# A CONVERSATION WITH DAVE MILLER

Daniel Brooks
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Brooks: Since most biographies start from the beginning, why don't we just start from the beginning? Why don't you just begin telling me where you were born and what your parents were like, if your family was rich or poor?

Miller: Well Dan, I'm pleased at getting this opportunity to lay out for a young man like you some understanding of the struggles we've gone through, having reached the age of 80 years of age. I was born in Dundee, Scotland on the fifth of February in 1891.

Brooks: Where is Dundee?

Miller: Dundee is in Scotland—on the east coast of Scotland. It was a well-known textile town where they manufactured the raw jute that was shipped from India. It's converted into burlap cloth and in fact eventually it was refined to the point where it was sold to America as approximately "wool", so well refined that many suits of clothes were made from jute that people thought were actually sheeps-wool, you know.

Anyway, we were raised in that atmosphere, having gone to work. My father was a common laborer; I was the oldest of a family of six and started school at 5 years of age. An attempt was made to have me go to a parochial school, which I resented. The rest of my brothers and sisters were raised in an Episcopalian parochial school; I ran away from it and finally they had to send me to a public school.

Brooks: How come you ran away? How come you didn't like it?

Miller: I didn't like going to church in the morning. Consequently I went to public school and remained in public school I reached I think about the fifth grade. I was around twelve years of age then. Under the law, you were entitled then to get an exemption from school on half-time which enabled you to go to work in the mill for one day and to school the next day—provided you got a pass from your foreman. So you had to alternate between school until you reached the age of thirteen. Then at thirteen you were free to leave school entirely and go on full time. I worked then around

the mills from one mill to another. I remember one particular occasion we were being bossed by a foreman who had had his training in India. He was a Scotsman who went down to help develop the industry in India, and he had the belief that he could treat us kids in the mills the way he treated the natives out there. So I think that was the first strike I was involved in, around thirteen years of age.

Brooks: Did you have a union at that point?

Miller: No, no, no, we had no union, not at that particular time. But we marched from my mill down to the mill where my father worked and my father was— well he was liberally inclined but he didn't like that kind of stuff by young people. So he come out and I was scared to go home that night. We danced around the bottom in the middle of the street and we pulled all the kids out of his mill and we shut that down. Anyway, that was the first instance of conflict about jobs and oppression—kicking you around, foremen kicking you around. They used their feet too—they didn't use their hands to slap you, they just kicked you around in those days.

So then I saw it was necessary to get a job where I would have to earn more money, so I went away down to city hall. Our transportation system was owned by the city—tramcars, streetcars, electric streetcars. So I bluffed my way into a job as a conductor. I was around fourteen then and I got passed for anything between eighteen and twenty. They didn't ask for any birth records—

Brooks: You were supposed to be eighteen?

Miller: Yeah, yeah, yeah. So I went on the streetcars—that was in 1905. Then about 1906, less than a year there when I realized that the conditions there were not as good as they should be. So five of us got together, all men that could have been old enough to be my father. They were liberally-minded too. So we organized a group and we applied to the headquarters of the Amalgamated Association of Tram and Vehicle Workers in Manchester, England for a charter to organize streetcar-men in my home-

town. We got it, and we became the first union of transport workers to be organized in Scotland. I was elected their first chairman (of the local union).

Brooks: How old were you then?

Miller: Between sixteen and seventeen.

Brooks: You were chairman of the union?

Miller: Yeah. Again, I was presumed to be much older. So then that enabled me to be able to come down to England—to Manchester, London, various places in England for the meetings of the executive board of the Amalgamated Association.

So , we continued, Dan, until 1914. I'd been courting my wife under a false age too, you know. She didn't know my age until we got married, otherwise she might not have married me. We've been 58 years together though. Anyway, we got married in 1914. We couldn't get away when we got married in January because I was involved in negotiations trying to get the establishment of a straight nine-hour day.

Brooks: What was the situation at that time?

Miller: Oh, they had scattered shifts, you know. You never knew just how many hours you were going to work every day. Sometimes you'd start at six o'clock in the morning and not get finished until midnight, but you'd have time off during the day. What they call split shifts, you know. We were dissatisfied with that and also with the wages, and only three days was allowed vacation-time every year, only three days.

Brooks: What were the wages? Is it all possible to give me a comparison?

Miller: Well, the wages for public transportation at that time were about equivalent with the best that a skilled-man could earn. Oh, about 32 shillings a week—that would be about seven dollars.

Brooks: You said you left the textile mills because you needed more money. How much did you get in the mills?

Miller: Oh, we only made about fourteen shillings, the equivalent of $2 or $2.50 a week for a sixty-hour week. So that when I went on the streetcars I jumped from that kind of money to 32 shillings a week.

Brooks: With the prices at that time, was that enough to give you a living?

Miller: Oh, we lived very poorly, very poorly, just basic diets—oatmeal, vegetables, very little luxuries, very little provision for vacation time. If you got fifteen or twenty miles from your hometown, you thought you were really going abroad. So that there was very little luxury in those days in my early life.

Brooks: What if you got sick?

Miller: Well now, I could come to that, I could come to that, because I was involved in 1911 (with setting up national health insurance). The medical service was more-or-less maintained by charitable contributions, and doctors just scratched a living. People were so poor that they probably would pay the baker, the grocer, and the butcher, but they would forget all about their doctor. And the doctors were really in a bad way.

So in 1911 a bill was introduced by Lloyd George, the Liberal Prime Minister, projecting a national health insurance plan. So being a delegate from Scotland I was called upon to go down to Cardiff in the South Wales and sit in on a national conference of government, employers, insurance syndicates, and the medical fraternity to build a structure for the application of this law which went into effect in 1912. The machinery had to be set up for (it). Under that law there was only sixteen million out of an approximate fifty million people covered by that law. So it was in full operation then by the end of 1912. My daughter was born in 1915—we were married in 1914 and she was born in 1915. She's a national health insurance baby—we got thirty shillings, seven dollars, for her when she

was born, a maternity payment. So that was the beginning of national health insurance.

Incidental to that, why 35 years had to elapse before it became, under Nye Bevin who was the leader of the Labor Party and would have been Prime Minister of the Labor government had he lived—but he died. So he got a bill passed converting the national health insurance into national health security. From the cradle to the grave with the elimination of the contributory aspect of it, so that every part of the administration to this day of national health in Britain is maintained from general revenue. There's no contributions made from workers' paychecks.

Brooks: I have a potentially embarrassing question. My father mentioned that he thought that at one time you were a prohibitionist.

Miller: Ah yes. Oh, we were both— mother and I met in the prohibition movement. One of the first movements we became associated with. She did along with her brother in the Good Temple Order: "Taste not, Touch not, Handle not" that demon liquor. So, she belonged to the Good Temple Order.

In my very early days, of course, I was raised in the Episcopal Sunday School and so on, and I belonged to the Temperance Society of the church. My father became a very ardent prohibitionist. My mother used to tell me that he was quite a playboy when he was a young man—a great singer, a wonderful singer—and he always used to be available for entertaining and drank pretty heavy. And the day I was born, I suppose he came home and took a look at me and went away and got drunk and stayed drunk for three days, and then he swore off liquor. And he swore offliquor as tight as any Billy Graham or anybody could ask you to pledge yourself. He wouldn't even allow a glass to be used at New Year or Christmas tim You wanted to drink, you had to take it in a teacup—anything that was symbolical of a saloon.

Yeah, we were in the Prohibition Party. As a matter of fact, the Prohibition Party ran a man in my hometown for Parliament who was only qualified to be a city councilman, but they ran him for Parliament—who do you think he defeated? Winston Churchill. He sure did—Winston Church-

ill had been shipped up from Manchester after being defeated there and came to Dundee thinking it was going to be a soft seat.

Edwin Scrymger (beat him). We sent him over in 1910 to America to attend an international temperance conference. And he made a contract to bring back home with him Carrie A. Nation—have you heard of her?—a woman who symbolized the busting of blind pigs in the local option states like Kansas with hatchets. We brought her over to Scotland to the most drunken city in the world, Dundee, my own hometown. There were about ten saloons and half-a-dozen pawnbrokers for every church in town. Anyway, we got her over there to carry on a campaign for prohibition. And Annie (his wife)—she knitted, she sewed, she made all kinds of things, and I went around (selling them). She brought a wagonload, she brought a shipload of little pearl hatchets, symbolical of the hatchets she used to smash blind pigs, and they were made into broaches. We kids would go around selling them. First of all, she used to organize all the urchins—I mean the poor kids, Kids in those days who sold papers were not like the kids here. The poorest of the poor sold papers—

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At this point, some of the tape was lost.

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Brooks: I wanted to ask you to finish telling me on the tape what you were telling me last night about Prohibition. When the tape ended, you were telling me about Carrie Nation, and then you mentioned that she wasn't very successful in Dundee.

Miller: Carrie A. Nation was a person who was more-or-less like a—I would relate her to a Billy Sunday or Amy Mc Pherson, a famous evangelist, the latest one Billy Graham. I think they're more-or-less providing an alibi for the perpetuation of a system which has become somewhat decadent in its operation. So that when she came to Britain, she came on that one-plank platform of eliminating from Britain and particularly from Scotland one of the main industries, the manufacture of alcoholic beverages. Very naturally she failed because she didn't even have the support of the churches for absolute prohibition because of the economic factor. Had they eliminated the manufacture of liquor it would have removed a very vital attribute to their economy and would also remove the potential of being able to manu-

facture munitions for the wars that Britain was involved in. So that consequently she ultimately failed.

We were a bunch of dedicated people who had never had the time or opportunity to really analyze the situation, until I've related to you the experience I had in being brought face-to-face with the question of what are the actual causes of poverty, and I expanded my mind to the point that I began to realize that it was a world-wide situation that emanated from the empire-building potential of Great Britain to spread its influence throughout the world, and eventually did build an empire upon which the sun never set. (After the tape had run out, Dave described an experience he had at a temperance meeting where one skeptic asked him why, if it was true that drunkeness was the cause of poverty, the soberest country in the world—India—was also among the poorest) But in the meantime, while building the empire, the people who were building it became poorer and poorer and poorer all the time. Well, when that realization came to us, we realized that we had been duped.

Brooks: Now at this point you had thought that, because of the things you saw in Dundee, that by prohibiting liquor you could end the poverty?

Miller: Well, yes, we actually believed that. We were actually so narrow-minded that no matter how poor you were, if you were sober you could overcome your handicaps, never realizing that the odds against you in the economic field with the syndicates that were operating on a multinational basis were too overwhelming to enable you even though you were (sober). My father was a sober man from the day I was born yet he died poor. All my uncles the same way. They were all very religious and very sober in their behavior, but they died poor nevertheless.

So that Carrie A. Nation went down as did many, many of her type using religion to more-or-less fool the people, although I don't believe she was what you would say dishonest in her motivation. She was just a fanatic. Well, that was one aspect that happened early, very early in my life. I was only around fifteen or sixteen at that time.

Brooks: Were you religious at that point?

Miller: Somewhat, in a sense I was. I belonged to the Episcopal Church and when I was very young I was involved in teaching a Sunday School class, but I also realized that that was an exercise in futility because it was not doing anything at that time to help families like myself to get above that level of semi-starvation, you might say—to be able to subsist. So I left the church high-and-dry when I was quite young.

But it follows you. I'm supposed to be associated with the St. Mathias church down there on the (Grand) Boulevard. The Episcopal Church is like the Catholic Church—they don't lose track of you. They keep dunning me for contributions, so I never go anymore to the church. I had a big battle with Bishop Archie Crowley, bishop of the Episcopal Church, when one meeting I went to he tried to turn the McCarthy witch-hunt and brand all the clergymen who were taking a liberal attitude of anti-McCarthyism as being fellow-travelers of the Communist movement, you know. I got in quite a discussion with him about that, so I thought if that was the attitude of the church I would have nothing more to do with it.

Both philosophically and ideologically I'm really not a Christian in the sense of orthodox Christianity. I would classify myself as an agnostic on the verge of atheism. I'm seeking the truth all the time, trying to find out just what inspires Man.

I had the experience when I was very young of talking with my brother-in-law who was not a Christian. That's the one who's now 95 years of age living in London. The leader of our party (Prohibition Party) who defeated Winston Churchill in the election, Edwin Scrymger, was an extreme Christian, one of these evangelistic types, and on all occasions he always insisted on saying "Praise God from whom all blessings flow" and derived all his inspiration from the Book. So talking to Bob (his brother-in-law, Bob Stewart) one day I said, "How do you relate with Ed, how are you able to work with him?" "Well," he says, "I only have to take a walk down the Overgate"—that was the seamiest, most poverty-stricken section of our town, that was where the most sordid slums existed—he said, "I only have to take a walk down there and see these very old and prematurely old women falling into these textile mills to earn a living, to see barefooted children running around on the street. That's enough inspiration for me to go ahead and try to change this society."

So you see I had these two relative points of view. So I began to think along with Bob and devote myself more-or-less to the materialistic activity to raise standards of people and let their spiritual welfare be their own business after they got a full belly and a clear mind.

So that would be the answer to the Carrie A. Nation thing. After she left Scotland, we heard nothing more about her after that, and as far as I know in America here (she did nothing) other than creating a little storm in a teacup over there in Kansas where they had local option. But that didn't interest us after she left.

Brooks: You were also telling me about Winston Churchill and his opinions on women's suffrage?

Miller: Well, he was a very, very outspoken opponent of women's suffrage and when he came to my town to expound his opposition, he had occasion to address a meeting of 3000 people. So, oh, I'm talking about this experience now in Dundee when Mrs. Pankhurst and her daughter came to town. They were leaders of the movement for women's suffrage. Isabel Pankhurst climbed to the roof of the building and climbed in through the sky-light and came shinnying down a rope right along side of Churchill on the platform and smacked him in the face. She was arrested and she went on a hunger strike.

But the other case was when during the latter part of his life, not too many, many years ago, when he was old they had to carry him into the House of Commons. And one day he was put in his seat by his bodyguard and the back bench of the Labor people were sitting on the other side of the aisle and two of them were criticizing him and saying how foolish it was to bring that old man into the House of Commons when he had no purpose to serve in there. And they kept on talking about him and old man Churchill turned around and said, "And they also say he's hard of hearing." (Laughing) He was an able man, a very able man. He was the number one empire builder Britain ever knew.

Brooks: Too bad he was on the wrong side.

Miller: When he declared, "I am not in this war to liquidate one inch of His Majesty's Empire", not long after he lived to see it crumble into pieces,

you know. Falling apart. Our colonies are all independent now, but—

And another incident I witnessed in a theater in Dundee. He came out after addressing a meeting and the Reverend Mr. Lee's wife—he was a well-know clergyman in my hometown—she was very, very active in the suffrage movement and when he came out, of course, he had what we called the "long hat", his silk hat on, you know. And he came out the side door where she was standing and lifted her umbrella and brought her umbrella down on the top of his silk hat and it dropped over his eyes and ears, and he turned for help to his colleagues. (Laughing)

Oh yeah, more incidents like that happened. They were a wild bunch, these women, when they were fighting for—and it was a non-sectarian, non-class movement, you know. The struggle for women's votes embraced women from all sections of society.

Brooks: Were working-class women active?

Miller: Oh yes, indeed. At least in my country there was. But Churchill delivered some marvelous speeches. There's no question about it, I say this as a credit to him, I doubt if there was any one man in Britain who could have mobilized his people as he did in the war against Hitler. I don't believe there is a living leader from Britain today who would have been capable of doing it, the thing that he did.

An adventurous sort of a person, his life story is very interesting. When a young fellow, he embraced the concept of the kind of grit and determination and courage it took for a young man like him. He never relaxed. He never relaxed from the time he was a lieutenant in the services, in the army, until he became Prime Minister. He changed his coat politically whenever he felt it was necessary. He had no basic principles so far as being a Liberal or Tory or Labor. He would change his coat and join whatever party seemed to be the most likely to achieve power, political power, you know. But always his concern was preserving the British Empire as such. "Hail, Britannia, Britannia rules the waves." Ruled every ocean in the world, flag flew over every country in the world. When you think of forty million people achieving that kind of

power, and to see them disintegrating, the way they are today. Britain has no power anymore, they're just a banking-house for Wall Street bankers in my opinion. They've got to eat out of the hands of the United States at the present time.

So, a lot of these things come to your mind. I know that they have recorded it in the history books, but they haven't lived through them. And you get a chuckle once in a while when you think back.

Anyway, so then it came to the question of devoting ourselves then to the building of the Labor Party. My union affiliated with the first organized attempt to get a political labor party involved with the labor movement. At this time, there were two major parties, the Conservatives and the Liberals.

Brooks: What was the Liberal Party like?

Miller: The Liberal Party was a combination of business and progressive elements. The co-operative movement had its early start in Britain, you know, by Robert Owens. The co-operative movement was really the first financial attribute the early labor movement had, because they had the money to finance it, you see. So that it became essential then—because the Liberal Party was not doing the job that was required to be done. It was not subduing the empire-building element who saw fit to transfer capital to India, to Africa, to Australia, to everywhere where they could get cheap labor at the expense of the British workers. Shipbuilding, textiles, and all the major industries began to suffer at the hands of foreign competition, but that foreign competition was all in the hands of British monopolies, so that they weren't suffering. We were suffering.

