

Oral History Project

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Interview with Christ Yonkoff

By Frank Ninkovich

February 26, 1971

Time - 1 hour

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Interview with Christ Yonkoff

February 26, 1971

Interviewer: Frank Ninkovich

Tape 1, Side 1

I. Tell me a little about your background, where you were born.

R. Well, I was born in Macedonia, in a little village there. All poor, there is only agriculture there, livestock, sheep, goats, stuff like that. We went through life very poor. In 1912 came the Balkan Wars. We went through hell then, you know. I had my brother and two baskets. I had my sister in there, and we went to a different village away from the war line. There was a town where they have Turks and they have Christians; there was two types of village residency. And when they found out the Greeks came in, at first in our village, they didn't fight. They came like without war, because the Serbians from the North, they had to fight down in Abitula. Do you know where Abitula is?

I. No.

R. When the Serbians stopped for ten days, all the Turks came up from the South, and the Greeks came into an empty field without fighting, before they got the Russian army down that way, and they killed all the Greeks and they chased them all the way down to the Greek border. There was a lot of massacres, there with the Turks, bones and bodies, everything piled up.

I. So you tried to get out of there?

R. Well, we were far away, and after ten days later, the soldiers started from the North to fight the Turks. Then they meet and they started to fight and the Turks got whipped again; then the Greeks came in.

I. Is this how you started to come to the United States?

R. No. That was 1912, and in 1913) the Bulgarians and the Greeks, they fought. And Rumanians and Yugoslav soldiers and Turks and Bulgarians fought the Balkan Wars very strongly, and at the same time Bulgaria got the dirty end of it. They didn't divide Macedonia the way the were supposed to, because even France didn't want Bulgaria to have a bigger share, They were afraid of the Russians, because the Russian people gave for that purpose, to have land in the Balkans. Well, that's 70 years ago almost. During that time I was a youthful guy you know, I always was educated in Bulgarian school and everything, and we were perfect patriots for Bulgaria and nobody else. Because the Greeks, they had the Albanians and all the others. They wanted to make us Greeks by force. Serbians were doing the same thing as the Greeks under Turkish domination, understand. And we go Bulgaria, the only one who helped us to survive from the Turkish, when we were under the Turk. Because they were giving ammunition, everything, education, schools, churches - everything was given, all that help, and the Archbishop has in Bitula, a pretty good town. Well,

Bulgaria got cheated on that in 1913, so they killed a lot of people after that to kill the instincts of the Macedonian people, and the Greeks came in. They burned our literature; they locked the schools up; they punished the people by not talking no more Slavish; and they took different people and there was a lot of jailing in the Greek Aegean-Sea islands. Then from there, I as a youth, I wanted to get away. The Greeks put up a law, nobody from thirteen years old he can get away to go away from the country. &en if he came back after fifty years, he had to serve service and be punished for it. I was the one, because I was supposed to be punished for that. What we did, my father came in 1914, he was once before in 1907,

I. In the United States?

R. Yeah. Then he came home in 1913; then he came back in 1914, Then a year later, I had to come back because they wouldn't let me out, never, but one agent says, "Wait", you know?. He fixed it up with Greek politics, Inside politics. They made a passport, you know.

I. What agent was this?

R. So, we said I came in as a Serbian citizen, not as a Greek. Then we went you know, In Athens. Ten days we waited there before we got another permit, from a regular passport from Athens, in order to get on a boat. We got on a boat and we, came to New York. When we came to New York, we met Greeks who came from the ship, together and we

went to a store to get milk, something to eat, from the train, you know. They stayed in there for a few minutes.

I. This was 1914?

R. 1915. I didn't know how to open up a milk even, because I was so green. The bottle in them days had a paper cork on top, and the Greeks, I hated to see them. We almost got in a fight and I was going to throw him in the ocean, when we got off the ship in a little boat In order to go to Pennsylvania Station. I pushed that cork down on the bottle and drowned with milk. They said,"Oh pig!" In Greek. So I said you look like a prasca (pig) more than ever. SO we had not much for us, price, You know. After we got in I was working in Melbourne, Iowa. I found my father there.

I. Oh, Your father was in Iowa, so you went straight there from New York to Iowa.

R. I came to Chicago from New York. And I didn't know how to ask for the time even, you know. And my agent, we went together, you know, to Union Station.

