

Herbert Hill - H
Robert Battle - B

This is an interview with Mr. Robert Battle, President of the Trade Union Leadership Council, at the headquarters of the T.U.L.C. in Detroit, Michigan, on March 19, 1969. The interviewer is Herbert Hill.

H: Mr. Battle, when were you born? Where were you born? Could you please tell us about when you first came to Detroit and your early experiences as a worker in the automobile industry, and when you became active in the U.A.W.?

B: Well Herb, in the first place, I was born June 4, 1917. I didn't come to Detroit, I was born in Detroit. I was born on the corner of Fort and Russell, which was known at that time as Black Bottom or the lower east side. I got started in the plants at an early age, at 17 years of age. I was one of nine kids, so consequently it wasn't an idea of going to school as a luxury, it was an idea of getting what education you could, then getting out and going to work so you could help support the family.

H: Where did you go to work?

B: I went to work at Ford Motor Company.

H: What plant?

B: Rouge Plant.

H: And you joined the U.A.W.?

B: No, the U.A.W. hadn't come through at the time. This was in 1935 when I went to work at Ford.

H: Was there any union there at all?

B: No union what-so-ever.

H: What department did you go to work in?

B: I went to work in the Pressed Steel Building, in the shipping department.

H: And what kind of work did you do in the shipping department?

B: In the shipping department, at the time, we were loading trucks for the shipping of parts throughout the country from the Ford Motor Company.

H: That was 1937?

B: 1935

H: 1935. Were there many black workers in the plant at that time?

- B: At the time the black workers in the Rouge plant whose total employment numbered around 55 to 60 thousand was approximately 10 to 12 thousand.
- H: There were about 10 to 12 black workers in the plant at that time?
- B: 10 to 12 thousand, yes.
- H: Where were these 10 to 12 thousand black workers concentrated, what departments, what kind of work were they doing?
- B: Well, the bulk of the black workers in the Rouge plant at that time were all in the foundries, in the pressed steel, which is now the Stamping Plant, or the Assembly Plant. In the Motor Building you had a scattering of black workers, but by and large, the over-all concentration of black workers was in the foundries. At the time you had approximately, oh, 9 to 10 to 12 thousand workers in the foundry and I'll say that 87 1/2 to 93% were all black.
- H: Why do you think that was so?
- B: Well, in the early days, it was hard to get anyone to work in the foundries and you had the combination of what was termed as the bohunk and the Negro as the only ones who would work in the foundry at that time; and the Negro was scratching for jobs and any jobs that was open they had to take, they didn't have a choice of saying I want this job or that job or what have you.
- H: It was a hard, dirty job?
- B: Oh yes, by all means.
- H: Very hot, uncomfortable working conditions. Were the wages the same in the foundry?
- B: Wages were the same.
- H: Wages were the same. There were very few workers on the production jobs, that is, very few black workers on production jobs?
- B: No, they were concentrated mostly on production. There were very few black workers on anything but production.
- H: Let me reformulate that. What I meant was, there were very few workers on the assembly line in the Rouge plant?
- B: In other than the foundries?
- H: Right!
- B: Other than the foundries.
- H: Yes, that was what I meant, in other than the foundries. Do you

remember the first attempts to bring a union into the Rouge Plant? Can you tell us about your first awareness of any union activity?

- B: Well, first in 1936 when the U.A.W. organized in Flint, immediately at that time Ford Motor Company started what was known as the company union called the Liberty Legion. Now the Liberty Legion was brought about to try and off-set an outside Union, mainly at that time the C.I.O. and the U.A.W., from coming in, by saying that our workers already were organized with the Liberty Legion. But we all knew right off the bat that it was strictly a company union, so consequently a lot of the fellows, white and black, all refused to join it.
- H: Did the majority of black workers refuse to join the Liberty League?
- B: The majority of the blacks refused to join anything at the time because the Negroes didn't have any knowledge of what unions were all about, and anything that came about that they didn't know, have some first hand information on, they just merely withdrew and had a stand-off position against it.
- H: How did Ford recruit the black workers for the foundry? Did workers just go and ask for jobs? I've heard stories from my interviews with others that Ford had a relationship with some of the Negro ministers in town that they would send over to their workers, that Ford used some of the Negro ministers as kind of recruiting agencies. Is that true?
- B: The way Ford was getting black workers, was there was an old system of you had to know somebody. Ten or fifteen dollars in the minister's kitty or at that time you had the automobile salesman like Mullin Mack Motor sales and someone like that, you'd go out and put a down payment on a car and it was used as an entree into getting a job. Now it wasn't the idea of only recruiting blacks for the foundry, it was the idea that whatever you had a chance to go to work at, you was happy to do. Just coming off the depression of '32 -'33 and '4 at that point, Ford had just gone into the \$5.00 a day so consequently a large number of Negroes came from the South up North looking for this \$5.00 a day and looking for a job. And the only place that was hiring in the 30's to any degree was at Fords, and they liked this, and they was jumping for the \$5.00 a day.
- H: Why was that so, why were the jobs at Ford and not at the other plants in town?
- B: Well, Ford at the time let's say the Rouge Plant, had a concentration of approximately 75 to 80 thousand workers in the Rouge Plant, where in your Chryslers or General Motors didn't have any large foundries or any large masses of workers. It was down to strictly assembly or part of a skill or non-production worker, what have you, and these shops were predominately white. The only thing you could find a Negro doing in Chrysler or General Motors was the menial jobs

such as clean up the toilets or labor work, I mean, street labor like concrete busting or digging ditches.

H: So it would be correct to say that during that period - we're talking about the late 30's - the majority of black workers in the automobile industry in Detroit was concentrated at the Ford Plant and especially the River Rouge Plant.

B: Right.

H: Did Ford have other plants operating besides the River Rouge? In the Detroit area?

B: Yes, the Highland Park Plant.

H: Were there blacks in there?

B: There were.

H: Why do you think Ford employed more blacks than the other companies?

B: I'd say that Ford itself had got into the situation of using black workers over and above the other companies, and let's say they had at that time what was known as the Inkster, just a little project at the time, and Ford used to use the system of bringing in so many people from wherever it was, South, or whichever ones they could get, and had what was Ford owned homes out in Inkster, had places where you could go to get food which was known as a commissary. Now Ford had large numbers of workers who didn't receive any pay whatsoever. It was an idea that they was subsidized by living in the Ford homes in Inkster and also they had what was known as the commissary giving the food and so forth. Now this was as far back as 1920 to '29.

H: When did that stop? When did that come to an end?

B: This just about tapered off in the late 30's or early 40's.

H: I see. When did your active trade union career begin, and would you also tell us when you went into the foundries?

B: I went into the foundry in the last part of 1937. At the time, and those who are around Detroit of any age will remember the famous lay-off of Fords in 1937. Why, everybody was told on December 17th that they was laid off until January 12th or 13th or somewhere in that neighborhood, and you were supposed to be called back to work. But, consequently those who were laid off in December and were supposed to be called back in January of 1938, a lot of them were never called back, and this brought about what is known in your Ford contract as your four year break, because those that were laid off in '37 consequently didn't get back. The majority of them didn't get back until 1942, and as the contract negotiations at Fords was

in 1941, this created what is known as the four year break. But now my going to work in the foundry was brought about, that when the lay-off came in '37, and we was told to come back in January of '38. At this time, they didn't have jobs for the majority of us who was laid off at doing anything but foundry work. At that time I was working with the Riggers, now as I said before, Ford had got out in front back in the 30's of putting Negroes on jobs that are now classified as skilled, such as rigging, iron working, maintenance, mill wright, machine repair and so on like that. Negroes was on these type of jobs at Fords back in the 20's. Now Ford had what was known as the Ford Trade School, where you had a large amount of, I won't say an equal amount between the white and the black, but it was a large amount of Negroes in the Ford Trade School. While they were studying the trade and the minute they graduated from the trade, they put them to work right in the Rouge Plant. At the time, I was working with the Riggers at the job called construction millwright. When the lay-off came, I was given a choice of waiting until the middle of '38 before coming back to work, or accepting immediate employment in the Iron Foundry. Being one, at that time, who didn't have money, none of us had because we just come out of the depression, and prior to that it was an idea of working some 3 or 4 months out of the year. It wasn't an idea of working a year straight through, you was lucky if you was able to make 6 months out of the year. Now this wasn't largely due to the fact of shift balance or nothing like that, this is because the Ford Motor Company who was not organized had this system of hiring in a thousand workers a day, and laying off a thousand workers the same day.

H: Why did they do that?

B: Well, they had the old system then where you in turn got your increase by a nickel, nickel increments, and they had a standing policy out there the minute a worker got up to \$7.60 a day that it was an automatic lay-off for him and they'd bring in another new crew and start them at \$6.00 a day.

H: Was this true for the whites as well as blacks?

B: Oh yes, yes, yes, yes, yes. It wasn't an idea of blacks having one and whites having another, it was the same thing for all. The minute you hit that \$7.60, seven dollars and sixty cents a day, you was automatically laid off, and a new crew brought in. Now this was true mainly among the common laborors, those who was on production, common labor jobs and so forth. Now those who were in what is now known as skill were not in this same catagory. It was just an idea of them working out there helter-skelter. Ford always did have prior to the Union coming in where what looked like about one and one half men to every job.

H: Now would these workers be called back? Would the thousand that were laid off, would they be called back at a certain point?

- B: The only way you'd get back at that time was by going to one of these ministers that you was talkin about and greasing their palm with some ten, fifteen or twenty dollars.
- H: Then would you start at the base rate all over again?
- B: You'd start at \$6.00 again. Start at \$6.00.
- H: And then when you started to hit the \$1.65, the \$1.67 rate they would fire you again?
- B: When you hit the \$7.60 a day, you was automatically laid off again.
- H: \$7.60 a day.
- B: \$7.60 a day. See, the thing was, the good part about it was Fords, in Ford's favor, was you had General Motors and Chrysler, some parts of Chrysler, were organized in '35, '36.
- H: Who were they organized by?
- B: U.A.W.
- H: Now the U.A.W., A.F. of L.?
- B: No, the U.A.W., C.I.O. in '35, '6, that's when they organized the Flint Plant, was the last '35 year and the end of '36. That was the U.A.W. and it was from the C.I.O. at the time when you had John L. Lewis, the miners District 50 who was working with the U.A.W.
- H: I think this was a slightly later period, but this isn't important now. You were in the foundry...
- B: Um hum.
- H: We're now in about 1938?
- B: Yeh. '38.
- H: '38. When did you become aware of labor activity, attempts to organize the workers? Were you already in the foundry at that point?
- B: Yes, I was in the foundry when they started.
- H: You were just a worker in the foundry?
- B: Just a worker.
- H: And the C.I.O. organizing drive had begun?
- B: Yes sir.

- H: Were you active in the U.A.W.- C.I.O. organizing drive?
- B: No, at the time you only had about five Negroes that was active in — who had any knowledge of what was going on. At the time everything was very hush, hush, and either you was a part of a circle that they in turn let you in on, let's see now, there is a guy that's dead now, Nelson Davis, Veal Clough.....These were older fellows....
- H: These were black workers?
- B: Yeh, black workers. These were older fellows and these were the ones who had been mingling around Pete O'Daniels, now I don't know whether this was, they had been climatizing prior to coming to the city of Detroit, or prior to coming to the United States, one or two that I named off was from the islands, Jamaica and so forth and they might have in turn been indoctrinated by unions there.
- H: These were West Indian.....
- B: Yes.
- H: Negroes.
- B: Yes.
- H: Who was working in the plants and would you feel that the West Indian Negroes were more receptive to trade unionism, the idea of labor organization, than let's say the American blacks?
- B: Oh yes, at that time, because the American blacks had not been introduced to the unions whatsoever.
- H: Was Veal Clough a West Indian?
- B: Veal Clough was a cross, he was, you could say he was West Indian.
- H: How about the other man you mentioned?
- B: Pete O'Daniels, yes definitely.
- H: Pete O'Daniels.
- B: Pete O'Daniels.
- H: He was a West Indian Negro.
- B: Yes,
- H: You mentioned a Nelson.
- B: He was not a West Indian Negro, he was American born.

H: And what was his name? Would you repeat his name?

B: Nelson Davis.

H: Nelson Davis, was he an American Negro?

B: American Negro.

H: These three were black workers in the foundry who were active in the C.I.O. Organizing Drive?

B: Right.

H: '38, '39.

B: Right.

H: Can you think of any other names?

B: Oh well, Horace Sheffield....

H: Horace Sheffield?

B: And at times I suppose you had Shelton Tappes. I don't know too much of Shelton Tappes' activities as such, but as I say, you didn't have over five, six or seven Negroes that was actually involved, or indoctrinated to it to have been invited to meetings and so forth. Now some of these was on the basis that they had been working through the N.A.A.C.P. At the time, Horace Sheffield was the youth director of the N.A.A.C.P. and I think his came through that. Now as I say, Veal Clough and Pete O'Daniels, I'm quite sure they had prior indoctrination to the union by being from the West Indies.

H: When did you become active, Buddy?

B: I became active in 1941. It was during the organizational drive when the strike was hit on a Monday morning. Now at the time, at this time I was young and had quite a bit of mouth, and all the guys around it knew me, when the strike came they told me that morning. They says when it gets here, don't be surprised at what you see.

H: Who told you? Do you recall?

B: Oh, it was a white fella named Bill Keefie (McKie?), was working in the jobbing foundry. He said if it gets here in the morning, don't be surprised at what you see. And I passed it off, I mean just as if it was a joke and so forth 'cause the workers usually joked back and forth and the next morning when we got to the plant they had telegraph poles they had laid across the highway

at Miller Road, where the minute you turned off at Michigan you couldn't get in the following section about fifty yards up and you were stopped. Then I knew exactly what they was talking about then. So then a bunch of us youngsters, myself, Banton, William Banton Jr., Louis Tait, Joe Swan, we had all worked, we worked around one certain area there in the foundry.

H: These were all black workers?

B: All black workers. All black workers. So we got together to advance down to see what was going on. So when we got about half way down, and we was told by some of the fellas there who had been from Chryslers, so forth came to help organize, that if you going there to go to work forget it. If you want to do something helpful, stay here and help us keep these cars out and work with us. So we kibitzed around back and forth about two or three hours and all being completely new to us and not knowing what's what, and after some two or three hours got the swing of the thing, where they in turn assigned us a certain thing to do. I mean we was known by the majority of the fellas there because as I say we were young and loud-mouthed, and very active and so forth and they figured once they had indoctrinated some of us in this for couple two, three hours there what it was all about and what they wanted us to do, that they could depend on us.

H: Allright, now you and a small group of other black workers stayed out. It is my understanding, tell me if I'm correct, that many blacks did go into the shop.

B: There were many blacks and whites in the shop. See what happened was this. The strike was called between the midnight shift and the day shift in the Rouge Plant. Consequently, those that were inside when the commotion started outside, the running, the wrestling and fighting back and forth, those who was inside didn't know what the heck was happening, and Ford Motor Company had did a good job of brain washing or indoctrinating the workers in the plant by saying that all that the Unions were trying to get in was Communistic dominated this and that and so forth, and if you get involved in this you'll be a Communist and so forth, you be laid off and everything like that so the workers who wasn't union-minded, standoffish, both white and black. Standoffish. So the result of this happening between the midnight shift and the day shift coming in they called a full shift in. Those that was out couldn't get in, and those that was in was scared to come out because they didn't know what the heck was going on.

H: How long did this situation continue to exist?

B: This was from around February under April the first and two days later, they finally convinced the workers inside that nothing was going to happen to those inside that wanted to come out. If any guy inside wanted to come out, I think it was seven or seven-thirty

that night, everybody inside that wanted to come out, I think we had bull horns and everything was to come on down to Gate 4, Gate 9, something like that, explaining to the workers that was inside, locked in and wanting to come, be at Gate 4 at seven or seven-thirty and come out and nothing will happen to you.

H: Was this when Walter White and N.A.A.C.P. went around the plant?

B: Right.

H: I want to get something straight, it's very important. Many writers on this subject have said that Negro workers to a larger number than white workers, that a greater number of blacks than whites functioned as strike breakers during this period - stayed in the plant. What is your view on this?

B: My view is this: that the, I say, that the majority of people that worked in the Rouge Plant at that time was white. The midnight shift, the largest majority of the midnight shift was white. Those that were caught in would, by the same token, be that the majority was white. But, now when it came down to the situation of coming out, the largest majority that came out of the plant was white. In the foundries Ford Motor Company had gotten to some two or three guys who were acting as their agents as they had the Ford Brotherhood and Liberty Legion that was operating at the time which was supposed to be the AFL unions and bucking the U.A.W., and they had told each worker in the foundry, "All you do is stay in here and protect Ford's property and every hour you're in, you'll be paid a dollar an hour for." Now this is what was handed through the foundry by the agents of the Ford Motor Company, which was called the Liberty Legion or the Ford Brotherhood, three or four company unions, in turn, named through.

H: Did they have a separate union for the blacks? Did Ford set up a separate organization for the black workers?

B: No. It was all one.

H: Was the N.A.A.C.P. sound truck with Walter White on it effective in getting the black worker out of the union?

B: Very much so. This is what finally convinced the black workers in the plant to come out.

H: Was there a certain sentiment against the idea of a union or joining a union among the black workers due to the discriminatory practices of the AFL? Did the tradition of anti-Negro practices by the old AFL mean that some of the black workers were not sympathetic to unions because of this?

B: Certainly; all they knew as far as unions was concerned was the AFL. Then the next thing was, as I said before, at Ford's, Negroes had

jobs there that you couldn't get at General Motors or Chrysler.

H: Did the Ford Motor Company exploit the discriminatory practices of the AFL as reasons for the black workers not to come out and join the new UAW? Is that part of the propaganda?

B: That's part, but the major thing with the other companies' unions was: why join the union, those guys are already organized and making 35, 45, 50 cents an hour and we're not organized and we're paid 75, sometimes a dollar an hour.

H: Ford wages were high?

B: Oh, yes, yes.....

H: So, I just want to establish the record as clearly as I can. Both blacks and whites functioned as strike breakers originally. Then when the strike began many more whites than blacks did come out of the plant. There was a reluctance on the part of a large number of black workers until the N.A.A.C.P. sound truck and other activity in the Negro community occurred to bring the blacks out. But originally both blacks and whites did stay in.

B: Were caught in.

H: Were caught in, yes. How about going through the UAW picket line into the plant?

B: No such.

H: No such.

B: No such.

H: Neither on the part of blacks or whites?

B: Blacks or whites. You see what happened, what was the major thing in this should be spelled out. In the situation that happened without anybody knowing anything, only the few, which was on the inside track.

H: Why do you think that was? Why do you think they kept it so secret?

B: At the time, you couldn't trust a soul. You couldn't trust a soul. You didn't know who _____. At that time you had service men, spy men.....

H: In Ford's service department.

B: You didn't know who was a Ford spy, Ford _____, or something like.

H: Were there any blacks in Harry Bennett's Ford's service department?

- B: Very few, if any.
- H: But the feeling was that there probably were black spies as there were white spies?
- B: Oh, yes. Each foreman had his own right on the job. And they felt that they couldn't in turn trust anyone in talking in a situation because it meant your job and everything else, if this got back to the supervision as such. So as a result of that, it was kept very mum to the very few who had been into the meetings and had sworn blood and so on like that, "Now look, we're going to hold this together."
- H: Now, all right, once the blacks came out of the foundry, who emerged as the leaders in the foundry? Were you among those who became active in the UAW organizing? Would you tell us about that? What year are we in now? Still in 1941? All right, go on.
- B: As the people withdrew from the plant and Ford Motor Company came through, then it says all right we're going to sit down and negotiate a contract and immediately from that, I became a union steward. This was in 1941.
- H: Who were the other leading Negro leaders at Ford's River Rouge Plant at that point?
- B: You had quite a few.
- H: Mention their names please.
- B: You had Horace Sheffield, Shelton Tappes....
- H: Was Horace in the foundry?
- B: Horace was in the foundry.
- H: Was Shelton in the foundry?
- B: He was in the foundry. Otis Eaton, Veal Clough, Nelson Davis.....
- H: Otis what?
- B: Otis Eaton.
- H: Eaton?
- B: Yes. And Eddie Hester, William Banton Jr., Lewis Tate, Joe Swan, Henry Marshall, Veal Clough, James Neal, George MacDonald, George MacDuffy, Henry Birdsong (I'm naming off the ones who were committee men of this time because when the union came in, we all took over.)