So the start of the labor movement began with the organization of the ILP, the Independent Labor Party. To get finances—by that time the co-operative movement was beginning to get into the hands of a middle-class element by buying shares and so on, controlling the stock of the co-operative movement—so it became necessary to solicit the support of organized labor, and that's when we organized what we called the LRC, the Labor Representation Committees. Well, that was really the foundation for the base on which the Labor Party was built, until some employers took a case through the courts, and it went all the way up to the House of Lords,

which is the equivalent of your Supreme Court here, and they declared the use of trade-union funds for politcal action illegal. That was away back in I believe about 1906 or 1907. So from that time, the funds to finance the Labor Party had to be raised on a strictly voluntary basis.

The first five Labor members, the first Labor members elected to Parliament were sent from—modern historians claim they were the first Labor members to enter Parliament, but the actual first Labor candidate to run for Parliament ran from my hometown four years before I was born—1887. But anyway the first official recognition of Labor in the House of Commons came about when these five men walked in with scarves around their neck, not dressed up, nothing that was typical of the ruling class—they walked in.

So the Labor Party developed as a real grass-roots movement until the Liberal Party began to disintegrate. They were a middle-class element, you know. So, they started to transfer leadership into the Labor Party, which ultimately as years rolled on in my opinion—it might only be a personal opinion—it became more-or-less of a middle-class party.

Brooks: The Labor Party.

Miller: The Labor Party did. Today it's not really representative of the working-class of Britain. It's moving, the trade unions are moving. I was over there almost two years ago. I interviewed leaders of Transport Workers and the Engineers and other union leadership, and they're showing a tendency to assert themselves a little more militantly than they have done in the past. But the political Labor Party headed by Wilson—he never had any association with the industrial proletariat. He was a corporation lawyer with a liberal bent and moved into the political Labor Party and became the leader and Prime Minister. So today I can't conceive of too much difference between the Labor Party and the present Heath Conservative government which is struggling over the question of who's going to benefit from entry into the Common Market. That's the big issue in Britain today.

My own experience in Britain was—I was never too militant in the building of the Labor Party. Most of my activity was concerned with the trade-union movement, in my own union, seeking redress of grievances and

a better standard of living. And also with the peace movement, the peace movement. Another movement that I also participated in and only recently has it achieved what I fought for when I sat in a public square in my hometown soliciting signatures on petitions for the abolition of capital punishment. I never believed in capital punishment and don't to this day. So only now has Britain suspended capital punishment. These were the only movements I really became involved in. First of all, the Prohibition movement, secondly, in the trade-union movement. And in a sense I identified with the Independent Labor Party and then the national Labor Party to secure the election of good labor men. My town has always been represented by outstanding Labor (members) like E.D. Morrel who was a well-known economist.

You should read my brother-in-law's (Bob Stewart) biography, which more-or-less covers many of these things. He's older than me--95. And his life story covers most of these things. Altogether he spent about fifteen years in jail. From time to time. He got sentenced during the war time, and then when the Southville miners ran him for Parliament, they threw him in jail for violating some injunction against meeting in the public square. He served only six months at that time, got out just about three weeks before the election, and he lost the election by just a handful of votes. He run on the Labor ticket. He didn't have much time to campaign.

He was a great guy, I tell you. They put him in Edinburgh Castle one time after his second court martial and every soldier had read about him and had his picture. We had these post cards with poems that he had prepared himself. We used to sell these post cards with his picture on the front. In the billet, in the castle, every soldier had his picture at the head of his sleeping quarters, you know. He didn't get much solitary confinement, you know, because he was sentenced to longer terms.

A lot of very well-known people got to know him. For instance, the chairman of the Scottish Crime Commission came to see him one time and he had Bob write the preface to his book, which was a classic on crime and criminality at that time. Bob was quite a writer.

Of course, he's been all over Europe, you know. He's never been to America, but he's been to almost every country in Europe. He was a pallbearer at Lenin's funeral.

Brooks: He was?

Miller: Oh yeah, he represented the Communist Party of Britain. He's still, even at 95 and blind, well, he has mellowed a lot. I met him a year-and-a-half ago, and he's still an ardent Leninist. He knew Lenin very intimately.

So when you get a guy like that to write a story of 95 years of living— My wife's older than I am too, you know, although she is sharp as a needle. When he became an apprentice carpenter, he did like me, he was a rebellious young fellow. He organized the first strike of apprentices in the shipyard when he went to learn his trade as a carpenter. From that time on he became a leader in the Transport Workers and went abroad and took his whole family to the Soviet Union and stayed there many years. Then he came back.

When I was home back in 1951, the family was disintegrating and Bob was in a nursing home, you know. And all the ideological friends come to see him, young students who know about him and who have an inquiring mind, you know, but his family are following their own desires to make good.

Well, anyway I got involved in (all kinds of things) and then—as I said I got married in 1914 in January and in August, after being away for a few days belated honeymoon, a note "On His Majesty's Service" was lying at the back of the door.

For fun I had joined the Royal Naval Volunteers Reserve just to get a Saturday afternoon occasionally out on the river rowing boats. But I was in them and out of them before I was even the age for joining them. It was voluntary, it's like the Boy Scouts. Anyway, then of course I didn't have to acknowledge that citation to come and join the services, because it was a purely volunteer army at that time and we weren't under oath to participate in any war.

I hated war so much. I saw my father badly treated way back back when I was only nine years of age in opposing Britain's entry into the Transvaal in South Africa and practically ravaging the peaceful Boer farmers in their quest for control of the gold mines and diamond mines in Africa. (My father was) very much opposed to that, although he wasn't what you would say a radical. He hated violence, he hated war. Well, I learned all that at his knee, you might say, and I grew up to have an antipathy to war of any kind.

So in 1915 the conscription law was passed, and of course I happened to be president of the streetcar-men's union then at that time. Oh, they offered me all kinds of alternative service. When I finally got my calling under the conscription law—the draft law as you call it here—I refused to acknowledge it. I had to, of course, make my appeal to all the tribunals that were set up for appeals on various grounds if you wanted to be exempted from the conscription law. I made my appeals and I was offered alternative service.

Brooks: What kind of service?

Brooks: What kind of service?

Miller: In a shipyard or an engineering job or any kind of work that would contribute to the prosecution of the war. My answer was that I wasn't prepared to hold the coats for the other men to go and do the dirty work that I refused to do myself.

Brooks: Let me ask you a question about the First World War. Did you see that as an imperialist war?

Miller: I certainly did, I certainly did. I see that Germany was bulging at the seams with over seventy million people with no colonies, desirous of finding expansion—colonial expansion—and blocked at every turn by Great Britain, whose flag flew practically over all of the world, a flag upon which the sun never set at that time. So consequently I did believe that it was an imperialistic war. Unfortunately, the Germans, instead of continuing to negotiate and secure world opinion on their side, went for jingoism, went for the sword, and under the Kaiser thought—

But one thing that's never been disclosed in all of the histories of the First World War, Germany did not set foot in Belgium first, which was the reason why the war was declared—and the killing of the Archduke of Austria, but the main claim was that Germany violated the neutrality of Belgium. I know that is untrue, because Britain had soldiers in mufti—civilians—in Belgium before one German ever set his foot there. As Lord Roseberry once said, "A hundred years will elapse before the actual cause of the First World War will be known", and I doubt very much whether any historian has ever told the truth about it yet.

Anyway, eventually I was through, exhausted all the procedures under the law. I never appealed as a conscientious objector. There was a clause in the conscription law which was initiated, promoted by the wealthy Quakers—you know, Rowntree and Cadbury and all these people, very multimillionaire industrialists. They were all Quakers. They were peace-loving people too, you know. They managed to get that injected into the law to save their people. I wouldn't take advantage, I wouldn't claim to be a conscientious objector because I wasn't. I was an anti-militarist. There's a distinction between them. Human life is not sacred to me if it stands in the way of human progress.

So that was the position I took finally before the tribunal and then one morning at 5 o' clock two policemen, two detectives, came up to the house and yanked me away downtown to jail, and I appeared before the civilian police court. I didn't have a lawyer—I had my brother-in-law who'd given me a lot of ideas about laws that had been passed in the early days. So I managed to get a postponement for a week and had to go back to court. And I was found guilty of evading the law, you know, and a couple of soldiers, a sergeant there ready to take me into custody, marched me on down through the center of the town with fixed bayonets—I'll never forget that—and the sergeant behind them, to the railroad station. I boarded a train to Hamilton which was the headquarters of the HLI, the Highland Light Infantry, and the Royal Scotch Regiments. So I was thrown into the guardhouse there, and the next morning I was ordered to put on a uniform. I refused to do it. I refused to put on a uniform. That resulted in an order to line up with the rest of the prisoners. I refused to line up. I refused to do anything. It wasn't braggadoccio, it

was just a sheer determination. You start something and you're going to do it on the basis of principle. You know that a firing squad might be at the end of the road, you know—I always anticipated that. Anyway, I was called before the commanding officer and he asked if I wanted a court-martial or would I take his sentence. "Please yourself. Whatever you want to do." He gave me 112 days and I was shipped off to London, to Wormwood Scrubs prison in London.

So I was in London and found all kinds of people there—Holy Rollers and Quakers. You see, the No-Conscription Fellowship which we had organized—there were about 10,000 young fellows like myself who joined up, pledged not to participate in the war. But by the machinations of the British government and military authorities, by cajoling them and offering them various attractive offers and to give up the battle, in the final analysis, when it came to counting the absolutists at the end of the war, we only had some 200—212, I think, who (went through) the rigors of all the King's regulations and all the punishment.

Well, I did that 112 days and then I came out to Barlinnie, Barlinnie Military Barracks, and this time I was court-martialed, taken out in the square with the whole regiment aroundabout you. So finally I was taken out there and the charge was read, refusing to salute an officer, refusing to obey commands, and refusing to identify myself by putting on a uniform, and so on. Finally I was found guilty and the verdict was read out 48 hours later, and in the meantime I was in the guardhouse. I was sentenced to two years.

Brooks: So you were sentenced for the same thing twice?

Miller: 112 days the first time. At Barlinnie then you come back and renew your opposition and you're court-martialed again. This time you get a more severe sentence.

In the meantime, I'll never forget that we had fellows that come in just before I was sentenced that time. We had guys that come in there who had been AWOL, soldiers who had been in the first battle of Mons, the first battle that was ever fought in the First World War, and coming in all crippled up. They were due for a discharge but they had got medical

leave from the hospital, overstayed their leave, and they brought them back.

One of these cases was on trial before that court-martial, the same day I was. He got three years, he got three years at hard labor. And I saw that man being taken out of the guard-room with his withered arm, making him carry his heavy pack with his good arm, taking him way up to the military barracks. Anyway, I never knew whatever happened to him after that.

But then after that I went to Dartmoor. That's a well-known prison in the South of England. They used to keep the French prisoners there at one time during the revolutionary days. The oldest prison in Britain—Dartmoor. It stands in the midst of moors. No one—no man—was ever known to have escaped.

* * *

At this point some of the interview was again lost. Dave explained that he escaped from the prison and went to Edinburgh. When I expressed my amazement, he said that others escaped too, that it was not hard to do, and proceeded to explain why.

* * *

Miller: Dartmoor was really a detention camp for politicals—for anti-war people, conscientious objectors. So they weren't as rigorous in their application of the rules. The cells were converted into rooms (although) they were cells in that we were locked up at night same as they always were.

You know, you can do five years penal servitude and come out much healthier than doing two years at hard labor. I have experienced that. In penal servitude, you have certain regulations, you are given time for exercise, you are allowed association and employment in prison. Two years at hard labor you are in solitary confinement most of the time, except for a few hours each week when you are allowed exercise. And then the food. It's a reasonable of solid food over long term. Over short term it's practically liquid diet, all bloated up.

When I had my experience, strange to say, it was a Labor leader named David Grace who, under the coalition government, was Home Secretary and he had charge of all the prisons. He was a Labor man, yet that was the cruelest period there was in Britain's history in the application of

the penal system to politicals, specifically to political prisoners. They really treated them rough. You know, most of them who became anti-militarists during the war, there was only one thing likely to happen and that was the firing squad. Lloyd George and the Quakers saved us. Otherwise the penalty under King's regulations called for the firing squad.

Brooks: For refusing to serve?

Miller: For refusing to serve. But on the whole that wasn't any more cruel than the treatment—solitary confinement, oh boy. If you've never tried it, you'll never know what it means to be locked up. Never see a soul, nothing to read except the Bible. I've read the Bible, god knows, at least a dozen times from Genesis through Revelations. I can quote the Bible with Billy Graham or anybody. No communication whatever, no letters in or out for politicals. (The Bible was) the only thing I had to read in jail. (In some ways it was more cruel than) the system that prevailed under the Czar in Russia. In Russia they had the labor camps for political prisoners. You know, you had association.

So, when I left there (Dartmoor), of course I came back to my hometown, and I had to go to Edinburgh, the capital of Scotland, and I went to work in the mills. In the meantime my wife was sustaining herself. She refused to take a soldier's allowance. They were trying to get her to accept one, which would have compromised my position. She refused to do it. She went to work as a maid in the homes of wealthy people and helped to keep my home going and my daughter—. And I worked in the shipyard for awhile on a false employment card.

Brooks: In Edinburgh?

Miller: Yah, in Edinburgh. There was a shipbuilding port. A friend of mine who worked in the employment office forged a card for me to get a job in the shipyard, so I was able to work in the shipyard until such time as I got ready to leave for the United States. How I ever got a passport I'll never know, because I don't think they were too rigorous in their investigations

at that time.

Brooks: Did you get a passport under your assumed name?

Miller: No, no, under my own name. Both my wife and daughter, we all came on the same passport.

Brooks: How had you heard stuff about the United States? What things had you heard?

Miller: Well, so many Scotsmen, so many old country people who come from Europe—we don't classify ourselves as Europeans of course—they also had the same desire. Economic pressure, unemployment—that's how they were able to maintain such a successful volunteer army in Britain, just as they're doing today. I was just reading in the paper, recruitment is away up because of unemployment. People join the army to secure a square meal and have a place to lie down at night. And then others saw fit, when they had made enough money to emigrate, they were given encouragement to leave the country, to go to Australia, to Canada, South Africa, the United States.

Of course, it wasn't so much economic pressure that brought me over here. It was the fact that I was deprived of all my political rights. You see, having taken a position against the government in the perpetuation of the war, I was denied my citizenship rights.

Brooks: Was that the major reason you left?

Miller: One of the major reasons, and also as I told you last night to prevent the people in my industry from going on strike, which I knew they couldn't win with the prevailing patriotic sentiment immediately after the war. I knew a lot of people would sacrifice their jobs, all in my behalf after the war.

Brooks: They said they were going to go out on strike unless you were rehired.

Miller: That's right. So I left my home on Saturday and went downtown to the shipping agent and booked my passage and sold off whatever we had to pay

our fare across. Brought the wife and my five-year-old daughter to this country.

Brooks: What had you heard? You mentioned that you had read things about America, that you didn't think there was gold in the streets—

Miller: No. Well, so many people came out here in the early days. You go back sixty, seventy, eighty years, America was building up then and jobs were available, you know, stretching the boundaries from the Atlantic to the Pacific. Jobs were available, and many people hit it rich, did well when they came here and they sent home some fanciful stories. But I also had had communications through the labor press from the Western Miners' Federation and the old Wobblies. The Marxian Society was quite active in the educational field.

Brooks: Did American labor leaders ever come to England that you saw?

Miller: No, not that I particularly became involved (with), because at that time I wasn't up to the level of leadership to enable me to sit in at the Trade Union Congress level. Oh, they came over as fraternal delegates. No, there was no rapport between British and American labor at that time. As a matter of fact, it's only since the CIO was born that you really have an affinity developing between labor leaders in Britain and in America.

So when I arrived here and began looking for a job and finally got one, became conscious of the terrible, inhuman conditions that prevailed in the shops, I became really dedicated to one conviction and I told some of my friends and relatives, "Come hell or high water, I'm not here to make any money. I'm here to see to it that something protective, something has to be organized to protect these people who work in these inhuman Bastilles like the Ford Motor Company, Briggs Manufacturing, Wadsworth Body Shop—." I could name a score of them with steel, rubber, glass—the same conditions prevailed.

Brooks: Did you come to Detroit immediately?

Miller: Yes, I arrived in New York and came right on to Detroit.

Brooks: How come you came to Detroit?

Miller: Well, my wife happened to have a nephew who was here some ten years sooner than I came. My wife is an aunt of nephews, some of whom are older than her. She's the youngest of twelve of a family. They've all been abroad. One of them died in South Africa and one of them died in India. I mean the Scotsmen were travelers. Forced by economic pressure they were compelled to get going when they reached the age of being able to go somewhere and seek a decent standard of living. So you find Scotsmen all over the world. The story goes that when Commander Perry reached the North Pole he found a Scotsman with his kilt and his legs wrapped around it. (Laughing) That's the story. Anyway, they were inspired by that desire to get away, not because they loved the concept of expanding the empire—that was the military concept of the monopolists. But the individual wanted to get away, get away, get away.