I. Well, what do you mean by agent?

R. I came by that address you know, because my father was going around all over the country with the jobs. In them days, you know, it was hard to get jobs. And if you did get Jobs, you worked only two, three months out of the year. When the fall came, most of the work in this country was railroad, nothing else much anymore. So, the

agent says, "You see the clock over there?" I didn't know how to read a clock either, So I looked at the clock, and he said, "You go over there by that man and he's going to punch your ticket to go on the train," I didn't know what the heck he was doing that for, so I left out, you know. I couldn't get there. I went back to the agent at nighttime, about twelve o'clock. Everybody locked up; I tried to sleep at the front door, Oh, I think I was so miserable, you know. So the next day the agent saw me and he said, "Well, I have to wait to put you on the train. Otherwise you're never going to get on." So next night I went by my father in Melbourne, Iowa, and we worked there.

- I. What was your father doing there?
- R. Well, railroad, raising the track, . new ties, repairs, maintenance. Rut that was as an extra gang, not like a section. A section has three or four guys or ten guys but this was about fifty or sixty men, They worked on the railroad track, with a working train and everything else, We had to dump cinders, stuff like that, fill in. The railroads were still on the bum because they were not packed yet. The country was getting harder, you know what I mean? So from there, wherever there was a job, we worked there three months. Then we come back to Chicago; they lay us off - no job.

I. You were working for three months in Melbourne, Iowa?

R. Yeah.

I. With your father? You got a job with the railroad?

R. Yeah, together with my father. We lived in them days, I was sixteen years old, but they gave me a job as an adult. I had to work that job whether I liked it or not,

I. So you went back to Chicago. What did you do?

R. When we came to Chicago, then we went to Granite City, Illinois looking for a job over there. People were all waiting for a job, thousands of people in 1915 looking for jobs at that time. In the winter time the railroad doesn't work because they're frozen; you can't raise the tracks no more. That's why we came back. They laid us off. So I went down myself. What the hell are you going to see? What chance've you got to get a job? Thousands of people looking, when the boss is going to come out to find out how many men he's going to hire. He didn't hire nobody. He came out, he's looking around, maybe he needed one man or two, when he'd see a great big guy, strong like a mule, and with people right in front of him he'd never pay no attention. He says, "Oh Joe, come on here." What the heck, he'd hire a couple of Joes, And the rest of the people, you know there was no relief - no handout, nothing, And some people died from hunger, some of them suicide, They do everything in that position

we had to live for. From then on, coming to Chicago again - no jobs there. We got on the Grand Trunk, the railroad again. There was an old engine that was all coal, coal burning engine. We had to make great big dumps of coal. So we were there working a couple of weeks, sometime with a big shovel like that.

I. In a coalyard?

R. We had to unload it from the cars, shovel by shovel.

It was cold, We didn't have no residence, no house to live in there. We had to live in the bunk cars. They were cold too, you couldn't heat them up. No water. No toilets. No nothing. You go In all those cars there, you'd find those Americans that were born here and everything.<sup>8</sup> they ain't got no jobs; they're down and out, sleeping in those cars' bunks, early fall and in the later fall. And it was terrible! Then from there we come back.

I. People were sleeping In the railroad cars?

R. Yeah. On board bunks, that's how they were sleeping.

I. The rallroad kept you In this car and they just shipped you from place to place? You went with the train?

R. Yeah, Well, the railroad, we always had to get the agents first. That was on Canal Street. There were a lot of agents you know, bum houses, everythang.

