

BOOK 37

H A R R Y H A R P E R

Interview with Harry Harper
By Barry Kritzberg

February 12, 1971
Time - 2 1/2 Hours

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Respondent: Harry N. Harper

Interviewer: Barry Kritzberg

Date: February 12, 1971

Harry Harper was interviewed by Chicago Sun-Times labor writer Fred Frailey for a Labor Day article in 1970. In a telephone discussion,, Harper told me briefly about this interview. The first question referred to this earlier interview.

I: When did you make this tape with Frailey?

R: Oh, I would say approximately a week before the article. came out in the Chicago Sun-Times.

I: That was the Labor Day article?

R: Yes, the Labor Day article. He was here. Same room.

I: How did he come across you?

R: Well, it was an article on David McDonald. David McDonald, who was at one time Secretary-treasure of the United Steel Workers upon the death of Phil Murray became president and wrote a book. It was a controversial book, never mentioned me by name, He referred to the fellow with the batch on his eye and why they didn't support him and why they supported Germano. The idea was that Germano, who

is the present district director, I understand did not support him (McDonald) in the last election. One time he did, all the way and then he supported Abel, the present president of the International. He wrote a book about his experience in the labor movement. I didn't see the book, I'm still looking for the book. But the reason he didn't support me was because I was supposed to have left-wing support and all that. Well, in my book that's a lot of nonsense. Because anybody that was hired by the International we had to work with and I never did go out and red-bait openly. My job was to organize the unorganized and that's what I did. These companies hired all these people who were supposed to be Reds. I believed in democracy. Well, Germano at that time, was hand-picked by the International because they wanted him. So, at that convention I was called by Phil Murray, President, and Van Bittner, vice-president, and they said, if I would only step out, there would be other elections. It would be a slap in the face for them if Germano wasn't elected, and well, I finally decided to step out of the race because I had counted that I had 90 per cent of the delegates behind me for the district directorship. But, I was broad minded enough

to know that if they didn't want me in the International that was the first constitutional convention they could curtail my activities by withholding finances to organize and it would just be a matter of time. They could appoint someone else, too, to do all their work. I'd draw my salary and that would be it. So, I stepped out. And that was it, so that's why the present director is in. So that's how Frailey called me at the office.

I: I see.

R: He asked me if I was the party referred to and I said yes. He said he talked to certain people who knew, how to set in touch with me and I admitted I was the party, but I didn't see the article, and I'd have to see the book and see whether there'd be a chance for a libel suit. But McDonald didn't mention the name. He was clever enough to leave the name out, but there was only one fellow in the International with a batch on his eye. That's how Frailey wrote an article in the newspaper at that particular time, refuting that statement in McDonald book. That's how I got to know, Frailey. Of course, I gave him that information over the telephone. I worked for the Bureau of Sanitation

at that time. I'm retired now.

I: Did you see the article that he wrote at that time?

R: Beg pardon?

I: Did you see the article that Frailey wrote at that time?

R: Yes I did.

I: Would you describe the events leading up to the Memorial Day massacre?

R: Nell, I was an employee of the Interlake Iron Corporation, I believe it was in 1935, when the NRA was formed. Roosevelt was the president and I'm not positive about the year, but it's either '34 or '35, and that gave labor the right to organize. The National Labor Relations Board was created. Throughout the nation divisions were set up and immediately, the Steel Corporations, that is Big Steel and Little Steel, immediately got busy to form what was known as the independent unions in all the steel companies. At that particular time I was active in the credit union. We had formulated a credit union at Interlake Iron Corporation, one of the first in the district, and we received a charter from the state. And I was considered a

leader of the men there. Well, immediately we were called in to get up a union, strictly a company union, which was later labeled so by the National Relations Board, I don't mind saying it, but we operated under it for a while and found out that there wasn't much you could do, Delegates were elected from different departments and we'd meet with management representatives and as far as wages and hours were concerned, there wasn't much that we could do. We could probably get showers in the washrooms or something like that, but as far as bargaining on wages and hours and other conditions of employment, they would always have some fancy answers for us. So, we heard the CIO came into the field, the Steelworkers Organizing Committee -- and we got together, sent communications, called the various delegates, leaders of these independent unions, which I'm going to call company unions, now, and throughout the area -- that is, the South Works of Carnegie Illinois Steel, the Gary Works, Wisconsin Steel, Interlake Iron, Republic Steel -- we set up a meeting. This must have been in the latter part of 1936, I believe, or the early part of '37. This meeting was held at Calumet Park