We were subject to discrimination (by the English), economic and otherwise. Even today, even today you take a Scotch bank-note and try to cash it in England, you have to take a discount on it. Housing patterns were far better for people in England than they were in Scotland. The standard of meals, feedings—Englishment eat roast beef, a much higher standard of living than the Scotsman who is expected to live on oatmeal and vegetables. But things have changed over the years, and today there is a uniformity developed throughout the entire United Kingdom.

Brooks: Did you go back to Scotland when you went over to London?

Miller: Oh yes, oh yes, I saw a tremendous change. I found the local authorities and municipalities doing a remarkable job in home-building, building homes for the common people, eradicating the slums that prevailed. So they're really making progress, but being done more on a local basis than it is on a national basis. They still have their problems with the Common Market, competition from America, etc.,etc.

So we came to the United States in May 1920 , and of course I came right down to Detroit. And I went to work on the old D.U.R., the Detroit United Railroad, That was before the city bought the system. A Scotsman happened to be the manager—a Mr. Dawson was manager at that time—and I showed him my record of being employed as a transportation man. And he wanted me to stay with the system, but they were only paying 75¢ an hour, and I knew I could earn that much in the factory. So I first tried to get a job at Burroughs but they only offered me 50¢ an hour, so then I went up to Ford's—I got into Ford's.

I wasn't there many weeks when I realized what a terrible labor system they have here. We were conscious of what we had to fight back home, but we never thought that in a modern industry, especially in the automobile industry, that conditions would be so bad.

I was working away on the line there when the foreman came along, and he handed a pink slip to my buddy and I said to him, "Well, what's this?" He said, "I'm all through tonight. I'm all through tonight. I'm being laid off." "How long have you been at Ford's?" And he said, "Fifteen years." I said, "I've only been here about a month." He said, "Keep your mouth shut," he said, "otherwise you'll get one too and it won't do me any good." Well, I was there about six months when I learned that this foreman happened to be a Canadian married to a Scotch woman. Thought he was giving me a break by keeping me on.

Well, about that time then, I met an Englishman called John Rushton and Al Dinkfelt, who your dad and I are very close to yet, a very, very able fellow. At one time he was secretary of the old Marxian Society, a very well-read fellow. We got busy and began thinking in terms of getting a union organized. Well, we had to meet in each other's homes, in basements. The father of the present president of the Ford local (600), Walter Dorosh, his father joined up with us. Eventually I was transferred to the Rouge Plant.

Brooks: Where were you before?

Miller: Highland Park. Highland Park plant. And I had gone to school at Ford's,

studied all the chemistry of paint. I became a No. 1 paint specialist on show jobs.

But I had two names. I had my own name in the shop, outside I had my wife's name. Tom Stewart was my name on the outside. And for—well, for some sixteen years I fooled the Ford Motor Company. I was intensively following through—we organized the old Autoworkers' Union way back in the early '20s. Bill Logan became president of that. Anyway, that was the beginning of organization underground but not recognized by the employers and no way of settling problems in the shop.

Brooks: How many of the employees were sympathetic to the union at that time?

Miller: Very few, very few. You could hold a mass meeting in this room.

Brooks: Why was that? Because of fear?

Miller: Fear. Fear. Fear. You can't—you dare not indicate—. The Ford Service Department was second only in its spying ability, if you could call it ability, to that of the FBI. They had men traveling on streetcars. Oh, you can read all about that, you read the story of Harry Bennett, who was the head of the Security Department for Ford Motor Company. Terror ran through that plant. You could not go down there in the morning and be assured of your job. And the foreman had very littleto do with you. Continually on the job, if you broke the slightest little rule, the Service Department, the policemen of the plant, had more control over you than your own supervisor had. There was a reign of terror down there.

Brooks: What kind of rules did they have?

Miller: Well, first of all, no smoking, no eating on the job, perpetually keep moving. You could not stop on the job without being penalized for it. The most rigorous rules that kept a man shackled to his job from the time he started in the morning till he quit in the afternoon.

Brooks: Did people ever collapse?

Miller: Oh, dear me, yes. You know, the climax that exposed the Ford system came around 1933, I think. Ford had all the newspapers carry advertisements indicating they were going to hire 10,000 people, and they came and there wasn't work. It was the dead of winter, around February of 1933. On Miller Road in Dearborn, thousands and thousands of people showed up there and nobody was violent. So, of course, it was way below zero then and there was a lot of resentment shown by the people that had come there. They had come from all parts of the country.

Ford Motor Company ordered their fire brigade from the roof of the top of the motor building, with their fire hoses, and started to pour ice-cold water on these people. I was employed in the plant at that time. Then Harry Bennett, the Chief of Security came tearing down Miller Road in his automobile, and all the Dearborn police were there. Demonstrations were illegal in Dearborn at that time, even just passing out leaflets was illegal. He came tearing down there and the first thing he did (was) got out of his car and pulled his gun and three young fellows were shot, and two of them were killed. Strange to say—oh, that car was battered with all kinds of missiles and was brought into the plant and, without knowing too much about how it happened, I had to repair that car.

The following week the boys were to be buried at Woodmere Cemetery. We had a huge demonstration from all over the city. Strange to say, that was the beginning I believe of them beginning to take surveillance over me, because I helped to raise the funds to bury the boys and I went to their funeral.

Brooks: Oh, I think I heard about that. Was the funeral a march down Woodward?

Miller: Yeah, yeah, to Woodmere Cemetery. And I knnow that's what brought about my own exposure, and then they began to (spy). Although, I used to handle all the (Ford) family cars, the show jobs, I was considered—I had a good job with the Ford Motor Company, but oh, I hated their labor policy. I was a very respectable Ford employee prior to then and not knowing the Dr. Jekyl part of my life, I believe that (because) of the fact they had

all the snoopers around the plant, they began to be suspicious. But I was able to survive that until 1935.

Well, come around 1935, a young man who I'd been able to get a job at Ford's, he managed to climb up to become a foreman, and I guess he—he used to come around my house, he knew all about me, knew my background back home. And I suppose they called him in and laid it on the line, "You tell us what Dave Miller is doing in his off-hours, otherwise you'll be out of a job." So, he squealed and that following day I was fired.

I left the shop on Friday evening and went back to work on Monday morning and when I got inside the plant I was ordered to the Employment Office and within thirty minutes—it used to take about eight hours to hire out at Ford's and eight hours to quit—but I was out on Miller Road within thirty minutes. My tools were cleared and everything, and they claimed that it was because of a job I was not responsible for being done in my absence. But they held me responsible for the poorly finished job. And they didn't tell me I was fired because up to that time, nobody ever got discharged from Ford's—nobody. Before you got the amount of money, your wages, you had to sign a quit slip. They were protecting themselves in case of any legislation dealing with the rights of workers, you see, that they would not be charged with discrimination and up until that time there was no such thing as being fired.

So I had to wait sixteen years, from 1935 to 1951 when I was hauled downtown to testify before a McCarthy Committee suspected of being a fellow-traveler of the Communist movement. The witnesses against me, the stoolpigeons that the government hired, they were testifying that I had been fired for having put literature, so-called Communist literature, into new cars as they were being sent out to the dealers.

Brooks: Did you do that?

Miller: There was no such thing as Communist literature at that time as I knew about. The only literature I put in came from the A.F. of L., purely call for labor organization. Sure, that was the last contact between the company and me and the public, the dealers. Certainly I did everything

possible during my working hours to transmit my thinking to whoever would read the stuff.

So, that (firing) was prior to the passage of the Wagner Labor Law. It deprived me of anyclaim against the Ford Motor Company for all the years I had served there. Incidentally, after the union was recognized, they were able to get a supplementary award from the Ford Motor Company. After he was compelled to recognize the union, Henry Ford had to agree to allocate one million dollars for the settlement of fringe cases. Well, I had submitted my case to the Compliance Board of the NRA, of which Father Sedenberg of the Roman Catholic Church was chairman. But Ford was not bound to acknowledge that even under the NRA, because it was purely a voluntary set-up at that time, until the Wagner Labor Law was passed. Well, of course, I was far before the Wagner Labor Law was passed.

Brooks: What about the depression? It seems the depression was a catalyst for finally breaking the hold of the auto makers on the auto workers, and it created a lot of energy and drove home the need to people for a union. I want to ask you a couple questions about the depression, OK?

Miller: Well, in 1929, as I indicated to you before, I was still employed by the Ford Motor Company and functioning in a dual capacity there, doing my job very efficiently and looked upon as a specialist in my occupational line. I was much respected by the Ford Motor Company. Underground, I was known by another name and was busy organizing for several years before that, from 1921 to 1929. In 1929 my health broke down, and I had to seek a leave of absence and went to Britain. I went back home to Scotland for about four months. When I returned things were beginning to indicate a breakdown in the economy. We were able to carry on until 1933, I think it was when the banks declared—when the government declared a moratorium on all banking institutions in 1933. The Ford Motor Company practically closed down at that time. We had no union except a small group of people in what was known as the old Auto Workers' Union, which was not recognized by the management of any company. Nevertheless, they were operating like myself in a sort of an underground manner.

I was fortunate,because of the work that had to be done frequently, to be one of very few who were allowed for many months to enter the Ford premises, because I had a job where I had to help to restore old cars for dealers, salvage on used cars, etc., so I was able to sustain myself by having at least a four or five-day week, which I was paid for. That meant my wife and I had to share whatever income we had with many of our people who were really on the bread line in destitution.

Brooks: When was it personally driven home to you that the depression had hit? Any incident that sticks out in your mind?

Miller: Well, the incident—my whole family, my sister, her husband was out of work. Everybody we knew who was employed by the Ford Motor Company and other companies were on welfare. So it hit pretty hard and frequently I would take a trip downtown and go around the flophouses on Michigan Avenue and see the destitution that had been brought upon them. I went in the alleys that run through the Hudson Motor Company premises and see scores and scores of men lying up against the wall under the warm pipes in the wintertime to keep themselves warm, because they didn't have the money to pay for a bed in the flophouse. I kept myself involved although I was employed. I never saved a nickel in the period of the depression.

So it was a terrible condition that prevailed. A man whom you knew had been affluent, you would see downtown standing on the street corner, selling apples to make a few pennies to buy a meal. We had what they call restaurants starting up in various parts of the city, what they called penny restaurants. Where you could have a bowl of soup for a penny and that was just about the level at which the working-class of this particular community, and I'm only speaking of Detroit, had been brought down to. So that was my experience.

In the meantime we had a movement to organize the unemployed, and John Anderson, who eventually became President of Local 155, and then in later years when the union was organized he became the leader of the WPA, and we were able to get that money from the government to start a welfare program of putting people to work. We organized them and we used them for

demonstrations at the City Hall and at the State Capitol. But beyond that there were really no significant movements except that made by William Green of the AFL who sent two organizers here to find out if there was any desire for the organization of industrial production workers, because the AFL, as you probably know, that whole organization was based on craft unions. Well, they came here and checked with Walter Chrysler and Edsel Ford, several of them in industry, and they went back and reported to William Green that there was no need for—

Brooks: Did they talk to any of the people who—

Miller: They didn't talk to us at all. Later on it became apparent that they were willing to organize the industrial workers provided we would agree to join as auxiliaries to the craft unions. But they did not desire to have a nationwide industrial union so that—well, then of course out of that came the organization of the skilled men in the shops. You know what I mean by captive shops? Shops other than the outside independent skilled shops. In other words, General Motors, Ford, and Chrysler where they employ skilled men are considered the captive shops so far as the skilled labor is concerned. They have steady work throughout the year.

Well, there was a man known as Matthew Smith, a very able Englishman trained in Britain in the London School of Economics. He started a movement that was called MESA (Mechanics Educational Society). That was really the second union that was organized.

Brooks: The first one was—

Miller: The Auto Workers' Union, which wasn't recognized. But this second one was recognized by Harry Bennett, who was the head of the Security Department of the Ford Motor Company, provided that the skilled men did not involve the production worker. Well, there was an indication there that they could not survive without (production workers). There was nothing they could do in trying to enforce their demands without the help of the production people, so they organized an auxiliary division of the union which I joined at that time.

Brooks: When was this?

Miller: 1933. About that time there was kind of a revolt that took place at the Briggs Manufacturing Company. The leadership there was provided by Emil Mazey, who is now Secretary-Treasurer (of the UAW). Then there was also a strike that took place at Midland Steel around the same time. But there was no fundamental organization.

Brooks: Were you involved in the Auto Workers Union?

Miller: Yes, yes. Oh, I should have mentioned that in the AFL, we did have a unit of the AFL later on about the time the MESA was being organized, and they did agree and they were pushing for us to join the craft unions. Painters to join the painters' union, die makers and tool makers to join their craft union, and so on. In other words, keep us in a comprehensive body but all divided into different classifications, so that— Yes, I had my card there. I was a member of the AFL back at that time, to which I paid dues.

We belonged to the AFL, but we only had a number. We were only known by numbers, we were not known by our individual names. So, you had to obscure your identity. You dare not disclose it to anybody in the shop. You knew fellow workers, a few of them, had joined up but you had to keep it very, very secret. You couldn't recognize each other on the job even. But you would meet them at meetings in the old Electrical Workers' Temple over there on Adelaide where we would meet every Friday night.

Brooks: But the Auto Workers Union, that wasn't connected with the AFL, was it?

Miller: No, that was the union that the AFL wanted to divide up into different classifications and put them into crafts, you see.

Brooks: I see. Was the leadership of the Auto Workers Union more leftist?

Miller: Very much so. That was the mistake the leftists made. Instead of being more tactful and diplomatic in handling their problems, they more-or-less took over the whole outfit, and the Communist Party, unfortunately I'd

say because they were an aggressive group desirous of building an industrial union, over-reached themselves. In fact, Phil Raymond, who is alive today and I talked to him the other week, he became President. Well, he was known as an outstanding Communist Party member and leader.

Brooks: You think most of the rank-and-file workers were scared off?

Miller: Yes, they were scared off. They ran scared, no question about that. Prior to that I had become Vice-President of the AFL group, which Bill McKie, an old fellow who died maybe at 83 years of age, a Scotsman, (was President of). He and I cooperated all during the '20s right up to the '30s in laying the seed for organization underground at Fords. So I was Vice-President and today the Ford Local union does not recognize the first president of the first organized group in the Ford complex was Bill McKie and I was the vice-president. Yet nowhere in the record will they say that we were actually the pioneers. I and many, many others. I don't want—it wasn't a one or two-man outfit. We were involved with others.

Brooks: Did you achieve any recognition from the Ford Motor Company?

Miller: Yes. I got fired. Two years I was blacklisted, and it was during that period of time that Walter Reuther was back from the Soviet Union, after making that trip all through Germany and various countries and finally finding a job in the Soviet Union. He worked there about eighteen months before he returned—he returned about 1935. That was about the time I got fired.

When he returned from the Soviet Union, of course, there was a big consternation about letters that he was alleged to have sent from the Soviet Union, you know, so enthused about the control that the workers had in the factories. He worked in an automobile plant in Southern Russia. It was used against him, of course. He was home before 1938. He and Emil Mazey were hauled before the Dies Committee and branded as Communists, but they worked themselves out of that.

Brooks: Had you met Walter Reuther before you got fired, or was this after you got fired?

Miller: Oh yes, I knew about him. I didn't meet him very intimately, because he was employed in the die room at Fords. He was sort of a foreman then, and I was in the paint shop at the other end of the complex altogether, so I (only) knew about him. I knew he was a member of the Socialist Party, and I knew about him studying and so forth. But he wasn't active in the underground movement. He was never active in the underground movement. No, I wouldn't say I was too intimate with him until we got together to organize the West Side. That's where the UAW was actually born, on the west side of Detroit.

Brooks: How did you get together? What meetings were going on and is that where you started working with Walter?

Miller: Yes, he had been living on a hit-and-miss kind of a style, he had no home. There was quite a number of progressive guys like George Edwards of the Appeals Court and quite a number that I forget offhand. Anyway, they were living together in a place they had rented on Glendale Avenue just to conserve the resources. They were going to Wayne in their spare time, you know. They all became active in laying the foundation of the UAW.

So then, of course, September 1935 came around. The CIO was chartered, and about that time Homer Martin had been fired for conducting an illegal strike at the Fisher Body out there in St. Louis, Missouri, and he came to town. And that's when the movement for the organization of autoworkers on a broad scale took place. Well, I had been fired then. I was out of work, and of course I worked with Walter Reuther, out every day. Bill McKie, another old Scotsman who had been fired also for writing articles to the Daily Worker, the Communist Daily Worker, he got fired too. And we worked very, very hard in getting around the plants until we got that office started on 35th and Michigan, and from then on it just started rolling, snowballing. But it was only that morning when Walter and I and Bill McKie went out to distribute leaflets at Fleetwood Division of General Motors that we got the idea of pulling in all the plants,

Kelsey Hayes, Timkens, Cadillac, and all the surrounding plants there. We knew we had groups there who were interested in organization, so we finally got them moving. It took some time after that before—not too long—before we got the thing rolling up to late in 1936. Walter was elected the first president of (Local) 174. I never sought any office, I wouldn't even take a job as an organizer.

Brooks: How come?

