$150.

Question: How did the people in Milwaukee respect the picket line?

I think in the main that we had good results from the picket line. I think the sales were down as much as 70 and 80 percent. And the Boston Store for years was considered the outstanding store in Wisconsin and the leader in sales for many, many years. I think if you would check with the record that for seven years after that strike that they were not again back in their previous position of being the the leading store in the state as far as sales are concerned. That Gimbels and Schusters surpassed them in sales. Although this is a matter that should be checked in the actual records if that's possible.

Question: How did it finally end up on the picketing? You say there was one case that went to trial.

Oh, there was one _____ that went to trial, a jury trial. The others - on a settlement being made - I think all of them were with the exception of one or two

cases were ruled out due to the fact that the thing was over and everything was getting along pretty good. So they were all... I don't believe there was any serious charges against any pickets - that is, more serious than disorderly conduct. With the exception of the one charge of hitting and resisting an officer was larged against that particular fellow.

Question: Did you have any strike fund that was contributed or did the for relief at that time?

I think that 90% of the people who were on strike for six weeks did get county relief(?). As far as the union was concerned, we didn't have any money when we started and we didn't have any when we finished. The Clerks had some money due to the fact that they were growing so rapidly. They were collecting initiation fees, \$1.00 or \$2.00, did have some money. The Truck Drivers had some money. But during this period of time other unions were very good to us and made donations. We ran a benefit dance at the Ballroom at which we raised approximately \$3,000. We had what we called a Beggars Committee, made up of women clerks who went around to various merchants and we ran a soup kitchen in the Odd Fellows Temple at Tenth and Well Street and we used to cook up this soup and whatnot and then we served the picket line from the meeting hall in the Commerce Building. On Fourth and Wells.

So we had hot soup and hot sandwiches for the strikers all day long and - we used the kitchen up in the Odd Fellows Temple. And we had a pep meeting every night. When we stopped picketing at six o'clock we would march right up Wisconsin Avenue to Tenth Street and then we would have a pep meeting in the hall at the Odd Fellows Temple on Tenth Street, between Wisconsin and Wells. And the morale of the people was good with the exception that when we had these here people who were schooling - The Clerks Union - how to properly run a strike and so on and so forth and all those ideas that there became a lot of arguing back and forth on the floor at these various meetings and some of the people who didn't want to get involved just got disgusted and went back to work or went back to the small towns they came from in order to come to Milwaukee to get to get these clerk jobs.

Question:

Who brought in the schooling

No, the Commies brought it in themselves. Hell that was meat duck soup for them. When you seen all them (birds?) and how they do it and the League of Women Shoppers. The greatest collection of women who never learned how to wash dishes you ever saw in your life. In my opinion at least. I told them to go and mind their own business. They were very insulted. So shortly thereafter I went back on the picket line and one of the messengers came over and said that I was to come back over to the hall in the Commerce building and

and it was packed with clerks who were very (incensed?) that I had insulted these society women by telling them to go home and mind their own business. And they insisted that I go and apologize to them and I refused to. They were a bunch of busybodies. In my opinion they were all disciples of Joe Stalin and they could go to hell as far as I was concerned. Off the record I'll tell you who these women were too.

Question: Now this wasn't the League of Women Voters.

No, it was the League of Women Shoppers. Hell, these Commies never needed any - we were fighting to hang on to the manufacturing and trades every day.

Question: Who were they?

I won't speak for the record on account of the libel laws.

Question: Well now on the actual negotiations, what was the breakdown there? You spoke of months of negotiation.

Prior to the strike we were - negotiations went on for about two months.

Question: didn't meet with the representatives

Oh sure, they called the truck drivers and our group right there was no argument about us. They agreed that we had a majority. They knew because they polled every member. But they weren't so sure about the Clerks and they wanted to argue that point out.

Question: So apparently they made an offer to the Clerks to hold an election.

Yeah, but that was unbeknownst to us until two weeks after the strike was in effect. And then of course it was too late. The vice president of the Clerks' International Union kept this letter from the Store in confidence and divulged it to no one.

Question: And he participated in the negotiations?

Oh yes, he was in the negotiations. That's right, he was here helping the Clerks try to negotiate...

Question: That was (Turner?)