I. You mean you had to talk to an agent before you got a Job?

R. Not only talk to an agent, you paid him to find a job.

I. Was this an employment agency?

R. Yeah. All employment agencies.

- I, I see. The railroads only worked through them? You couldn't go straight to a railroad and get a job?
- R. No.
- I. And you had to pay the agents?
- R. Yeah, I had to pay the agents. Because in them days they couldn't even talk English. Who was fortunate enough to talk a few words, he was a foreman.
- I. Could we talk a little about life on the railroad? You didn't stay in Chicago, you went along with the trains, right?
- R. No, I came into Chicago, came to Chicago for reason, and there from here we shipped down to Sandusky, Ohio. In Sandusky, Ohio, they had a highway to be made. In them days there was no machinery like today, and all by hand, two sand wheelbarrow luggers and three stone, you'd put that in a mixer. They had a coal burning mixer, the boiler, and that's the way we was making highway cement. That, was the problem for those years. And in the war in 1916, we had to make more available jobs by people losing their lives in the war.
- I. You found it easier to get a job, though, when the war started.
- R. Yeah, it was easier to get a job. But it was harder. The boss in 1915, was carrying a brand new handle from a pick. He'd all the time walk back and forth "Hey! Hurry up! Hurry up!" If anybody'd say a word he was ready to give them one over the shoulder. That's how it was. They was whipping us.

I, And where were you working during the war?

R. That was on the Chicago Northwestern. They had a granary down on the South side, South Chicago, South during where they made a Chicago and Northwestern railroad yard there, That's the place where they were Just like slave-drivers. That's how It looks to me. Well, we were afraid of the bosses. We were afraid of losing our jobs. We were afraid we were going to be hungry, We was afraid we were going to by hungry. We was afraid we might die from sickness. You had no place to wash your face, never had a bath. You're working in coal all day and you'd go home, Still you didn't have no place to wash. If you had some kind of a pail to bring some water, one pail of water wouldn't wash you. You gotta wash say about 20 gallons of water In a tub, because you've gotta to use a lot of water and soap before you get that body cleaned off. It's just like a tremendous lot of dirt sticking all in the pores for days and days. That was such a crazy life.

I, What about that job you had as a fireman, what was that like?

R. I was a fireman In Madison, South Dakota. It's 65 miles to Lexington Springs, South Dakota.

I. How did you get to Madison, South Dakota?

R. How did I get to Madison? Well, we was in Ohio. From Ohio, after the first World War finished we couldn't get no more jobs there. They laid off again; Then we had to come to Chicago to the agency again, you see,

Again, you gotta pay for it and we shipped on the railroad to work,

I. How much did these agents charge you?

R. Well, three dollars. That was lots of money, three, four, five, dollars. They didn't charge much, but you couldn't get enough out of it either. That's how we got out West again. When we came here, I left my father in Ohio. Then when I came here, we went to Virgil, South Dakota. Then I went to work over there on a section. There from a section I went to work in North Dakota on threshing, a harvester. From there I came back again, in the same place on a section, and on the section they laid off again - wintertime came, see?

I. You never had a steady job with the railroads, did 't you? What about that fireman's job?

R. After I got in there, I went to work in the Bridge and Building department. They were giving pretty good money then, 65c. That was a lot of money in them days. Then in the fall time, they'd lay us off again. I went in Austin, Minnesota - I left there, Then I went back to Madison, and In Madison they had a job for a fireman.

I. On a train?

R. On a train, Oh, Jesus; there was a big load of coal, and big hills! You're going up and down, up and down. I'd throw about fifteen tons of coal to make about 65 miles of route. Worked like hell! That's when I lost my

hair.

- I. Did you have any sort of job security at all? Or was there anything like seniority? Were there any unions?
- R. There was no seniority for us, because It was all scabbery. The only unions on the railroad was Fireman's, if you worked long enough; Then the Engineers, then Brakemen, then Conductors. That's all. There was no other and they was weak in them days too, see, And later on the common laborers became organized, section, gangs, or maintenance people, They organized later in the years, And after the unions came and organized, they made some kind of a reform to have washrooms in a tool-house, a bath in there, a cleanup, They made a law, you know, when you'd finish a job you might as well take a bath there and leave the dirt for the company, Then you'd go home clean, That took a long time, right?
- I. Didn't you have a run-in with the NLRB regarding some injury?
- R. Oh, the injuries! In those days they never were responsible for the common man. My father, In his days he told me, he had a friend from the next town in the old country, He lost his hand, Then my father, he had a few bucks, you know, and he bought some pigs to raise pigs in a partnership with him. That was in Seattle, Washington, my father was. In those days it was, you know, hard, And the pigs In the summertime they got sick, and every one died. So

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there was no progress noplac. You couldn't make out noplac.