Miller: Well, I believe—my philosophy has always been equivalent to—take the religious person. If you're in religion, if you're a priest, you're the father of a flock. You don't sit on top of a mountain when the sheep are all in the valley. If you're going to be a leader, you want to be with the people, with the people.

So, Homer Martin wanted me to go on the payroll. Walter Reuther wanted me to go on his payroll on the west side. I felt that the people that I worked with at Cadillac Motor—by the way I had snuck into Cadillac. This is a very disjointed story I'm telling you.

Brooks: Oh, that's OK.

Miller: I had snuck into Cadillac after a year and 11½ months blacklisting. When we left that place (the first union office) after renting that office, we stopped off at Clark Avenue—Walter Reuther and I—and I said, "Walter, I'm going to try this plant up here and see if they're hiring, I'm about broke, " I said, "I've no more money."

So I went to the employment office and asked if they were hiring, and the manager said, "No, not today. Take an application with you." I filled in the application, I just indicated that I was in business for myself during that two years I was blacklisted. Anyway, he looked at it, he said, "Oh, you're a paint man. Wait a minute." Anyway, he sent me down to see a foreman, the superintendent of the paint department. Well, I stood around there for about thirty minutes waiting for him, and when he come, he looked up and he says, "45 years of age," he says, "past 45.

You're pretty well worn out, aren't you?" I said, "Look mister," I says, "I'll tell you what I'll do. You give me an opportunity for four hours. I've been watching the kind of work that's been performed around here. If I can't deliver the quality of work you want in four hours, I'll walk out. You won't have to pay me." "OH," he said, "you think you're that good." "Well," I said, "only way to prove it. Try me out." Anyway, I bluffed my way in and he said, "You come in tomorrow morning."

Well, that was on the 11th day of November, and by the 8th of January we closed that plant down as tight as a drum-skin in less than two months. Walter Reuther of course helped out in that situation. I got a group (together) there. They were unorganized with very few interested because they'd never had a labor dispute in Cadillac in 35 years of existence. But there were a few guys who were interested in joining a union. So we got a few of them together, and I (managed) to get them to meet with Walter and myself at a hall on Junction Avenue there. We decided on trying to shake them up, so I gave the assignment of—come hell or high water—that plant has got to be closed down on the 8th day of January, 1937.

Brooks: How come you picked January 8th? Was there any special reason for that?

Miller: Well, we thought if we didn't jump the gun, they would do it up in Flint. So we figured we had enough people to get the necessary leadership to get the handful of people to do the job. We had a meeting the night before, the 7th of January, and we picked all the guys who had enough fortitude to stand up to the job and assigned them to various parts of the plant where the switches were, you know. Well, we stayed up until about 3 or 4 o' clock in the morning that night, and Walter was with us, and then we all went home. I went in the plant at 7:30 in the morning, ready to go to work, and at 8:30 I gave the signal from the very end of the assembly line. I had a guy in the foundry, and another guy in the machine shop. At 8:30 I gave the signal and walked over to the main switch, pulled the switch, and the foreman and the manager all came rushing. "What's happened? What's happened?"

Brooks: They had no idea that it was going to happen?

Miller: No. All the guys said, "You better talk to Dave Miller. He can tell you about it." So, in the meantime, I told all the guys to get to the locker room to get to the assembly, and they would find out what it was all about. In the meantime, the foremen started to man the cars and tried to get as many cars rushed out of the plant as possible.

So, I'll never forget that. That morning some of the guys were relunctant to participate. Anyway, we got them all up to the locker room. Being a new employee—I'd only been there two months—they didn't all know me, you know. Anyway, some guy got up and said, "I move that Dave Miller become the leader," you know. So I got up on the table and told them what was transpiring, that the plant would close down and that those who wanted to leave should get out on the street by 12 noon and those who remained inside would remain inside until hell froze over if necessary, until General Motors recognized the right to organize, the right to bargain.

So, there were 5500 people employed at Cadillac at that time, and people went home, and when I counted noses after we closed the gates and welded them closed, chased all the supervision out, chased management out of their offices, we had 212 left. We had a wonderful time. So, it was a question of organizing these people, rotating them, putting pickets on the inside of every entrance all around the plant, which was very effective. I insisted on every guy doing a certain chore every day, and we conducted educational classes while we were living on baloney sandwiches.

Brooks: What kind of classes did you have?

Miller: Oh, classes in labor history—particularly labor history—the structuring of a union, the disciplining of a union, the duties of stewards who eventually would have to be elected, and I mean how the whole union should be run, you know. And we really trained enough guys so that when we walked out of that plant and had our first meeting, we were able to set up a very capable leadership.

I used to go around, and people on the ground floor would come around and hand in bottles of liquor for those who wanted it and so on. I and another two selected guys would go around every night and open the lockers and collect these bottles, call a meeting, and break the necks of them and pour the whiskey down the drain. Never allowed any liquor to be used o, the premises. So much so that after ten days and ten nights in the plant, having arranged with the management—they were humane enough to allow us to use the first aid and to keep the heat on, etc. And the plant protection, we never interfered with them. They made rounds of the plant and never interfered with us. We'd never allow any of management to come in unless they had a personal matter to come to their office about, and we sent an escort with them and escorted them back out of the plant.

It was a very well managed—in fact we got the credit for being the best organized, most disciplined group involved in any sit-down strike. So much so that when we left the plant the management called all the supervision together, and I was informed that Mr. Drystadt, who was a manager—he was of German origin—he let them know that he would like to have his plant left in this condition every weekend. He said, "This plant was never left as orderly and as clean as it was when Dave Miller and his squatters left the plant." I would tell these guys to get brooms and brushes and clean up the floors and tables and put everything in order before we left. Because I could see no need for vandalism, no.

Well shortly after that, after we marched out—we had a kitchen band with the drums and horns and so forth fashioned in the shop—we marched out of the plant. In the meantime, we had hundreds of our people walking the picket line every day outside who were entitled to as much credit. You know, they couldn't all stay in the plant. They had families to care for and so on. But a lot of hardship, Dan, a lot of real hardship. There was no money to pay them, no strike benefits at that time. We'd no money in the union. We had to send out committees to scrounge food at all of the stores and warehouses and so forth to keep our people going. We had to scrounge coal off the coal merchants to keep the furnaces going. All in all it was a very inspiring period.

Brooks: At any time did you feel that there was a strong possibility that the

police or someone were going to come in and clear you out?

Miller: Oh yes, oh yes. We stood at the window and saw Walter Reuther being dragged down by the heels off the top of the sound-truck and Victor Reuther being knocked around by the cops. But we didn't allow the people in there any kind of vandalism in the plant. Now, when I left the plant, Walter asked me if I would take a platoon of people out there to Flint. Well, I went out there and I sat in Fisher #1 plant for two weeks and helped to subdue that kind of activity, tearing up cushions and throwing equipment out windows and so on. You couldn't win a battle by methods like that. By that time we were threatened every hour. Finally, we got them to stop that kind of activity. I always felt that if someday we workers are going to take over control of industry, why destroy it?

Brooks: In Flint they had more problems with the police. Was that—

Miller: Oh yes, I remember one night Walter—I was in there about three nights when Walter Reuther came through one of the windows and he said, "Dave, you better get your people mobilized, because Sheriff Wills and Judge Godola has given permission to mobilize the National Guard to take you people out of here if necessary on a shutter. You're not going to be ordered out, you're going to be carried out. They're walking around Flint with a Gat on one pocket and a pint of gin on the other, imported from New Orleans and Chicago and everywhere." Thugs, you know.

And I had an experience at that time that indicated to me the dedication and the willingness of workers to defend themselves. I went around along with a committee. We placed as many as we could at the top of every stairway leading from one floor to the other to prevent—if anybody should try to invade the plant. I come across one big, tall hillbilly, a guy who'd only been in the plant about six weeks before the strike, and we told him what we wanted. "But we've nobody to you." He says in his dialect—I can't mimic him but he says, "Go away and come back in about two hours and I'll show you how I'll defend myself." Well, we come back and here he had laid sheet metal on the bannisters

on the top of the stairway, and he had it loaded with about a quarter-ton of small pieces of metal, and he had two chains hooked. And he said, "Now, if any of those so-and-so's try to come up that stairway—" all he had to do was unload that metal. Now, that guy had never had any association with struggle of any kind, other than to earn his living—never been in the union, never been in the army—but there it was, the instinct to cooperate to defend something he'd learned was going to be to his benefit, the right to belong to the union.

Anyway, as you probably know, (the National Guard) never did try to throw us out. Governor Murphy was responsible, along with J0hn L. Lewis, in bringing about a settlement. But I will never, never forget the pressure that Frank Murphy was under by all the forces of reaction, manufacturers associations, etc. What pressure that young man was under to use the National Guard, to use force on behalf of General Motors to clear the plants of the strikers, which would have postponed the day of organization maybe many, many years. But he refused to do it and that, to my mind, the labor movement has a lot to be grateful for. For having Frank Murphy as Governor at that time.

Brooks: In this time between 1935 and 1937, which I get the impression is when a lot of the basic, hard organizing was done before the successes of the sit-down strikes, did you have lots of run-ins with the police or with vigilante organizations, or were you mainly left alone?

Miller: Oh no, I had many run-ins with police. I had more rough times here, in the police precincts in Detroit, than most people had. They always seemed to focus on me because I happened to be a little older than most of the other guys that were involved, you know.

One strike out at that—what's the name of that plant there out on the west side—I was badly beaten up there. That was in 1937. And as a matter of fact, I was in every precinct station on the west side of Detroit during that period, always being dragged in for some kind of explanation about property damage which I may or may not have known anything about. But I was spotted pretty much as a—who knows who was

potentially responsible—they would haul me in. I never was charged, but they would give you a rough time and at that time when they pulled you in, it was sort of a semi-third degree.

Nothing compared to what happened in New York though, when I did that period up in New York there. I nearly—well, they crippled me. They caused a hernia condition in me that I never recovered from. I mean still—getting beat up when they take you in. At that time they took you into a police station and five or six cops got around about you and without anybody seeing, one would bring a knee up between your legs and do all kinds of things, weaken you, you know. That didn't actually happen in Detroit.

I wouldn't say—oh, there was some overreaching by the police on picket lines. For instance, over on Martin Avenue there was a strike there that we went out to help on, and the mounted police came out because they were trying to man the plant with strikebreakers. I'll always recall that. Our people were waiting on them coming out at quitting time, and somebody threw a bottle—I didn't believe it—and they hit the leader of the strikebreakers as he was coming out of the plant. Hit him on the side of the head, and he went down like a load. Well, that enraged the police, so the police run wild on horseback. But then we had a whole bunch of youngsters, school kids, who were hiding behind the bushes on the homes all the way up the street, and they had slingshots and some of the guys had furnished them with small ball bearings. And these kids were hiding behind the bushes and taking shots at the private end of horses and causing the horses to rear up and throw the police off their backs, and so on. Oh, that was a maddening couple of hours. Well, I ducked away around the other street, and I run up the alley,and I knew there were a couple of cops on horseback. One of the kids thought he had got them. We weren't encouraging that sort of stuff, I didn't at least, I didn't know what was happening. Anyway, the police went after this kid. I saw them chasing the kid so I grabbed ahold of the kid and dragged him up this alley, and there was an open door to a garage, and I pushed him into the garage and the cops had lost sight of both of us. But that was one of the incidents that happened.

Oh, the cops were playing rough at that time. You see, we had a

mayor at that time who claimed that only over his dead body would the CIO ever find a base in Detroit. But incidents like that did happen. On the west side, at Cadillac at least, I finally developed a rapport with the police department. I went voluntarily up to the precinct and tried to arrange for them to allow for wagons with coffee and doughnuts to come down to the picket line. We agreed to remove all the cars off the streets so that no mischievous person would hide behind the cars and throw bottles and stuff, you know. They began to appreciate that kind of cooperation. I thought it much better to do that than to have them come and provoke trouble. People are easily incensed, and it could have been a two-way battle. But we got through. No, I wouldn't say that the cops were too violent as far as I was concerned.

Brooks: I wanted to ask you about that incident in New York that you mentioned. When you went to jail? Explain that to me.

Miller: Oh yeah—

Brooks: What were you doing in New York?

Miller: My daughter was living there. In 1935, as I told you, I had been fired from Ford's and I had tried everything. I trained a young fellow from New York at the Rouge Plant in the technique of finishing cars, paint and metal, etc. His father was the custodian of Edsel Ford's estate up in Maine. He was raised among the aristocracy, and he was the only son he had. So, he was kicked out of every college he was sent to—

Brooks: Edsel Ford?

Miller: No, this young fellow who was the son of the custodian of Edsel Ford's estate, which is a big job, you know. And his son was a pretty rebellious young fellow who got into all sorts of trouble. So finally they sent him to Detroit and the Rouge Plant, and they put him under my control to put shoes on his feet and exact some discipline. And oh boy, he learned to hate me. I used to give him the lousiest jobs. I wasn't

the foreman, but I was in complete charge of that little custom paint shop. It's like breaking in a mule, you know. Finally he realized that if you can't beat 'em you join 'em, so he became very friendly and began to come up to my house when I lived on Kentucky Avenue, and we got very, very intimate. I used to call his parents every Friday night up in Maine and let them know how he was doing. Anyway, he finally graduated (from college).

I was fired from Ford's at that time, and he was in charge of the Edgewater Plant at that time up there in New Jersey. I went up there to pay a social visit with him, and I was looking for a job everywhere. He offered me a job, so I went there on a Friday. And they told me when I went over there Monday morning that someone from the Rouge Plant had seen me up there and wired Harry Bennett's office—security—and they wired back, cancel the requisition for hiring Dave Miller. When I went in Monday morning, well, they told me no job. I couldn't find Eddie Clements (the man who offered a job) for six weeks or more, and I finally found out he was away hiding. He knew what happened. He knew all about me, and he was going to take a chance on hiring me, but the union wasn't organized at that time. It was not until 1941, you know.

So anyway, I got mucking around New York, in touch with a bunch of young people, a young socialist league, and I suppose some young Communists among them too. They were organizing and sending whoever wanted to go to Spain to fight on the Loyalist side, you know. I was very much interested in that, too. So there was a picture at that time at Liberty Avenue in Long Island called The Red Salute. I never seen the picture. It was a devastating attack on the Soviet Union. These kids thought they would picket the joint. So I went over there and walked around. A couple of paddy wagons came up there with a whole bunch of policemen, and we got thrown into the wagon and shipped way out to the Long Island jail and kept there over night. I let them know my lawyer's name. I wanted a lawyer from the Civil Liberties Federation. He got over there and they had me away to another station. And we kept going around for about 48 hours. They finally let the lawyers see us. I didn't spend too much time in jail, we got a suspended sentence of thirty days.

But one other incident happened up there. I was on the same platform at an unemployment demonstration with the famous Father Divine. You probably heard about him. He had a tremendous movement in New York, you know.

Brooks: How come you were on the same platform?

Miller: It was an unemployed demonstration I was participating in. A young congressman who succeeded LaGuardia, a young Italian, was on the platform too. We decided we were going to march from Union Square to the Port Authority Building. Well, the police—we didn't have a permit, and the Port Authority has just two entrances, one on each end, and big buildings on each side. We got boxed in there and the police came riding in on horseback to break up the crowd. I will always remember how I was right behind that Congressman, when a great big burly policeman—he was just a short, little man—took him by the scruff of his neck and the seat of his pants. He was carrying the American flag. And Congress was in session, and every statesman is immune from arrest while Congress is is session, you know that?

Brooks: No, I didn't know that.

Miller: Well, they grabbed ahold of the little Congressman and they shoved him right into the wagon. Do you know the following day, Valentine, who was the police commissioner at that time—and oh, there was a barrage of criticism—claimed that he was not arrested, but he was taken into protective custody, which was coined from Goebbels in Germany? That was the expression the Germans used to use when they were picking up people. I can remember that very vividly. I didn't get involved in that situation. They didn't make any arrests, they just took the Congressman away and didn't try him or anything. They let him loose the next day.

I imagine any detailed question—much of the stuff (coughing) comes on me after I go to bed. I get to thinking of a number of things and I really haven't had the time, honestly Dan, I haven't had the time to dig up all the material that I should have over at the archives. I really should have had all that stuff filed away and had it (coughing) shipped over for these experts to put together. The attic is loaded, the basement

is loaded, the back bedrooms are loaded with stuff that might be of value to historians, you know. One of these days if I ever retire— probably I'll drop down in my shoes one day and leave to my daughter the job.

Brooks: This union I ran across, the Automotive Industrial Workers of America, led by Father Coughlin, did they give you—

Miller: Oh, back in Father Coughlin's time. That was around the early thirties, when he was on a rampage against FDR. Yes, I—

Brooks: He organized a union.

Miller: He organized a social justice union. He tried to get in the plants, and he achieved a measure of success. The broadcasts on Sunday afternoon brought about a tremendous response. The income that man derived from the contributions made by the poorest of the poor, not only off the Roman Catholic community, but everybody became hypnotized, glamorized with his approach, you know.

I remember—well, it was in 1935 or 1936. My daughter was living in New York on Long Island and married then. I remember Father Coughlin, oh he had a terrific following in New York City, terrific following, chapters in almost every block.