Field House, That's on the East Side. I believe it's 100th Street and the Lake-- Lake Michigan. So we secured the field house, and we had a meeting of all these delegates of the company unions throughout the area. I can refer to them as company unions because later on the courts ruled them as such. All these agreements that they had, unilateral agreements, were posted on the bulletin board and were referred to as yellow-dog agreements. So we all decided, that is, the majority decided, that we would organize our respective plants into the Steelworkers Organizing Committee, which is a division of the CIO. By that time John L. Lewis had been coming into the area and appointed Phil Murray chairman of the Steelworkers Organizing Committee. So we began meeting with the representatives and getting cards, application cards, and signing up the men into the CIO. Well, I became the president of our local at that particular time. And it wasn't easy. Nowadays, it's easy to be an International representative, but in those days it was mighty hard -- because the next morning, after that meeting, I came back and went to work, and I was called in by the general manager and he knew

everything that transpired at that meeting. Everything! All those who were there, what went on -- it was amazing. So, I said, "Yes, we've decided to go ahead -- all of them decided to go ahead." Later on, we found out there was an individual, I don't want to mention his name, the delegate of the Wisconsin Steel of the International Harvester, he double-crossed us and stayed with their independent union. They still have an independent union. That individual, although he voted there to join with us, he became personnel representative for the company. So he sold us out there. And, to make a long story short, every one of these plants of the delegates that were there are now organized under contract -- with the exception of the Wisconsin Steel of the International Harvester. Although several attempts have been made to organize it, they've got their own union -- and now it's legitimate, I guess, as much as you'd like to call it legitimate. I do know this: that the United Steelworkers negotiate contracts and immediately they put into effect what was negotiated by the United Steelworkers. so, then we got busy and locals were set up all over the steel industry and

I became president of the Interlake Iron local. So, then on, Memorial Day, I think of 1937, that's when the Memorial Day Massacre took place. There was a mass meeting held at the strike headquarters. There was a strike, we had to strike, but we only struck it for recognition. Headquarters was known as Sam's Place; it was approximately 112th and Green Bay Avenue. I lived at 58th and Albany and I had a couple of brothers -- two brothers working at Republic Steel and they were holding a meeting. I'm getting a little ahead of myself, because a few days before, the Steelworkers Organizing Committee local at Republic Steel was denied pickets at the gate at 118th and Burley. So, a mass meeting was held and several speakers were there -- Nick Fontecchio and I don't recall who the others were because I came in late. At that time I lived at 58th and Albany and I was married and my son was small, and my mother lived at 107th and Avenue O, approximately, oh, three-quarters of a mile from the mass-meeting. So, I took my wife and the baby over to see my mother and I asked about my brothers and if she knew where they were, and she said, "I know two of them are at the same mass meeting."

There was a mass meeting over there. The other one she hadn't heard from -- she thinks he's inside. Well, my brother, Peter, was a strong union man, but he belonged to the boilermaker's union and I don't know what happened. So, I left my wife and son at my mother's place and I went over to the mass meeting. It was at 112th Street and there I saw a lot of fellows that I knew and they were forming a parade to march back past the gates at 118th and Burley and leave a few pickets, with signs to parade around which was denied them by the police a few days before. Well, at the conclusion of the meeting, the parade was formulated -- men, women, and children -- some women had babies in their arms. Well, we marched down a path from 112th and Green Ray to approximately 117th and Rurley. That was about a block away from the main gate. It was an open field. And we paraded; the American flag was in the lead and I was right behind the American flag. We paraded down there and I would say there were approximately eight-nine hundred people. And when we were half way down the field, we saw the police coming out. Well, we couldn't see the main gate. Homes hid the main