- I . Getting back to the railroads Just for a while. First of all, what kind of men did you work with? Were most of them immigrants like yourself?
- R. Immigrants, yeah. They used to mix up Bulgarians and Macedonians. We'd work together. We're almost one people. We'd work together, sometimes a couple of gangs. Sometimes there is a Greek gang - Dago - Italian gang, They are separate, you see. Italians they are all far away from civilization, even though they have more civilization in their economy, but they didn't act half as good as we did. I didn't know why is that. They're somehow funny people. When they started making up breakfast, everyone of them would build up his own fire, not to have a cook and dishwasher there to organize, All he thinks is the other guy's going to steal from him, In the mornings they'd start to build up fixes all around, everyone of them, you'd never see anything like it, those people.
- I. You mean the company didn't provide the food?
- R. They provided it, if they had a 25 people gang, They'd. give them a cook; they'd give them a stove in the bunks so they can cook. They had a facility used to bring water in there in order to wash dishes. This was when we were on the extra gangs, But, Dagos, you know, ma funger!

You know, he brings all that dry bread from the town.

He goes to shop and brings all that dry bread which they wanted to throw away or sell to somebody for pigs or chickens, Then they soak it up with water, and put macaroni in there, you know. They'd boil it together, that was weekly manqar what they'd call "one week's eating" just like a pig.

- I. What if you had less than 25 men? Did you have to cook and everything oh your own, provide your own food, or what?
- R. Oh, You provide your own food, you know. The cook, He goes and buys all the groceries, brings the bills, and when the week is finished they figure out how much the whole week's expense is and they divide among 25 or 30 or 50 people, how much the bill is. They'd come out to three, four, five dollars a week, that's the way they lived them days.
- I. Did anybody working with you talk about unions or organizing?
- R. No. In them days no, that was too early.
- I. What did you do after you got through working with the railroads? You were talking about the harvests, you said you worked the harvests.
- R. The harvest was ten hours work. We were doing the thrashing. How were we going to get the grain out of the wheat?
- I. How was that Job? Can you tell us a little bit about It?

- R. That was, 60c an hour. That was paying pretty good, but that was temporary, How long does a harvester work, one, two months, that's all.
- I. How did you go about getting the job?
- R. Well, when I quit the railroad, me and another guy, he couldn't talk English either.

SIDE 2

You see when I quit the railroad in South Dakota and then on I went to North Dakota on harvester. When I went there I went down to Aberdeen, South Dakota. That is the point station, You know. Chicago and Milwaukee goes in from that town to Seattle; Washington. And a lot of railroads, the Northwestern, they'd all meet in Aberdeen there, We got in Aberdeen, so we had to go northeast on the Northwestern Railroad to get into Oaks, North Dakota looking for a Job. So I went there with this guy, and at the depot before I get in a coach, they stole my money, I had, \$68 and the hoboes stole my money,

- I. Hoboes?
- R. Yeah.
1. Were there a bunch of them around in those days?

R. Yeah, all kinds of bums, didn't have no homes, nothing, They were in the depot, you know, and they tried to chase them away but they'd come back again, and they robbed my pockets. Then I had only the tickets left and that buddy of mine who was with me. I had a big faith in him, He was twice in this country and he didn't know how to talk English at all. So we went to Oaks, North Dakota, We went In a hotel and got a room there, Then I thought to myself, "Well, he was going to go out and get a job? No agency here, nothing". So I got disgusted, One day, there is one guy, a Bohemian guy, he had a mustache, and I thought to myself, "Oh, this guy's going to help me out." He came with his son to shop in town, So it was just a little town there, maybe a couple of hundred people there. That's pretty big over there. I see him once, I see him twice, and the next day, I thought to myself, "I ought to go over." I had a couple of thousand dollars saved already, hard saving you know.

I. Really?

R. Tight saving. I never let money go to spare nothing. Anything I ever bought, I sewed and mended shoes, clothes, everything. So I thought to myself, "Hey Ivan," Ivan was his name, I'm going to watch that guy coming in here to buy things, I'm going to hit him for a job. And what the heck, he had money. So I didn't have no

money. I had money in a bank, that was in McKeesport, Pennsylvania, that's where I kept it.