And they called a conference of Social Justice people, the Union of Social Justice in Long Island there. It was supposed to be for members only, but we got wind of it. We prepared a leaflet exposing this man. I remember I was assigned to one of the places where we expected the meeting to be held. After we learned that it had been transferred to another place, a school teacher in New York went along with me and we went to legitimately hand out our leaflets. Oh my, no sooner on the job than about five great big strong men came out. Two of them grabbed ahold of the girl and rushed her away down the street. Three of them grabbed ahold of me and dragged me over to an automobile and threw me into the automobile. I really thought I was going to be taken for a last round-up, a last ride. They drove me out about fifty-odd miles down the island and

they dumped me off and warned me not to come back there. Didn't hurt me other than twist my arm. I didn't try to resist. There was nobody to help me, you couldn't do it. People were just flocking into that hall. Anyway, I was able to get transportation back to the city. That was about the only experience I had with Father Coughlin.

Brooks: Do you think that his union organizing attempts hurt the UAW at any time?

Miller: No, no. He was practically out of the picture as a leader, as a force, before the UAW was actually established. No, he had no influence so far as the UAW was concerned, although he opposed it.

I can remember we had another phony clergyman who was operating—Gerald L.K. Smith, who was a Southerner and a minister, and I can recall him coming here. He took a more positive position in supporting Homer Martin and opposing the CIO. So this guy, Gerald L.K. Smith, he was equally as obnoxious as Father Coughlin was. So, I remember the time we had this—when the UAW was split and Homer Martin was headquartered in one part of town and the CIO had headquarters in the other part of town, over on Lafayette Boulevard, and Gerald L.K. Smith came down the steps into the lobby there. Dick Frankensteen went over to him and challenged him about some statement he made that Sunday evening about the CIO, and I heard that clergyman say this: "Look, Dick, had you guys been willing to pay me as much as I'm being paid by the employer's federation, I could have done equally as good a job on your behalf." I heard it, Dan. He thought it was (just) being said to Dick Frankensteen and could be denied, but I heard it. A clergyman swearing on the Bible every time he opened his mouth. Is it any wonder I got no use for these guys whose collars are turned backwards—unreliable outfit.

He's still functioning, but he's very quiet the same as Father Coughlin. Of course, the church, that bishop in Philadelphia was largely responsible for putting the gag on Father Coughlin. I just read about him the other week. They claim that he still holds to his reactionary attitude. So that's about all I know about Father Coughlin. So many, many people poured their funds into him who could ill afford it. Poor people would send him a dollar. What he did with all that money, nobody

ever got to know. The government certainly didn't get to know.

Brooks: Let me ask you—I was really interested in the question of black workers in Detroit and how they related to the union and if there were tensions. Like, I know that during the Ford strike in 1941 or '40, something like that, Henry Ford hired something like 5,000 black workers to sit inside the plant. And that there was—to possibly create a racial situation. How did the union deal with that? How did the black community react to the union? All those questions.

Miller: Well, eventually—well, it's still a situation in the black community that they feel they're not getting their equities within the union, the opportunities for leadership. It has more or less been mellowed and the black community today on the whole, the leadership at least, they're in line with the philosophy of the union. They are beginning to be recognized now. They are going to school. 25%-30%, sometimes as much as 40%, of the students at Black Lake are black, and they're being educated. They're being elected to positions where the whites are numerically overwhelmingly in control of local uniions, and blacks are being elected presidents and various offices in their local unions.

Of course my position on the black issue—I take the same position as the big battle that took place way back in the early days when they wanted recognition on the International Executive Board. My position was let them lay a base as we all have to do. I will not agree, I won't agree today—I have the same problem confronting me. I broke the color line three weeks ago down in Washington. I've been able to get two black men elected to an all-white executive board of the National Council of Senior Citizens, but because they had demonstrated, to me at least and to many others, that they had the qualifications of leadership. I take the same attitude regarding blacks as I do with women. I am not prepared to support women, merely because she is a woman, to any position of leadership unless she can demonstrate she's qualified for that job. In other words, I don't go whole hog for the women's lib movement. I go for equal rights, but they've got to prove themeselves.

No, Ford did try to create that division. Harry Bennett again. Of course, he had the situation in the Ford Motor Company ever since it

was incorporated where they had two separate employment offices. A fellow called Marshall, a black man, he was the Employment Manager down there at Ford's for hiring the blacks. He didn't hire any whites, he hired the blacks. And they had a fellow called Miller, Employment Manager for hiring the whites.

But I will say Henry Ford I don't believe in his heart had any clear opinions about—I think the old man went along the same thing I did. When I hired out in Ford's way back, I can recall that back as far as 1920, I remember being transferred because of lack of work for my particular classification. I was asked to go down—rather than go home—to go down and work in the dock. And lo and behold, in 1920 when I went down there I found myself working under a foreman who was black. Now, that was back in 1920.

So Ford at that time had no opinions. They hired anybody who could be trained the way they wanted them to be trained. They would rather take someone from the street and train them according to the way Henry Ford taught and the philosophy laid down by him and his advisers. Dean Marcus, another clergyman, Dean of St. Paul's Cathedral, was head of the Sociological Department at that time, and they hired people regardless of race, color, creed, or nationality, but they had to be trained. "Forget all you ever learned elsewhere. We'll brainwash you, and we'll tell you just exactly what to do and how you're supposed to do it, what you're supposed to believe in."

Come around 1928, why, they sent foremen around trying to put Hoover buttons on all their employees. When they came to me, my superintendent tried to put a button on my coverall, and I flipped it into the ashcan and said, "I'm here to paint these jobs. Politically, how I think and what I do at the ballot box is none of your business." It's a wonder I wasn't fired at that time, taking that attitude. The same on what they call the Community Chest. Henry Ford never believed in charity, never believed in charity. But come a time late in the '20s when they were involved in trying to get their employees to make contributions, and they tried to compel the employees to contribute a day's wages. Well, a day's wages at that time was a tremendous chunk out of your pay. I refused to be coerced into doing that too. I would do what I wanted to do on a voluntary basis.

The public news media devoted themselves to building up men like Henry Ford, that he was infallible, making a god out of him, you know. Oh, I recognized old Henry Ford as being a supreme egotist. In fact, when he set up a plant in Cork, Ireland, he anticipated at that time that if the Irish won their battle for separation which they were engaged in at that time that he would become the king of Ireland. He was a crazy old man, you know—he was a a very stupid old man, Henry Ford. His mind ran on wheels, engineering, but beyond that—

Brooks: He couldn't deal with people?

Miller: Oh, no,no,no,no,no. He was asked questions at a lawsuit one time in Chicago by a lawyer, a Jewish lawyer named Shapiro, and one of the questions he couldn't answer. And the lawyer said, "Any schoolchild could answer that question. It's historical." Henry Ford said, "History to me is a bunk. History to me is a bunk." Well, I indicated that he had very little normal education in other fields other than engineering. I knew that, I knew the man very intimately.

Brooks: You did?

Miller: Oh, yes. I was up at his home almost every week when I was operating as Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, you know, two names. I was up there under my own name, while at that time I was down underground operating as Tom Stewart. I was treated very well by the Ford Motor Company, I've no reason to complain at all.

But that was their main objective, to prevent their industry from being unionized. And as soon as they got their focus on anybody that had any ideas, no matter how important they may have been to them. You could have been the chief engineer at the Ford Motor Company, but if you held any liberal ideas about building a union, about organizing, you'd go out, you'd go out, you'd go out like a strike of greased lightning.

Brooks: If you were treated well by the Ford Motor Company, why were you so interested in building a union and willing to risk so much to build it?

Miller: I saw the conditions that other people had to suffer from. Nobody could

call their job their own. Nobody had any security. You went down in the morning and five minutes later you could be on your way back home again. There were no compensations of any kind, and lay-offs took place for such a long period of time. And sometimes the people who had rendered the most service—there were no seniority rights—they would be laid-off because the foreman or the Service man didn't like them or they happened to speak back at some time. Consequently, it was a dehumanizing system. There were no means of channelizing your thinking to the authorities within the company. When the foreman spoke or the Service man spoke, that was the first and last word. If they decided you had to go, you had to go no matter how many years you'd served the company.

So that on that conviction I put my own thinking aside. I wasn't really interested in promotions, no more at that time than I have been in the union. I was more concerned with sticking with the rank-and-file. I'm not bragging about it. I mean, again I say it might have been a freakish concept. But no doubt I had the opportunity for promotion in the Ford Motor Company to supervisor and moving up the ladder, but I always felt that my dedication had to be devoted to building a union. And we went through that process, and we came in 1935-36, when we were able to assert our power first at Midland Steel, the first big strike we had, and the Briggs Manufacturing Company, and then General Motors in '36.

From then on I was conscious, even when I sneaked into Cadillac, bluffing my way through. After the strike was over, they didn't have to call me back, because there was no contract provided for me being called back after the strike. They could have left me out in the cold, but because of my experience and the particular line I was employed in, they called me back. And I was only about three months there, when the superintendent called me to the office and told me would I go and exchange my coveralls for a white coat? All the supervisors in Cadillac wore white coats at that time. "George," I said, "George, would you care to come up with me to the end of the line?" He says, "Why?" "Well," I say, "I want to prove something to you." He came on. I said, "Look up that line. Not a man on that line who's had less than fifteen years service with this company. Everyone of them equally capable as I am of fulfilling the function that you're offering me. Why are you offering me, George? I'm the

founder of the union in this plant. I'm the plant chairman. I've got an obligation to see these people are protected and give them guidance. Without showing any gratitude, I know the motive for offering me the job. It means I have to desert these people and move within the ranks of (management). No, the answer is no, George, no." He was very honest, he said, "Dave, I just told the management upstairs this morning that that would be your answer."

So, I've no more desire to make money in the industry—a lot of money. To keep my head above water was my main concern, to see that my family, my wife and daughter, didn't want. And the same principle applied to my activity in the union. I've no mercenary motive whatsoever.

Ford Motor Company, they've been a conglomerate of enigmas, you know. They never had a clear and concise understanding of what humanity was all about, what human aspirations were. Dictatorship. Henry Ford used to take them out of Jackson Prison and he believed he could rehabilitate every twisted mind that ever became involved in crime. He used to bring them to the plant there. The whole Service Department was made up of ex-convicts he had taken out of jail. Henry Bennett, his chief security man, was Safety Commissioner of the State of Michigan at that time. Hell, Harry used to take them out and put them to work down at the plant.

There was the famous boxer who did ten years of a life term for manslaughter. He became head of the gardening project for Ford during the depression, when Ford furnished a parcel of land. Instead of giving you a handout of money, you'd get a little land and the use of a spade and shovel to see if you could scratch your living out of the land growing stuff, you know. You go out to Dearborn and see these wonderful buildings, that was just all land that was used by the Ford Company for that purpose.

But it was a question of trying to control a man's body and soul 24 hours a day, You know, the Sociological Department, when I hired out there, they had to know exactly every asset you had.

Brooks: There was a Sociological Department in Ford's?

Miller: In Ford's, headed by Dean Marcus, Dean of St. Paul's Cathedral, although

he was on the payroll of the Ford Motor Company. That great avalanche of publicity that Ford got in 1915 when he was the first industrialist to establish five dollars a day—of course I wasn't there, I didn't come there until 1920—but you know, nobody got that five dollars a day except those who had been screened and homes had been visited to find out how much debt they had. Their associations had to be checked, and in the final analysis, only about 25% of all of the Ford employees ever received that. The average wage at that time was $2.75 per day.

He controlled the Highland Park Bank. Although he did have a savings plan whereby an employee could put in one-third of his earnings—got paid every two weeks—in a savings account with the company and they paid as much as 8% per year at that time.

Brooks: How many workers had that much money to spare at that time?

Miller: Well, a lot of people scratch as much as they could to get that 8% and pay for the coal in the wintertime and so on.

But Henry Ford was a peculiar individual. He was an old man who was dominated by a woman, Anna Bryant. She was the boss. He used to call her Lady Ford. He never addressed her as Mrs. Ford, talked about her only as Lady Ford. He was agreat admirer of monarchy, old man Ford.

I remember when the Prince of Wales came over way back in the early '20s. He came out to Highland Park. We had all to dress in white coveralls, and the tools had all got to be plated and just so on the final line for the big showing. I can well recall Henry Ford looking out the window down at the receiving dock and the Prince of Wales came forward. Old man Ford almost went down to the ground. Edsel Ford was standing about three or four feet away dressed in a heavy coat, and he just stood there, hands in his pockets, until the Prince came over to him. You could see the difference in attitude between father and son. Old man Ford grovelled before monarchy, and Edsel Ford was a different type. Although I don't think he'd ever been strong enough to run the company. He didn't have the will-power.

But a lot of these incidents come from time to time, and maybe I'll be able sometime to get down to my typewriter and put them in a more coherent condition. But I will say, had I not been imbued with this fervor

to organize and get involved in every kind of movement to help underprivileged people, that I only had one desire, I know I could have gone places for the Ford Motor Company. I know I carried a lot of respect, because there was one thing I did do. If you're class-conscious and you know what you have to contend with and then be compelled to be employed in industry, make yourself one of the most efficient people they have. Get yourself so fortified for the particular job you're doing that they'll have second thoughts about firing you. Maybe I overreached myself because the Ford Motor Company has really prospered after I was fired, but I used to kid a lot of people, thinking that they'll never fire me. Why, they'll fall apart. But, I did have that conviction. So much so that foreman respected you, superintendents respected you, because in your particular line—like, when I was transferred from Highland Park in 1927 to the Rouge, I finished the last T model that Ford ever built. I put the finishing touches on that. I went to the Rouge, and I built the first show car of the A model. Of course, that was produced by the Ford Motor Company, and it took over a year before they showed it, you know. The plant was practically closed down at that time.

When I went to the Rouge Plant, there wasn't a passenger-car man down there. In other words, I had the responsibility of practically training supervision. I was never a supervisor myself, but I had the responsibility of training these guys, because prior to that they were all involved in the building of tractors for agricultural purposes. So that I commanded a lot of respect. But, oh boy, I could never, never forget the inhuman manner in which they handled their labor force. Nobody had control except these thugs and ex-convicts that walked around the plant, and they were all involved in some way or another in stealing from the Ford Motor Company. Oh my, my, if I had disclosed to the Ford Motor Company—every day I knew about hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of material that was stolen from the Ford Motor Company—

Brooks: By the Service Department?

Miller: By cooperation of supervision of the Service Department, Wasn't a supervisor that didn't have a power boat on the river there powered by a

Lincoln motor. And some made money (from) these hot shops all over the country, New Orleans, Chicago, and elsewhere. They used to do business day after day and year after year on stolen goods coming directly, not stolen out of the company's plants but stolen before the stuff was ever delivered there and charged against the Ford Motor Company. Oh, had they not had a monopoly in the business at that time, a real monopoly on the low-prided car, no company could ever have stood the machinations that went on there in the way of stealing.

Brooks: How did you ever break the feeling of terror that Harry Bennett and the Service Department and all the Ford supervisors were able to keep the workers in? What broke that down?

Miller: Well, Harry Bennett was out really before the union. At the time that Homer Martin tried to sell the union, when they set up the Ford Liberty Legion, that was the movement that Harry Bennett gave his blessings to.

Brooks: Homer Martin set that up?

Miller: Homer Martin set that up. That was a company union, and Bennett gave his blessings to that and more-or-less tried to compel the employees to join. That was really when the revolt took place.

Brooks: What was the effect of the Battle of the Overpass, which is the most famous in auto union history? Did that cause the workers to be more scared or did that get them angrier?

Miller: No, that made them very angry. That was the beginning. That really gave an impetus to organization. Mike Widman—John L. Lewis sent Mike Widman, one of the ace organizers of the Mine Workers, sent him to Detroit, and he did a marvelous job. He did a marvelous job in organizing the workers. Right after that skirmish on the bridge, the overpass.

Brooks: Did you mention to me at one point that you were almost involved in that?

Miller: Uh-huh. I went out with Walter, and we and Dick Frankensteen and several others went up on the bridge, and we saw the gang of goons headed by my former superintendent, Bill Comment, a great big strong hefty guy. We saw them coming along the bridge and I said to Walter, I said, "We need more people up here if we're going to defend ourselves." He said, "Dave, I'll tell you. You get down there and mobilize as many of the guys as possible and then go back to 174", a hall we had on Michigan Avenue, "go back and see if you can get some more people because there's going to be trouble out on the street too." So, just as they came along before the confrontation took place, thinking nothing of it, I left under orders, because Walter was the leader then, and I left. And, oh boy, when I got back, huh. Of course, Walter wasn't really hurt very much.

Brooks: No?

Miller: Nah.

Brooks: Is that just—

Miller: The guys that got really hurt were several guys down below on the street who remained in the hospital. One guy has a silver plate in his head, Tony Marinovich. He lives out in Inkster. He's got a silver plate in his head yet. He's an old man now. His wife used to be secretary in our local union—174.

Anyway, no, Walter got punched on the nose, caused his nose to bleed, and of course the blood got all over his white shirt. At that time he was quite a publicity hound and he went before the cameras, you know, horrible-looking picture, seeing blood all over. But the guy that really got the beating was Dick Frankensteen. He was a former football player, and they pulled the coat over his head and punched him in the kidneys, really did a job on him. He couldn't respond because his arms were pinned down on his side. It was a vicious thing.