- H: These were all black committee men?
- B: Yes, I'm naming off the black committee men in the foundry.
- H: Would you make any comparison at this stage of this, once negotiation started and the UAW became the bargaining representative, between the enthusiasm of black and white workers for the UAW?
- B: I think the black was more enthused than the white because this was something completely new to him and finally this raised the veil informing him what unionism was all about and he quit believing what he had read in the books or what they had told him about the old AFL-CIO. I think it meant that this veil was raised and he became enthused to no end.
- H: A black worker became very active in the UAW?
- B: Yes, by all means.
- H: The foundry remained the base and perhaps does, as a matter of fact, of black organizational power within the Ford's system and also really within the UAW. Isn't that true? A very large number of black leaders and figures in the UAW came out of the foundry.
- B: A majority of black leadership originated in the foundry. Those that are now still in the UAW that's holding any top notch jobs, the majority of those originated out of the foundries.
- H: Now, was Bill Oliver in the foundry?
- B: Bill Oliver was at Lincoln at the Highland Park Plant, 400. He was not in the foundry.
- H: I see. Was Bill Oliver active at this stage?
- B: Bill Oliver was not active to any great extent. Bill Oliver only became active in say about '43 or '44.
- H: Was he at the Highland Park Plant?
- B: Highland Park Plant, yes he was.
- H: He didn't participate in the original Ford organizing drive?
- B: No, because the main place it struck was Rouge.
- H: When the strike did take place, was there a strike in the Highland Park Plant?
- B: No, it struck the Rouge and it was automatically stopped by everything else because once the Rouge stopped nothing else could turn.

H: Now we're in '42, we're about '42 aren't we?

B: Well, we're in the last of '41. They signed the contract June 12, 1941.

H: Right.

B: So from that time here it was merely an idea of sitting around and getting rates and getting everything else. So nothing of any importance happened between that time and '42.

H: Now very early at this stage the Negro workers began making certain demands upon the union for representation, for playing a role, a leadership role, in the union and being recognized as a force. This comes up at the '39 convention, '40, the '41 convention. Were you active in black caucus activities at this stage?

B: Well, at the time we didn't have what was known as black caucus as you said. Your little segments, your little groups from here at the foundry, we sent out seventeen delegates. Well, when you got seventeen delegates and you got five or six other buildings which are only carrying four and five each, you automatically becomes a power at that time because of the seventeen delegates from one building. Then you got four or five other buildings and you got to make up their delegates to match yours, they need your support so they automatically come to you. Whether it was white or black, it was the idea of joining together on certain things you wanted. But it was in the '42 convention in Chicago, this was the first convention which Ford was attending in as official delegates because they had been organized and had contracts and so forth, was the '42 convention in Chicago. This time was the first time of any real meaning that was put forth of Negroes being in capacity of leadership.

H: Were you active in that sort of work?

B: Yes. Myself, Horace Sheffield, James Watts, Edward Hester, Nelson Davis, Otis Eaton.....pretty much the same ones that I named of the leadership of the foundry in '41.

H: Do you remember Walter Hardin?

B: Oh, I know Walter Harden very well.

H: Did Walter Hardin come out of Ford?

B: Walter Hardin didn't, he came out of Pontiac in the General Motors Plant in Pontiac. Walter Harden was already a staff member.

H: Who would you say was the major Negro figure in the UAW at this stage?

B: Walter Hardin.

- H: Walter Hardin. He was already on the UAW staff?
- B: He was already on the UAW staff.
- H: Walter Hardin was the first Negro on the UAW staff?
- B: Well, I would say he was the first one that was given any meaningful role. It might have been some guy in Indiana or Ohio or somebody who was stuck on to some corner role. But, the first one that had any meaningful role that could sit down and, given time, could call together twelve or thirteen thousand Negroes in twenty-four hours time, was Walter Hardin.
- H: We were told that the first Negro international rep. was Walter Hardin. Was that true?
- B: I think it's a good statement.
- H: You think it's a good statement. All right, now, would you tell us what happened at the 1942 Chicago Convention on the race question and the push for representation, Negro leadership, recognition of the role of Negroes in leadership positions?
- B: Well, in the '42 convention it was the first time that the guys from Fords had been to a convention. In fact, it was.....
- H: Was that your first convention?
- B: First convention. In fact, it was the first convention of the majority Negroes throughout the whole UAW. Of course, at that time, not too many of the plants that you had Negroes in the line for, or were active enough to get elected as delegates of conventions. But when you hit the Rouge plant at that time, which was in the neighborhood of some seventeen thousand workers, you wound up with seventeen delegates.
- H: So, you had a power base?
- B: Yes.
- H: Where were the other black power bases in the international union - were there any other?
- B: The only other power bases, say in Pontiac. Pontiac...
- H: That was General Motors?
- B: General Motors in Pontiac. Yet, I'd say the largest concentration of Negroes was at Chrysler, at Chrysler 7, or the old 212 local.
- H: That was the Briggs?

- B: Yes, Briggs, 212.
- H: On the east side?
- B: Right. Now this....
- H: Wait a minute, this still didn't compare in size in numbers to the River Rouge?
- B: Oh no, no, no, no.
- H: But, these were the power bases. How about outside of the Detroit area, anything in Chicago, Buffalo, any place else in the U.S.?
- B: At this time Chicago and Buffalo and the rest of it were all very alike. In fact, these places only came about after the great decentralization start of the Rouge Plant. Then Chicago became into being because it took a little part from the Rouge and put it in Chicago, took a little part from the Rouge and put it in Buffalo, a little part from the Rouge and put it in Ohio and Canton.
- H: That isn't much later with decentralization?
- B: Yes.
- H: All right, do you recall what happened on the race question at the Chicago convention? I'd like you to describe in your own words as much as you'd like to tell us about this.
- B: Well, not too much happened, Herb. It was the idea of Negroes being there and we were questioning everything that came up on committees and so forth, which was all white, on the convention committees, all white. So, we were questioning what about this and what about that. We had just been introduced to a situation then of staff representatives. Walter Hardin was playing a part by trying to indoctrinate the Negroes by explaining to them what could happen if they in turn became active and worked as a block instead as a splinter group or what have you. By the time, as I generally say, you had Negroes there at their first convention. They didn't know what was what so each ring-wise white guy was trying to get this group of Negroes here, this group of Negroes here, such as there. So nothing really of any conscious effort could have happened there because there was a splinter down or split down in Negroes not knowing. But, we did go out of that convention with the black group together which formulated here in Detroit which we can talk about later on. And, then came the '43 convention where Negroes was welded together.
- H: All right, now before we go to the '43 convention, would you just hold that for one moment, at this stage the union was divided in its leadership between two factions - there was on one hand the Addes - Thomas faction and then there was the Reuther faction. To the best

of your recollection, to which group were the majority of black workers most sympathetic?

B: Addes-Thomas.

H: Why?

B: Well, at the time, the picture had been painted as Reuther being anti-Negro and this spread quickly throughout the UAW that Reuther was anti-Negro and George Addes and R.J. Thomas who at the time, and let's say this, that Thomas was a guy that got around among the ranks more so than anybody else so his being the president at that time, everything swung his way so far as the left wing group at that time.

H: Walter Hardin was a supporter of the Addes-Thomas?

B: Right. Walter Hardin was an appointee of the Addes-Thomas faction. Walter Hardin was one of the guys who was out trying to recruit people into the caucus of Addes-Thomas.

H: Now, the majority of Negro leaders at this point like Shelton Tappes and Walter Hardin and others, they supported the Addes-Thomas faction.

B: Addes-Thomas.

H: Generally, the feeling was that the Addes-Thomas faction was more sympathetic to the interest of Negroes than the Reuther faction?

B: Right.

H: Was there any truth to this? Did you agree with that?

B: By no means.

H: Well, how did you feel at that time?

B: At the time, I felt that, which later came on in '43 to prove out the point, it was an idea of groups in power were going to use everybody they possibly could to maintain their status quo in power and this was brought about when we started talking about Negroes in certain jobs. In '42 after they in turn finally put some Negroes on staff, it was a situation of Negroes not having any assignments. All Negroes were assigned to the Larks Grill or to the....

H: Paradise Grill?

B: YMCA. Yes, the Larks-Paradise Grill or else to the YMCA.

H: Now, we've been told in the interviews that I've conducted, for instance, several of the older Negroes in the UAW have said, that

when Walter Hardin and the other early Negro reps. were first appointed, that they did not operate out of the UAW headquarters which was then on West Milwaukee. But, that they operated out of bars and grills.

B: They were each assigned. In the morning you had to get up.

H: Yes, tell us about it.

B: Nine or ten o'clock in the morning, they'd get up. The white reps would go to 411 Milwaukee, this was headquarters. The black reps would either go to the Larks Grill which was on Adams Street.

H: Now, Larks, how do you spell that?

B: Larks, L-A-R-K-S, Larks.

H: Larks Grill.

B: Larks Grill.

H: On West Adams Street?

B: On East Adams Street.

H: On East Adams Street.

B: That was in Paradise Valley. Some would work out of there from assignments. I mean, work out assignments, they would stay there until they got a call to go pass some hand bills.

H: Who called them?

B: Oh, well any white rep. or whatever. It wasn't an idea of being assigned to a different department, you just had a bull gang there of Negro reps. you're going to work from and if you need them one to do this, therefore, you just pick from anyone who's there.

H: And, some of the Negro reps. went to the YMCA?

B: YMCA and the Larks Grill, those were the two places in Detroit, but in turn concentrated.

H: Well, now are you suggesting that Walter Hardin did not have an office in the Uaw headquarters?

B: He didn't indeed. He definitely didn't. In fact, Walter Hardin wasn't attached too much in Detroit. Walter Hardin was working out of Pontiac and out of Flint and around through there. But, he definitely didn't have an office in the UAW headquarters.

H: How about Oscar Noble?

- B: He didn't have an office. He's a Larks Grill boy.
- H: Oscar Noble was one of the early Negroes' national reps, wasn't he?
- B: Right. From GM.
- H: Now, why do you think this was so? After all the Addes-Thomas faction was supposed to be so concerned with Negroes. Why do you think that they.....You know, this was such a blatant differential in treatment between...
- B: Oh, this is what I said that....
- H: Whites and blacks.
- B: You soon found out in front because you couldn't get into what was the headquarters at that time at 411 Milwaukee. We had to lead a pressure group on the international union to get over to colored girls working in the international union in the headquarters.
- H: What year was that?
- B: Well, that was in '41, '42, '43 as late as '44. Now, it was an idea of refusal to hire colored girls working, they had one girl working there, her name was Miriam Lee, and she got a job strictly through Walter Hardin's pushing. Now, the rest of it was taboo. Now, the black staff members had no assignments out of the headquarters, was assigned down to the Larks Grill or to the YMCA.
- H: Then, actually they were told to go there to wait for your instructions, we'll call you in the morning.
- B: If you don't get a telephone call, you stay right there. Don't move. If you leave, we won't know where you can be contacted at.
- H: But the whites went directly to.....
- B: Directly to 411 Milwaukee. And this is one of the major things that in turn woke up Negroes to the disguise of the liberal forces of Addes-Thomas forces. In fact, this is....It was the beginning, at that time, '42 or '43, when myself, Horace Sheffield, Jimmy Watts, Ed Hester, only about five or six of us, that we in turn went into the Reuther caucus.
- H: Now where was Shelton Tappes? Or, what was Shelton Tappes doing?
- B: Sheldon Tappes was strictly with the Addes-Thomas faction. At this time Shelton Tappes had gotten elected to recording secretary of Local 600. Therefore, he was with, was known at that time, the left wing faction, which was the Addes-Thomas faction; the right wing faction was the Reuther faction, Reuther-Frankensteen faction. So it was pretty much split down then on the left and right factions.

- H: When did George Crockett come into the picture?
- B: George Crockett came into the picture approximately 1944 or 1945. He was put on then by Addes-Thomas as the FEP director, which later became the FEP director of civil rights at that time, director in the UAW. The cause of some of the upheavals was small at that time compared with what they are now of the blacks throughout the union of hollowing for equality of rights or staff jobs and local unions where Negroes were not given the rights or else one of the blatant things at that time was they used to have where the company would in turn advance a Negro up to a job and the union workers walk off saying that if a Negro worker gets his job, we're going to walk off....etc. and so forth. And you had....
- H: Well, there was the Hudsons', the Packard...
- B: Packard 190.
- H: Yes.
- B: Where a guy who later became one of the vice-presidents of the UAW. led a hate strike.
- H: Who's that?
- B: Norm Matthews.
- H: He became head of the Chrysler Department?
- B: Yes.
- H: He's dead now?
- B: Yes....
- H: Now Buddy, to the best of your recollection when did a black caucus, either informally or formally start operating within the UAW? My information is that this really began before the '43 convention. You think it was earlier than that? Either informally or formally when did the black workers say gather together and began to prepare for a fight at the next UAW convention?
- B: I'd say between '42 and '43.
- H: All right, would you tell us about that? What happened?
- B: Well, you see as I said in the '42 convention, the majority of Negroes were there, all of them were there in the first convention, they didn't know what it was all about, they wasn't ring-wise, they hadn't been indoctrinated to the UAW or any other union or what have you. So in-between the '42 and the '43 convention - there's a convention every year - there was a bunch of us got together back and forth, myself, Sheffield, Hardin, Noble, Eaton, the whole bunch,

around pretty much the ones I named off before. We got together and had meetings back and forth on the Executive Board. We got to have a Negro on the Executive Board.

H: This was just before the '43 convention?

B: Just before the '43 convention. It was in-between the '42 and '43 convention which was held in Buffalo. So when we got into Buffalo we in turn immediately had a meeting of the black delegates at the old Vendome Hotel at Buffalo.

H: Of all the black delegates, from all over the country,....

B: From all over the country.

H: Who were coming to Buffalo for the UAW convention...

B: Of course you didn't have too many...

H: (I know) approximately how many were there?

B: I venture to say about fifty-five or sixty.

H: Fifty-five or sixty out of how many attending that convention? (I can look this up but I'm....)

B: A good twenty-five hundred delegates.

H: Out of twenty-five hundred, there were approximately fifty-five or sixty black delegates?

B: Right.

H: Did all of these or the majority of these caucus the night before or the day before the convention?

B: The majority of us caucused two days prior to the convention starting with the opening of the convention.

H: All right, I'd like you to answer two questions: Who were major leaders in that black caucus and what was decided upon as the demands to be put forth at the convention?

B: The two major leaders of the forces in this caucus was Horace Sheffield and Walter Hardin.

H: How about Tappes?

B: Tappes was not.

H: He was not. Was Horace still with the Addes-Thomas faction?

- B: No. Horace was with the Reuther faction.
- H: But, most of the other black leaders were still with the Addes-Thomas?
- B: With the exception of myself, Watts, Tappes (not Tappes)--myself, Watts, Sheffield and Ed Hester.
- H: You were Reuther supporters?
- B: Right.
- H: All right. Now, tell us what you recall happened at the internal meetings of the black caucus before the convention. What did you decide to do at the convention?
- B: Well, we had decided prior to the convention, come hell or high water, we were coming out of this convention with the Negro on the Executive Board. We didn't give a damn what we were to do and par for the course at that time was the first three or four days at the convention, was spent slapping each other around physically, I mean. The convention would usually go some two or three weeks over and above the regular scheduled time because you'd spend the first week or ten days slapping each other around jockeying for the committees there, the credentials committee, so you could in turn have enough delegates to put in a project or anything you wanted across. And, we were so used to caucus that you got to take three or four days at that.
- H: Did you try to get blacks on these various committees: the credentials committee, the resolutions committee, the other committees?
- B: The blacks at that time were only given a little small committee such as your union labor or some menial committee....
- H: But, not on the really important committees?
- B: No. So, as a result of that, we in turn had a meeting where we had called all the blacks together where we were demanding that we in turn have a Negro board member. At the time the Addes-Thomas faction was in power and Walter Hardin was there speaking for the Addes faction saying this that we'll in turn go into the thing and see about getting the....His idea was pacifying down because those in power said, well look. don't rock the boat, let's don't push, let's don't fight. But, we might get a Negro on, but we've got to sit down and say exactly how it will be. The situation of saying that if you put a Negro on the best he can do is handle black questions, the best he can do is handle black problems, the best he can do is to handle black workers' grievances. All right, now from that part this what was brought in from the Addes-Thomas faction as for Walter Hardin. All right, from that time then came from the Reuther side that no Jim Crow boxcar on the UAW, that if

you put a Negro on, it would have to be with full status and not just a situation of putting him on to handle the black, subject of black problems.

H: Well, now did the Reuther caucus support either the appointment or election of a black member of the Executive Board?

B: Not at that time. Neither side.

H: Neither side?

B: Neither side. It was later found to be, window dressing, lip service, in fact Sheffield had been led down a blind alley while he was up there fighting. He thought that he had support, but let's knock off the thing of this guy being Jim Crow. We're going to put him on full status. It was later found out that it was an idea of lip service from both sides, which neither one had intended to support.

H: Who emerged as the major spokesman for the black caucus in the convention?

B: At the time you had....

H: Who spoke on the convention floor?

B: Hodges Mason,....

H: Tappes?

B: No, Tappes was....although he was recording secretary of 600, he was very quiet when he came to the conventions. He usually didn't get involved in any of the controversies or what have you. And a fellow like Hodges Mason, who was a fighter out of Dodge Local, oh not Dodge, out of the Bohn Aluminum, Local 208. In fact, I just saw him the other day at one of the guys' funerals and this guy was a fire-eater at that time of we've got to have this right now, right right away, quick, like yesterday, not tomorrow and...

H: Hodges Mason was a supporter of the left wing caucus?

B: Yes, yes. Now, let's see how can I get through with this. The major spokesman on the floor was Hodges Mason from the left.

H: Where did you first meet Willoughby Abner?

B: Oh, Abner? I met him approximately in '45 or '46.

H: During the period between '43 and '45 or '46, preceding each convention, there would be these meetings of the black caucus?

B: Right.

- H: But was there any formal organization, any open formal organization of the black caucus?
- B: Yes, we had them in 1944. But, we actually, after the '43 Buffalo convention, both sides in turn caved in where neither one actively supported a Negro for the Board. We came back to Detroit at that time and we in turn pulled in together from Flint, Saginaw, Bay City of those around into the union into Ford. This was in 1944, where we were getting ready to come to the next convention. We in turn were going to all be together and whatever Negro in turn defected from the thing, well, we're just going in turn slap him around or whatever (thats all I guess). Then later doubly if you want to get slap around you see.
- H: Now what did you call this group, was there a name?
- B: No, this is a....Out of this group is what later became TULC.
- H: Right. But starting right after the '43 convention, you began to have the organization of an informal black caucus. Did you have periodic meetings?
- B: Oh yes. We had meetings every week.
- h; You had meetings every week?
- B: Meetings every week.
- H: Were the representatives mainly from the Detroit and other Michigan locals of the UAW or did you contact people outside the state?
- B: The main thing was Detroit and other Michigan locals because as I say, you didn't have, once you got out of Michigan, you couldn't find five Negroes in the capacity of leadership in the UAW.
- H: How long did this informal black caucus continue to operate?
- B: Oh, it went straight through for '44, '45, '46, and '47. I will say in '46 it shook it a bit because at that time the big fight came between Walter Reuther and Thomas where Walter Reuther unseated Thomas for president.
- H: What did the black caucus do in that fight?
- B: At the time you had the...Well, this is where the splitting of the black caucus came because you had a group that met in Chicago that was trying to pledge all of the black delegates to support Thomas and Addes. At that time there were people who belonged to the Reuther faction who went into Chicago to speak to the same black delegation and at that time we wanted to know, okay, good if all of the delegates agree to support Addes and Thomas, if they would put a Negro on their slate and actively support and run, and they

refused to put one on and actively support. If we can get the Reuther faction then to agree to run a Negro on their slate and actively support, will all the Negroes vote for Reuther then? Could we pledge all the Negroes to Reuther? And, this broke up into a fist fight in approximately five minutes after this proposal was put on the floor. And as a result of that, we had, while I was in Atlantic City, we had several fist fights there. This is one of the things why the '46 convention lasted for some two or three weeks; it was called for some seven days, but lasted some two or three weeks. This was during the days which get rough when they needed two or three votes. Each delegate was only carrying 6.7 or 7.8 votes. They needed the vote; well, the whole thing was you were in the room, someone was thrown in the room, picture taken, something like that. The next day, well, either you vote my way or this picture we send home to your wife or something like that. This went along pretty much like that. Well, now the black caucus pretty much split itself there because at this time when Reuther was coming in, when he took over the presidency in '46, then in '47, he took over the whole UAW.

- H: I'd like to interrupt you at this point. Just to get the chronology straight, at each convention between, say '43 and '46, the black caucus met before the convention and decided who would be the spokesman on the floor and what demands would be put forth. The basic demand was for Negro representation on the Executive Board?
- B: Right.
- H: At '46 this came to a head, but nobody got on the Executive Board. Actually, we didn't get a black....
- B: They put a Negro down as trustee.
- H: We got a Negro as trustee in '46?
- B: '46.
- H: Who was that Negro?
- B: Lawson. Maybe his first name was King Lawson. It was Lawson. Lawson was his name, yes.
- H: He was a.....He became a trustee and he was a black man. What local was he from?
- B: Somewhere in Chicago.
- H: He was out of Chicago?
- B: Chicago.
- H: He was not part of the Detroit or Michigan caucus.