I. A long way to go to make a deposit.

R. So I went there and when that old man came in I went by him. I talked to him in Slavish, "Hey, have you got a job?" He understood me. I talked Bulgarian to him and he understood me. He, talked Bohemian, and I caught it here and there. He says, "No." When his son came back from the grocery store, he told him, "Give him the address of that ranchman. They're looking for a job." He gave me the address, and he said that as the train goes by about 5 o'clock tonight, he's going to be there. The people are going to meet you there, When he gave me that address and we put his name, who was sending us, he gave us the job. **when** I went there, I went in that wagon, that traveling kitchen, and he says, "You guys hungry?" and I says, "Yeah" I rather not eat because I was so ashamed; I know I'm going to meet difficulty. People like that, you know, they look at us because we don't even know how to eat bread for Crissakes in front of those Americana. I don't know what they were. He cooked eggs and this and that, some pork chops and this and that, prepared all the lunch. He gave it to us and everybody was looking around sitting there talking. Everybody was looking at us So there's an egg, and I know if I take that egg I'll bust it on the table. That won't look very presen-

table, And my face got so red. This thing was going to drop out. Finally I watched that guy. Maybe he knows something, my buddy: he didn't know. He pounded that egg and that cook, he looked at it and he made it easy for me. He said, "Well, I believe I'm a little hungry." He took a knife, he took the egg and chopped It in half, you know, and it was good.

- I. You were going to say you ran into some Wobblies.
- R. Those Wobbles, they'd run around there, and they'd come in, and they'd go to the grocery stores and everyplace. They'd beg and if somebody got money, a few cents (they were all from Chicago - those Wobblies) when that time came you could see them just like black birds. That's how they was, like crooks. Right on the top of those freight oars, running all over, And they'd go into town; they'd start door to door to beg, this and that. We had money, they'd buy this. Some'd buy sardines, 5c , 4c, Them days it was cheap to eat if you had a few cents. and when they throw all the garbage outside, a dump like, and they'd go there and eat. And they gambled all day. On what, I don't know. And they teach the little boys there from town. When they'd get tired of that they'd come Into town again and ask for another eats. Yugoslovs, too they singing right on the sidewalk. They felt free. They didn't give a damn.
- I. What were they doing? They were supposed to be in a union.

- R. I know. But when a woman passed around, they'd make remarks, you know.
- I. What were they doing?
- R. They used to sit, and they looked at what was a good looking woman,
- I. Did they ever talk about unions instead of just looking at girls?
- R. No. Unions, hell!! You see the Wobblies, If you're not a Wobbly, they'd put you out of the train. They were the bosses on the freight train, Or they'd beat you up. Sometimes they'd fight so bad that somebody would get killed too,
- I. Really?
- R. Nobody cared. Yeah, that's how it was.
- I. Well, how come they ran the freight trains?
- R. Well, they didn't have any money to pay for tickets. That was free for them,
- I. What did they do, make other people pay, or what?
- R. Nobody pays.
- I. Nobody?
- R. No. They used to get on a freight train. There's a lot of people even today that do it. They knew how to get to Seattle, Washington. They'd get some dead-header. You know what a dead-header is?

**No.**

- R. Some freight cars, they take them from here special to get in Seattle, Washington, or wherever he wants to go, He knows how to make it.
- I. Are these trains, these boxcars empty, and they're just shipping them?
- R. Yeah. They're empty. Dead headers they call 'em. And these bums they'd lock themselves in. They'd go there in no time. That car goes right down there, They used to get to all of the passengers in the same way. The passenger was a fool between the passenger coaches, in them days. When they come together to hook each other, well they didn't have these doors to bump together. And they were open, you know.
- I. Go mix with the passengers? Did the Wobblies ever talk about their union? What did they do?
- R. They knew that was their organization.
- I, And what did their organization do for them?
- R, To go into the facts of how the Wobblies become, Daniel Deleon, who organized the Socialist Labor Party, you've got to go to the root to explain IWW. because IWW was organized by the Socialist Labor Party, IWW means Industrial Workers of the World,
- I. As I said, how were the guys "workers of the world"?
- R. Well, you see, De Leon organized the Socialist Labor Party on revolutionary principles, And when they find

out, the capitalists, that the Socialist Labor Party  
Is organized for that purpose, they got frightened.  
The SLP - IWW together, SLP organized industrial unions  
the SLP can't be revolutionary only on the political  
front. The SLP had to have industrial unions to help.  
When they win politically, the working class of people  
to be organized and politically vote out the capitalist  
system, the industrial unions have got to take over,  
because the capitalist won't let you take the system.