No, really the worst thing—Walter's never been in jail, you know, despite all the struggles he came through. He'd never been in a police station, although some of the stories would like to make you believe that

he was. The two most serious things that happened to Walter were first of all the beating he took from Harry Bennett's goons when they broke into his apartment over there on Glendale when he had a few friends in. I wasn't there, but they broke in one time and beat him up, not too severely. They beat all of them up and then escaped, and the police never interfered there. That was number one. And the next one was when he was shot.

Brooks: I just heard he had been shot, but I've never heard the incident described.

Miller: He was sitting in his kitchen when he moved away out to where he is now. I mean where he was before he died. Somebody sneaked up to his kitchen window and let a blast go and shattered his hand and arm and side. It took a long time, but some wonderful surgeons, bone specialists and so on, they put him all together again. He was able to write with his hand, he got the power back there to be able to write. That was the second incident. And then when Victor (Reuther), when they took a shot at Victor and blew one of his eyes out. He has only one eye now. These were the two that really went through tragic experiences.

Now, they never were able to get to the bottom of either one of these happenings. They did arrest one guy. And of course, at that time the first people to be suspected were those who disagreed with Walter. They immediately started to put the publicity stuff on about the possibility that Communists wanted to get rid of him, because, while Walter had been in the Soviet Union and been looked upon as an extreme leftist at one time, he gradually became right of center and put that clause in the constitution which barred known Communists from holding offices.

Brooks: He introduced that clause?

Miller: Yeah, it's still in the constitution. No Communist can hold—if they want to apply it. But they don't apply it. It has never been applied. How do you know who's a Communist or not? They all look the same. So that, no, it never has been applied. Walter was a shrewd guy. He did it in the face of public opinion, which prior to and during the days of Joe McCarthy,

Brooks: Could you talk a little bit about the factional fights the UAW has had?

Miller: In 1935, the first conference of the UAW was called here in Detroit. Now, it's not recorded in the UAW history, but that conference was called by William Green, President of the AFL. That was referring back to what I said about trying to get us to join up in the federal unions. I was at that conference. Walter was not there, of course. Neither was anybody in the top leadership of the union today. But then in 1936, when the struggle took place for control between Homer Martin, who had identified himself with the AFL and with Harry Bennett of the Ford Motor Company, a convention was called in South Bend, at which time Walter was elected to the Executive Board.

Brooks: Were you at that convention?

Miller: Yes. I've been at every one since 1935, either as a delegate or observer. And so in 1936, Walter was elected to the board.

Brooks: But Homer Martin was still elected president.

Miller: Homer Martin was elected president. When the split took place at that time, two unions began to function in General Motors and Chrysler. The AFL one under the leadership of Homer Martin and the dissident group which had no leadership other than Walter Reuther, Dick Frankensteen, George Addes, they were all left of center at that time and we had headquarters in that hotel on Lafayette Boulevard and Homer Martin had headquarters in the Griswold Building.

Come 1937 and the convention then was called in Milwaukee, Wisconsin and oh, my, Homer Martin brought in every vicious element that could be hired to try to control that convention in Milwaukee.

Brooks: Physically control it?

Miller: They terrorized the people. I was leader of my delegation from Cadillac. We were a division of 174 at that time, of which Walter had been elected president. During the proceedings, Homer Martin—every time Walter tried to get recognition on the floor, Homer Martin would always look over his

head and recognize a little fellow from Racine, Wisconsin who was one of his boys. So finally, our boys got kind of tired of this thing and I volunteered to try. Homer Martin, well, he knew me, but he wasn't too sure where I stood. Anyway, they hoisted me up on the table, and I demanded the floor. So, he recognized me, and I immediately under parliamentary procedure yielded the floor to Walter Reuther, which was correct under parliamentary order. And Walter went up onto the platform, and oh boy, he stripped that ecclesiastical acrobat, as I called him because he was a former minister, you know.

Brooks: Homer Martin?

Miller: Homer Martin, yes. He stripped him naked ideologically. He left him bare, and I can remember the words that Homer Martin said when he threw out his arms, "You are trying to crucify me as you crucified the Lord on the cross." (Laughing) I'll never forget these words. Anyway, that was the beginning of the end—beginning and almost the end of Homer Martin.

Brooks: The workers were able to see through him?

Miller: Oh yeah, the locals that he had control of began to liquidate and switch over. Of course, with the help of Phillip Murray and Sidney Hillman and John L. Lewis, we got complete support of the CIO thrown behind us. From then on, "CIO, CIO, we'll never stop until we reach the top. We are the CIO." We never looked backwards after that.

Oh, there were a lot of incidents, Dan, that sometime come to mind. And there's so much involved in the present day and what we have ahead of us. I have an International Executive Board meeting and the White House Conference coming up on the 28th of November. In the meantime, we have our own UAW convention taking place. This old mind of mine sometimes has to discard many of the things that are stored up in my mind and take care of the things that are—

Brooks: How about the whole fight over Communists in the union?

Miller: Walter veered away a little to the right on the question of the control by the radical element. The Communist Party was really trying to take over, no question about that.

Brooks: Of the UAW?

Miller: Yeah, after the UAW was organized. So he didn't want any particular group to be simply in control of the party—

Brooks: You mean of the union?

Miller: Of the union. So, of course, I took the position that when we organized the union, we never asked a person whether he was Catholic, Protestant, Holy Roller or what he was, whether he was Republican, Socialist, Communist, or Democrat. Did he want to join the union? That was the only concern and interest we had. We organized all kinds of people. So, I eventually took the position of being neutral in the matter. When the Communists were right, I supported them. The Pope was against child labor, the Communists were against child labor, every liberal thinker was against child labor in industry. And many other issues. When they were right I supported them, and they were right so very often. Well, I never joined the party. I was branded as being a fellow-traveler.

At the time Walter was first elected president, he called me in and tried to persuade me to cast my bloc of votes for him. He said to me, knowing that I was on the left side of the fence at that time, "Dave, if you go back to George Addes and his caucus and put the following proposition to him, he can choose whatever job he wants to run for. If he wants to run for president, I'll run for secretary-treasurer, and vice versa." Well, he got another guy from the right side of the fence to go before the right-wing caucus ostensibly to do the same thing.

I went before the caucus and got my ears splattered all around my head. They were all more-or-less—well, most of them were Communist Party-inspired people, you see. I didn't belong to the Party. But no, they wouldn't have anything to do with it. They wanted to defeat Reuther and so on. So the other guy failed to show up at the other caucus.

And consequently, when it came to a showdown, that was when a guy who is now vice-chairman of my Advisory Board, John Devito from Cleveland, a brilliant young man, the first time anybody ran against Walter Reuther, he ran against him.

Brooks: How did you feel helping to lead the opposition against Walter, yet sharing these experiences and being really close to him?

Miller: I'll tell you, Dan, here's how I felt about it. I knew the leadership of the Communist Party. I knew them all. I indicated to them I was an independent. I supported them when they were right, and I opposed them when they were wrong. And if you want to look up the records of the Daily Worker for years and years, I was as much criticized as Walter Reuther ever was. That was the organ of the Communist Party. But I let them know that I was not going to be dictated to. Within the union, I would call my shots as I saw them.

Anyway, what aggrieved me with Walter, knowing full well that Walter—the first thing that Walter did when we hired that little office on Michigan Avenue, which I referred to in my eulogy to Walter, the first thing he did was put the secretary of the Michigan Communist Party, who had raised enough money to fund this little office—he became his political adviser. Billy Allan, who is the Michigan journalist for the Communist publication even today, was up there. All the caucuses were held with the leadership of the Communist Party at that time.

And then when Walter acquired power and decided to be a way toward the right side, he fired all these people. Now I can tell of an incident where, when it came time to expose Homer Martin being associated with that Jay Lovestone, that fiend who helped put the Fascists in power in Spain, who went out there and subversively helped to destroy the Loyalist leadership back in 1936, who's now a braintruster for George Meany to this day, to this day. Anyway, to expose Homer Martin's association with Jay Lovestone, I can name the guys that went to New York, climbed two stories up a water pipe, sneaked into the bedroom of Jay Lovestone, stole his correspondence, brought it back, and put it in the hands of Victor and Walter Reuther to sustain the charges we made against him—(Martin's

association with) Harry Bennett and Jay Lovestone. That knowledge I had to tell Walter Reuther when he asked if I would support him.

Brooks: Those people who did that were Communists?

Miller: Yeah, yeah, Communists. Known Communists and didn't try to bely the fact in any way. When Walter ran for president I spent about three hours with him in his office, discussing. He was soliciting my support. I had some thirty-odd votes to deliver in a bloc at the convention from my local union. And I told Walter at that time, I said, "Walter, I love every part of you. I am very devoted to you personally. My heart and my desire and everything I think about you is based on admiration for what you have done up to now, except one thing. Walter, in your intense desire to climb the ladder you have crucified an awful lot of good people." This was up in Atlantic City, behind the platform. I said, "I could walk out there on the boardwalk and could lay all the political bodies that you have eliminated who are all dead now politically. You crucified them, Walter, you didn't have to do it. Expelling them from the union under the pretense that they were Communists, etc. I can't vote for you, Walter, I can't vote for you."

Brooks: Do you think he did that out of a feeling that this was the only way the union could be successful or was it more personal—

Miller: Yea, to satisfy public opinion. Oh, he was shrewd. Anyway, as time went on, it didn't in any way separate us or cause any difference in our friendship. He was a broadminded person, you know, in lots of ways, provided you stood your ground. But if you submitted to him, then you were just another flunky in the administration, you know.

So then I was able to work with him and in later years when he had that authority, he saw fit to put me on some very important assignments, such as this Committee of 100 which engineered the plan for national health insurance—national health security, I should say—and also to get me involved with the National Council of Senior Citizens, which I'm now enlarging and developing in this particular section of the country.

So, on the whole, he had a different trend toward achieving the goals that he believed in, but I believe that Walter actually never, never abandoned his concept that ultimately socialism would become the philosophy of government in this country, But he had a different way of approaching it. So, my experience with him has been something I will remember.

Brooks: What if there had been no Walter Reuther? Do you think there would have been differences in the direction that the union has gone? How much does the union bear the personal stamp of Walter Reuther and how much would it have been anyone else?

Miller: Well, I believe—people with a potential of Walter and equally as capable, where they would have gone in the years following their eventual eclipse, I don't know. Take Matthew Smith, whom I referred to, who organized the MESA, the Mechanics' Educational Society. Now, there was a brilliant man. Well educated in the Central Labor College in London where all the outstanding labor leaders of the British labor movement were educated. Some of them became very respectable politicians in later years, but in their beginning within the labor movement they had to submit to courses of intense education in that college. See, in Britain at one time, it wasn't a popularity contest to become a leader. In the labor movement you had to show your credentials as having been equipped for the job you were running for. So that, had he (Smith)—he was a bigoted Englishmen and he wouldn't apply for (American) citizenship. He remained a British subject right up until he died. Now, he would have been a potential.

Another fellow—well, he was a known Communist. He was from Butte, Montana. But he allowed the bottle to get to him. Johnson was his name. Way back in the early days. He had potential as a leader, too, but it's hard to say.

Now, George Addes, who was our secretary-treasurer before Emil Mazey. He was a founder of the union down in Toledo. Today he works for the Ford Motor Company.

I will say this in conclusion in my evaluation of Walter. No, the union could not have made as much progress under any other man to my

knowledge than it has under Walter Reuther's guidance. He's being criticized a lot now for overreaching himself so far as finances are concerned. You know, Black Lake and all kinds of extravagance. They claim that he was responsible for what led to our financial battle that we're in now. We're broke. No union in the country is poorer than the UAW is today. We're losing membership year by year because of the economic situation and the international competition we're facing. 33,000 jobs went out on the West Coast. The aircraft industry went to Japan. Now, whether Walter would have avoided that tremendous strike that we had, that 1970 strike, whether he would have taken on General Motors at that time, knowing full well it was going to be a long struggle, that it was going to bankrupt us—we could never bankrupt General Motors, but it was going to bankrupt us and put us in hock for the next ten years—I don't know. He's dead, and we'll never know. All we do now is we're trying to keep the faith, baby, as they say, in Leonard Woodcock, believing in that man. Well educated, former Chairman of the Board of Wayne University, a deep understanding of the problems of the auto workers and workers in general, we only hope now that he'll be able to restore the prestige of this union.

But to ask me could any other man to my knowledge—I believe that had I been able to transplant some of the leaders I knew in Britain and bring them over here, with their sagacity of a couple of hundred years of struggle and organization as compared with our—well, today, we're less than forty years old, and the AFL is less than eighty years old. So, had I been able to transplant some of these people from Europe, maybe I would have found somebody there more capable. But the situation in America was unique, you know, with so many different nationalities—

Brooks: Do you think that the union could have been organized—I am just talking about the early days now—that the union could have been organized without the Communists?

Miller: Well, if the employers had continued their oppression in trying to maintain control in the plants, I—a worm will turn. No matter how submissive that worm my be to all kinds of abuse, a worm will turn if you stand on its tail long enough. I have no doubt there would have been

revolts, but the higher intelligence of the guys who came into the industry and were able to see the light and know that even under the benevolent system—and there were employers who were prone to be benevolent with share-profit plans in operation and so on, like in Britain with the Cadburys and the Rowntrees. They never were organized and they're not organized today in the candy business over there.

If employers who (were) handling wealth and inspiring and motivating industry, had they remained human, had they had some concept of human dignity and human well-being instead of a policy of how much money can they make to keep on exploiting other people, then there would be no need for unions. Unions were not essential things, if people had any concept of decency in human relationships. It's struggle that brings unions, and oppression that brings unions.

No, I do believe that in America here today, unions would have been organized,as they were before the Communist Party was known in the United States. The Knights of Labor, The Western Miners' Federation, the Molly Maguires, and the elements that came from countries, chased out of the countries because of economic pressure, coming with dreams about liberty and freedom that prevailed in America here, and finding such disappointment, such frustrations.

You know, back in 1920, they took a census of all the workers in this country. You know that out of 4½ million who belonged to the AFL, only 21% were native-born. Only 21% of five million were native-born, which proves the point that struggle begets struggle. These people had to struggle in the old country like most of us. They came here looking for a higher standard of living and they found disappointment. They found they had to go through the same thing their forefathers went through in Europe. That's why you had so many Europeans who moved into the front lines when the struggle became required and evident here. They gave leadership.

And as you know, the country became so cosmopolitan, so diversified, and some took the political end of it to pursue their ideals, like the Irish now, for instance. They came over from a highly exploited country, exploited by English landowners and industrialists and so on. When they

came over here—there's a little story about that. I remember General Atkins. General Atkins was the leader of the Transport Workers in Ireland, and he came over to this country in search of funds and to try to induce Irish to go back to Ireland to fight on behalf of the Sinn Fein movement. Sinn Fein means Ireland for the Irish, a united Ireland, which they haven't got today, as you know. But he was in support of that movement, the Sinn Fein movement. Well, he broke what they call the syndicalist law in New York State, and he was sent to jail for two years in New York State. Well, he became a trustee, an honor prisoner, and being so well educated, he was allowed to speak. One afternoon, one Sunday afternoon, a group of visitors came up from New York City, and quite a crowd came to hear a lecture by a prisoner, you know. He devoted his time to lecturing on mythology of Ireland, how St. Patrick freed Ireland of all the snakes and reptiles. He wound up telling the story about St. Patrick—not a snake or reptile to be found in Ireland, you know. But General Atkins says, "But what did I discover when I came to the United States? I found that, while St. Pat had chased them all out of Ireland, they had all gone across the Atlantic here and become judges, policemen, and politicians."

Well, that story goes along with the idea that you will find Irishmen in almost every city, county, hamlet, and state starting with old Honey Fitzgerald, one of John Kennedy's grandfathers. He came from Ireland. Certain nationalities took one line. The Polish people, they were all in the vanguard politically.

But there were others who came from more industrialized sections of Europe, like Germany and Italy—the Milan part of Italy where the engineering industry had its high point way back in the early days, and Britain, which was the machine shop of the world at one time. When they came here, they found themselves confronted with the industrial situation, the might of the economic royalists in control, as FDR called them. They devoted themselves to the struggles in the mine fields. Miners came from South Wales and from the Ukraine and from all parts of—and these basic industries became the basis for struggle.

So you have the two elements. It's only in the last couple of decades that we in the industrial field became conscious of the fact that, while

we extract as much as we can at the bargaining table, we have only become conscious of the fact that that can be wiped out in Washington with a stroke of the pen, you know. And now we are realizing that we've got to combine our activities, keeping education supreme at the shop level while at the same time directing ourselves to (political) education. Until this system changes—and it will one day. What it will be known as I won't live long enough to know, whether it will be socialism. Earl Browder used to claim that the benevolent capitalist system had about a hundred more years to survive, and then it would be a question of from capitalism to socialism and socialism to communism. That was his theory. He was thrown out of the Communist Party for believing that.

Brooks: Because of the hundred years?

Miller: Yeah, yeah. The Communist Party always believed that revolution was just around the corner—that's forty years ago.