Turner, yes. And they had a committee of about ten members. When they went in there, it was really a hoe-down.

Question: Did you sit in also?

(End side 1)

Cooper:

We met separately. Building Services met with management separately. Clerks met separately. Maybe the Clerks would have a meeting in the morning at ten o'clock. We would meet at two and the Truck Drivers would meet with them at four. The Store took the position that until the Clerks thing was settled on representation that they just couldn't deal with us. They said after we get that settled we'll deal with you. But - they wouldn't get it settled.

Question: They would have been better off dealing with you at the start then.

Cooper:

They'd have been a hell of a lot better off. They
They lost a lot of money. We lost some money. We went
on strike - on the first day, of the Building Service,
we had 56 people come out on strike.

Question:

Out of the Boston Store alone.

Cooper:

That's right. At the end of six weeks we had 54
left. Two people we sent back to work the third day of
the strike when the store tried to inject a jurisdiction
question on account of one of these persons was a fellow
who *went around to see if the radiator valves were packed*
They claimed that we had no business having him in our
union, that he should be in the Steamfitters. We said
"good, we'll give him to the Steamfitters." So we sent
him back to work. The other fellow was the kind of guy
handy with a saw and hammer and in addition to the nine
carpenters that the Boston Store had, they seemed to use
him for some extra little carpenter work. So we said
"good, we'll send him back and he can go into the Carpenters
Union." So we were 100% with six weeks on the picket line
as far as Building Service. And so were the Truck Drivers.
The defalcation, as far as the union was concerned, took
place within the Clerk's ranks - in view of the fact of
what happened - the sabotage and the boring from within by
Communists plus the cold weather certainly didn't help
to keep their morale up. For instance, we had one big fat
slob whose father and her were often mentioned

as being very Pinkie-minded get up in the meeting - she wasn't even a member of the union - get up in the meeting and start poppin' off about everybody in the AF of L was a racketeer. And that if they wanted to get a job done that they had to take control of the union. So I got up and asked whether she was a member or not. She admitted she wasn't. So I insisted then that she be put out of the meeting. We had no more trouble with her. Now off the record I'll tell you who she was if you want to know it.

Off the record sequence
Question: *And again* elected from this area?

Cooper: Yeah in Detroit and Turner went there and Turner got lucky and *Turner had* the largest individual membership in any city that the Clerks got into in Detroit right now.

Turner's operated out of Detroit ever since.

Question:

In the fruit stores, I suppose?

Cooper:

Oh, department stores, *fruit stores, everything,* drug stores,

Question:

He You don't have communists... *department stores?*

Cooper:

He We've got some.

Question:

He might have some little ones.

Cooper:

He's Got Sears. Got Montgomery Ward.

Three years ago *I helped him out,* hand out handbills at J. L. Hudson in Detroit. He talked me into *handing out* handbills and I wound up there one night, handing them out when they came out of work.

Question: Right back to the old days, huh?

Cooper

Oh hell, I was picketing *Hillger* the Wednesday morning before - I was picketing *Hillger* at seven o'clock that Wednesday morning because they didn't have any other picket and I was picketing myself

A charwoman joined our union so they fired her. So what the hell. We decided to picket them. We unemployed and what not and then there were a couple guys supposed to go over there and do the picketing didn't come so I picketed - until nine thirty til the others came.

I got a little fresh air.

Question: to me because I was with the Retail Clerks in Colorado - May Company(?) strike - I always thought after that

Cooper: We put \$4500 We wound up with nothing. Same as the Clerks. Yeah, department stores are rough. But I'll tell you ...

Question: I wish to hell somebody who'd been through this one had been out there.

Well, what good would that do? I'm going to tell you something. Unless our method of living and our society picks up I don't think you'll ever see the time when you'll have a successful union organization of department store employees. For this reason - the very premise on which many of the people in there are working

is entirely foreign to the building of a good union organization. You've got the younger element are in there working and they're trying to keep body and soul together on the miserable wages they get and they're working to live. They're about thirty percent. The seventy percent are all married old bags who are just working to spend what they make and put it on their back. And they're the ones that'll kill you every time. And on top of that - of course, shut that thing off, I don't want to put this on the record.

Question: (inaudible)

No, it ain't. These department stores, you know...