- I. Anyway these Wobblies that were riding the trains, did they have anything to do with their union? What were they doing? Were they trying to organize anybody?
- B. You see, when the SLP succeeded in organizing the SLP - IWW as a whole political industrial organization, then American FBI, all of them, their spies, came in the organization. They became counteractive in the organization. Then they became the opposition, that the industrial union didn't need any political party. Political parties stand to organize in a class conscious way in the Socialist Labor Party, so you can have an industrial union. Both together, they're just like the capitalist classes organized. Capitalists are organized as a class and they are organized industrially also. That's how they got us down, see. Then Daniel De Leon came in Chicago In 1905, after he organized the SLP and IWW together. Then the anarchists went in the organizat-

ion; they split it. They split the union off the SLP. When they threw the political clause off the IWW, then they became violators. After they became violators, then the police and everybody else had an opportunity to counteract on them. Because it no longer is a peaceable way of taking the system over and destroying it.

What Daniel De Leon says, Socialist Labor Party and working people are to be organized for aim to overthrow the capitalist. What the capitalist doesn't like, he's going to become counterrevolutionary.

I. When did you get interested in the SLP? What did, they do for you?

R. They didn't do nothing for me,

I. The SLP?

R. No.

I. Well, why did you get interested in it then?

R. Well, that's my class. I see that people want to get rid of. the capitalist system: how they going to do it? You've got to educate yourself in order to educate others,

I. Rut how did they educate you?

R. Well, this is the way. Go to meetings, and read the literature.

I. What year did you join?

R. I joined in 1928.

I. Could you tell me something about the people that were in the Socialist Labor Party, in your branch, anyway?

Was it a Bulgarian branch?

R. You see the SLP was just like the Yugoslav, we have a Yugoslav branch, not only a branch, a federation. They used to have a Jewish federation in the SLP joined together. They used to have a Swedish federation. They all worked out as time passed by. Then came the Yugoslavs; they were a federation before the Bulgarians, Bulgarians became about the last to be federated; and next to them came the Greeks, but the Greeks, you couldn't make nothing out of them people. The Bulgarians, they had a pretty good membership and the Yugoslavs even today they got not so good because the people got old. The new ones, they're young. They don't know what the hell, they don't care or know anything about it.

I. How did you get interested in it?

R. Oh, this is the way, working class and capitalist class, they've got no --

I. Were you walking down the street one day and you decided to become a Socialist? What happened?

R. Well, I didn't come out that way. I just was conscious of the working class of people. That's my class, and I like it because it's not against my interests and not against anybody else who works for a living either.

I. Did you have friends who were members of the party?

- R. I was in Millwaukee when I joined. I worked in a tunnel In Milwaukee. Oh they said,"How about it, join the party?" One day they gathered a little money for the office, for the paper. And they had a little picnic. They wanted money, donations, And I gave them \$10. In those days, their eyes opened up when they found out. You know, I wasn't a member yet. Then they came after me, but I liked the cause. And then, you joined them people, you got a little friendship. Nobody wanted nothing from you. They're all Interested how to get rid of this system, But without working class consciousness they can't accomplish nothing for themselves. They've got to work towards that end to end capitalism and the evils of the society also. There's nothing more to bother them, because people are going to produce for use and not for sale and demagogues, feeding capitalists.
- I. We never did get to talk about you and the NLRB. You had some trouble with them? The NLRB?
- R . Oh, that was when I worked In the tunnel.
- I. What kind of tunnel was this?
- R. Sewerage, A double train can go through those sewers we've got In Chicago, On 47th and South Ashland,- I was working there. I was a barber, and I quit the barber because the depression, you know, was taking the best of me. I didn't have no money. If there was no job for a barber I had to work there.