Brooks: Do you think that's the major mistake they made with the union? In thinking that they could just organize the workers into this union and that this would bring about the impending revolution, that they saw it as a tool for bringing about the revolution, instead of a more long term—

Miller: Well, of course, if you've read anything of Marx and Lenin, you know that the supremacy of the proletariat is the base of all revolutions. In Russia, it didn't start with the peasants on the land but with the proletariat in basic industries, you know. And the same in our own union. You know, the union did not start with production people. First of all, I indicated to you, it started with the skilled men, with men who were trained to use their heads first on their job and they expanded their thinking, if they have time to do it, to other things that confront them.

So that, yes, the Communists in this country made some terrible blunders. They did a lot of marvelous things, but they made terrible blunders, too. You see, who was it that said when Joe Stalin sneezes, the leadership of the Communist Party in America takes out their

handkerchiefs? I mean, how much truth there was to that I don't know. But especially, I read everything I could lay my hands on. I read papers in the old country and so on.

But they have all changed their attitudes. How things change. Look at the changes that have taken place—from Stalin to Kosygin. Nixon going to Peking. These birds can do every damn thing they like and nobody criticizes them. But if I applied for a passport to go to the Soviet Union, I would have to go through hell and high water and inquisitions to get one. These birds can fly all over the world. You talk about democracy—that is complete dictatorship. Who knows, who knows today in Washington exactly what Nixon is going to accomplish by going to Peking or Moscow? But he's got the freedom to do it.

No, I would say that the Communists were just ahead of their times. I mean, you can say that about Christ himself. To my mind he was a rebel. He was a revolutionary. Chased the money-lenders out of the temple, scourged them, and went after championing the cause of the oppressed. He was crucified. It has taken 2,000 years to/even follow any kind of lesson he laid down. And we're in as bad a shape today as we were at that time, crucifying people for speaking what they believe to be, and throwing them in jail, too. We're doing it today. Nobody is free to go out there and assert themselves without being branded.

Brooks: Let me ask you something. How were you able to avoid being crucified, as you put it? You were known to be left of center, and you did pose a threat to Walter in a way—you led struggles against him. How were you able to avoid being isolated and thrown out?

Miller: Well, I had a lot of support in my local union at one time. When I was elected president—I served as plant chairman as a unit of 174—I had 99% support of the rank-and-file in the shop. I commanded a lot of respect from management, too, strange to say. I would never go up there before management and argue a lie. I confined myself to the agreement we had entered into. I honored contracts and so on. Many times I had to find myself on opposite corners from some members of my own bargaining committee. On the whole I was able to satisfy the rank-and-file.

Now, you ask me how I managed to avoid—I didn't avoid it. That's the point, I don't know where I stand today. When I was president of Cadillac, during the (Korean) wartime, I was hauled downtown to appear before a Congressional Committee, the McCarthy Committee, branded by somebody as being a fellow-traveler of the Communist Party.

Brooks: Do you know what committee this was?

Miller: Yeah, the House UnAmerican Committee—UnAmerican Activities. So, I was hauled down there, and I just refused to testify. There was a great danger to me, because being foreign-born, you know. They were picking them up and you'd be surprised to this day it's not known how many people were deported from the darkness of night without any judicial procedures whatever. I was really laying the years of my activity in this country one the line.

I had Ernie Goodman for my lawyer. Cost me 200 bucks for two days. Labor lawyers are no different from any other kind of lawyer. Anyway, he appeared with me. Never had to answer a question, never had to advise me. I gave them my name and address. "Any further questions, Mr. Chairman, are futile, and I take the 5th Amendment." "Are you a member of the Bund?" "I refuse to answer." "Are you a member of the Communist Party?" "I refuse to answer. The 5th Amendment protects me from answering that question. You can ask me if I'm a Christian or an atheist, I'll refuse to answer these questions too."

So that I went back to the plant. I was a working president, you know. So what happened, I come back and next day I went into the shop, I couldn't get a kind look from anybody. The women, we had 8000 women out of 15000 employees. These women organized themselves to throw me out of the plant.

Brooks: Really?

Miller: The guy who was instrumental in General Motors in bringing about the first contract that brought equal pay for equal work and equal seniority

for men and women, and yet these women (were) so inspired by the stories in the press, you know. I took the 5th Amendment, that was enough. You were a Communist by taking the 5th Amendment, even though it was part of the Constitution and still is. Anyway, I went to the shop every day. No one even looked at me. Very few—oh, there was a handful of people, friends of mine. I went every day.

Then they went up to management and wanted to know—a right-wing committee—they wanted to know what are they going to do about Dave Miller. You know what management told them? The management of Cadillac Motor told them, "We know more about Dave Miller or as much as the FBI will ever know. We know him from the days he went to school in Scotland. We know all his associates. We know everything about him. And, when we find it desirable to get rid of Dave Miller, we will do it without consultation with you. Now go back to your jobs, and if we hear of any interference with Dave Miller in the shop while he is employed here, you'll have us to reckon with."

In other words, I got more support from the company, whom I had fought from the day of the sit-down strike way back in 1936. I fought the company, hitting the ceiling on many issues, yet they offered me more support than the union did at the time.

Brooks: Why do you think that happened?

Miller: Well, the union wanted rid of everybody who was anti-administration. And I wouldn't, even with Walter Reuther then—I'm not today, I'm not just a camp follower. I call my shots as I see them. I disagree with even what Woodcock has to offer today in the present period of uncertainty and confusion. If I don't think he's right, I'll question him, and I did at that time. So the union was in a position that they wanted rid of all elements who were somewhat questionable, you know. Anyway, I just carried on and kept on going. I was defeated (for president), defeated by a guy that is on his way to do a long stretch in jail now, George Scopas. He became mayor of Harper Woods and recently he was indicted for doing something about traveler's checks.

Brooks: I read that. In North Carolina.

Miller: Yeah. He's the guy that defeated me. He was only in for one year when a friend of mine I promoted, defeated him the following year.

But, now this was in 1951 when I was called down there and all this happened. I retired in 1959, just eight years later. Do you know that they mobilized a committee one Saturday evening and they more-or-less shanghaied me away from home and told me they were going to take me—three or four guys—take me over for a little celebration in Windsor? They took me away out Warren Avenue instead of that, and when I went in there, here was several hundred people representing the union from every section of the city, people from the city, a couple of Congressmen, and the company, the general manager and his staff from Cadillac, all there to give me a farewell party. And you see how unfair it is to be dogmatic about public opinion, especially workers' opinion. (It's) very fickle. It can change overnight. You can see how fickle, changing that way.

Brooks: Why do you think management supported you?

Miller: Well, off the record, management are human beings. They're not all vicious people. Hell, there was about three hundred people showed up at that party. 25% of them were from the management side of the fence. How do you account for that? I don't know. I never sold out a worker in my life.

I remember one time destroying five Cadillac cars in my hurry to get out of the plant to attend a union meeting. I rushed a car down the main line, and another fellow pulled out in front of me, and I crossed right into him and knocked him into three or four other cars. Well, supervision were all upstairs on that day on Friday afternoon. I left the plant, that was about 12:30 or 1 o' clock. I came back about 4 o' clock and management was still in a meeting, but all these cars were just like brand new. All my boys in my department had got together and had taken out the broken radiators and busted fenders and replaced them, stored them away. It was Tuesday of the next week before management knew whatever happened. That was what you call unionism. That was solidarity at that time. The union wasn't a Pandora's Box at that time. People

functioned in the union dedicated to the principles of unionism. Today it is like a slot machine in the eyes of many of them. Not all of them, many of them. How much can I get for what I do for the union?

No, you say how I escaped the McCarthy days. I didn't escape.

Brooks: But how were you able—you didn't escape McCarthyism, but how were you able to oppose the top leadership of the union and yet end up today a very respected member of that union, going to White House Conferences and representing the union?

Miller: I was never beholden to the top leadership for anything. I never asked a job from them. I never turned in a check for any kind of money from them. I was never paid for any job I had. When I was president of my local, with 15,000 people, I was the only president in the international union who went to my job every morning at 7:30 and stayed there until 4:30 or 5 o' clock in the afternoon. I did all my presidential chores over the telephone with the staff in the office, only leaving the shop when in cases of emergency. I believe, I think I told you this before, that when a shepherd is looking after the sheep, he doesn't sit on top of the mountain if the sheep are in the valley. That was my pet peeve about union leadership. We developed them too fast, and they were so anxious to get out of the shop and get off the production line. We induced them to train, and we provided them with jobs in an office ten miles away from the seat of exploitation. I never believed in that, never did believe in that. I don't believe in it today, although I do know that we need specialists. I couldn't go into a shop today and handle a local union. You've got to be somewhat of an embryonic lawyer, counselor, sociologist, you got to be everything under the regulations that prevail today. But at that time, it was dealing with a bunch of people who knew little or nothing and want organization and sharing responsibility.

So that when you say—well, they couldn't expel me. I've never been guilty of any kind of overt act or any other act that would justify me being thrown out of the union. So, they were in the same position as

the government was. Had I been proven to be a Communist, I would have been on the other side of the ocean right now for the last twenty years. I would have been deported, as they deported many, many union men without trial or hearing of any kind. Ship them over to New York and put them on a ship or on a plane.

Only a couple of years ago we stopped a deportation at Metropolitan Airport of Fred Williams, one of the founders of this union, who was an acknowledged Communist. They proved the case against him and he wasn't able to—he always believed he was born in this country. He was brought over here when he was four months old from South Wales. He's a man about 68 now. Because he falsified his place of birth plus being a Communist—he went through all the tribunals, all the hearings—all declared that he was an undesirable. And it was George Crockett, who is now a judge, and Ernie Goodman, with the help of Walter Reuther, that brought him off the plane at Metropolitan Airport, and his case is cleared now. Now, that guy would have been sent to a country where he knew nothing bout it, leaving a wife and children and grandchildren. This happened to many, many people. It would have happened to me had they been able to prove—they couldn't send you away because you were a fellow-traveler. I might have been classified as that, but on some occasions so was the Pope. The Pope was against child labor, and so were the Communists against child labor.

Brooks: That's how they thought, too—McCarthy thought.

Miller: The FBI came up here a few years ago now, Two young fellows came to the door there. My wife was sitting down there. "David Miller? Born in Dundee, Scotland?" "Yes." Pull out their badges. They're from the FBI. Well, I said, "You can't come up to my home. First of all, my wife is sort of ill this morning, but," I said, "if you want to talk to me in your car there, OK." So I went over to their automobile and sat there. They were very, very nice. They wanted to know how I was functioning in the retired workers movement. I laughed, I laughed. I said, "Is that all the government has to do, spending taxpayers' money and sending you guys out to

find out what an old codger like me is doin? Am I likely to overthrow this—lend a hand in overthrowing this government?" "Oh, don't talk about that, Mr. Miller. We don't mean that. We're just interested in what you're doing, that's all." "Well," I said, "I don't think it's any of your business. I don't want to be unfair or uncharitable. You guys have a job to do, but," I said, "I have no information to give you." "Oh, that's quite all right, quite all right. Do you plan a trip to the old country?" I said, "If I make enough money, I may make a trip back home." "Well, wish you good luck."

I've never been cleared by the Internal Security, although I've been in the White House three times when LBJ was there. Being called on when we'd be at a Board meeting in Washington. They would ask the officers—I'm the fourth vice-president—to come over to the Oval Room in the White House to witness LBJ signing some appropriation bill and get presented with a pen. But to get into the White House you have to be checked and double-checked by the FBI, by the Army Intelligence, Internal Security, etc. I told Bill Hutton, an Englishman—he's executive director of the National Council of Senior Citizens—the first time we went there, "I don't think they will ever, ever let me in through the gate of the White House, far less into the White House itself." Bill said, "Listen, Dave, if they don't let you in, we don't go in." But I was more-or-less cleared.

I suppose I have a clean bill of health so far as they're concerned, or they figure, "What the hell damage can that old man of 80 years of age do?",you know, and they just give it up. But they don't seem to realize that I haven't changed a bit. If it weren't for my legs, I'd likely be as active and be into every one of these demonstrations. I'd be sitting in these churches with draft evaders and doing everything I could to help these youth in their opposition to this war and every other activity that seems to me to be constructive.

Brooks: What's your opinion of the youthe movement now?

Miller: I believe they're frustrated, somewhat frustrated. I believe that

ultimately they will come together. They will come together and unify their activity and secure the goal for which they want to focus on. But it's not going to be something to happen in my time. I do believe that they will eventually do it. When I look at some of the suffering that some of these kids are undergoing, when you've never been inside of a jail, it's—well, dehumanizing to say the least, no matter how high your ideals are. It's a terrible experience and takes an awful strong mind to handle it. And don't ever forget that politicals are not handled in the same way as ordinary criminals. These kids who become draft evaders and finally are willing to go to jail, they suffer plenty at the hands of the authorities.

(We're) working for the unification of youth, getting them to realize we are not concerned specifically with the welfare of the elderly people exclusively. It's not one of our main programs, but the inspiration and guidance of the youth, if we can without becoming nostalgic, letting them understand that from an acorn grows an oak. A small minority can influence the majority eventually, if they can only get into their minds that destruction, destroying property—as I used to say to the guys in the sit-down strike when I went out to Flint, "Why do you do this? Some day, come the revolution, we're going to take over this factory. Why do you want to destroy it?" So, the futility of violence has always been affirmed to me. I never use my fists. I never hurt anybody in my life. I can never fight physically.

Brooks: But in that sit-down strike, you were willing to defend—

Miller: Oh, yes. If they ever come in there and attempt to use brutal force to get us out, we had all kinds of means. Oh, my god, yes, we had sling-shots, everything ready to use for weapons to repel under siege, not deliberately to go out and try to create public opinion by the use of violent methods, such as been doing in many sections of the black movement, specifically. They get blamed for a lot of it. I don't know if they're guilty of it. But the Panthers and other segments of the black movement and the students at the universities—I don't think their actions are justified at times, but I don't know. I don't know what inspires them. Educated

young men, I would think that they have an idea of a different means of redressing their grievances. Organizing without the use of violent methods, breaking down property. That's about my observation relating to the youth movement.

That's why I'm so interested. I'm getting all kinds of calls and getting letters here from people who don't agree with me about giving so much money and so much focus on the education of youth. A lot of old-timers—in the next couple of weeks I'm going to have to face quite a barrage of opposition from them to the things I'm proposing, you know.

Brooks: What is it that you're proposing?

Miller: That a $100,000 be transferred from our funds (UAW Retired Workers) as a down payment on what we hope to do in the future for the education of young people into the understanding of leadership up at the Walter Reuther Family Educational Center at Black Lake. By the way, have you been up there yet?

Brooks: No. My dad has, but I haven't.

Miller: Oh, you have to get up there, Dan, and see that place. There's nothing like it in the United States. I doubt if there's anything like it in the world. All conceived of by Walter Reuther. Even the architects—he overruled the architects and got his own ideas injected into the layout of the buildings. The symbols, historical symbols, are very inspiring to the mind that's educated enough to understand what they all represent. He had a marvelous brain, that guy. So that's the institution that I think is going to—provided we can clear the debt. It really belongs to the Teamsters now. We had to get a mortgage of 25 million dollars and put up the complex there as collateral. Oh, we'll clear that. We'll clear that in the next couple of years.

The youth movement has the biggest attraction to me in the years that are left to me, if there are years left to me at 81 years of age. If there are years left, I would like to devote all of my time doing whatever I can to stimulate young fellows, and that includes a program that we helped to initiate, catching up with drop-outs from school.

While they're unable to go to college, we're getting them vocational training in high school. We've organized 26 coordinators—retirees—to teach them skills, you know, to go to these high schools and help the teachers, you know, the regular teachers on the job. They go there three days a week. So, that's another program I'd be awfully interested in, too.

Brooks: How do you think that you can get—there seems to be a mutual distrust between old people and youth. Youth saying that we shouldn't trust anyone, you know, who is older, and old people not listening, saying that kids today are crazy. How do you think that we can get the two to be able to talk together?

Miller: Well, that's the concept we had before we stimulated the retirees to stay with the union and get the focus changed somewhat—reorientated. They have gotten all they can possibly achieve while members of the union in the shop. Now we are out of the shop, we have free time now, and what are you going to do? You only have to depend upon the people in the shop to motivate improvement in your condition. We can't strike, we can only depend on the guys in the shop. Starting with that, you get them to realize there's an interdependency. I've found in going to labor schools, I've found when you keep that point of view constantly before them, they begin to respond, provided you don't become overly nostalgiac. Trying to impress upon them what I went through, the rugged Valley Forges of the union-building, I accomplished this, I participated in that. You don't do that with the youth.

And as we carry on and get these young leaders to cooperate with us, we go to their meetings and show an interest in their problems that they're facing, and listen to them. Listen to them. Try to understand what they are driving at and then if something relates to part of your own experience, you try to relate it to them. But don't go out egotistically to tell them, "Well, we built the union, and here's what we accomplished, and this is the technique we used." You don't do that with youth anymore. That's what I'm trying to impress upon our people, and we will become capable of going before—well, take your dad. He's

past fifty years of age now. You don't hear him—he worked in the shop at one time—you don't hear him going around raving about the conditions that were prevalent when he started. He's talking about something that's ahead of him all the time.