- B: No. No. It was just a token thing. This was strictly a token thing.
- H: All right.
- B: It was something we weren't fighting for. We were fighting for a Negro on the board (period), a director or whatever we were going to get. And, they in turn threw this in. They threw Lawson in strictly as the appeasement thing, a tokenism.
- H: Now the existence of the..., of this black caucus continued and finally, you said a moment ago, that this black caucus was the preparation for the development of the Trade Union Leadership Council. When did the TULC come into being in Detroit?
- B: The TULC actually came into being as such a trade union leadership council in 1955. But before, all these other black caucus groups that we had that could in turn last for a year and a half the guys would peter out and go someplace else and we would re-structure it again, re-formulate it again. This all dove-tailed into what is now known as the TULC.
- H: Why did you organize as the TULC in 1955?
- B: Well, at the time we had so many complaints. Everytime you'd hit a convention, or any conference, where there was any concentration of Negroes, you in turn learn of the many problems that Negroes was faced with.
- H: What were the problems that the black workers faced in the UAW around 1955?
- B: Oh, the idea of the refusal of classifications, certain classifications in work.
- H: Job classifications?
- B: Job classifications.
- H: Inside the shops?
- B: Right.
- H: Black workers were still barred from certain classifications.
- B: Right. Right. Then also you had a situation of workers in the shops, where the workers were some 45 or 50%. And they were still outright denied in the political arenas of the local union, denied representation.
- H: In the locals?
- B: In the local unions.

H: Were caucuses formed in the locals?

B: This is part of the TULC, played of helping teach guys how to form caucuses in the local unions where they could be an active part and demand that they be a part of the leadership.

H: One of the early functions of the TULC then was to give guidance and leadership to the organization of black caucuses within the individual local unions.

B: Right.

H: Was this successful?

B: Yes, Sir.

H: It did advance the rights.

B: Definitely.

H: Would you like to cite some examples?

B: Well, I can say approximately '53, '54, and '55 the only places where you actually had Negroes in capacity leadership over and above just a shop steward, which is some guy tied to a line, was at the Rouge plant or the Highland Park plant. After the '55 where we in turn made a major drive and got into the TULC as such where we had millions of guys throughout the country at the '55 convention and sat down and got into these things and started communicating with them back and forth and we would have a meeting again in Detroit say about every six months we'd pick it close to a holiday where a guy would have two or three days in the week and all of them could come without loss of time and we'd phone it into different local unions, take 453 in Chicago. Heretofore you had Hilliard Ellis, you had Octavius Hawkins, and at the time Willoughby Abner was catching hell in his run through there. But, it was an idea of one job for the whole group. Hilliard Ellis had it and you had to fight Hilliard Ellis for the job.

H: Were the black workers satisfied with the black representation in UAW leadership positions? You still didn't have a Negro on the Executive Board.

B: No, not satisfied. What I meant was they were not satisfied with just the leadership positions they had in the local unions. They were still fighting all the way through for a Negro on the Executive Board.

H: How about more international representatives?

B: This was the fight straight through for more Negro representation. Now a Negro on the Executive Board was one of the things that was

a must. But now the idea of more international representatives, they would always quiet this down by saying I can't appoint for this guy, his regional director had to deal with appointments or something like that.

H: So there were three questions that were in the 1955 period: Negro leadership position and control of local unions where there was a large concentration of Negroes; the issue of opening up certain job classifications to Negro workers, like the skilled trades, was the skilled trades issue an important question?

B: No, not in the early '40's. The skilled trades issue became an issue in the late '50's. But prior to that it was an idea of just getting Negroes on the general run-of-the-mill jobs: assembly jobs and so forth.

H: Negroes were still kept out of the assembly jobs?

B: Yes.

H: Right.

B: With the exception of these within the Ford set-up.

H: Then there was the question of the Executive Board.

B: Right.

H: Was there discontent with the fair practices department, with Bill Oliver's fair practices department at this stage?

B: As I said, it was not Bill Oliver at all, because he was just under Reuther as such. And, certainly the job was not being performed as it should be or it wasn't allowed to perform as the Negroes felt that it should be. I mean, if you had a complaint, you just had a complaint period.

H: Nothing rarely happened?

B: No, nothing concrete could be nailed down of any straight action nailed down. If you had a complaint you could do this, that, and so forth. The department itself didn't have any channels for recommendations from this department into you change this, or you cease to say something on that.

H: So, in 1955 the Trade Union Leadership Council is formed. Were you elected president?

B: I was.

H: Who were the other officers?

Horace Sheffield, Nadine Brown, Frank Holly, Dave Moore, Dave Holmes, John Brown, George Carson.

- H: Now originally at this early formative stage the base of the Trade Union Leadership Council was the various black caucuses that were operating in and around Detroit and UAW locals. At a later period did you spread out to also include representatives from local unions outside of the UAW?
- B: Teamsters, building trades, and everything else.
- H: I recall that Horace's request and your request came in at about 1957. In 1958 there was a problem in the construction industry here and we helped a group of black workers, I think it was from the laborers' local.
- B: Right.
- H: What local was that?
- B: Local 334.
- H: 334. Right. And as a result of the advice and counsel given by the TULC on a day to day basis, they eventually took control of the local union. This was a local where the Negroes were in preponderance of membership.....
- B: 98%, the majority were Negroes.....
- H: But, they had no control.
- B: They didn't have one Negro officer.
- H: Right. But as a result of their working with TULC, they took over control of that local.
- B: Correct.
- H: Were there any other examples of this?
- B: Local 1191.
- H: Of what?
- B: Which is the same thing of the building trades and the laborers' local; the same thing where the membership was 95% black and they didn't have any Negro officers, full time or otherwise in the local unions.
- H: So TULC became a kind of central, directing agency for the establishment of black caucuses in leadership and help these black

caucuses organize in local unions both inside the UAW and outside the UAW.

B: Right.

H: What was your membership soon after your organization in '55?

B: Soon after our organization in '55, I'll say we had about, oh about 3 or 400 membership.

H: What was your high point of membership?

B: High point has been about 11,000.

H: 11,000. What year was it 11,000?

B: It was in 1960 and '61.

H: What year did you open up the A. Philip Randolph Building where we now sit?

B: We opened the A. Philip Randolph Building in 1960. We got a license to operate as a club and a bar in 1961.

H: And it became a general community center?

B: Definitely so.

H: Many meetings, conferences, discussions.

B: Well, at this time we figured that then we could not only operate within the Union. We felt that there was enough community problems that we also had to stick to the community problems as well as to the Union problems.

H: But, wasn't there a strong objection within the UAW top leadership, to the organization of TULC?

B: Oh, yes.

H: Will you tell us about that? This is very important.

B: Oh, well, throughout whole organization the drive of TULC from '55 in, '55 into today's conception, you had the leadership of the Solidarity House. Now, leadership, I'm not talking of a Reuther per se. I'm talking of those who were on the Executive Board.

H: Well, Emil Mazey, he was very outspoken, wasn't he?

B: Yes.

H: Who were some of the others on the Executive Board?

- B: Oh, Mazey, McCusker (Joe McCusker I'm talking about), Merelli (George Merelli).... Look, I think it's much easier to name those who wasn't vocal against than name those who was.
- H: Did they make threats against you, Horace, and others who...
- B: They didn't make threats against me because I was elected.
- H: You were an elected official in the foundry unit of Ford Local 600?
- B: Right.
- H: So, they couldn't touch you.
- B: They couldn't touch me.
- H: But, Horace was on the international staff.
- B: Horace was on the international staff, Jack Edwards was on the international staff....
- H: You were saying that in the early stages of the organization of the TULC, the top leadership of Solidarity House opposed the organization, and that you and others who were elected local officials - by the way, what were you in 1955? What was your formal position?
- B: President of the specialty foundry and.....
- H: You were President of the specialty foundry unit 600. Was that an all black unit?
- B: 95%.
- H: 95%. How many workers in that union?
- B: At the time we had about 1700 to 2000.
- H: Right. So that gave you real power?
- B: Yes.
- H: Right. Were you also, did you hold any other local office?
- B: I was on the General Council, and the Executive Board, which is the highest in the body.
- H: Of 600? You were elected to the General Council as well as the Executive Board of 600?
- B: Right.
- H: And so you were a local union official. Now Horace, however, was

an International Rep., who was as closely identified as you were at that stage with the TULC. Was he at any time told that he had to choose between the TULC and the UAW?

B: More times than you got fingers and toes.

H: Would you tell us about that?

B: Let's say in '55 Horace came back into, he was a Staff Rep. from '42 off and on back and forth, and whenever they felt that the Iron Foundry from which Horace originated and I originated from in the union movement, the Iron Foundry, whenever politics got such that they couldn't handle they would send for Horace and get him elected president of the foundry, and he would in turn straighten out the in-between words, then he'd back out as staff and so forth.

H: On who's behalf would he do this? On the behalf of the international?

B: International, and also the local cause usually at times you'd have what was known as the Unity Group in Local 600, and usually some guy would merge up with no part of the unity, and this time I'm out of the foundry, out of the Iron Foundry. I was in the Specialty Foundry then, so you only had very few fellows left there that could pick up the reins and go.

H: Now was this during the period that Stelatto was President of 600?

B: Yes.

H: And Stelatto was Anti-Reuther?

B: Well, Stelatto was everything. Basically anti.

H: But basically Horace would go in on behalf of the Reuther group to secure support for the Negroes?

B: Right. Reuther administration for the Negroes.

H: Of the Negroes for the Reuther administration.

B: Right.

H: I see. All right, well what happens now? You started to tell me about the threats against Horace.

B: Well, when we started formulating the TULC, everybody was in good graces. I mean, fine in this, they think he should have it, at this time there was an impression in the TULC was - it would just be another organization - a subsidiary of the UAW for them to push the strings - you jump up and back and so forth. But when they saw our bylaws and what we was talking about....

- H: What were you talking about? You describe it.
- B: We was talking about the lack of representation of Negroes within the union which had paid dues too. We was talking about the lack of channels for handling problems. We're not talking about the grievance procedure now, we're talking about the...
- H: Internal Union?
- B: Internal union problems of Negroes being in point of position making bodies, on the Executive Board, we was talking about better treatment for the Negroes who are on staff. Now still you didn't have too many Negroes, this was in '55, that had actual assignments - plants you was assigned to service. You didn't have too many servicing Reps.
- H: Well, what were they doing? You had a lot of International Reps who were black. What did they do?
- B: You still only got about 72 now. Now we're talking about '55, you didn't have a lot of International Reps who were black.
- H: How many did you have?
- B: At this time you had about 35 or 40.
- H: Around the country?
- B: Throughout the UAW.
- H: So what did these 35 or 40 black Reps do? You say that they had no specific assignments?
- B: Well, by the time you spread out one or two in Region One E, one or two in the upper part like Pontiac, Flint, or Saginaw, and so forth, and two or three throughout all of Ohio, one or two throughout Chicago, and the rest that are here, in the Detroit area which is in turn working out of the Solidarity House, you only talking then about in each area some one or two.
- H: So what did they do?
- B: It was equivalent to the old Larks Grill assignment.
- H: But they weren't in Larks Grill, they were now in Solidarity House.
- B: In Solidarity House.
- H: By the way, when did that Larks Grill, Paradise Grill, business start? When did they actually start operating out of Union Headquarters? Was that when they closed down the Milwaukee Avenue...

B: 411.

H: And built the Solidarity House?

B: Yes.

H: So that Negro Reps did then operate out of offices of their own?

B: Right.

H: That stopped when they closed down 411 Milwaukee?

B: Right.

H: All right. Now, what did Gene Wilson do? In Detroit. He was an International Rep. He came out of the old Kaiser-Frazer plant in Willow Run. What did he do?

B: Gene Wilson, this is one of the major things in this. Ironic you should mention Gene Wilson. Gene Wilson had been kept on staff working for Ed Cote for 11 years and Gene Wilson's only assignment was passing out hand bills and selling NAACP.....

H: Memberships.

B: NAACP Memberships. Also runner on any other black conference or assignment that came up. I don't mean making decisions on being there representing the UAW so that, that, representative there is Gene Wilson. Now is not to take anything from Gene 'cause this same thing was happening throughout the UAW.

H: Is this true of other Negro Reps.?

B: Yes, you only had one fellow that I know who went to the front and demanded an assignment.

H: Who was that?

B: Horace Sheffield.

H: Well how about Oscar Noble? During that period?

B: He only had one fellow, Horace Sheffield. At the time he was pretty much doing the same thing out of Pontiac, out of Saginaw, so and through on for the General Motors staff that were not in on the contract negotiations or servicing Reps of the plants.

H: In other words they were really sort of ambassadors to the Negro community. When there would be an NAACP convention or a civil rights conference they would go and represent the UAW, but they would not involve the day to day operations of the union?

- B: Of servicing plants, see you had what you called your Servicing Rep. A Servicing Rep is attached to a plant or to a shop to handle the major problems. Where there's contract negotiations, where there's a grievance procedure or there's negotiation of new rates or what have you and so forth, he was the guy, he was the guy who had all the business to that shop and reported back to his director, or whoever it was, whether it was the Regional Director or whether it was a Board member or what have you. This was what the Servicing Reps did. We did not have any Negroes who were doing these type of things.
- H: So actually the Negroes who had elected positions in Local Unions were really more powerful than International Reps ?
- B: Definitely so.
- H: Who were some of those? Would you mention some names and their local Unions?
- B: Well, let's say just to get into, we had Hodges Mason. I'd say he was at Bohn Aluminum from 208, you had Andy Osborne, was from 306 in Flint, you had Buck Buchanan who was out of Buick in Flint, you had, let me see, Detroit now, you had John Conyers Sr., who when he wasn't on staff was elected Rep. in Chrysler 7, you had Marshall Padgett who was the recording secretary out of Local 212 which is old Briggs local, and you had of course the guys in 600. The Negroes always did enjoy not the Lions Share, but the Fair Share of representation in 600.
- H: You felt that the situation in 600 was different, Negroes had a higher degree of internal political power within Local 600 than in the other locals?
- B: Definitely so.
- H: Now in this period, I recall Bill Abner was working in the regional office of the UAW in Chicago.
- B: Bob Johnson.....
- H: Was this true for him?
- B: Well, Abner was the Sheffield of Chicago.
- ✓ H: Bill Abner was in a different position. Didn't Bill Abner work for Greathouse when Greathouse was the Chicago District Director?
- B: Right.
- H: Greathouse was the Chicago District Director. He was in the PAC operation as I recall at that time. It was what you described

before, was that true for Bill Abner?

- B: No, Abner was the Sheffield of Chicago. Where he demanded all the way through, I want to be doing something....put me into the plants and so on and so forth.
- H: Right.
- B: Now this is how Abner was put into the PAC same as Sheffield was here. Sheffield was not a servicing rep. to a plant as such, but Sheffield was assigned to a special assignment working with Roy Reuther in the political action.
- H: So, you say that nationally throughout the country bearing two exceptions to the pattern you described, was Abner in Chicago and Sheffield here?
- B: Pretty much so.
- H: Well, now did this make for demoralization among the Negroes?
- B: Definitely so, this is why all the reps were in turn griping for support.
- H: And did they support the organization of the TULC?
- B: Under cover.
- H: Under cover.
- B: Under cover. You only had about five or six who came out and joined TULC on top - otherwise where it could be seen the rest was an idea of sending in money for the dues but didn't want to appear on any records at all because it meant their jobs - oh, one more, Dewey McGhee.
- H: Where was he?
- B: He was out of Ohio, but he's from 600. He's from 600 but they had him working out of Cleveland. Now Dewey McGhee joined the TULC right off the bat. He was one of the guys who was on top of the cover and not under cover.
- H: How about Nelson Jack Edwards?
- B: Nelson Jack Edwards, he, him and I and Sheffield were working pretty close together so he was on top of the cover. At the time you had those on top of the cover, I'd say named as, Sheffield, Jack Edwards, Richard Johnson who was working for Mazey, Dewey McGhee, who was working for Pat Greathouse, for a while he was working for Dick Gosser, for a while, Abner who was out of Chicago, John Conyers Sr.,

who was out of the Chrysler Plant, but he was working in the Chrysler set-up.

H: These openly supported the formation of TULC.

B: Openly supported, openly joined. You only had about four, myself, Sheffield, Jack, Abner and Dick Johnson who was about the only four who was actively supporting positions of TULC.

H: Did Abner come in from Detroit to Chicago frequently to meet with you and caucus?

B: Yes, or we'd meet half way house, between here and Chicago and go over things and swing back, he'd go back to Chicago and I'd come back to Detroit.

H: Now what was the nature of the threats against the Negro reps who openly supported TULC?

B: There was always the threat of being sent back into the shop.

H: Horace was the main target?

B: Oh yeh. Horace was the main target, Abner was the main target in Chicago.

H: How do you explain the fact Mazey was the most outspoken person of the top UAW Leadership against TULC during that early period?

B: Oh, at that time the two major heads of the UAW was Mazey and Reuther. Reuther would always take a round the corner position.

H: Now what do you mean by round the corner position?

B: Reuther would in turn meet with a bunch of Negroes, and said I think this is right, you should have an organization that can look out for Negroes, one who can speak of their problems, one who can organize and help alert Negroes, what their responsibility to the Union, this type of thing. He was certain it can't be all bad if you in turn do the job you supposed to do. Working with Negroes, making a better Union people then if you got problems, bring it to the attention of the heads here.

H: Now what did Mazey do?

B: Mazey was completely just the opposite. Mazey's idea was you got no right having a separate organization, this dual unionism blah, blah, blah, the Negroes always hollering about they didn't want dual unionism, now here they are starting the same identical thing for blacks. They put down, tried to pin it down that we was a bunch of mau mau's, that we was trying to excite Negroes to rebel

in the UAW or withdraw from the UAW, we're just a bunch of trouble makers, we was going in local union politics of the local Unions, instead of handling our own politics in our own local Unions we spread throughout the city or throughout the country trying to handle UAW politics in the local Unions.

H: So in reality, even though Reuther appeared to be more friendly and said all the right nice things to you, the UAW leadership regarded the development of TULC as a threat?

B: Definitely so.

H: They saw this as a threat, the emergence of a black organized block within the UAW. They regarded this as a threat?

B: It was a threat to the status quo.

H: As a danger to them?

B: Yes.

H: And also as a danger to their own leadership?

B: However, the status quo would stick to their leadership and no blacks in. So as the status quo as far as the Negroes is concerned, had never been in the capacity of leadership on the international level, and never had actual equal rights, so far as the position policy making bodies...

H: Were there any concessions made in terms of leadership positions since one of your major demands - in fact, the major demand was to get a black face on the Executive Board, were any concession made?

B: Well, the closest concessions that were made was an idea of Reuther taking on a Negro as Administrative Assistant. At the time he offered the job to Horace Sheffield. Horace Sheffield turned it down.

H: What year was this?

B: '57 - '56, '57. Sheffield turned it down by saying that he'd rather be in the field where he could get around where if he was A.A. to Reuther it would be strictly sitting at the Solidarity House tied to a desk.

B: He was offered a job as Administrative Assistant to Reuther.

H: Is that the job Bill Beckham has?

B: That's the job Bill Beckham has.

H: Bill Beckham came out of Cincinnati?

B: Yes.

H: He never supported TULC and the black caucus, did he?

B: No, in fact when Beckham came on, Beckham's main job was to hatchet the TULC. Now whether this was an assignment as such, or he felt that this would in turn give him brownie points by doing these things or not, this we'll never know, or whether he is thinking of himself or whether he is given instructions. I don't believe he got the instructions from Reuther, but there's enough other people in the power structure that kept pressure to bear on Reuther, where Reuther couldn't come forth and do exactly as he wanted to or speak as he proclaimed that he wanted to. But, now one thing, every time we had in turn an affair what have you, there was great pressure on Reuther not to attend the affairs like the Founding Convention we had here in 1960. At that time the whole Executive Board had went on record as against Reuther being a principle speaker at the Founding Convention. But, Reuther took on the whole Executive Board and came and was the principal speaker.

H: Now, you said that you had your Founding Convention in 1960, you say that TULC was formed in '55.

B: The Founding Convention in 1960 was what where we had came forth with NALC.

H: Right, now, let's hold that for a minute. I will come to that in just a moment. I want to get some other things straight now. What was Bill Oliver's attitude toward TULC?

B: Standoffish.

H: Was he a member of TULC?

B: He was not.

H: No. Beckham was not a member.

B: Was not.

H: Oliver was not a member.

B: Was not.

H: Which other Negro reps were not members or people in staff positions?

B: Shelton Tappes never been a member.

H: Never?

B: Never.

- H: Not even now?
- B: Not even now, in fact, Shelton Tappes never had his foot inside the door of the TULC.
- H: How do you explain that?
- B: He felt that the boss downtown didn't want it, and he wasn't about to be rockin' the boat with the boss.
- H: Was Oliver active in opposing TULC?
- B: Not openly. Unerhanded.
- H: But TULC grows, you put out a newspaper called Vanguard. What year did the newspaper start coming out?
- B: The newspaper started coming out in 1962.
- H: What was the height of your circulation?
- B: We had about, well, any special project we'd put out three or four hundred thousand.
- H: Three or four hundred thousand?
- B: Three or four hundred thousand on any special projects like the elections and so on like that.
- H: What was your normal press run through for the average issue?
- B: Normal press run, 10,000.
- H: Ten thousand. The height of your membership you said was about eleven thousand?
- B: About eleven thousand.
- H: When did you open up the apprenticeship training program? You started up an apprenticeship training activity didn't you?
- B: Yes. The one that we had in the Building Trades. That started in 1966.
- H: 1966. Well let's hold that till we come to '66. Now, in 1959, Phil Randolph at the San Francisco Convention of the A.F. of L. has the big fight with Meany regarding the continued discriminatory practices of the A.F. of L., he denounces, there is the fight between Randolph and Meany on the floor and out of that '59 convention of the A.F. of L. comes the organization of the Negro American Labor Council. Obviously by some almost five years you anticipated that development here in Detroit. What was the relationship between TULC

and the Negro American Labor Council, in its early formulative stage?