I. And you got in an accident there?

R, Yeah, I got in an accident. One big chunk of clay fell down from the top and I had that hard cap and it hit me and goddamn it pushed my head into my body, and I didn't even complain. My eyes started to run for about two, three weeks, and I felt bad. But I didn't make no report because I was afraid to lose the job. And I had an ear running, too, from them machines -- you know, those machines they work on the streets, You see, you're in a closed place there in a tunnel. That all goes in your ear, where the exhaust comes out, I went by the lawyer, and he says, Oh, I'll take the case. I'll get some changes for you". So I says Okey, I went by him and the lawyer says, "I've got a doctor who's going to examine your ear and he's my friend. He's going to fix you up." All right, and It wasn't enough one doctor; he sent me to another doctor, and the other doctor he was a capitalistic stooge. He was around Wabash St, "Well", he says "you were a very strong man. What's wrong with you?" He's looking around, And when we went in the labor relations board there, goddamn, both doctors come in. I thought my lawyer's doctor was enough. Why the hell did that goddamn fool hire another one? And he says that was the cause of the machine. And the other guy says "What do you say, Fr. Arends?" And he says; "Well, I find, it wasn't exactly, I don't know how to

put It, maybe it was because of it, maybe not."

That's maybe, that sonofabitch beat my case. Goddamned Jew!

I, You went where, before the Labor Relations Board?

R. Yeah, that's the place where the company doctor and the company lawyer and my lawyer, they make a decision there. They made a check on me; I never got injured on a com-

pany Job. That was all.

I, How come you had to go down there? Was it the NLRB, was it the federal government board?

R. No, no, It's an arbitration board between the company and the worker. They gather them together and they arbitrate, The lawyer, my lawyer and the lawyer of the company, they fix that up and they tell you how much you're going to get. One day one colored fellow, he'd broken his thumb. It wasn't moving again. When it doesn't move, they're supposed to pay for that thumb, the company. But how much did they pay? \$85 they gave to the colored guy, poor guy.

I. \$85?

R. Yeah, for the loss of a thumb.

I. He was never able to use it again?

R. No.

I. How, could he hold a hammer even?

R; The lawyer said he can hold this, but this (the thumb)

doesn't work. That's the main part, like half of the hand is gone.

I. This was while he was working in the tunnels?

R, Yeah.

I. No union? No Benefits? No nothing?

R. Well, we had a union, but that union didn't do nothing for that.

I . There, was no insurance? Well, what do you think of the unions now?

R. The unions still don't have nothing to do with the injuries on you. The union's only thing is wages.

Everybody In favor say yeah. Everybody who doesn't agree say no. What else have you got In a union? That's the American Federation of Labor. That's the faker of labor. That's the tall of the capitalist system, even if they are labor,

I . You don't think too much of them,

R. No, no. Hell no! That's a fake.

I What about the CIO?

R. Same thing, same thing, Anybody who doesn't organize on the principles of the Socialist Labor Party, they are not a revolutionary party, they are not a labor party, They are just a fake, that's all it is. You see, the union faker and the capitalist faker, they come together. They agree for how much our price has to be. Well if you agree on it, how are you going to agree? The capitalist

gives you \$100 today, they give you \$15 out of it or \$20. Can you buy all that stuff that you earned \$100 for the capitalist? Huh? Can you buy it? What can you buy? Nothing, You exist under the capitalist system as a slave. You're not an honorable man. This is the question.

- I. Back in the 1930's, when they did begin to unionize, did many members of the Socialist Labor Party join the CIO unions when they were formed?
- R. Well, the SLP members, individually. Well, they're never going to oppose the AFL-CIO, because these are only a fraction of the men in there, and you always have to support labor regardless of how unconscious he is, Understand? Because he knows what's the best, by himself he can't do nothing in that organization.
- I. So you were just talking theory before. When it comes down to practice, when it comes down to joining and supporting the union, most of the people are for it.
- R. Yeah. That's all. One time in 1921 when we had a strike, seven union crafts on the Chicago and Milwaukee, (I was working in Mason City, Iowa) well, we had one IWW. Now regardless, that guy, he knows some of the problems in organization you know that he was taught to be knowing something. I'm only against the IWW today because they don't realize that the capitalists organize with the two hands against the working class of people, politically

and economically, And the working class of people, they've got to organize the same way, like they do, in order to punch them in the nose. You've got to get the industrial union to take the industry away from the capitalist. industrial union to take the industry away from the capitalist.