No, I don't think there's any generation gap, as they call it, that can't be solved. We're getting fellows out of the shop now classified as senior citizens—they'll be coming out at 55 in a few years from now. Right now they're coming out at 58. These guys don't want to classify themselves as old because they're retired. We've got to build them into the youth movement, working politically and for the improvement of social security and so on, health care, and what-have-you for the element of aging people who are not able to speak for themselves or move for themselves. We'll always try to do the best we can. In the main, we've got to get that cooperation. It's the youth to whom the world belongs.

There is one thing I can visualize. Before the thing I dream about—about the power of youth bringing about a change in this society—we will have to go through a phase of refined fascism.

Brooks: Stage of fascism?

Miller: It will not be as brutal possibly as—it won't involve any form of genocide as it did in Germany, but in the form of refined fascism by suppression of all the rights of workers and curtailment of all the rights of organized labor, unless, in the meantime, we can develop that offsetting power of making the youth conscious of what lies ahead of them. Otherwise their plans are all made—let them deny it if they want to—it was exposed many, many years ago that there is a plan for concentration camps in this country to eliminate the opposition. You have your George Wallaces and your Richard Nixons and all your various so-called patriotic organizations who have all the wealth behind them. Something came to our attention the other day while I was in Washington. Do you know, we have a guy who organized a movement in our particular realm, the AARP, the American Association of Retired Persons, and to organize that he put five million dollars down some years ago to offset the influence we (National Council of Senior Citizens) were developing?

Brooks: He is a reactionary?

Miller: Right. Today, he's got twenty million dollars to put in and this Leonard Davis, who is an international organizer of insurance syndicates all over the world, sits on the policy committee of the Democratic Party, which is nine million dollars in debt, while he is financing a movement to defeat national health, to defeat the Kennedy bill. Boy, did we lay it into Hubert Humphrey. We met about the whole thing in our headquarters last week in Washington. We really went to town on him. He wouldn't even commit himself (about) whether he was going to take that money to help in his campaign for the Presidency. Chairman of the policy committee, and here's a guy giving money to the Republicans and every reactionary group to defeat the things that the Democratic Party is giving lip service to. You see, wealth, wealth, wealth, Who speaks loudest? We got the people. He's got the money. Who speaks loudest?

I remember way back in 1928, the Chairman of the Board of General Motors—at that time you didn't have the Hatch Act to prevent this—gave a quarter of a million dollars to the Democratic Party, and Alfred Sloan, the President of the company, gave a quarter million dollars to the Republican Party. That was even back in 1928.

Brooks: So whoever won, they—

Miller: They win, they win. I've no faith in these politicians. I'm not a party man, I'm an independent. I wouldn't join the Democratic Party. I will support some of the guys that they put forward, but to identify myself with a party that's so goddammed confused and so susceptible to corruption, I just wouldn't be part of it. Even when the union gives directions, I sometimes question their guidelines. I think I have the right to exercise that kind of independent thinking.

But there's a clear defined issue. Now, I'm supposed to go in there Friday to expose this thing to some of our people in Solidarity House, but I only learned about it last week. I only learned about it from Nelson Cruikshank, who is the president of the National Council, and he's going to carry the thing right into the very highest echelon of the Democratic Party, to find out what they're going to do about this guy.

Are you going to let him buy the party with his wealth—Continental Casualty Company, an outfit that's a parent of a whole lot of subsidiaries all over the country and all over the world, as a matter of fact. He enabled the new group of senior citizens to make a little money by peddling insurance policies, so he keeps them under control, too. They supported Nixon in the last election, and they opposed Medicare way back ten years ago.

Brooks: A senior citizens' group opposed Medicare?

Miller: Yeah, yeah. That's right, the American Association of Retired Persons. So we're about the only independent group. We've got threemmillion people on the books. I can't say they're all dedicated, but we have three million. I don't believe they have that many members, but they have wealth, while we're operating on a shoe string.

Brooks: Where do you get your money from?

Miller: Well, my membership in the UAW, we extract from our dollar dues thirty cents per year per capita. We pay thirty cents for 250,000 members a year. Then we peddle gold cards which cost $2.50. We buy them, and we get some extra advantages such as we have a drug program where you can get prescription drugs at a very big discount through this organization. We have travel plans where you can travel anywhere you want to go at a much lower rate. So through that gold card operation, we're able to raise enough money. And we got a share of some of the government grants, such as Senior Aides Program, which organized seniors to go out and help in nursing homes, Meals on Wheels for people who are unable to leave their homes and so on. So, we organize people to do that. We get a grant from the government, and as I told you, this apprentice training program, our organization gets a grant for operating that. Of course, we get administrative costs for administering the program along with it.

So, all these little bits of trickling through the pipeline, but they don't pay any salaries. When I go to these meetings in Washington, the UAW pays my expenses, my plane fare, and my hotel.

Brooks: Are you drawing a salary from the UAW right now?

Miller: No, no, no. A hundred dollars a month they give me for expenses. I have to pay that (much) for taxi cabs for my daughter. She comes here every day. Her husband's retired too, and she's not of the age for getting any social security. So her time is taken taking care of my affairs. She does a lot of secretarial work for me. So she gets the hunderd dollars. It's not any benefit to me.

Brooks: Would the union give you a salary if you would accept one?

Miller: No, nor have I—we're going to have an election this month for national leadership, and I haven't really committed myself to anything. We're getting so many very capable people coming out of the shops now. Expecting that they will show the same dedication, I'm willing to step aside and take a minor—you know, get back to the rank-and-file.

Largely because I originated the movement, I'm beginning to think I'm more-or-less a symbol now, a symbol of the old days. So I haven't made up my mind definitely whether I'll run for re-election or not.

Brooks: Would you talk a little bit about how the UAW Retired Workers' movement got started? When you retired, did you already have that in mind?

Miller: Well, I think I told you yesterday about meeting your dad the second day after I retired. I retired on Friday and went down Monday morning to a (Retired Workers') Center. It was in Local 49 at that time. And all I could see then was something that didn't excite me one little bit. It was all right I thought for elderly people who were physically and mentally unable to exert themselves anymore and who were coming in playing cards and drinking coffee. So, then I went back to my local union, and a few of the guys that had retired, I got them together, and we held a meeting in my local.

At that time, the only program the international union had was these four centers. From these four centers, they had five guys coming

from each of the centers, amounting to twenty guys who used to meet every month over at Solidarity House. It was called the steering committee, but they had no authority, no power, no money. They'd just sit and talk about things. They'd go down to city hall and make a presentation about cutting the fares on buses and so on, nothing interesting.

At that time we had an academically-trained Director, Chuck Odell, a very able fellow who was very capable in his own sphere. But he could not see the need for focusing on the local unions. And him and I crossed swords over that. Anyway, time went on and we did the best we could to work with Chuck and developed an Area Council, but there was never any effort to get back to the shops and local unions.

So one day I got a couple of guys together, and the International Board was going to meet, so at 9 o' clock in the morning we went over there. At 2 o' clock they were going to convene. I told the other guy, "I'm not going to wait. I'm going to go in and see Walter." I went in to see Walter and of course the palace guard was there, you know, four or five administrative assistants. They said, "You can't see Walter." "The hell I can't," I said. "I've sat on his doorstep before and I'll do it again. Now go ahead and tell him I'm here." Larry Getlinger came out and told me that Walter would see me at 11 o' clock. So I went in and spilled everything that was on my mind to Walter about the futility of trying to organize senior citizens, unless you get them back to where they started from—their local unions. By god, he swallowed it hook, line, and sinker. The following day he called in a committee of the Board, and he asked me to bring in a committee. And he had a great big blackboard and, by god, he had the whole structure on that blackboard, organization of chapters at local unions, regional councils, area councils, all the way up to the top representation on the International Executive Board.

Well, about two years later, we went to Long Beach, California in 1966. I got the opportunity to make my pitch to the convention of 3,000 delegates, and from then on we became constitutionalized. Articles 53 and 54 were put into the constitution of the union, which gave us complete recognition in the same manner as every other department of the International. I gave Walter all the credit for it, although he had to

be enlightened on what we wanted.

So, from then on we worked very, very closely together. Had the General Motors strike not taken place, we'd (Retired Workers' Council) have been in a much stronger position than we are today. We have no funds to focus on. We gave a quarter million dollars to that strike fund, and we organized almost 10,000 people on a picket line that picketed the General Motors Building during the GM strike. And now we're ready to offer another $100,000 for the educational programs.

That's about briefly and very simply (the story). If we could only get this thing with the freeze and the economic policy of Nixon over with, we could move into organization. I've got all kinds of letters from the Teamsters, the International Brotherhood of Electricians, the Steelworkers, all want us to send speakers over to their outfits to carry the pattern of how we did it, because we're the only union in the United States, the only union in the world that retains retired people with full membership in our union. We can vote the same way we could vote when we were employed, except we can't vote for people who do the bargaining in the shop. We can vote for local union officers and participate in every way with the young people that are there now operating the local unions.

Brooks: How large is your organization?

Miller: It now has 250,000 retirees within the UAW.

Brooks: Is that the largest organization of retirees?

Miller: Of any union retirees. We are also affiliated, as I have stated, to the National Council of Senior Citizens. So with that combination of people we are developing what we call "senior power". In the hope that senior power, youth power, black power, woman power—you coordinate all that power in a program which you can get your teeth into, (coughing) and the economic royalists of this country had better watch their step.

So, I don't know how much more there is to tell. The facts are all there, but they're not assembled the way they should be.

Brooks: I think they're fine.

Miller: I tell you what I do with my daughter sometime when I get tired typing for myself. When I'm over at her house, sometimes she's very useful. She's very good at shorthand, and she can take shorthand faster than I can articulate. Then she'll transcribe it on the typewriter. Sometimes I look at what I've said, and I'm really amazed that I have said (it), because she puts it in proper order, you know.

Brooks: What would you like to see done with these tapes?

Miller: I would more-or-less transcribe it (and put it in order), and then in case an occasion arises when you need the live voice, that's exactly when the recording is beneficial. That's the use that the archives are making over at Wayne. They're transcribing everything that goes on tape.

Brooks: When you write things down, you know, type things up, are those things all current things or do you record your own history?

Miller: No. Your dad has been after me for the last two years, if and when I had the opportunity to when I get off my job, to narrate what has happened in my lifetime. I always kept putting it off, putting it off, putting it off, until he indicated you were available now and interested.

I have all kinds of records to play on the machine. You see, during the wartime we were the first plant in the industry to set up a P.A. system in every department and every dining room in Cadillac. And every day we would assign somebody—or I would do it myself—to go up to the broadcasting room up in the Manager's office and broadcast whatever we decided to tell the workers about the progress of the war, the need for eliminating absenteeism, all the issues that should concern workers who are involved in defense industry. So I used to broadcast here every morning between 7:30 and 8 o' clock, and I have all these records. The funny thing is I can't get a machine to play them on. The machine they had down there played in reverse. In other words, the arm went on in reverse—instead of starting on the outside of the record, it started on the inside of the record. I can't find a machine that you can operate them on to use them all.

Oh, I've got a lot of things stored up in the attic dealing with

the early days, some things that people who are still alive and still active wouldn't want to have disclosed. But they're still facts, such as there are men working in the International Union today holding very high jobs, who were very violent in their opposition to Walter Reuther at one time. How they were able to hang on, I'll never know. I didn't have to hang on. Nobody was paying me for a living. These fellows all had jobs, you know.

No, Dan, I don't have any—but that's the purpose of the tapes, I would say. They started off (taping me) over there at Wayne about five years ago. I went over there about two or three times a week. I believe I have a copy of it someplace.

Brooks: A transcribed copy?

Miller: —where I answered the sharp, pointed questions he asked me, you know. I was exclusively dealing with the origin of the UAW, and the role we all played in its inception.

Brooks: Any major disappointments or regrets?

Miller: The only thing that disappointed me was my daughter. She was very much imbued with the things that I believed in. She was raised at school here. She was the first student to graduate from McKenzie High School. She was there from the time it was built, you know, and I had hopes that she would continue through college. I had saved enough money to enable her to do that, but unpredictable females—. Why, I sent her away to New York to take a summer job for a little experience—she was studying commercial law—and I sent her away there to a friend of mine who had a law office up there. A month later I got a letter back saying she got married, and all my castle of cards came tumbling down around my ears. She stayed there in New York for a number of years, and I had to bring them back here and put whatever capital I had into a home and get them away from this neighborhood. But, she's been an angel to us, you know. She's enabled me to carry on at my age where under normal circumstances I should be at home, taking care of my wife as many old men do.

In the main, I—if I had my life to live over again, Dan, I might be a little more cautious. I don't think I would change one thing I intended to do. I've no regrets. Oh, I might have been more thoughtful about my family and my wife. At one time I was up on top of the mountain. I've been on both sides of the fence. Never was rich, but at least in the position of being semi-independent economically. So I might have been in a better position from an economic point of view, but what the hell, I'm getting by and I'm happy. My wife's happy. We are both ailing now, physically unfit to do many things. She gets very, very annoyed because I compel her not to try to do the things she used to do. She thinks at her age she should be able to do the things she did thirty or forty years ago. So, with the exceptions, we're well cared for. The doctors up there at Metropolitan Hospital take an awful lot of interest in both of us, so physically we do the best we can. On the whole, I've no complaints, Danny my boy, I've no complaints whatever. Just taking it day-to-day now.

Brooks: Keeping plenty busy.

Miller: Yes, indeed. I could be doing a whole lot more. The heart and mind is willing, but the legs won't let me. Constant pain all the time, constant pain. I'm never free from pain, pain from the legs to the hips. These two boys who attacked me is something to be accountable for. Before that, I was riding my bicycle over there at the Physical Fitness part of our building, where we have stationery bicycles, and swimming. That's only a couple of years ago.

Brooks: And then you got robbed?

Miller: Now I can't even walk, I can't even hardly walk to the corner. I wouldn't even dare to try it anyway. I got knocked down there in between two churches. As bright as it is today, too. Just about this time, too. The street was deserted, but people were sitting on their porches. Nobody wanted to be involved, nobody came near me. It all happened so fast. These kids are professional. They jump at your back, one of them grabs your arm and twists your arm way back, while the other, smaller guy gets ahold of your wallet. I used to carry a wallet in my back pocket, but

they just get ahold of it and rip it right down. The wallet falls out, and they're gone around the corner in no time. Nobody could have caught them, even if all the people had come off the porches, you know. They might have been able to identify them, but—

Well, achh, these kinds of things, they don't embitter me too much. I realize it's part of a decadent society. The society is going to fall apart at the seams. Anyone that ever believes that their so-called benevolent democratic system is going to be eternal had better begin to read the world's history. You can see if falling apart everywhere, everywhere. Every country in the world is in trouble. Look at their monetary system. I go back to my own country now, and I wouldn't even know it. I wouldn't even know how to handle the means of exchange over there. It changed quite recently, you know. And even the people did not get the opportunity to know the value of the coinage that they're having to use now. They weren't even educated to that before they put it into effect.

All the social connections I built up over the last fifty years and the people my wife and I helped to feed and clothe during that period of the depression, who are now living in affluence in the suburbs, not one of them will come near me, because I live here, because I live in a ghetto. I just had a meeting with a bunch of colored people today. They're calling all the leaders together to get them to go on the warpath, to give them the kinds of things we want them to go after. Why would I want to move? I like to be amongst these people. I like to know what their problems are. It doesn't do me any harm.

Maybe it will come to the point when "Over the stones, he'll rattle his bones, he's only a pauper who nobody owns." I believe I belong to the common herd. I started there and I'll wind up there. I may be eulogized and patted on the back as a symbol of the old days, but I'm conscious of the fact that my usefulness is pretty well diminished now.

Anyway, what happened to me and how I ever got over all these hurdles, I'll never know. I'll never know, never know. How they let me out of the old country? Hell, I never got an honorable discharge from the army. I was an anti-militarist. My records show one civilian conviction and three court-martials. Why they ever let me out of Britain?

They (must have thought), "Glad you're going, you rascal you" or "Glad to get rid of you." Having to go through the procedure, there's no place they can send you to. Like the guys here, guys who were born here. The government is frustrated. They can deport the aliens, they can take your citizenship away from you if you were a naturalized American and deport you, but a native-born guy there's nothing they can do. And that's why they were plotting in the second World War—and the plans are still in Washington on the books—concentration camps. If ever there was an uprising in this country, they have all the plans laid. They know when a dragnet would go out and who they would bring in.

That's why I'm so concerned about the youth getting some clear objectivity about their movement—there is so much frustration that prevails today—and let them know what they're heading for. How they're going to achieve it. How they're going to organize. How they're going to free themselves from the need, if there ever was a need, to use violence. How that can all be averted and accomplish the thing they want without having to indulge in the thing that the present system has to rely upon—force, force, force, police force, military force, every kind of force. The whole system is predicated and built on that philosophy. I think we can build a movement without violence. That's why I say I am concerned about the future. Yep.

Postscript: In November 1971, Dave did decide to seek re-election and maintained his position as head of the UAW International Retired Workers' Advisory Council by acclamation. Furthermore, by order of the Executive Board of the UAW, over Dave's objections, the building which houses the UAW Retired Workers' Department is to be re-named the Dave Miller Building.