Question:

Aren't your porters *good stuff?*

Yeah, but you can't organize them in department stores.

Question:

(inaudible)

Question:

Out in Denver, boy, these porters are the guts of the union.

You can get them here too. But look what you're up against. Look how many cleaning women you've got in a store. To do their dusting and all that. And you can't (get that many?) jobs. You just don't get them - if you once get them they're good stickers. But in the beginning, getting them is just one tough - and furthermore, you get all the competition. If you go in there and if you start, the Clerks get wind of it and then you've got to get them in and Christ, the clerks never get a

you wind up (in a beef?). A couple years ago...

Question: *The department stores* don't have to recognize you.
They can claim you're in a

Oh, no, we could get that

Question: take care of that?

Three years ago it looked like Schusters was ready
to go. One of my guys (inaudible)

So the clerks that were interested
started an organizing committee and we started
handed out handbills
work on all that stuff. We did that for three months

What're you gonna get? You're just gonna get a good
lickin'.

But while we were doing this. The stores voluntarily came
the forty-hour week. Five cents an hour raise
for everybody. Last summer, and the year before even,

You know, I told him off.
We won't put on a drive until/enough of you people are
ready. ^{we know} pay your initiation fee. When you get
enough of them organized then we'll come in and we'll

In the meantime,
We're not gonna go in there. Just a year ago (name)
came to me - (He's now?) an international representative
for the Clerks in this district here. He says "Bill,
we can get them now." I said go peddle your fish. You
go and get these people to pay initiation fees. When
you've got fifty paid initiation fees then we'll start
organizing them.

Question: simply has not got the staff to handle
any thing as big as he starts.

Nobody has. (name) goes out into the small towns
and he organizes anything and everything. But you can't
organize Schusters, Gimbels and Morrises(?). What I want
from them, I get from them.

I have no trouble with them. Schusters, here a while
ago, I had a guy, (name), used to be in our
union, contractor. We threw him out because he wouldn't
behave. So we started to make a
of him. We would up with this guy

Got the injunction against us and the State Board stopped
us from picketing (because it wasn't a duly?) certified
organization.

and the State Labor Board enjoined us with an order -

But it was all out and over - I just said to Schuster, "That's long enough now. We don't picket you anymore. But brother, I'm gonna tell you, you're not gonna have nothing but trouble if you keep that bum washing your windows." He said "Well what can we do? We're in the middle." I said "you got there, you get out." Now you get some union window cleaners, that's all I ."

They got union window cleaners. I didn't care about , I wanted to put the heat on and get on with the deal. I ain't worried about the Clerks or anybody else. They'll do business with us.

Question: So Schusters got union window cleaners. Gimbels, Boston Store, got contractors doing the work for more than ten years.

So I don't worry about it.

We're getting escalators now, we don't even have any elevators no more.

Question:

And Boston Stores, today if we had them all, we'd have *them pouring in (?)* and for scales less than what we give the other

Question:

Well you see, I don't have any *time* to work on. *it* Maybe if I was a local business agent I'd be around giving them a bad time. I think I could do business

(of a nuisance value ?) because...

Question: Well you're a small group

For years, when I didn't have anything else to do, I used to aggravate the Boston/^{Store} - by walking in and letting one of them dumpy floorwalkers see me and they start to talk to everybody. They used to have - I'd have six people following me. And I used to get a great big kick out of that. For crying out loud. Because they always watched me. Old John Birch was the building superintendent and when he died he was general manager of the joint. Why John Birch used to throw a fit every-time he heard I was in the store. They'd call him

let him know I was in there talking (to someone?). If I went into the shop *that guy had* people watching me. Hell, if I time now I'd enjoy nothing but roaming through the joint talking to some of the people I know - hello, how are you - knowing that (they'll be ^{ye'} *hyped* fired?) and there'll be *department* heads all the way through - they're just crazy.

Question: Are the strikers still in there?