- B: Well the NALC was born from the TULC because here in Detroit where fingers were on the pressure, on the pulse of what was going on in the community and also within the UAW or different Unions. But the minute you left Detroit it stopped right there. So what we got together in, in the NAACP Convention of 1959.
- H: The NAACP Convention of '59?
- B: '59 is where we formulated....
- H: That was in New York, wasn't it?
- B: New York is where we formulated NALC, although we didn't have the final convention till 1960.
- H: A group of Negroes informally gathered at the time of the NAACP Convention - that was the 50th Anniversary Convention of the NAACP - in New York City. You met informally and that was in the summer of - now there's a time question here, let me get some thing straight. The A.F. of L. convention was prior....
- B: In September.
- H: Then the plans for setting up the Negro American Labor Council were actually started before?
- B: Before the convention of the A.F. of L. - C.I.O. in Bal Harbor at that time - it was in San Francisco. Meany and Randolph, they had an argument.
- B: Right, Frisco. I attended the convention in '59.
- H: Now this is very important, actually the plans for setting up the Negro American Labor Council nationally, took place at informal conferences of black trade unionists who attended the NAACP Convention in '59 in New York City.
- B: '59.
- H: Then in September, about three months later, the sort of serious disagreement between Randolph and Meany occurs, and what happened then, and tell me about the - my assumption is that the folks from Detroit, the TULC people, the UAW people already had a base in the TULC organization, played a very important role in setting up the American Negro Labor Council nationally. Will you please in your own words describe that?
- B: Well, in the '59 NAACP Convention, we met there and while meeting we was requested by several fellows who belonged to local unions

and also who belonged to NAACP who was there for that convention...

H: Would you like to identify some of these men?

B: I would say out of Cleveland you had Frank Evans, in New York you had Joseph Overton, Washington you had....

H: Joe Beavers?

B: Yes, Joe Beavers, out of Washington and Robinson out of New York.

H: Cleveland Robinson?

B: No, not Cleveland, yeh Cleveland. Robinson and also James Robertson who's from the Bar Tenders Union, and out of Louisiana you had the, we called him Little Chink, and Alabama you had Holloway who was with the UAW.

H: The International Harvester Plant in Memphis, Tennessee?

B: Right, that's it and you had Street, Charles Street from the Steel workers.

H: Where?

B: Out of Ohio, Youngstown, Ohio, you had Boyd Wilson from the Steel Workers out of Pittsburg, you had several other names that leave me right now.

H: All right, what happened there?

B: They talked about how we had done this here in Detroit, how we in turn set up the same thing on a national level.

H: Detroit was the model, TULC was the model for the National Organization.

B: Right, right, and they wanted to know how could set up the same thing on a national level in each city, major city where you had union workers.

H: Was Randolph personally involved at this point?

B: Randolph was personally involved, at the time he met in '58.....

H: He met at the time of the NAACP Convention with these groups?

B: AT the time, see when we got into, we was wonderin' how everybody agreed that we should have the same thing in all these major cities where there was large unions, international unions, whether they be A.F. of L., C.I.O. Teamsters or what have you so forth, and we got into then on how could we set up, and we got into the mechanics

then on showing how to set up, get their charters and so forth through.

H: Did you personally meet with Randolph?

B: Yes.

H: Did Horace speak with Randolph?

B: Meany, Horace, Abner, Frank Evans, Overton and so forth, we all met with Phil Randolph. Now the purpose of it was we got into the first steps of it, of setting them up in different locales. This was easy, but the major thing was this, with everybody being, say, in Detroit I'm the President of a foundry, say in Chicago packing house workers was Russell.

H: Russell Lasley?

B: Russell Lasley. Here he is Vice President of International Union, you know what I mean, so who in the hell wouldn't turn and say who was the major domo between here's a guy who's the Vice President of an International Union, and here's a guy here who's president of amalgamated -- of a local union, but we felt this would cause basic conflict of who was top man, this that and so forth and we'd settle it right quick by saying that we could get some guy who was nationally known to all Negroes in labor, one that everybody looked up to and respected, that this would in turn erase any dad-gone gaps you might have as to who was tops and so forth.

H: So you went to Phil Randolph?

B: This time we prevailed on Phil Randolph, who met with us.

H: All right, now I want to establish something that is very important for the historical record. Did Phil Randolph take the leadership in calling together the first organizing group? Did this happen spontaneously and then you went to Randolph?

B: It's a spontaneous thing and then we went to Randolph.

H: You in a sense suggested the idea to Randolph?

B: Right.

H: Was he receptive?

B: Very much so.

H: He offered support and assistance?

B: He was very receptive and he in turn said that guys in this local union was on full time. Carter out of Chicago, Kent out of Chicago.

- H: People out of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters?
- B: That's right.
- H: He offered the support of the staff and financial resources of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters nationally?
- B: And also his office as a base and a headquarters, and as a result of that when we, this is the summer part of '59 - in the October, November of '59 - Phil Randolph then called a national meeting when we met in Cleveland. This is when we in turn formulated NALC. This is where we got the name NALC.
- H: Right. That was at, I recall, the Statler Hotel in Cleveland.
- B: Right.
- H: In the early winter as I recall.
- B: Yeh, right around November.
- H: Right, of '59, this was the founding conference of the Negro American Labor Council.
- B: Right.
- H: And of course the great spurt to this was the events that took place at the '59 San Francisco Convention?
- B: Right.
- H: Of the A.F. of L?
- B: Right.
- H: Did the Trade Union Leadership Council people play a decisive role, an important role, in the Cleveland Convention?
- B: The Trade Union Council subsidized the whole conference.
- H: The TULC subsidized?
- B: Uh hum.
- H: You came up with the money?
- B: Money for the whole thing. We put forth the whole money and all the notices, literature, stationary and everything else.
- H: And the Trade Union Leadership Council became the Detroit affiliate of the Negro American Labor Council but you kept your own identity and your own name?
- B: Right. It was the only organization which was allowed to hold its

own name. The big hassle at the time which was something, we got over in a hurry, by saying that the TULC the Trade Union Leadership Council is the founders and so forth like that, so they'd be allowed to hold their own identity, would not have to be the NALC of Detroit, would be the Trade Union Leadership Council, the TULC of Detroit which is affiliated with the NALC.

H: Who were elected the officers of the Negro American Labor Council?

B: Phil Randolph of course was the President, you had, Ted Brown, was the Secretary, you had Parrish.

H: Dick Parrish of the Teachers Union?

B: The Teachers Union, he was one of the officers, myself and Horace Sheffield was the two Vice Presidents out of Detroit, or the Detroit, Michigan area, you had Boyd Wilson who was the Vice President out of the Pittsburg area, you had Charlie Street who was the Vice President of the Ohio area, you had Jack Thornton who, Thornton.....

H: Youngstown.

B: Youngstown.

H: Beavers from Washington?

B: Beavers from Washington.

B&H: Overton from New York.

B: Cleveland Robertson, New York, Jim Robertson, from New York, and Bill Cully.

H: I'm sorry it wasn't Robertson. Don't you mean Richardson?

B: Richardson.

H: From the Bar Tenders?

B: Right.

H: Short light skinned fellow?

B: Heavy set.

H: Yes, that was Richardson from the Bar Tenders Union.

B: Richardson, yeh. And Bill Pollard out of California who is now working with Don Slaiman and had, what the heck is his name, the one that later turned around and became the spy for the FBI and the NALC which they tried to say was Communistic dominated.

H: Who was that?

B: I shouldn't forget it.

H: Dolly Robinson?

B: No, it wasn't Dolly Robinson.

H: Who?

B: There was one name.....

H: By the way, was Dolly Robinson.....

B: Yeh, Dolly Robinson from the Amalgamated Clothing Workers.

H: She was there, she was the only woman I remember.

B: No, there was another woman, the one with the second dang gone board meeting, I don't know who it is, we actually found out she was in turn taking all our board minutes to the FBI.

H: From what union was she? I did not know about this.

B: She's out of New York or Chicago - one. I'm quite sure her name was Holmes.

H: All right, we can look at the record, I'm curious about this. I did not know about this.

B: Yes. She turned over all the records.

H: Well, all right, so you started organizing and setting up chapters all over the country. How did it go, were you successful? Did you make progress?

B: We were very successful when we started off and setting up in Chicago and Cleveland and Ohio and so forth. But it seems the minute we started setting it up then in places like in Youngstown, where you had Charlie Street, with the Steel Workers Union, you had Jack Thornton, and you had, I can't remember the guy's name, Charlie Street, Jack Thornton, well immediately a fight broke out there on who would be top man when we started electing officers in these chapters there, so on and so forth and the big fight loomed in Chicago between Crowder who was from the Sleeping Car Porters..... had Jim Kent who was from the Scavengers-I guess this is DPW what we call here.

H: Kent no, James Kent was from the Building Service Employees?

B: Yeh.

- H: James Kent was from the Building Service Employees.
- B: Well the fight broke out there?
- H: He had the, well, he was head of an all black local, the Building Service Employees in Chicago and eventually became a Vice President of the Building Service Employees.
- B: So a fight broke out there, and this is pretty much all of the turmoil that you had going for awhile and so of course we'd send in three or four Vice Presidents from around the country in to check and see what's going on and report.
- H: Now wasn't Willoughby Abner a leading figure?
- B: In Chicago.
- H: Now wasn't he also nationally in the TULC?
- B: Yeh, he was one of the Vice Presidents.
- H: The Negro American Labor Council.
- B: Yeh.
- H: That's right. Now I would like to ask you what I regard is a very important question Buddy, there was one fundamental difference between the TULC and the Negro American Labor Council, you had a mass base, you invited the rank and file black workers to join. It is my observation that the Negro American Labor Council became an organization of Negro staff people, Negro elected officials, of Labor Unions, you never really got the rank and file black workers in, did you?
- B: This is the fight the TULC then had with the NALC.
- H: It became an organization of Negro pork choppers. I used to go, I attended every convention of the Negro American Labor Council, and as I would look around me with the exception of the people from Detroit, it was an organization of black pork choppers. Would you agree with that?
- B: Yeh.
- H: And would you agree that that was a great weakness?
- B: Yeh. This is the big fight we had when we explained to them that you had to get the masses involved in it and Phil's main thing was you had to get the masses involved, but when you hit New York, the Overtons and so forth, each one of them was lying in for the power in New York. It was strictly a staff thing. They checked you to find out how many people you got in your chapter and so forth -

they come with 10, 12, 15, 20.

H: It never really developed a mass base?

B: And it'd always be as you say the guys who's full time staffers, which is called pork choppers and as a result, we got into it by saying well look, we gotta quit dashing out here to board meetings when you get here all you got is some hassle between two staff guys. We wanna know what are you doing for the organization.

H: Well, why do you think that Randolph never developed a perspective of creating a mass based organization of Negro rank and file workers and that the membership of the Negro American Labor Council is distinct from the membership of the TULC? Was that essentially a Trade Union of either appointed or elected officials?

B: I would say in the UAW you have a type, a different type of Negro, a different type leadership than you do in the rest of the international unions throughout the country. International unions throughout the country you have a majority of guys who are there strictly as, well let's say a guy's a leader there could be a union guy and also be a foreman on a job. Such as like the Building Trades. A guy could be the union steward or the union leader and also might be a contractor. Same thing like in New York where you had Joe Overton who was the representative there also was the owner of a big supermarket there which he was boss and was also union rep. also, so as a result of that you had the situation of the membership looking at the leadership with a jaundiced eye look.

H: So you agree that one of the great weaknesses of the Negro American Labor Council was that it never developed a mass base?

B: Agreed.

H: Now between it's formation in '59 and '62 I just want to stick with that period, between '59 and '62 Randolph and the Negro American Labor Council fought the A.F. of L. leadership on race practices. There were reports, Phil Randolph again and again got up at the National Convention and at the executive council meetings in which he was a member was very critical of the Federation's racial practices. What happened in '62 when Randolph evidently took a different position at the New York banquet in '62 when Meany spoke? There was a kind of a rapprochement, they got together. Meany addressed the dinner of the Negro American Labor Council in '62 in New York City, he sort of recognized it, up until then he refused to recognize it. You remember there was the rapport in which they censored Phil Randolph at the A.F. of L. Executive Council, they attacked him. What happened in '62, that the line, the policy changed?

B: Well, immediately after the, in '61 convention or during the '61 convention, at Bal Harbor.....

- H: That is the 1961 convention of the American Federation of Labor, Bal Harbor, Florida?
- B: Right. Now at this time we pulled 18 people from all walks of the Union itself, black leadership together and went there, the next big convention came up after a meeting in Phil Randolph had the big hassle, well he asked him, who in the hell appointed you spokesman for all the black workers, so we took 18 people from all walks to go out and answer.
- H: I remember, I was there.
- B: Great, so as a result when we got there and we sought out a meeting with George Meany, and Meany, prior to meeting with us sat down on the floor for a meeting with Phil Randolph, while out of this he was supposed to have ironed out every dang gone thing and agree to some changes in the structure pertaining to Civil Rights Commission...
- H: Department and Committee.....
- B: Department and Committee of a change of structure of allowing Phil Randolph to name X number of people into the FEP and Civil Rights Committee which would in turn change the structure. By the same token, 18 guys met with George Meany, Meany after Phil Randolph, and he assured us at that time that the A.F. of L. would start moving and we talked about the 18 international unions that had color bars in the constitution. We asked him what's your position on that and he sketched the thing pretty much and we in turn.....
- H: By that you mean he refused to take a position?
- B: Refused off the bat to take a position by saying that we could in turn tell them to take 'em out of the constitution but if you don't do it what could we do.
- H: He evoked the A.F. of L. tradition of local and international union autonomy?
- B: Right. What could we do at that time we came through and said that in the event you don't, you should expell, so this was the position that we left the convention with. That those who have color bars in the constitution who refused to take out, should in turn be expelled.
- H: Now, I remember the meeting that we had both before and after we met in the Lido Hotel that was where we all stayed.....
- B: Right.
- H: In Miami, when we met in Bal Harbor.
- B: That's right. Down at the Lido.

- H: We stayed at the Lido and I remember those meetings - I sat in on one of those caucus meetings and we made, we agreed to raise several demands with George Meany at that time - your feeling was nothing very substantial came out of that, but that paved the way for what was to take place a year later when Phil Randolph and Meany did get together. Why, why do you think that considering the fact that no real concessions were made, except some token promises that Phil Randolph changed his position?
- B: Well see, at that time they did come out with a promise, they gave international unions six months to eradicate color bars of the constitution. Gave 'em six months with the threat that if you didn't have it done in six months you would be expelled.
- H: That was as the result of the conference of the Negro Representatives?
- B: Right.
- H: With Meany?
- B: Right.
- H: At the '61 meeting in Miami?
- B: Right.
- H: That he would give the internationals six months.
- B: Six months. Now in between that time - it was in December so we in turn six months waiting gave them till a June date, but in the mean time we hit New York for the NALC Convention there and we were still at war with Meany because nothing happened but a bunch of daggone promises. He allowed Phil to name two or three people into the FEP Committee and change the structure.
- H: That was the Civil Rights Committee of the Federation?
- B: Right, but now nothing happened except he allowed him to name some two people and in the.....
- H: Who were those two people?
- B: Big Webster, what was Webster's name?
- H: Milt Webster.
- B: Yeh. Milt Webster and Crawler, Crawler was out of.....
- H: Crawler was never on the Federation.
- B: How did Pollard get in from California, Pollard came in on the same

one or what?

- H: Now, Pollard came in much later, much later, and he was not a Randolph man.
- B: I know one was Big Milt Webster, I'm trying to think of who in the heck the other one was.
- H: Actually, Milton Webster was on the Civil Rights Committee from the very beginning of the merger. Webster went and he was already on, Webster was already on.
- B: I'd have to check back to see who was on that.
- H: I don't think there was any changes to the Committee, what did happen I think was that Ted Brown who was working for Phil went on the staff of the Civil Rights Department.
- B: Right, right, right, right.
- H: Boris Shishkin was head of the Department. My recollection is that there were no changes on the committee, but that Ted Brown went on the staff of the Civil Rights Department.
- B: Ted Brown, but there was two that Phil Randolph was allowed to name and.....
- H: Webster was already on.
- B: Yeh, Webster, he's already on. The only one I can think of then is Ted Brown. But now prior to anything happening there, we went into the convention in '62 in New York, NALC Convention and the thing that hit us most we was down in there fighting all of these A.F. of L. international unions that had these color bars in, but when we in turn hit New York, we looked at the doggone book there, the program book, and the program book was completely full of all these international unions that had color bars in their constitution. They had bought up the whole program book.
- H: They had contributed to the Souvenir Journal.
- B: Right. Strictly the whole book was them, period. The next thing we looked and here is George Meany as the principal speaker.
- H: Now was this done without the knowledge of the Executive Board of the Negro American Labor Council?
- B: This was done with pressures brought to bear on the Overtons, the Cleveland Robinsons, and the different guys who were appointed staff members on these, from these unions who were on the Executive Board, and New York was handling the setting up of the Convention and so forth in the city where you put on the convention, they in turn was

the host.

- H: Now did this come as a surprise to the representatives of the TULC Convention Board?
- B: A complete surprise.
- H: This had not been discussed before?
- B: They had a board meeting approximately a month prior to them drawing up or getting into the convention and this hadn't been broached at board at all. We were still left going into the convention, gonna tell the people how we took on George Meany and the rest of the guys and we gave these people a deadline, to have something done about this thing, and before the deadline's even met, before the deadline is three months old, here we got the very people we have the deadline, is gonna speak at the.....
- H: It was originally the intention based upon the previous meeting of the Negro American Labor Council, that is the Executive Board. When did the Executive Board meeting take place, the one immediately preceding the New York Convention?
- B: Approximately, let's see, the New York Convention was the.....
- H: December, December '62?
- B: It couldn't have been later than September.
- H: All right, and.....
- B: With the quarterly meetings.
- H: And was the intention to sharpen the differences with Meany, and to give him a deadline for change and to make some other public demands?
- B: The time had gone by and none of these, none of the international unions had been expelled.
- H: The promises that Meany had made.....
- B: Right.
- H: In the previous summer at the convention in Miami were not held?
- B: Right.
- H: And it was the intention of the group as agreed upon the meeting of the Executive Council to sharpen the differences and expose Meany?
- B: Right.

H: All right.

B: Plus the fact you remember at that time this is when we had met back and forth and got into the point of asking for decertifications.....

H: I was going to come to that in a moment, but I just want to make this very clear. Now, so it was an absolute surprise when you came to New York and you see that the agreement that had been arrived at at the September meeting of the Executive Council, Negro American Labor Council was scuttled without any prior consultation of the membership of the Executive Council? That Meany was on the program, that international unions with long anti-Negro records had bought space in the Souvenir Journal and that the entire approach had changed, without prior consultation, without the Executive Council?

B: Right.

H: This was something that Phil did privately with Meany with the support of the Overtons and the Boyd Wilsons and.....

B: I'd rather say that this is something that the Board had in turn put pressure on Phil to do because of the McDonalds getting to the Boyd Wilsons, your Streets, and your Thorntons, and the Overtons from his district, 65 or whatever it is.

H: No Robinson?

B: Robinson's district 65, and so forth but they had brought pressure to bear where the Board, the New York Board, had did this thing in between the last Executive Board meeting and the convention there.

H: The New York Board of the Negro American Labor Council?

B: Right, now remember we had resolutions which we had drew up asking for, that we was going to court, asking for decertification of these, of these local or international unions because of the promise that George Meany had made, and hadn't fulfilled, hadn't lived up to, we went in there with resolutions, well we went into court asking for decertification.

H: Now was this agreed upon in the September meeting of the council?

B: It definitely was, now remember we had Bayard Rustin in here in October, but Bayard Rustin took the position that we should in turn go in for decertification.

H: Support them?

B: Yeh.

H: All right, now at this time at that meeting however, there was a

fight on this issue. You will recall that the NAACP after the decision in the Houston tool case, Houston Tool Company, and the Independent Metal Workers Association. The NAACP won the first decertification and that we asked the Negro American Labor Council to endorse such a procedure that when unions failed to eliminate segregated locals, discriminatory seniority lines, excluded Negroes from membership, etc.