Oh yeah

I was there the they put these new escalators in the Boston Store. One of my best members was *a starter over there* during the strike. Now she's still working. When we/^{first} had that strike she had just got married. She was going to have a kid and then she wasn't

going to work anymore. She never had no kid and she was still working, up until nine months ago when they put the escalators in. Now she's finding out. They got the escalators done and they canned her. I told her. I was in there one day and I said "What's all this buisness?" "Oh, they're going to have escalators." "When those escalators go in, you're through." Oh, no. No, no. I'm going to be here the rest of my life." That's true., I went in there after the escalators were in and I talked to this little gal and I said "Where's (name) ?" "Oh, she got fired." She worked all them years. When she first got married and was going to have kids and all that - she never had no kids - she's still working. Hell, that's seventeen years ago. Seventeen years ago now. Right about this time of year seventten years ago it was colder than . That Friday when we had all those people out, and Saturday? That Friday was cold, terrifically cold. On Saturday morning it was about zero and it was snowing. On Sunday we had 400 of our people home sick in bed with colds or pneumonia. These kids didn't have clothes for that stuff. Don't forget, in that picket line we had about five women to every guy. I don't know how the hell many of them we had home sick. There were three doctors in town who took care of our sick people for free. We had a registered nurse who was working

over there and we opened up a hospital in her office in the Commerce Building and we had a couple cots in there for some of these gals that came in and she'd give them aspirin and a shot

We really had this thing organized. No kidding. This beautiful blonde dame, a registered nurse - she's working out at _____, a county institution. / If anybody _____ or anything happened to them she could take care of them. We had three or four doctors that made home calls free of charge and what not, would come down to the office and spend an hour in there and _____ send these gals in that had aches and pains and he'd write prescriptions for them. Oh, we had a hell of a deal over there, including - that soup kitchen - you should have seen that, that was something. _____ come and line up, we'd dip this soup out of great big cans like they have in the army. We'd haul it down from up there - we'd cook it up there and haul it down here in big cans--dish that stuff out - them gals had never eaten so well in their life.

Question: Did the State Federation do anything during the strike? You mean as far as money? No, the State Federation in them days didn't have any money. They weren't paid _____ hand in all their salaries - they didn't have enough. We first paid (name) _____ and _____ (name)

salaries in about 1939 that they had coming from 1934-- by special act of the convention up in . We had money in the treasury then and we voted at the convention. They wouldn't take it so we introduced a resolution (that we take all the back pay?). Where their salary was supposed to have been about \$60 a week, they took \$30. That's all they figured the traffic could bear. We put through this deal that they had another \$30 coming for all them weeks, now take it. I'm positive it was at the 1939 convention when we did that. Because they wouldn't take the pay. So we made it mandatory that they take it. Of course, it could have been the 1940 convention too. I don't know, it was either 1939 or 1940.

Question: Well what about your own local

Answer: Oh, hell, right after that every guy we took on licked us. Jesus Christ, did we get licked. We just couldn't break any of these guys. We couldn't break through til 1936 - we finally broke through, we got a closed shop agreement in December of 1936 with all the theaters in town. There were twenty-six independents that we didn't have in the set up.

Question: You were working as a business agent during all this time.

Answer: Without pay. The union didn't have any money. We were lucky (inaudible)

Question: employee all that time?

Answer: No, no. I left the city August 1934. But I had a union card from my Local 17, see. For being their business representative. And of course, when I get this charter for 150 I said to 17, "Now I'm going to spend half my time working for them so cut my pay in half." Which was a big mistake because I lived on half pay for three years.

Question:

Answer: That was the group. The owner was
At that time there was only one in there and that was the city park employees exclusively.

Question: City parks.

Answer: That's all. That's what I come from originally.

Question: When did you organize that?

Answer: That was organized before me. They got their charter in 1923. I joined in 1926. I was the president for five years prior to them blackjacking me into becoming the business agent. I took a year's leave of absence from the city to be the business agent. And at the end of the year I want you to know I was ready to go back to work for the city because I was hungry and I had spent most of the money I had - my own - and my wife was raising a little objection. She didn't mind too much me being out every night of the week and all day long. But she couldn't understand why we had to use our money

to finance the union. And a certain labor leader (in this man's town?) - I'd got in his hair because I got a guy fired and so I and this guy that got fired went over and picketed an office building. We should have had thirty more people on the inside that so-called would be under our union agreement that would get out there with us. But they weren't so this guy got involved through a couple of people he had in this building

So finally he got real pissed off and one day and he said "Bill you had a good job over at the city. For Christ sake why don't you go back to the city?"