- B: Different rates of pay.....
- H: Different rates of pay, wage-differential, seniority, discrimination, that when unions refused to, that the only course of action was to move for decertification in the courts and before the NLRB. Now, as I recall, a big fight broke out in that New York meeting. This was the '62 meeting, winter of '62 meeting, '62 of the Negro American Labor Council. My recollection was that Horace Sheffield, you and Willoughby Abner led the forces in support of the NAACP's position for decertification, Phil Randolph changed his position at that time, Meany in his speech attacked me, attacked Herbert Hill personally, I recall, as I recall, Negro American Labor Council put out a leaflet at that time defending the Association's Labor Secretary, the Association's position and attacking Meany, but Phil Randolph changed in the midst of all this. Would you describe the debate that went on at that point and also tell us about Bayard Rustin coming here to Detroit, speaking in this hall that we're in now and at that time you say he supported the NAACP, the position of the TULC and the NAACP because we had the same position at that stage for decertification. Would you describe all this?
- B: Well, Bayard Rustin was here in a meeting in October where you had Norman Hill, who was a youngster then, with him, and at the same meeting I'm quite sure you had Stokely Carmichael here, in rags, in fact, while he was here, somebody had to give him a jacket because the weather turned cold here, where he left it was warm, he got in here without a jacket, one of the fellows went and got a jacket. We had the meeting here. Bayard Rustin chaired, not chaired, he was the principle speaker.....well, he came forth.
- H: The Chairman at that meeting as I recall was Horace.
- B: Yes.
- H: Horace was Chairman, Bayard spoke in the headquarters of the TULC.
- B: And Norm Hill had came to the same thing so forth through, and we left here with a full head of steam that was all going in to New York at the convention, where they gonna get on record and get everybody all together; in fact, we was gonna file a suit from that convention.
- H: The Court actually filed suit?

B: Yeh.

H: Were you in touch with the NAACP, with Robert Carter, or with Herbert Hill to actually plan these suits?

B: We had talked with you seven or eight times, in fact, you made a couple of trips to New York, Horace made a trip down here, flew down and back in, we was in close contact all the way through. Well we had drew up resolutions and had it coming in from Chicago, coming in from Flint, Detroit, Cleveland, but the New York bunch is the one that scuttled it and as a result you had Frank Evans, at that time was on our side, Bayard Rustin open on our side, but, when the New York bunch at that time presented a solid front, now, it's my contention this is where they boxed Phil Randolph in.

H: Well did it box Phil Randolph in, or did Phil Randolph - was he part of that agreement? Was he part of the new arrangement?

B: I've never been able to get down to the pinpoint that Phil was a part, but I do know that the solid Board of New York presented a solid block against. And this is where we damn near came to blows at the convention.

H: Now would you please tell us as much detail as you can on this point, the debate on this issue, if this was the decisive thing that changed the line, that changed the whole perspective, of the Negro American Labor Council, and eventually led to its disintegration?

B: Well the major debate at that time was between Horace Sheffield, Joseph Overton, Cleveland Robinson, myself and Abner.

H: I wonder if we can get one thing straight Buddy, who was on which side? As I recall, you, Horace,

B: Sheffield.

H: You, Sheffield, and Abner were the major spokesmen to continue the policy arrived at in the September meeting of the Negro American Labor Council, and you asked for a formal vote of endorsement of the NAACP's position.

B: Of fighting for decertification of....

H: Right.

B: International unions that had color bars,....

H: Right.

B: And had discrimination in the union.....

- H: Right.
- B: And so forth down.
- H: Now who opposed that?
- B: Speaking against at that time and took the major thing was Joe Overton, Cleveland Robinson, trying to get the New York Chapter together. At this time Ted Brown was standoffish; he didn't come to either one of them.
- H: Now, how about Phil, did Phil participate in those discussions?
- B: Phil Randolph, after the fight got rough on the floor, took over the discussion at that time and said that we have in turn got concession from the A.F. of L. - C.I.O. and I think we should give them time to get these things straight, and after all.....Rome wasn't built in a day and I think we should give them time - after all, we've invited George Meany in for our speaker and of course we can't slap him in the face and something like that.
- H: All right, now, but in fact you had gotten no concessions.
- B: None that I'd seen.
- H: They were paper concessions.
- B: None that I'd seen.
- H: They were promises that were not kept.
- B: They had promised that in six months color bars out or else expulsion. No international union had been expelled and none had come through and changed the color bars to the constitution.
- H: As I recall from that meeting in Miami, there was also another demand, that is that the integration of City and State Federations of Labor.
- B: Right.
- H: I remember Phil raised that as a sharp question.
- B: Um hum.
- H: But none of this really had occurred.
- B: Nothing. It hadn't even started, hadn't even started. See, we spoke up and said that if there'd been - I think it was some 18 - we said that if we'd had as many as two that had either changed the color bars or was up for expulsion, we could see then whether they was sincere in this. But you had at that time - I remember the speech that Horace made - that not one international union had been

called in. And this is strictly an idea of people lying, outright lying.

H: Were the minutes kept of those meetings and those debates?

B: Yeh.

H: Where are they?

B: New York.

H: Do you know who has them? Would Cleveland Robinson have them?

B: No, I think it would be Parrish.

H: Parrish would have them. So the TULC forces - Abner, Sheffield, Battle - were defeated at that convention?

B: At that time we lost a vote.

H: Right. What happens afterward? What happens after '62?

B: Important at that night, I mean at the '62 convention after we lost the vote, we then went on record and boycotted the banquet that night where George Meany was speaking.

H: You did not go to that?

B: No sir, none of the Detroit people, none of the Chicago people, with the exception of those that was in Sleeping Car Porters. Remember Abner and his bunch didn't go, Detroit people didn't go, the fellows from Flint didn't go, the board completely refused.

H: The TULC people didn't go.

B: Um hum.

H: I see. How about the UAW people?

B: Well the UAW people was mostly from Detroit, mostly from Detroit. They didn't go because at the time then you had a sharp difference between Reuther and Meany at this time also. In fact, Reuther tried to speak in behalf of the groups that was down there and they turned completely on the opposite side of Reuther in the convention of '61. As a result of when we came forth asking for decertification, they tried to come through and said the TULC (they tried to throw it on our back then), the TULC then was coming through playing the part of management asking for decertification of local unions, international unions and so forth like that and they tried to bring pressure to bear, but immediately after that - some thirty or sixty days afterwards, Reuther came forth saying that international unions that had color bars and who practiced discrimination should be decertified.

- H: Well now, did he say decertified, or should be expelled from the Federation?
- B: Decertified. Yes sir, see after Bayard Rustin was in here, it was in thirty days, within thirty days time, prior to the '62 convention.
- H: What role did Bayard Rustin play at the '62 convention of the Negro American Labor Council?
- B: Bayard didn't. If I remember correctly, Bayard didn't take the floor and speak for and against because this was strictly a board thing and people had been channeled through the board to speak on it. Bayard Rustin played pretty much a standoffish role in it.
- H: Now as I recall, the folks from TULC then came back to Detroit and you sort of became passive in the Negro American Labor Council. Up until then you really had been the major unit, you were the biggest, you were the richest, most active unit. You started, and I recall Horace and you telling me then that you were going to concentrate on building TULC and you weren't going to be very active anymore in the Negro American Labor Council. Would that be correct?
- B: We agreed the NALC, we felt it was strictly a paper organization. And so far as our wasting our time running to board meetings or to conventions, we could more easily or more readily spend that time here building TULC in Detroit, Flint, Saginaw, Bay City, set up one in Philadelphia,
- H: You set up TULC units?
- B: Yes. TULC units there instead of the NALC.
- H: So you really were in opposition then to Negro American Labor Council?
- B: No, we had withdrew, we had withdrew silently from the NALC.
- H: You withdrew silently, after the '62 meeting, the TULC withdrew silently from the Negro American Labor Council. You say that after the '62 meeting the Negro American, the TULC passively withdrew, there were no public announcements, no public attacks on the Negro American Labor Council and you started setting up your own units in several cities elsewhere in Michigan and also Philadelphia. What success did you have?
- B: Oh, we had good success, we had a chapter in Flint that grew to about four or five thousand members, we had a chapter in Saginaw that grew to about eight or nine hundred members, in Jones in Philadelphia, he grew to about six thousand members and this came then where we used the Vanguard here and the TULC as the major media of communication back and forth.
- H: The Vanguard monthly paper of the TULC?

- B: Yes, that's right. And in each chapter or each issue we in turn send for each one of them to send the articles which appeared in the Vanguard which is our news media of TULC.
- H: Well what happened with these groups now? Do they still exist?
- B: We still have the one in Flint, and Jones is still operating in Philadelphia.
- H: But that sort of lost it's identity with the TULC. It hasn't been.....
- B: Well it's still, every now and then you look up and see where, well let's see, they've got a pre-apprenticeship training program there, under the TULC name of Philadelphia.....
- H: But you don't really control Philadelphia.
- B: No, no.
- H: It really has become an independent organization in Philadelphia.
- B: Yes.
- H: Now tell us something about your activities here, your pre-apprenticeship training programs. I recall at one point you set up a training program for Negro women, typists, clerical work, and then a placement service, tell us about that phase of the TULC's work.
- B: Well in, you remember back in '62, beginning of '63, when the NAACP was out on General Motors, Chrysler's and Fords on the lack of activity so far as Negro women, and to the clerical jobs and also the lack of Negro males in the supervisors' capacity, or in the labor relations capacity, and so forth, the big fight was made by the NAACP in '63.
- H: Yes, we had a picket line around the General Motors Building, and the Negro American Labor Council - the TULC joined in that picket line.....
- B: Right.
- H: In that picket line, and we had - I think you and Horace, spoke at the speakers stands that were set up, you joined me at that time...
- B: Right.
- H: In attacking the General Motors Corporation, even though the folks at Solidarity House were not very enthusiastic.
- B: So then we came back and we figured this, that we had to get all of the organizations, the Negro organizations, chimed into one channel

and we figured we'd have a problem if we in turn asked them to come in the TULC as such, because each one wanted its own personal identity on the whole. So then at that time we set up what was known as one - Operation Negro Equality - where we in turn invited all of the different Civil Rights Organizations or Negro Organizations in to participate with people from SNNC, Brown from SNNC, and you had people from CORE, we had the NAACP local people in, we had the Detroit Council of Political Education in, we had the what is now WCO, we had them in, and we set up this where we set up a group organization where we then went forth in the City of Detroit and surrounding areas where we took on, we picked up the fight that the NAACP had started, but we took on General Motors, the Ford and the Chrysler people, of bringing them to the task of the lack of, the absolute absence of Negro women in the clerical positions in the Administration Buildings, and also Negroes in labor relations set-ups in the plants and shops and so forth.....

H: And you also established these training programs.

B: Right.

H: You had a pre-apprenticeship training program going.....

B: I want to lead into that, after we got in all these committees and groups together, then we started off meeting with Ford, General Motors and Chrysler. Now, of course General Motors is the one who almost poo-pooed the whole daggone thing - well get away from me, what are you talking - Ford was a little more receptive to it. Well I was from Ford and I knew all of the ins and outs and so forth, I could argue straight to the point, 'cause I was raised with Ford, and the majority of people I was arguing with were the people that I had broke in on the shop level and labor relations and they had gone up to be Vice Presidents and so forth, and I could speak readily to them. So as a result, we in turn beat Ford over the head, and from that we beat Chrysler over the head. Now, to end the thing, Ford tricked us, and I say tricked us with arguing about non-Negro women in the clerical field, and out of the clear blue sky approximately ten, fifteen days later, Ford called us and told us, all right, I want ten girls who can take typing and shorthand, I want 'em like two or three days. So the minute this happened, we were sent scurrying then to try and find ten girls, we thought it'd be off the bat we pick up ten right out. But when we started looking, we couldn't find ten who could do typing and shorthand. And they had the prerequisites then, they must be able to take X number of words, that meant in shorthand they must be able to take X number of words, typing, blah, blah, blah, and so forth, so after scurrying around the whole daggone city and robbing the black businesses where they had the girls in paying them \$35, \$40 a week, we only came up with some three or four, after about two or three weeks time there was only come up with seven. So at that time, we and TULC says, we're gonna stop right now runnin' off our mouth and not have anything to back it up with. As a result of that then, we got into our training

program, educational center of TULC while we, after two years' time, we turned out some 375 girls who came from completely scratch into typists, stenographers, what have you. And by the way, they've all been placed, all have good jobs, either Fords, Chryslers mostly, General Motors picked up a few. But the major ones that picked them up was Fords and Chrysler.

H: You say you placed about 3 or 400?

B: Yeh.

H: Does that program still go on?

B: No, when the TAP programs came in, it was an idea then of duplication.

H: Oh, I see.

B: So we in turn moved out of the field then, because you had TAP programs, that had federal money in, so we figured we'd use our money doing something else.

H: Now how about the pre-apprenticeship training programs?

B: Our pre-apprenticeship training program, you understand the whole, getting into that in '61 and '62, we took on the building trades here, while they had the idea of the apprenticeship training where no Negroes was in, sending out 25, they'd sit back and brag to you in front that I bet ya that in that 25 not one would pass with this or that or so forth, and so we went in the courts and had an injunction to stop the.....

H: The TULC went into court?

B: TULC.

H: What year did TULC go to court?

B: TULC went into the courts on the apprenticeship training in 1963.

H: You went into the U.S. District Court? And you filed a suit against the building trades unions?

B: Right.

H: You have the documents on this?

B: Yes.

H: You have all that. And what happened, what was the result of that?

B: At the time, they came down and shut down the schools; they showed cause hearing why the injunction should not be upheld.

- H: You were describing now 1963? Is that correct?
- B: Yes.
- H: TULC went into the U.S. District Court against several building trades unions on the question of discrimination in the apprenticeship training programs as well as the admission of black journeymen?
- B: Yes. Both questions.
- H: I also understand you filed the same complaints against both trades unions with the Michigan Commission on Civil Rights.
- B: Right.
- H: Can you tell us generally something about that?
- B: We had got into this situation of recruiting Negro kids and sending them down to take the examination for apprenticeship training programs. They had what you called aptitude tests or acceptance tests or whatever you call it, and we had got into where we had first approached the building trades that were saying that they couldn't find any Negro kids who were wanting to go into the building trades, so we took it on ourselves as a project. And we took half page ad in the Negro paper - the Chronicle.
- H: The Michigan Chronicle?
- B: The Michigan Chronicle where we ran a half page ad.
- H: Do you know what date that was? Or can we find it?
- B: The whole thing was in the court at the time where we testified.
- H: Right.
- B: We ran half page ad where we had about 75 to 100 kids and we advertised, "they must have high school diploma, must be between age such and such (which was 17 to 25) and we had approximately 75 that showed up. When they showed up this night we got with some of the Negro journeymen who were members of the trades in the industrial plants and we had several people who were from the Board of Education who were in the same thing - the apprenticeship training program from the Board of Education. And we together drew up the type of thing which we could in turn give them, a mock interview or mock testing for the aptitude tests and of the 75, about 50 came through with flying colors because some of the people who knew what the tests were all about or a close proximity of what the tests were, made up a mock test for them. Out of 75, we had about 50 who went through with flying colors.

- H: So you got in some Negro youngsters into the union-controlled apprenticeship training programs. In what trades?
- B: No. At this time we didn't. We had them here. We went out and sought out the kids. When we first went into it then - the first time in '63 when we was threatening, their first answer was that they couldn't find any Negro kids who wanted it, so we took it upon ourselves to recruit the kids.
- H: And then referred them?
- B: Prior to referring, we also had people in the trades who drew up mock testing which would have something equivalent to what they were doing down there so we climatized the kids as to what they'd be looking for.
- H: The instructors were Negro craftsmen who were not in the construction unions but who did that same work in industry?
- B: Right.
- H: In the industrial plants.
- B: Right, and also with the city.
- H: Who worked for the city?
- B: Right. We drew up this mock test which would be equivalent to what they had and when we took a dry run, out of the 75 kids we came up with approximately 50 that passed it without any problem whatsoever. So then we figured we were ready so we sent down - when we found out the date to be open for the testing we only got about 38 who were still holding and as a result of holding and waiting for the testing date to come up, out of the 50 kids we had had, it had dwindled down to approximately 38. Because in the holding, kids - youngsters who need a job to take care of themselves - it's pretty hard to hold 50 kids. To keep ourselves in readiness, don't move this, that and so forth and so as a result it dwindled down to some 38.
- H: How many did you actually get placed?
- B: None.
- H: You got none?
- B: None. The thing is that we contacted them that we have in turn recruited the kids for you because you said you couldn't find them. We have recruited them for you.
- H: And you sent down 38.

- B: Yeah. But prior to that when we was in contact with them to find out the testing dates and told them we have some 38 for you - at this time a boast was made in the building trades that we will bet that not one of the 38 will pass. I mean we tried the thing and told that if they were really sincere in the thing and we in turn went out and recruited the kids and we also gave them the tests and so forth so they won't be complete dummies and like that and the answer we got back was that we will bet that no one passes so we went into the daggone thing and of the amount that was sent down, which was over 25, none of them passed. So this was when we got hot to the extent of knowing that this was a frame-up with regards to the fact we had been put down and even if we had sent Einstein down and as long as he was black he wasn't going to pass the test. It was also thrown in our face that even if he passed the test you still have got to go through the oral interview. You still got to bring in your letters of credit, schooling, this, that and so forth. The fact was that they was in so many words telling us that they had control and even if you got off right and passed the test, you're still gonna fail the oral interview or fail bringing in credits from high school and so forth like that. So at this time we figured it was no sense in playing with them any further. We went into court then and got an injunction to stop any of their apprenticeship training programs from going on in any of the state schools where funds from the state or even from the city was in.
- H: And you succeeded in doing that.
- B: Yes, we succeeded.
- H: You succeeded in cutting off all public assistance to the apprenticeship training programs to the City of Detroit. The Board of Education, as I recall, withdrew its agreement to let them use the vocational high schools.
- B: Right. Now this lasted for somewhere in the neighborhood of 45 to 70 days where they were closed down and didn't have the testing program, so they agreed then - send us some kids down and we'll re-test them. We had about ten, and out of the ten, we got one. A young man named Carrothers. I'll never forget the name Carrothers 'cause we had it in all the papers and things that a Negro passed the electrical test.
- H: That was the IBEW.
- B: Yeah.
- H: Local 58.
- B: Local 58. That he had passed, so as a result of it then we were haggling back and forth on whether to keep the boycott - the injunction in - there was contention if we can't be testing, neither

black or white could get in - if you find some blacks you can't get them in - and we refused to go for the back door stuff - this idea I give you one or two and you let us go back - find the aids and then they go back and in turn completely shut out all the Negroes in the future - so we in turn held off on that and wouldn't go for it.

We sent one kid down - Carrothers - and he in turn took the test and passed and then we in turn eased off from the daggone thing with the assistance of the Mayor of the City of Detroit along with at that time, McNamara the Senator, his brother - his name is James - was at that time the Chairman or President or whatever of the building trades in Michigan - in Detroit, anyhow, we got into a memorandum of understanding.

H: You have a copy of that?

B: Yeah. Horace's got all of that. We went into a memorandum of understanding then where the Mayor of the City of Detroit acted as an intermediary to get the two groups together - the building trades and the TULC while they in turn brought in people from all of the trades, the heads of each one of the trades, and we sat down at a meeting where we went into a memorandum of understanding where instead of us breaking heads where we in turn was trying to put them in and them trying to keep them out, to knock off that crap because it was getting into Civil Rights struggles where they just got to lay down and Reverend Thunder or Plunder was killed.

H: Reverend Klunder.

B: Reverend Klunder.

H: Reverend Klunder of Detroit. I'm sorry - of Cleveland.

B: Yeah. Of Cleveland - was killed.

H: That was at an NAACP-sponsored demonstration at federal construction site where he layed down. I was out there and a bulldozer went over him and killed him.

B: Then there were the things in Brooklyn where the guys was laying in the street. So there was fear on the part of the Mayor's office.

H: So you got some concessions.

B: Right.

H: And you did get some Negroes placed?

B: Right.

H: How many did you get placed all told?

- B: Very few - about six at the most.
- H: Six. But as a result of those six men you withdrew the injunction.
- B: Yeah, but then from that as a result of this and prior to the injunction being withdrawn.....
- H: By the way, were they all in the IBEW?
- B: No.
- H: How many of them?
- B: One went in the IBEW - one in sheet metal and into the pipe-fitters trades and into the carpenters.
- H: But you got six in about five different.....
- B: Yeah.
- H:classifications.
- B: But we also came out of that with this where later grew up with what we called the pre-apprenticeship training program. At this time we got into where we had a memorandum of understanding. Instead of bucking heads because the kids were the ones who suffered in the daggone thing, we could try to work out a memorandum of understanding where we will in turn recruit the kids. We go out and get the kids and we'll have what is known as a pre-apprenticeship training where prior to their going for tests we would have teachers that would in turn teach them how to pass the tests.
- H: Has this worked?
- B: Well, let's say it's worked to a degree. We have got one now and we've been having one since 1966 but we haven't in turn moved by the leaps and bounds which it was supposed to have been - well, let's say the opening of the training program which was funded by the Federal Government - they only talked about \$200 for a year. Now, as to the \$200 for a year, it was all we could get the trades to agree to in the City of Detroit that they could see to the JAC Committee that they had in turn take in this \$200 and we in turn make the thing work in one year, over the span of the year.

All right, now the next thing is we had to in turn get the kids in so we felt we had no problem period. All we had to do was hit on the side of a wall or ring a bell and you'd have about three or four thousand kids running up the walls but we fast found out this was not true because the program which was funded by the Federal Government it gave us three people who could full time do nothing but just go out and recruit kids - bring them in - between 17 to 25,

high school diploma, equivalent to GED or something like that and the roughest thing that happened - and trying to get an entree or make contact to get the kids - from 17 to 25 - to get them interested in coming in.

When we first started out we had about 75 to 100 to 125 right off the bat but you start off and have the building trades people who were teaching in the apprenticeship training program would come over and teach ours in the pre-apprenticeship training program and then when they was ready they gave the OK to go and take the test.

- H: What progress has occurred? How would you estimate that?
- B: Well let's see - out of the program we have approximately 145 and this is since - let's see, we had our first funding in June of '67. We went through the hasseling back and forth for about two years to get the Federal Government to agree to this kind of program.
- H: Did they fund the TULC?
- B: Yeah, the TULC.
- H: It was funded and you have placed 167 youngsters in the apprenticeship training program.
- B: The apprenticeship training program.
- H: In several different crafts in the building trades.
- B: In all. The minor one being the electrical. In the rest of them we have 15, 20, 25, 10, 17.
- H: Were you able to get any Negro journeymen directly into the union membership?
- B: We had this problem but they had the door open for it. Find journeymen, pipe fitters, this and that. We had the journeymen's group who was here. We had some 50 to 75 who were members of the journeymen's group here.
- H: Now what is that called? The Negro journeymen's group? They are not members of the AFL Building Trades.
- B: No. It was Allied Negro Journeymen - something of that name. I can't give you the exact name but I can get it for you later on.
- And these fellows - TULC took some two or three as pipe fitters. We was going to pay the initiation fee to get them in. We sent two in and one in the electrical went in.
- H: I would like very much to know about this organization of independent Negro building journeymen.

B: It's called Allied Negro something or other. I can't think of the name but I'll get it for you.

H: It would be very important.

B: Now in these Negro journeymen, when we get into this we found that they were in turn standoffish against going in and their explanations was that they could make more money working out on the street on their own instead of going into the union and being saddled to just a job here and a job there and so forth but out in the street on their own they could make more money.

H: Yes. Part of the problem usually is even though we get the Negroes into the union that the union hiring hall doesn't operate for them. They can't get the good jobs in the union halls. This is a problem that repeats itself again and again.

I would like to jump back to something else because I would like to establish complete continuity here if I can. There are two very important things we have to back-track on. One - a very important break occurred between TULC and UAW leadership on Mayor Cavanagh's first election campaign. I want you to talk about the fight to get Nelson Jack Edwards elected. When was that? The 1958 or '59 Convention?

B: It was '59 where we made the fight to get a Negro on the Board. We finally came back in '62.

H: OK. We'll talk about that secondly but first I would like you to tell me what year the differences arose between the TULC and Solidarity House on Cavanagh's campaign? Cavanagh ran against Miriani as I recall. The UAW and trade unions supported Miriani for reasons I have never understood. The TULC supported Cavanagh and Cavanagh won. Would you give us as much of the details and all that you remember on that issue?

B: Well, the major thing on the Cavanagh and Miriani election.....

H: That was '58?

B: No, '60.

H: That was 1960.

B: Well it was 1961. Prior to the election in '61 in the City of Detroit we have got in the racial tension where you could almost feel it - cut it with a knife - it was so tight. As a result of that we had the Police Commissioner at that time, who was Hart, who worked under Miriani, coming through with a police crack-down in the central city. That was in the central city that came through with a police crack-down. The situation was any Negro standing on the corner, coming out of the house to get in his car, going into a church, going into a store, coming out of a store, going in a night club or

coming out of a night club - the crack-down was such that the crime in the inner city - we had to stop it. So a crack-down on any Negro loitering, idling or whatever - now loitering took in coming out of the house, waiting on the corner to catch the bus to go to work or anything - 5 o'clock in the morning, 6 o'clock in the morning, 4 o'clock in the evening or a Sunday going to church or what have you and this was open season on everyone. Ministers, workers, the youngsters, the 50 year-olders, the 60 year-olders. It got so daggone rough till in between the 27th of December '60 and New Years Day in '61, the crack-down which they had put on - the police crack-down - they had arrested 3,060 Negroes in between these four-day span and hadn't held over four. The four they held was on traffic violations where they hadn't paid fines and so forth. Now this was playing havoc with the Negro community so we got together a committee of people from the Archdiocese and community organizations from unions and other places, white and black together. We went down with the NAACP, Art Johnson and Ed Turner. We went down and sought out a meeting with the Mayor, at the time Miriani, to try to get into this daggone thing of the hardship it was causing on Negroes and the powder keg it was in turn placing the city on with the crack-down on Negroes who couldn't walk out of a house without being picked up and put in jail.

At the time, Miriani pooh-poohed it and said, "The Police Commissioner has recommended this and I'm supporting him." So as a result of this we couldn't get anybody to move. We went to International and tried to get them to move into it - they couldn't get any headway into it - couldn't or wouldn't.

We got ministers. They had a meeting and they were told either that the Mayor's not in or he pooh-poohed the whole idea. They got into the Catholic Church then. There were some of the priest going down. Father Kern played a leading role in it and the whole thing was pooh-poohed down. So at this time it came into a situation where we figured that if we can't talk to anybody, one thing the people can do is get together the people in the community, both black and white and see what we can do about moving.

At the same time we couldn't get the City Council to move either. We would go into the Council and whatever was brought forth....At that time there was three on the Board who was acting as liberals at the time. Mary Beck was acting at that time as a liberal and I think Eugene Van Antwerp was a liberal and somebody else. But anyway we never would have enough to come forth with a majority. So at that time we went down to the TULC and got some different groups together and decided that if we're gonna get movement here, we got to do one of two things or both. We got to change the Mayor or else we got to come forth with a majority in the Council. We got a nine-man Council. We had to come up with at least five of the Council so that you get the deciding vote when this thing comes up before the Council if you can't change the Mayor. So at that time we got the different organizations together. We had the

Italian organizations, the Irish organizations, the Polish organizations, the different Negro organizations, the NAACP, the TULC, and all the rest of them combined and we had several meetings where we came forth to get the general consensus of opinion or a togetherness thing or unity who would in turn work on getting five liberals to the Council. And also change the Mayor. The sad part about is was we couldn't find anyone of any stature, name-wise, to run. We prevailed upon Ed Carey who had been a former international representative - we prevailed upon him to run. Bill Patrick was the other one on the Council for the Negro who was liberal. We prevailed upon him to run. He led us down a blind alley and didn't run.

We talked then to some three or four people in Detroit who was liberal people who we thought would be salable in the Negro community and also had enough name in the white community. They in turn carried us right up to the brink and refused to run. We got into the thing of saying - well, let's run a Negro to show our protest. Low and behold, we hit on two or three Negroes but we couldn't get them to run, so as a result of that we in turn were talking with the 15th District at that time - the 1st District is now the old 15th party and explained to them exactly what the problem was and out of that we got a young lawyer who would in turn run and at least give us a candidate. The person was Jerry Cavanagh.

But prior to that we went out and worked with different ethnic groups in the city of Detroit, we had locked the thing in so tight, we had the Polish groups, Italian groups, Irish and other different ethnic groups and told them that we would hold meetings here weekly. This was some four or five months prior to the election. We held meetings straight up and down and over and they had pooh-pooed the idea and said that we was a bunch of ragamuffs and at that time we had 11,000 members in TULC. We had went into each district prior to the election and elected present delegates in each district around through the inner city and then through the Irish bunch, the Polish bunch - they had elected precinct delegates where we in turn came out with a slate which was known as "Five plus One". The five was for the five liberal Council members plus one is the liberal Mayor and this is the slate that we ran.

Now at the time, Solidarity House - UAW pooh-pooed the thing because what the hell, they had the people's ear where they figured that they would be the only one out and passing slates. They would be the only one who had workers at the polls, so they had no sweat.

H: Right now, let me ask you this. As I recall, Wayne County AFL Federation - the AFL-CIO Wayne County Federation publicly supported Miriani.

B: So did Solidarity House.

H: The UAW officially supported Miriani. The whole PAC apparatus supported Miriani.

B: The leadership.

H: The leadership. TULC broke with the whole trade union establishment including the UAW leadership and City Federation of Labor and openly supported Cavanagh. As a matter of fact from what you have just told us and from other information it might be said that TULC created Cavanagh. You created the situation in which he might run. You virtually selected him for office. You gave the impetus to the whole campaign.

B: Right.

H: Now, were there reprisals against TULC people who were also staff members of the UAW? Horace was assigned to PAC. He was in the political action work of the UAW. You were actively in the local and there were other persons from PAC who were UAW officials at various levels. What was the relationship between the UAW and TULC?

B: The UAW started off in front. When we first started with this type of thing, everybody pooh-poohed it. It can't go anywhere so let them in turn go out and vent their spleen and waste their daggone energy and so forth, and when it's all over, call them in and pat them on the head and make a couple other promises and this will be it. But now on the part of those who was assigned like Horace Sheffield - he was assigned to PAC - we would travel as a team. He would get up and make his speech and I would make my speech and we'd always be introduced as Horace Sheffield of the UAW and Buddy Battle as the President of the Trade Union Leadership Council.

H: Now were you openly critical in those public speeches?

B: Definitely, sir.

H: Of the UAW?

B: Definitely, sir. Definitely, sir. We was elected and Horace was appointed, so then we traveled in a team.

H: What did Horace do at this time?

B: Horace did get up and in turn as the PAC Director say, "The International Union is supporting.....and suggests you support....and so forth.....however there is a lot to be decided....I'm working for the UAW.....and so forth.....and have done by part....."

And he'd sit down and they'd introduce Battle, President of TULC and I'd get up and cut Horace up saying, "realizing Horace is also on an appointed job"...and so forth and blah, blah, blah....And as a result they didn't get wise to me and Horace traveling as a team and they

thought me and Horace was actually going to come to blows and they was pitting Horace against me and that's all I'd get and so when the thing actually got down to the closeness of the deadline for acceptance and so forth they recognized then that something was going on and they still in turn thought one of these daggone things - they would take it with their left hand - forget it - so they didn't put too much into it at that time but they did do one thing. They reached over and said that just for insurance, they'll get a Negro to run for mayor. They reached over then and got Frederick Yates who was a State Representative of the central part of the city. As the State Rep at that time, he just about encompassed the whole part of the territory we're in now where the large segment of Negroes was living with the exception of those that was living in the southeast part, which was Black Bottom and so forth like that. So they put him in to run for mayor. This was supposed to syphon off the Negro vote. We had about five or six.....

H: Now, who's "they"? The UAW?

B: I'm saying the power structure - the UAW, Wayne County CIO, the city-hallers.

H: Miriani supporters. Miriani supporters, plus the labor movement, plus the UAW - "They" arranged for Yates to run.

B: Frederick Yates to run - yes.

H: And the hope there was to split the Negro vote and Miriani would benefit.

B: Miriani would benefit knowing that Yates wouldn't go anywhere but the candidate they did use, in turn the one we was using all our reserve for was Cavanagh. They was hoping the Negro vote would be split down with Yates. He wouldn't get enough to do anything and Cavanagh wouldn't get enough to do anything and therefore Miriani would be running against some dog who didn't have anything behind him and as a result of that we in turn zeroed in on Yates and got to the Negro community and told them exactly what was playing and as a result, he got nothing.

H: But he ran and received a very low vote.

B: Very low! As a result of that, it was a run'off election between Miriani and Cavanagh.

At this time they're still pooh-poohing the idea and saying, "this is just a protest vote - and we'll snow them under and whatever money they had is washed down the drain and so forth....."

But what they didn't know was we had hold of a big treasury and we was just spoiling for a daggone fight and we were young and ready and so forth and this was our first big major battle and so forth

and we was just spoiling for a fight and we held this thing close-knit together from the different ethnic groups. And the surprising thing was we had a very large following of Italians. A very large following of Italians and we went into this daggone thing and when we hit....now here in Detroit they have what they called the key precincts where they have in turn 140 precincts where they take their men and treat them to the computer and this gave them a general idea of how the election was going.....

So, here's a good part about it, it can be told now. The people that they were in turn paying from Wayne County AFL-CIO to pass slates - they were getting these slates from the headquarters, which was the COPE headquarters, and they was coming right to TULC and handing us the COPE headquarters slate and we were giving out our "5 plus 1" slate and going out the back door and the next day on the polls, the people who they was paying were standing there passing out the "5 plus 1" slates. So, as a result, it was an idea we had slipped upon them and when they found it out, it was too daggone late - they couldn't reverse the field - but they still thought the thing was OK. They still thought the thing was nothing to worry about. So that night about 7:30 - just before the polls closed - there was long lines in all the Negro and liberal areas. Long lines. The thing which in turn fooled them was the big 22nd Ward which had 260,000 voters and was predominately white. You had long line-ups in that area so they pooh-poohed the whole daggone thing and they set up for the celebration down at the Veterans Memorial right on the river. They had pizza there and everything else all stacked up and all the major heads of the UAW, Wayne County and the heads from City Hall and they was all waiting for the daggone thing and so when they took a cross section tally - a sampling of the ballots of approximately 140 precincts at about 9:40 - they in turn checked everything and knew the computer had gone wrong and everything daggone other thing. Because the computer or what they got from the 140 precincts, showed Cavanagh winning by some 40,000 votes. They checked that thing out and they checked that thing out and about 11:00 the story was told - Miriani was behind and couldn't catch up!

H: So Cavanagh was elected - Miriani was defeated. That defeat was also a defeat for the UAW, for the Wayne County AFL-CIO and.....

B: And City Hall.

H: And for the whole Democratic Party labor coalition. In this instance, the TULC really mobilized the whole Negro community. The Negro community followed the TULC, not the UAW, where there was an open political break and the Negro community accepted the leadership of TULC and broke rather decisively with the UAW on the Cavanagh election. What happened in the second Cavanagh campaign?

B: Well, the second Cavanagh - the situation was being comparatively easy. The UAW at that time had learned to live with Cavanagh as the Mayor. In fact, they couldn't get any candidates out of any name to any extent with the exception of some guy named Shamie who was with some

buying concern and really didn't have a name or anything, plus the fact that the Mayor had come on boldly and put on the income tax and told everybody, "Now, if you want me to run this city and put the city back on its feet, I've got to have money to run it with..." and he put on the income tax and they thought that this in turn was going to knock him down. But, the people of the city of Detroit bought it and we in turn wanted our city built up and taken care of - Police Force and Fire Department-wise and we had to pay it.

H: What year was the second election?

B: '65.

H: '65. You have a four-year mayoralty. A four-year period. As I recall, the second time around the UAW did not actually oppose.

B: No. Well - well, financially they in turn supported without coming right out with their statements that they were supporting and like that.

H: That they supported Cavanagh?

B: Yeah.

H: In the second election (I want to get this very clear in my own mind)....In the second election, the UAW actually did support Cavanagh.

B: Yes.

H: How about the Wayne County CIO?

B: Yes.

H: The Wayne County AFL?

B: They supported.

H: They supported.

B: Yes. And the Democratic Party.

H: Right. Now, before I forget it - in the first election, did you carry in the other five on the slate?

B: Yes.

H: The whole five?

B: Yes.

H: The "5 plus 1" slate was elected.

B: In fact, we elected six.

H: All right, so you won a hands-down victory.

B: Right.

H: Now, another situation - a similar situation - developed with the election of Judge Crockett about two years ago. What year was that?

B: 1966.

H: 1966. Here again the UAW was very strongly opposed to Crockett. Did the TULC support Crockett for Recorder's Court?

B: The TULC didn't take an official position because at this time it had one of the officers, who was Horace Sheffield, who was in the middle of this - in the middle to a degree.

H: What was your position?

B: Crockett.

H: On the Crockett situation?

B: Openly.

H: You supported Crockett. Horace as a UAW official could not. The UAW really layed down a very rigid position on this.

B: Yes. They were watching this one close because they had realized what had happened in '61 and they was making sure it didn't happen this time but it was still mixed emotion on the part of Horace Sheffield and others as per Crockett.

H: That's because of the fight within the UAW, Crockett's role as a UAW official during the Addes-Thomas-Reuther fight and it went back to that period. Crockett was formerly involved with the UAW.

B: Right, right. In fact, we had met - Walter Dorosch, president of Local 600 along with other liberal forces had met with Wayne County and Solidarity House and had got a general consensus of opinion that the Negro community is in favor of Crockett.

H: Right.

B: Now they was making up I think it was, a 13-man slate on the judge's part that you have got to give the Negro community some parts of what they want. You couldn't just shut them out completely. In that time the strong feeling from the Wayne County and Solidarity House against Crockett was, they made a commitment saying this, "We will not endorse him on the slate, but we will leave the slate. We will endorse Levin, anyone who wants to, they can put two on the slate and put whatever two on there they want." And out of this, they will

take the high people - the ones who run high and make that for their slate.

H: Well, who opposed Crockett? Who ran against him?

B: At that time we had a field of about 25 people.

H: Did the UAW formally endorse any of his opponents?

B: Yeah.

H: Who did they endorse?

B: On, at that time, you had Davenport, who was endorsed by the UAW, you had Geraldine Bledsoe Ford, who was endorsed by the UAW, you had DeMasio, who was endorsed by the UAW....

H: So, the UAW did endorse those who ran against Crockett?

B: They endorsed all who won, but Crockett.

H: They endorsed all who won but Crockett. All who won. I see. Now, here again was also a very significant break between the Negro community and the UAW on the Crockett campaign. The UAW really, as I recall, used money and time and energy and everything possible to defeat Crockett.

B: Yes.

H: Crockett was elected and he was basically, I suppose, elected by the Negro community.

B: Yeah, basically, but he brought support again in that deep 22nd which was predominately white and the 21st.

H: The white liberals?

B: Yes, right.

H: So, the UAW took another beating politically and not only could not generally elect a candidate, but could not even retain the allegiance of its own black membership. Is that a correct assumption?

B: Correct!

H: So that you, as President of TULC, the major public spokesman for TULC, you again bucked the UAW and you again won.

H: Have there been any other similar situations - related situations - where there have been sharp political differences between the UAW and the Negro community on political campaigns?

- B: Not on any certain specific candidates, but there have been sharp differences on the attitudes of Wayne County where any time Negro candidates were backed in central city, they'd go into Wayne County CIO then and then the guys from suburbia would have the right to veto - have veto power over who you backed for your representatives from Detroit. Now, we've had a sharp thing on that for six or seven years.
- H: Well, does this relate to John Conyers Jr., the Congressman?
- B: No, John Conyers Jr. was split down between the AF of L - no, the UAW where part me and Horace Sheffield and others in TULC supported Austin and you had split down the TULC where Jack Edwards and others in TULC, Frank Farley and John Brown, supported Conyers.
- H: So, TULC was split on Conyers.
- B: Yeah.
- H: How is it now?
- B: Well, right now it's an idea of Conyers - he's got himself a bit of a thing so far as certain leadership people in the district on TULC or UAW are concerned. Now the UAW, as far as I am concerned, is playing footsie with this thing to the extent they'll let Negroes go out there and beat their brains out against each other, and they'll have a meeting with Conyers and the UAW, and get the forces out behind him so, as a result, any of the differences that you feel you've got with your Congressman, you can't bring pressure to bear to sit down and talk this thing over because all the elected people and the appointed people get out and support, or else.
- H: All right, I want you to now go back to the second point. Would you briefly tell us about the fight at the '62 convention to get a Negro member on the UAW Executive Board and the role that you and Horace and TULC played there and the campaign that resulted eventually in the election of Nelson Jack Edwards, the first Negro to be elected to the UAW Executive Board.
- B: Well, we'll have to go back to the '59.....
- H: Yes, what did you do then?
- B: '59 I think it was - well, this was where the role was actually played in the next convention - that is, where in between the conventions - before the next convention the UAW Executive Board went on record of opening up a post for a Negro.
- H: At the '59.
- B: Yeah, the '59. Where we led the fight! This is where Horace Sheffield and Wilbur Abner was on the platform nominating each

other and making speeches and like that at the caucus. Well, let's say after the '59 convention we left here.

Now the TULC at that time didn't have the home we've got here; we were just operating from house to house. This section had about 3 or 400 members but we in turn went on record and those were all good leadership capacity people and all UAW. We hadn't reached the point where TULC went beyond the UAW, so about 95% of the people all belonged to the Reuther caucus.

Now, we had had a meeting with Reuther in '55 where we went over this thing hot and heavy about a Negro representative in the policy making body - in the Executive Board. We didn't give a heck where it came from - either from a Regional Director or through a Vice-Presidency or what have you. Then at this time Reuther made the promise to us that, "All right, what I'll do is this." The '55 convention was held in Cleveland and "Let's don't rock the boat this time, we can't move this time because we haven't got time to do it, but I'll guarantee you one thing. The union is on the incline but after the convention is over, I'll go into the regions where they have large memberships and get them to put on a Negro Administrative Assistant and therefore when the region gets big enough I'll split it right down the middle and who is more likely to be elected than the Administrative Assistant because he will have the full run of the region and so forth and he'll be a Negro and we'll have a Negro on the Board."

All right, in '55 we bought this when he put on the Negro Administrative Assistant, who was Beckham. This would have been one of the moves on showing the Negroes could get in, but it stopped right there.

H: Well, in Chicago, didn't we get a Negro Administrative Assistant?

B: We had a big argument - a big argument where it was between Ralph and I forget the white's name - the white who was put on, not the Negro Assistant, but instead it was such a hassle that they said, "All right, we'll give you the money for the Negro Administrative Assistant providing you will not operate as such."

H: So there weren't any black Administrative Assistants placed?

B: Only one - the aid job which Beckham filled.

H: But the promise to put on an Administrative Assistant in the Regional Offices - that didn't take place?

B: No, that went down the drain.

H: How about Ralph, in Chicago? He wasn't an Administrative Assistant?

B: No. He was supposed to have been on, but after they had so much

hassle in the Region from the guy who was the regular Administrative Assistant (I can't think who it was), they moved off the thing by giving Ralph a raise but said he couldn't be Administrative Assistant.

H: What's Ralph's last name?

B: Robinson.

H: Robinson. Well, Ralph Robinson never was really the Administrative Assistant?

B: No.

H: Johnson?

B: No. Never was.

H: Oh, I see.

B: Now when he just got passed over again (he's with Greathouse now), they took one of the educational directors and put him in as Greathouse's Administrative Assistant.

H: So that promise of Reuther's was never kept in the Region.

B: It wasn't and the way he got around that was by saying that in '57 we had started a decline in the UAW. The Region had a rough year. Membership fell off like mad. We fell from 1,300,000 to about 8 or 900,000. So at that time, he couldn't put on the added expense when the membership was declining and so forth. So, they couldn't raise dues to put one on, so as a result, it went on through '59 and in '59 we left Detroit hell-bent on either we gonna get a board member or else we're gonna embarrass them, so, or else we'll walk out of the daggone Reuther caucus.

So in the '59 convention there was the thing which is now history, where Sheffield gets up and nominates Abner for a Vice President. He made a speech nominating where he told the reasons and so forth and Abner was supposed to in declining give further - expound on what Horace had said. Of course, they cut us down to X number of minutes to make your nominating speech and the next several minutes for your declination. And so right in the midst of everything, they change the rules. You could make a nominating speech but not declining. The person won't be able to make a declination speech. You either accept or you decline.

So, when this hit, Horace had to shoot the whole picture. So when Horace got up there was the idea then of him having to go the whole gambit himself. So as a result, all of the Negro staff reps, with the exception of one, Nelson Jack Edwards, Abner and that's about all. When it was over, Horace came off the platform and it just

like the Red Sea parted and let Moses walk the water. When Horace got in the aisleway he had a gap the size of this room three times and no one would get close to him. So me and Jack Edwards and Abner and Horace went across to the Sands Bar. We walked into the place and there must have been 500 people in the place. Five minutes after we walked in the place for a drink, the place was empty. So the fellow said, "Do me a favor. Go some other place and have a drink. You're driving my business away." So we went to the hotel and sat down.

But, the thing that led into it was this. Prior to that we had guys sit where they was supposed to take positions in the caucus. I was supposed to take charge of the caucus. I was in luck.... I caught Burt in the chair and tricked him around and then went up and down his back on the basis of no representation for Negroes, blah, blah, blah, and so forth and he rushed back by saying, "I'm a minority." "Yeah, you're a minority but you're sitting there handling the meeting. You're on the Board. We're talking about the minority and the major minority you have in the UAW and haven't gotten one on."

So then, this was when Reuther lost his composure and rushed up and grabbed the mike and said, "I suppose some day the qualified Negro will come along and sit on the Board of the UAW." After he said that everybody was shocked and so forth and so we set out to get the staff members around that night to find out how much damage had he done with the black delegates there and so forth. Of course the thing was smoothed over to the extent of saying, "Well, look, Reuther didn't mean it. You know his background of Civil Rights and so forth."

But, we had four phases set in this thing and they didn't know about it. They thought we had one phase. The first phase was me at the caucus meeting. The second phase was Horace Sheffield making the nominations. The third was supposed to have been Abner in declining. The third phase was out and then we put in another phase where we had the Civil Rights resolution there where we was going to get into the situation of the different local unions that was completely pooh-poohing Negroes where the membership was overwhelming - 60 to 70% - and not one Negro in the capacity of leadership and the different situation of talking about the Negro Executive Board member and so forth like that.

Now the resolution was drew up as such and we had the resolution set to come. Now this was on Wednesday. We had prevailed and put the resolution on the floor and now this was a Wednesday night meeting and it was refused and Thursday the same thing and Friday when the convention was breaking up....they usually close the convention around 1:30 or 2:00. If they had shot a cannon off at 10 in the morning, it wouldn't have hit five delegates. So that morning when they opened, I took the floor again and of course we got special permission and we trotted out the Civil Rights resolution again and I got up to speak on it. At that time it was a point blank refusal. We had also put into operation then that if they had refused, all

the Negro delegates was going to walk out of the convention. This happened! We was refused 9 or 9:30 on the Friday morning and.....

H: If I may interrupt you here, Buddy. The reason for doing this was; ordinarily the Civil Rights resolution was called up the very last thing before you left, so it's read out and voted to an empty floor...

B: Right.

H:and you wanted it read out while there was still a full convention.

B: Right.

H: And the Reuther leadership refused.

B: They refused.

H: As a result, the black delegates walked out.

B: Right.

H: They all walked out?

B: Right. In 1959. All the Negro delegates that was there as delegates. The staff, of course, stayed around but the delegates walked out. So after that we in turn started to kick over the traces when we got back home. We communicated with the black delegates and the black leadership then throughout the country, explaining what's what.

H: Did you do this through the TULC?

B: The TULC, yeah. We did this through the TULC and we communicated with them and we called several meetings where guys in Chicago, guys in Cleveland, guys close around came into meetings with us. And then we set several meetings where myself and Sheffield and several others, where we took off to St. Louis or different points that was farther out and met the guys and so forth like that.

So we had got the groundswell going and the main thing we was doing was talking while the guys was still sitting around faking left and right and we told them - knock off that left and right. You see what happened among the UAW with the whites. We can't sit around doing that. The Negroes got to consolidate themselves into one group. So when this information got back into Solidarity House and the different Regional Directors, they in turn called a special meeting here in Detroit where they went on record of, "we will give consideration to adding on a Negro board member."

But, now when this hit then you had others such as the National Ford Director, who was Ken Bannon, and Chrysler Director, at that time it was Norm Matthews, already on the Board, but you had people who had

been laying in the wings all the time so, "how in the hell you're going to give some Negro precedence above me.....I've been waiting!!..

So at that time they came through and created what was known as Board Member at Large. They came forth at that time with three, where they took the National Ford Director, who was not a Board Member. They took Doug Frazer and made him Board-at-Large. He was in Region 1-A then and they brought Bard Young up to Region 1-A and took Doug Frazer and put him on Board-Member-at-Large and Jack Edwards. Bard

H: Jack Edwards was not the original choice for the TULC?

B: He was not the choice of the Negro delegates, he was not the choice of the majority of the liberal forces, white or black, but at the time....

H: Well, how come he got it?

B: You know that.

H: Yes, but I want you to put it on the record.

B: Well, at that time, we had some six Board Members and they had a meeting here at Woodcock's house and you had about 15 or 20 Board Members in town for this meeting and out of that, when they came up with it, they did the picking. They came up with the idea of, it couldn't be Horace Sheffield because he had raised all the hell about the daggone thing and they can't let this thing become common practice, for the guy to raise hell and then be the recipient of something he raised hell for. So the thing came about then that we in turn was going to make an example of Horace and let him know he can't get nothing in the UAW and this will shut the other guy's mouth because he figures if he's out there raising hell, then he figures he cannot be the recipient and so therefore, he'll try to get somebody else to push and consequently, we won't have anybody pushing. So as a result of that, they came through and picked Jack.

H: So, actually it was the white guys. The Reuther group.

B: It was the higher-ups in the UAW that did the picking. The hierarchy of the UAW.

H: Actually the first choice of the TULC and the Negro delegates generally was Horace or Abner.

B: Along with Jack. It was Jack's choice also. The thing was - Jack and Horace at that time was just like two brothers and they in turn drove a wedge. But first, they was talking about bringing Robinson out of Chicago and everybody together let them know that if this happened you were going to get an upheaval in the Reuther caucus.

H: Robinson had never been active in TULC at all?

- B: He had never been active in anything else. Then they looked at Beckham. We shook our heads.
- H: You said that was also unacceptable. Finally, you sort of compromised on Jack.
- B: When they picked Jack, it caused a big upheaval. At the time it started off then, the people in TULC of choosing sides because Jack was one of our Board Members and Council Members and Horace was one of our Council and Board Members also and had been great friends for at least 10, 12, 15, 20 years. So this caused a cleavage or split down the thing - split down the middle. So we went for about six or eight or nine months or something, hassling back and forth where each one was going throughout the country and trying to get delegates together on the black delegation to bring pressure to bear that Horace should be the guy and this, that and so forth. So at the last moment, when we saw that the thing was futile, completely, we in turn accepted Jack and went into the convention with the unanimous choice of the black delegation there.
- H: That was in '62?
- B: '62.
- H: Now, let me come back to TULC. What is the membership of TULC now?
- B: It fluctuates now from year to year. Somewhere in between 5 and 6000.
- H: I read in the New York Times, I believe in September or later, that you had become the spokesman for a new black caucus. That you had met with Reuther and you made a demand for more Negro staff appointments and other Negro officers and staff appointments, more Negro participation in leadership positions. What is this new group?
- B: This is not a new group. It's merely an idea of pulling together the leadership of the Negroes in the local throughout the country.
- H: Now this is a national Negro caucus?
- B: It's a follow-through of what we've had going all the time with the delegate strength, the leadership strength, black, throughout the UAW.
- H: Now, under this auspices, and you are the spokesman, you have brought together a new (I think one has to call it) a new caucus, even though it's a continuity of all that has been going on in the past. As a matter of fact, one of the points I did make - what is happening now - the most recent development, is a continuation of things that started way back in the '30's - with the metropolitan Negro and labor leaders, and is a continuous succession of these. But it seems to me that you have now organized and I'm asking you to tell us about it - a national Negro caucus within UAW. You have met with Reuther. Would you mind telling us something about the new group? The New York Times quoted you as saying that if there were not substantial concessions forthcoming very rapidly - the New York Times said that you - well, they quoted you as saying that, great chaos could result.

- B: That we would take other means outside of the UAW.
- H: Yes. Now would you explain what you mean by that and tell us about this new group?
- B: Well, the group itself is....we got into this prior to the '68 convention in Atlantic City. Well, we expressed great concern to Walter Reuther that after some 30 years and some 1,300,000 UAW workers and approximately 1/3 of the 1,300,000 being black workers.
- H: You estimate that about a third of the membership is black?
- B: From 29 to 32%. I feel that's close enough for us to say 1/3. We came forth after checking out prior to the convention...what started it off was this: There was a rumor around that they was going to elevate the two Board Members at Large who were white into Vice Presidents of the UAW. But the Negro Board Member, which was Jack Edwards - they was going to leave him laying there as just strictly a Board Member at Large. When this hit, we in turn drew together the leadership forces among the delegates in Detroit. The delegates were elected at that time. We drew together the delegate leadership forces where we in turn sought out a meeting with Reuther - first to dispel this part and if he had it on his mind, and to let him know that you're going to have chaotic conditions if you're going to do this. The next thing we said we might as well hit a full shot on this thing while we're there. Out of 1,100 UAW staff members, you got full time, you had only 72 that were Negroes. Now, this is after some 30 years. Now, you're talking about 1,100 as compared to a third and strictly if you're going to go on the numbers game, or a quota system or anything like that, with just any fairness of any thinking with a liberal guy like Reuther, or a liberal union like the UAW - it's the most liberal you got going, blah, blah and so forth... we figured this was way out of line - 72 out of 1,100. And, if we talk about the third situation, a third of the membership, a third of the leadership forces.....
- H: You were arguing that black leadership participation should reflect the black participation in the membership?
- B: Yes, the dues-paying. And it was more than just this causing it. Out of the 1,100 staff members you only had 72 Negroes on the staff. We was talking about this in a two-fold position. First - in the policy making body. Negroes around helping make the policy, helping carry out the policy of the UAW. Secondly, these staff members are paid in the neighborhood of 15 to 17,000 dollars a year. Now you're talking about....
- H: Is that what an international representative gets?
- B: Yeah.
- H: How much does a Board Member get then?

B: A Board Member is around 22 to 24. And it's according to what capacity. If you're a Regional Director, you get about 22. Or if you're a Board Member at Large, you get about \$24,000. And if you're a Vice President, you get somewhere between \$25,000 and \$26,000. Reuther is playing with from \$28,000 to \$32,000.

We talked about this from a two-fold stand-point. You're talking about 200 Negro representatives. That would mean 200 times \$15,000 plus an insurance policy of \$30,000, plus the fringe benefits that go along with it.

H: It was very substantial.

B: Yeah. Fringe benefits alone would run it into a good \$20,000 per year. So, we took that and multiplied it by the absent number of Negro staff you had which would have come into the neighborhood of some \$3,000,000 a year that would have been into the black community. And this plays a hell of a daggone part.

H: So, what was Reuther's response when you told him there were only 72 full-time black staff members?

B: His first response was....prior to the convention...was he don't know if it was true, but it gave him a chance to check, and if he finds this to be true, he will in turn do something about it.

This was prior to the convention in April of '68. All right, so we get into the convention and everything smoothes out and comes out smelling like a rose. He says, now all right, what he's doing was he's appointing Beckham and Jack Edwards to in turn peruse the figures with the UAW and come up and say what it is. Of course, he knew it and I knew he would and if they wanted running room - I'd give him running room. So we're sitting down with 17 people on the committee and all 17 of these people from the capacity of leadership of the UAW - the elected leadership but no appointees at all. They was elected members from Chrysler 7,306, 51 and so forth and 600 and Flint, Bay City, Saginaw.

H: By the way, is there a name for this group?

B: It was called Ad Hoc Committee for the Black Workers of the UAW.

H: Now then - how was this different from TULC?

B: Well, in order to be on this Ad Hoc Committee, you don't have to be a member of TULC, although, all of them are members of TULC.

H: All of them are members of TULC.

B: All of them are members of the TULC, but you had to be in the leadership capacity of the local union to be on.

- H: Oh, I see. Let me get this straight. In order to be a member of the new Ad Hoc Committee, which is a euphemism for the new black caucus, you have to be an elected official of a UAW unit. It's an all-black body, consisting of all black elected officials, all whom (even though it's not a requirement) - but in fact, all of them do belong to TULC. What is your position with that group?
- B: Chairman.
- H: You are Chairman. OK., please go on.
- B: And at the meeting with Reuther and Reuther said, "Now look, give me a chance to seek this out and see if you guys are right and if you are, I promise you I'll do something about it. I figure you guys are doing the right thing because the wheel that squeaks the loudest, gets the grease. Let me try to work this thing out first. Let me check and see if it's what you say."
- H: How many meetings have you had with Reuther so far?
- B: Four.
- H: Since when?
- B: Since April of '68. The last meeting we had with him was September 18, 1968, where he was supposed to get back with us some ten days later to give us an answer of what the Board had said on it at a meeting they had on September 26. However, the national elections and everything was so close, he in turn used it as an excuse for not getting back to the meeting. He was flying all over the country trying to help get the Democratic candidate elected, who at that time was Hubert Humphrey. As a result, we relinquished pushing for a meeting at that time until after the election was out of the way. However, in the situation, you had reprisals trying to be made.
- H: Reprisals against the Ad Hoc Committee by the International?
- B: Yeah. Well no, not by the International itself, but by agents of the International.
- H: Such as the District Directors?
- B: Yeah. District Directors. Some staff members called some guys in and said, "Look if you get caught messing around with this committee, you just wipe yourself out from ever being a staff rep and they ain't gonna put money in your local unions," and things like that.

But the thing about it is and this came right down the line. We went into meetings on it where no movement was made - promises, promises - no movement. So at the last meeting we went into on the 18th, and I'm quite sure you seen a copy of the letter that was sent around, we sent a letter to Reuther. Now somebody (each one of our

committee had a copy of the letter) somebody took the letter and gave it to somebody and they made up copies and mailed it around at this time to try to paint the picture that Battle was down hollering strictly for Negroes and damn the whites saying, put the whites off the staff and put the Negroes on.

H: Now, who do you think did that?

B: I got ideas but you can't prove it. But let's say it was from people who were black and in the UAW and who in turn were looking for brownie points with Reuther and "we're gonna kill Battle" and so forth and since, that the word is out indirectly to whoever can and whoever will help put a hatchet in Battle's head, he'd get automatic bounty coming and so forth.

I'm coming to the election now where you get some four or five guys around, who every time they look at me just smile and everything else, but when my back is turned, they're going to cut off my head and so forth and I don't think they're getting anywhere.

H: Now, which Negroes are there - are there staff Negroes who are not supporting the Ad Hoc Committee? What role is Sheffield playing, Oliver playing, or Tappes' playing, or Beckham playing in this new development?

B: Well, let's say all of the name Negroes in the UAW, staff-wise, are fully in accord.

H: Does that include Nelson Jack Edwards?

B: All of the name Negroes in the UAW are fully in accord.

H: With the Ad Hoc Committee?

B: Yeah.

H: Does that include Oliver?

B: All the name - OK? Because in this thing it is a situation of bringing in more and sending their seniority high up the daggone list, OK?

But now you have some who are supposedly in accord but who have sent snipes openly to say that Marcellius Ivory who was elected Regional Director in Region 1-A and I'm told by some ten or twelve fellows who was on the Ad Hoc Committee, that they had called the fellows in person and told them, "if you get caught messing around this committee with Battle, that reprisals will be taken immediately and....."

H: Now, who said this?

B: Marcellius Ivory. Now on this I've strictly got the peoples' word that he called them and I have in turn confronted him with it, and he's denied it all the way through.

- H: How about some white guys? Were some of the white directors called in on that?
- B: The white Directors - we had Merelli from Region 1-B.
- H: Go on.
- B: So, as a result of that last meeting when we sent that letter out...
- H: Do you have a copy of that letter? Is there one around?
- B: Yeah. I can get you one.
- H: Yes. I'd like to see that.
- B: Where we in turn took a strong position to let them know that although we met some four or five times, it's been a complete foot dragging. All we get is promises and you haven't moved one Negro on staff, period. Now in the event that you in turn are going to use this method to try to drag the thing on, we have come through the right channels by coming through the union, that we're all members of the caucus, and the next redress in getting into the street, into the Press where ain't nobody got no control. We are going to lay the facts down as to what they are.
- H: Now, who are you talking about? The National Negro Caucus? The Ad Hoc Committee?
- B: Ad Hoc Committee, yeah, where we in turn get into the Press to explain the position of the Negroes in the UAW.
- H: Are you about to do this now?
- B: Well, let's say that since that time, they came through in January with some 14 to 16 Negroes they put on the staff.
- H: In what positions?
- B: On the staff, period. On the staff and since January, they put on some eight to ten more. Let's say, all in total since the first meeting we had in April where we was making the protest and to - say, to date, they have put on approximately 30 Negroes.
- H: Do you feel this is a direct result of the work of the Ad Hoc Committee?
- B: I know it is. I know it is. But the only thing, we was talking about the imbalance of the staff, but they have made it greater because from April into now, putting on some 25 to 30 Negroes, they have put on some 45 to 50 whites and if they in turn gonna put on a white every time they put on a Negro, there's no way in hell you can erase the imbalance. But, this is the whole thing in this part

now, so we in turn get ready to demand a follow-through meeting so we can find out from them.

Now we explained to Reuther that we know good and well that you can't just come through and, out of a clear blue sky and at one time, put on some 200 black staff reps. In this daggone thing you had to do something meaningful and let the Negroes know you are mindful or aware of what's what. You are in turn taking a step to eradicate it. Now, we had talked about a crash program of putting on at least 50 Negroes right now, then as you go along, putting on staff and the major thing, that you could eliminate the whole thing, was the going in now to set up the CAP program, which was taking up the old COPE program which we had in the AFL-CIL now between the Teamsters and the UAW, which got to be completely staffed. And they're talking about some 180 to 200 people around the country.

H: You're making demands for Negro participation in that.

B: Now we was hoping if he could have put on 50 in January they had come through with a special program for anyone who was on staff X number of years and X number of years old regardless of whether he was 65 years old or not, they would give him the same right to retire and the same full benefit as if he was 65, as long as he had 25 years, plant-wise and that combined, they would in turn give him the right to retire with full shot of pension credits and money coming in from the International, the same as if he was 65 years old, which is mandatory requirements. Now we was hoping you'd get at least 50 or 60 off that you could put on at least 50 blacks at one time which would in turn show them a meaningful attitude toward the imbalance.

When you filled 180 positions of the CAP program, we realized that you couldn't put on 180, but you would in turn make another big jump by putting on another 35 to 40 or 50 at one time and it would be split throughout the country and it wouldn't look so brazen as all of them thrown right in one spot, but throughout the whole daggone country and after two or three moves like that, this 235, or over the 30 years of 1,100, could have been reached without any great fanfare.

H: So, what do you think will happen now? What is your next step?

B: Well, the next step is securing the meeting with Reuther. Well, let's say this. With the number of things you've had happening around the city of Detroit from DRUM, FROM and so forth....

H: Now, what is your attitude toward DRUM - FROM?

B: Wrong. 1000%

H: Completely wrong.

B: From their attitudes - not their attitudes, but their methods.

H: What is wrong with their methods?

B: DRUM situation is, instead of talking about the problems....I guess you have seen some of the leaflets that went through the plant. I think it's wrong for me or you, either one, to write leaflets into a shop where you got a bunch of workers, why incite you to riot, or me to riot by calling you a Dago pig, or a Jewish pig, or a Polack pig, or you calling me a Nigger pig and this, as far as I'm concerned, is not people trying to get the problem settled.

I can see that they strictly spoke to the issue and the question of people not being represented, people not being promoted into supervisor jobs, speed-ups - the job running too fast or the work conditions. I can see that good, because this is present in all the shops, which are 25 or 30 years old where you got the obsolete, dust collection system or suction system or the lines are so old, you shim up one and it's running the right speed for five minutes and the next 25 minutes, it runs twice the speed or 1 1/2 times the speed, or some guy in the ranks is speeding it up or some committee man who ain't got time to watch the daggone thing, so it will run two or three days fast. I can see it if you're talking about that but I'm not trying to do anything to correct the daggone method. What I'm opening up, I'm not referring to your nationality and coming out the back that you're a pig or something like that.

H: Your objection to DRUM is not to legitimacy of their demands, but their methods.

B: Right.

H: You think they have a legitimate beef. But you think they're going about it the wrong way.

B: I do think that they have a legitimate beef to the extent of some of the grievances they're talking about. Right. I do think also they are legitimate to the extent of talking about the grievance procedure of working too slow. I agree with them there. A guy get fired and got to wait some six to eight months before some impartial arbitrator comes in and weighs whether he was right or wrong, your family have had to suffer for six to eight months and then if the arbitrator comes through and says the company was wrong and puts you back to work.....

H: Does he get retro-active pay?

B: He gets retro-active pay, but in the meantime, you lost your car, you lost your furniture, you get to the extent of being garnished, or your credit being bad, where for the next ten years you're going to spend that trying to straighten your credit out, through no fault of your own. Now, let's say this. If some penalty was put on the company for firing you wrongfully. If some penalty of damages -

that they have caused a hardship to you and your family was put on the company - now, some people might say it was a penalty for you sitting around home and doing nothing. But look at the hardship it imposed on you and your family for this six or eight months or a year, while you're waiting.

H: Do you think there's legitimacy to the two questions that DRUM and the other groups are raising:

1. The bad working conditions inside the plant. Now every worker, white or black, especially in the assembly plants - just the brutal situation in the assembly plants -

B: I have been a representative since the union came in. I agree 1000% - the working conditions are terrible.

H: And that the UAW has been remiss, I think, and I would like to get your response - this is a digression. That while the UAW has done well with wages and increased benefits and stuff like this, that they have neglected working conditions in the shops.

B: I wrote an article in the last contract negotiations where I was on the negotiating committee, where I talked about the conditions in the foundry. Where a guy walks in, he got to reconcile himself, when he walks in, that he's taking ten years off his life whenever he walks in the foundry to start to work.

H: Why do you think the Reuther leadership has not been sensitive to this? This is really the basis for most of the internal discontent - white and colored - with the leadership. Why have they not moved on the shop conditions?

B: One thing that they done. Not only Reuther, but other unions also. They in turn come through and placed the high value on the dollar, rather than working conditions and health and safety. The high value is on the dollar.

H: They have traded working conditions for money.

B: Well, the high value is on the dollar instead of working conditions and I guess they have said that we can't have them both.

H: OK. Now, you also think there's a legitimacy to DRUM's grievances regarding the lack of Negro representation in leadership positions. Your major objection is to the.....

B: Hold it! Hold it! Hold it! DRUM isn't talking about UAW leadership positions. DRUM is talking about in-shop leadership positions.

H: They have not raised the question of International leadership conditions?

- B: And the bad part about it, in the positions where they talk about it, like Dodge 3, 75% of the representatives there is Negro. Taking Chrysler 7 (you got CRUM out there), you got 75 or 68% of the leadership there is Negro. Take 600.....
- H: So what is their grievance in terms of the internal UAW? They threaten to withhold dues. What is, then, the beef of that group?
- B: I'm not going to witch-hunt or anything like that. In the DRUM thing - in the approach - because we've sat here and we have invited the people in - the people of DRUM in. When we first started off, we figured here was a bunch of youngsters who were the same thing we were 25 years ago, so let's invite the guys in and find out what the problem is and let's give them some leadership and let's tie some people around them who have been in the movement, and give them some legitimacy so they don't get their brains kicked out from not knowing what channels to go through. We don't want that they should stop and take the same period of time which we went through, from 1943 until now, to get a Negro on the Board and then finally only manage to get one on in 1968. We weren't talking about that. We were talking about finding out what their problems are so we can give them some guide lines on how to go on out to approach - then we could in turn get the old heads of the elected leadership where they are supporting, by kicking on the same thing in the shops where they didn't have any FROM or DRUM and so forth kicking. We sat there and tried to talk to them.
- H: You did meet with them?
- B: Ten or fifteen times. Ten or fifteen times. "We want a black, a Negro to be Chairman of the Board at Chrysler - we want, on the Board of Directors, three blacks on the Board of Directors - we want all of the Regional Directors to be black -"
- H: Well, why did they put a picket line around the UAW Headquarters?
- B: This was from the last shut-down, or strike that they had called or caused at the Dodge Plant, which is called Eldon, and they called the DRUM thing "ELDRUM" and they put a picket line around and refused to let the workers in and out of this, they had fired some 25 people. The 25 people that were fired - it was proven that they were out there participating in the work stoppage and refusing to let people in. When they fired the 25 people, again the grievance procedure came up and they went down to Solidarity House and delivered an ultimatum that these 25 people who was fired got to be back to work in 48 hours, or else! That was what the picket line was supposed to be the last time down at Solidarity House.
- H: So, you do not see any unification between DRUM and your Ad Hoc Group?
- B: By no means.

H: I see.

B: If we're talking about working conditions or different things which the workers have been denied, white or black, we see eye to eye, but until they go to talking about that, we see nothing at all. But, as long as they're talking about "Junky Sue", "Big Titty Mary", "Dago Frank", and "race" this, that, and so forth, we see nothing at all.

H: Why do you think they do that?

B: Well, I've been young, but I've never been that silly, believe me. I was young, and I was black way longer than they have been - way longer than they have been and I know good and well if you're white and you hate me because I'm black, I'm not going to get any chance to teach you that you're wrong by me going out and getting every other white by calling them what's equivalent to you calling me a nigger.

H: Well, why do you think they do that? Who are the leaders of this group?

B: I can't say. That is, I couldn't say, not with any legitimacy. But, let's say the ones who are in turn writing the literature are people who don't work in the UAW - who don't work in any of the shops.

H: Is there some political affiliation?

B: As far as we can figure out, as far as we can trace it down here, as far as we can trace it down from TULC, is the guys from Wayne State - Watson - Hamlin. Now, neither one of them.....

H: SDS types?

B:but neither one of them worked in the shops.

H: They're students?

B: Yes. Now, when they had the first picket line around Dodge 3, two thirds of the people on the picket line was Wayne State Students.

H: White or colored?

B: Well, they had the majority black, but you had a sprinkling of whites.

H: And the picket line around Solidarity House?

B: The picket line around Dodge 3,.....

H: You had students.

B: Two thirds of them were students from Wayne State.

- H: How about the picket line around Solidarity House?
- B: The picket line around Solidarity House - you had 24 people. Out of 24, you had three or four, so I'm told, who were Wayne State students. Out of the 24, you had about 15 from Dodge, you had about three that was from Fords, and about three from the Chrysler Plant (Chrysler 7). This made the 24 that was there.
- H: Given all the things you have already told me, supposing the Reuther leadership doesn't come through with the demands you're making - the Ad Hoc Committee. What will you do then? What will your response be if there is not a significant change in the present situation?
- B: Take it.
- H: Do what?
- B: Take it.
- H: And do what? You aren't just going to sit by quietly and run at the mouth.
- B: I said take it! If he don't give it to us, we're going to take it!
- H: I see. Well, explain what you mean.
- B: You got the east side of the city of Detroit here which is 65% black. You got two Regional Directors over there. They're both white.
- H: Yes, go on.
- B: It stands to reason - you elect -
- H: All right, let me see if I can draw a conclusion from what you've said. You now feel that the black concentration in some of these plants and regions provides you with sufficient leverage politically to take power.
- B: If we can't work it out on a peaceful thing where you in turn give and take, you just have to in turn take while you got the strength.
- H: You have to organize a more intensive and effective black caucus and run candidates and take political power in elections. Do you have any anticipation in picking up any allies among the white men?
- B: Well, let's say this. We have got a number of whites who are in the local unions that are predominantly black now.
- H: Yes.
- B: Which have already allied with people in these and these are separate

caucuses and this we have not done. We have not in turn got into....

H: Separate local caucuses.

B: Separate local caucuses.

H: Now, let's take Chrysler 7. My information is that in excess of 60% of Chrysler is now black.

B: 72%

H: 72%

B: At Dodge, we got 68%.

H: Dodge is 68%.

B: And Eldon - at the Eldon Plant, you got 78% black.

H: But at Chrysler 7, it's 72%.

B: 72%. Heck, at 212 - the old Briggs.....

H: Yes?

B: 68%. So, what I'm saying is....the make-up of the east side region - Region 1 - where you have two directors there. The majority of the workers in the Region is 65% or better black. Now you are elected by people who are elected as delegates.

H: What's the black percentage of 600?

B: Somewhere.....it fluctuates.....between 51 and 49%. One day it may be 51% white and 49% black and the next week or two, it may just be opposite. It's according to how many quit and how many are hired in, how many retire and what have you.

H: You feel that the concentration of numbers now provides you with the strategic basis to secure political power.

B: If this is the last resort.

H: What are you going to do if the UAW leadership (and you know it's a rumor that the UAW leadership is not unaware of the situation) starts splitting up locals and Regions to gerrymander - what the good white folks did in political situations.

B: They just got through doing that in '66 where you would have.....

H: The purpose of this is to weaken the black vote.

B: Certainly, even now, hell you had Region 1-A. That was just one

region where McCusker and Bard Young was elected from. With the Region 1-A aligned together you had a concentration of Negroes there who could have well played 50 or 51%. So what did they do? We took good pains and went down and drew a line. The trouble starts off here.

H: What year was this?

B: '66. It starts off here coming down with a line over here, back here, back here, back here, over here, where you in turn very systematically split the Negroes down where you ain't got too large a concentration in either one region.

H: This is a way of weakening the potential of power inside the union.

B: This is the way. The same thing.....

H: Supposing they keep on doing this then?

B: Well one thing about it, the Negroes got ot get up period and splitting and gerrymandering - someone going to wind up with the of the large block of Negroes.

H: Do you see a major Negro figure emerging in the UAW?

B: You mean on the national level? Not in the next four years.

H: In the Detroit area?

B: On the UAW level, not in the next four years. The reason I'm saying in the next four years - I'm looking for all hell to break loose when Walter Reuther retires. Walter Reuther is getting on - let's see, he was 60 in '67 - that will make him 65 in.....in '72.

H: Well, what do you expect to happen?

B: All hell will break loose in the UAW. I'm not looking for any one person to be strong enough or any combination of forces to be strong enough to hold it together the way Reuther has in the political guidance that he has since 1947. I'm looking forward then to all forces. They in turn will be looking for allies then.

H: Has your group been in touch with the Negro caucuses in the other big international unions like the Ad Hoc Committee - the Steel Workers - have you had any meetings, conference relations with the black caucuses in the other unions?

B: No. The idea of the Steel Workers.....they waited too late to even come forth and ask for the assistance or to give them some now - or help them.....they waited until the eve of the election - after all the delegates have been elected.

- H: Your anticipation is that when Reuther leaves in '72, to use your phrase, "all hell will break loose". No single leader will emerge and it will be necessary for all the contending groups to secure the allegiance of the Negro block and this will give the Negro block the power.
- B: Definitely so.
- H: The Negro block representing 1/3 of the members of the union and very well concentrated strategically - all of that will then make it necessary for you to get top people but who are not prepared to mark time between now and then. You are going to organize and try to get as many people elected as possible.
- B: We got to be ready when '72 comes.
- H: Right.
- B: If you wait until '72 and then start moving - or start to try and get ready, it will be another five or six years before you have yourself in a position and then those who will need allies, we won't be in any position to give it to them. You got to be in position in '72 when Reuther leaves, or those who are, in turn, groping about for allies we will be the allies to give them.
- H: Now what perspective do you have for the new group? The ALA? You know, Reuther's new Labor Alliance. Are you in touch with some of the black forces in the Teamsters Union?
- B: Let's say there hasn't been enough happening between the two - the ALA and the UAW - to actually put an evaluation on anything. Just an idea that it happened paper-wise in June or July of '68 and since that time there have only been some four or five hush hush meetings. So you actually can't evaluate what's what. But I do know in the capacity of the leadership in the Teamsters it was strictly Teamsters. Myself you have little or none. They are some guys who are appointed in the pork-chopper stage which ain't about to do anything to rock the boat period.
- H: What is your attitude toward MDLCA and what does it mean? What does it stand for?
- B: I'm the President of MDLCA.
- H: And what does MDLCA stand for?
- B: Metropolitan Detroit Labor Council.
- H: What does this group do?
- B: Same as TULC.

H: Why do you need another group?

B: No, it's not another group. In the '62 election of Jack Edwards, this in turn strained the relationship within TULC and at that time those who were pro-Edwards - those who thought they could in turn climb on Edward's band wagon and get a pork chop on it, they in turn eased over, became pro-Edwards in '64 election between Conyers and Austin. TULC was split down the middle, half for Conyers, half for Austin. Jack Edwards pulled the group and started what's known as MDLCA.

H: Then Jack Edwards started the group?

B: Jack Edwards started the group with the help and finances of the UAW.

H: The UAW started it then?

B: All it started out as was a buffer group against TULC.

H: But how come you ended up being President?

B: Because -

H: Since you are President of the Trades Union Leadership Council?

B: Because after they floundered back and forth, never being able to get off the ground to any degree, and trying to buck and they had the tag of being strictly the UAW's buffer group against TULC and after some 3 1/2 years of this buffering and coming out short each time, we sat down and agreed that we'd acted like damn fools long enough and in the city of Detroit, the Negro community cannot stand the leadership being split down like we was fools - we agree then to merge back into one group and MDLCA was strictly a split down of TULC.

H: But you are now back together?

B: Back together.

H: But you retain the independent identity.

B: We in turn called it TULC-MDLCA.

H: It's now TULC-MDLCA.

B: Yeah.

H: And you have a merger.

B: Yeah.

H: So there no longer is any question?

B: No.

H: How would you describe your relationship with Horace Sheffield at this time?

B: Hmmmmm - 92 to 98% together.

H: You have some areas of disagreement?

B: But I have disagreements with my wife. We sleep together each night.

H: The rumor is that you're going to challenge Marcellius Ivory again - for the Regional Director.

B: Let's say that 1970 will tell that tale. Many things can happen between now and 1970. We've been working together in Local 600 and it's the largest local in the region. In fact, Local 600 is the region. It takes 372 votes to win. Local 600's got 315 votes so all you got to do is pick up any small local.

But, let's say this - I will not be a candidate just to be a candidate. If Local 600 and the region is working good together I can see not reason for a fight - period! In fact, I think the sooner and the quicker we in labor, especially the blacks, learn to quit challenging just for sake of challenge we will in turn teach the people on top that the Negro is ready and demanding whatever he thinks he's got coming.

H: Alright. Three more brief questions...

Do you think it would be hopeful...do you think it would be helpful rather...do you think it would be helpful and hopeful to establish a working relationship between the Negro caucused operating within the labor unions today?

B: Definitely so.

H: Why isn't it being done?

B: Well, we have tried on several levels. In fact the NALC was supposed to have been the counterpart or the hub which would have brought all the Negroes in labor.

H: But it's not performing that function.

B: No. I say it was supposed to be.

H: Right - right. Isn't the Negro American Labor Council, for all practical purposes, dead?

B: It is a paper organization.

- H: A paper organization. Cleveland Robinson hasn't done anything with it. What year did he take over from Phil Randolph by the way? He succeeded Randolph in....?
- B: '66.
- H: '66. But you think it would be desirable to do that? #1.
- B: Certainly.
- H: No. 2. What do you see as the future for black workers in organized labor generally or the UAW specifically?
- B: If there's not a great concentration of organization between the black workers, I can see nothing but disaster for them.
- H: Why?
- B: Both in the union and also in the community.
- H: Why?
- B: Because in the absense of being organized, you are not going to get what you justly deserve. You're not going to get the problems taken care of and nobody's gonna give a damn about what you think and what you need.
- H: So you anticipate or are there forces at work that you see will lead to the organization of more and bigger and more effective black caucuses? Do you anticipate a period of this?
- B: Oh, yes. I can see this within the very near future of Negroes being thrown together whether we like it or not.
- H: And increasing confrontation and increasing radicalization of demands with white leadership. You say that they will be thrown together whether they like it or not. What do you mean by that?
- B: I mean in order to survive.
- H: One last question. You've been in the auto industry and you've been a leader in the UAW for more than 30 years now.
- B: Right.
- H: If you thought for a moment about the hopes, the anticipation that you had in the early '40's when you were organizing for the UAW - building the union - the hopes you had for the union and the hopes had for Negro workers within the union.....think back to the feelings you had then and compare what you find now. Do you think your hopes, your wishes, your dreams have come about regarding what the UAW would mean for black folk?

- B: Let me say if everything being equal and this is on the political front, so far as the community in the political front - so far as the UAW is concerned board-wise or staff-wise.....if these things were equal - in the absense of those - I would say that 98% of the dreams that I had for the Negro in labor when we first started organizing - have been fulfilled.
- H: But they are not equal.
- B: No.
- H: So?
- B: And I think this is a very bad point on the part of leadership in labor - to have let these small things lag to the extent of.....
- H: But these aren't small things, are they Buddy? Aren't they now the basic question?
- B: What I meant "small" was this. This they had the power to do just by turning it over.
- H: Why do you think they didn't do it?
- B: Well, I would say that in the first place when you take the UAW Board, for instance, you are sitting there with a 26 man Board and if out of 26 you got approximately 15 or 16 of them who don't see any just equity in the labor movement for the Negro - who figure he's got too much already.....
- H: But how about the good white liberals who love colored folk? Why haven't they done it?
- B: They ain't gonna rock the boat. They ain't gonna break up the whole daggone thing for the colored folks over there.
- H: Isn't it also, aside from the fact that they have a different order of priority, isn't it also that while they are prepared to help good deserving colored folks - what you're really proposing now is sharing power, sharing leadership....it's not just a question of being nicer to good colored people - it's a question of sharing in the leadership and the power and the wealth and prestige of the organization.
- B: They have got to give up something they've got if they're going to give you the job and no one is prepared to give up nothing he's already got.
- H: Right - right. It's a new ball game.
- B: If you could create something out there which he ain't already got, he'd feel halfway fair about "yeah, you should have some of that",

but if he got to give up something he's got so you can get your just equity, he ain't prepared.

H: Well then, your perspective is that we are entering into a period of a real battle to get that just equity? As you said before, "to take it", since it's obvious they're not going to give it to you. Is that right?

B: Again I say it, in the next four years they're not going to be able to hold it because they'll need help to hold - each individual group will need help to hold his end. In order to hold part of what he's got, he's willing to share with someone who can help him hold his. He ain't willing to give up his without a struggle but if he can in turn decide to help me hold mine, you'll come into your own and be helping him hold his.

H: That's right. Well, the analogy you made - the point you made about what you anticipate four years from now....the same question must be posed within the whole labor movement - that the whole AF of L - George Meany - he can't have but another two or three years if he keeps.....

B: Well, he can't live to be 1000.

H: Well, I don't know about 1000.

B: Well he came near.....

H: He may never die. But aside from that - aside from the question of George Meany's longevity - I see the same thing taking place nationally in the AFL-CIO. Don't you think it would be very desirable now to establish contact with all of the other black caucuses and all of the other unions to begin following a similar strategy within the whole AFL-CIO because this would then have a feed-back that would help your situation within the UAW.

B: Yes, but the fact is, in the UAW you have already worked.....

H: That's far ahead.

B: Right and to stop and pull in.....

H: Oh no, no, no.

B: To stop.....

H: I'm saying - in addition to. Not to stop! That would be catastrophic! I'm not suggesting that. I just want to raise the question that you....

B: There can be no dialogue between....

H: Right.

B:the guys in UAW who is in turn - who have made the move and on the way to help these guys to find their way to start making their move.

H: Right. It seems to me that you now have your chance to accelerate your program and your movement within the UAW. God! Nothing should interfere with that! But at the same time you start, in addition to the internal UAW situation, you start paying attention to similar situations in the other labor unions where black workers are not as far advanced as you are in the UAW. This would have a very desirable effect that would be good for your fight as well as for theirs.

B: I am hoping that we can wake those up who are in the AFL and in part of the UAW before it's too late and they'll have too big of a gap.

H: That's right.

B: Between those in the UAW and those in the AFL.

H: What I'm saying is that there is now a potential for the Negro UAW leadership to begin exerting a leadership role within all the black caucuses operating in the whole American labor movement.

B: I agree.

H: Buddy Battle.....Thank you very much. This has been a very rich and a very fruitful interview.