gate. We saw the police coming out and forming a semi-circle. We were heading right to the middle, and when we got there, I stepped forward, they stopped -- the police stopped us. Captain Mooney, who was in charge of the police, I talked to him and asked him if we couldn't get by -- go through, and he said, "No, absolutely not." Well," I said, "let me through. I want to check on a brother." I didn't see the other brothers there either, although later on I found out that they were on strike. What I think happened, somebody in the back must have thrown some object -- a brick or something -- and while I was talking to Captain Mooney something hit his cap, and it flew back. And just at that time, he blew a whistle, and when he blew that whistle, all the guns in the hoisters of the police came out firing -- it was as though all hell let loose. Now, later on, in the testimony in Washington before the La Follette Committee, it was proven that the police were in there all morning. Republic Steel was wining and dining them, and some of them looked as though they had too much to drink. Well, it was planned, because when the whistle blew, the guns came our and some of them

started firing in the air. Others were shooting right into the paraders, the marchers there. Immediately a gun came up to my head and I stepped back, but I stepped back just far enough that I'm here alive today because I felt it here (pointing to his patch) and then the bullet tore through, tore the eye out, and came out here and I was blind for about six weeks. So people were screaming and hollering and immediately blood was gushing out of my mouth and everything. I ran --I could see a little -- I turned around and ran back and there was a ditch like a culvert there, and I fell into it, because as I was running, I could hear bullets whizzing past me and I thought I was going to get some more in the back. And then as I jumped into the ditch, there was another gentleman lying there and he said, "Help me buddy, I'm shot." I said, "I can't, I'm shot too." And just as I got that out of my mouth, a big gas bomb fell along side of me in the ditch. Later on we found out that gas bombs were fired from the Republic Steel roof. And that burnt my face and I was inhaling that gas. Well, then I remember somebody threw me into a car -- I guess they picked me up and put me into a car,

and were going to take me to the, hospital. The police stopped the car and took me out, put me in a patrol wagon and from then on I didn't know too much as to what went on there, only that I was placed on the seat -- they were hard seats. Lying there, my blood was running into someone's face down below. They quickly, moved him a little bit so that I wouldn't choke him with my blood. There was one woman sitting in the patrol wagon -- I don't know whether she was injured or what happened. Well, anyway, half way down, instead of taking us to a hospital nearby, they took us to the Bridewell Hospital. And all I could think was, he's dead -- the fellow on the floor. Evidently he died in transit.

- I: How far away was Bridewell from the scene of the massacre?
- R: Well, Bridewell was at 26th and California. Now there was the South Chicago Hospital that was nearby, that was down about ninety-second street, I believe, and Calumet.
- I: It must have been at least an hour's drive to the Bridewell.

R: When we arrived at the Bridewell it was Memorial Day, and not much attention was given to the injured. And the first thing I remembered they pulled me off the seat. And I mean my back was bruised, legs first, you know. They treated you like a dog. They carted me down, and they stripped me, and all you could hear was the police saying, "Look for communist literature, look for communist literature." So, they didn't find any, but we were put into a bed. I was bandaged up. They washed the blood off my face, put me into a bed, but gave me no treatment. There were no doctors there for several days -- they were on a weekend vacation, I guess. One time they came by and they said, "Look at this mess." I could feel the mess, I could feel the flashlight, the heat of the flashlight, but saw no light, because this eye was blind too at that time.

At this time, my wife was trying to locate me. She had checked with several of the hospitals on the south east side but was unable to locate me. About the third day after the incident, one of the police in the east side Police Station, around 100th and Ewing, told her to check at the Bridewell

Hospital. I was in there several days before she was able to make connections and I was sprung on a writ to be moved to St. Luke's Hospital on Michigan Boulevard for real medical attention.

When we arrived at the St. Luke's Hospital, they refused to admit me because my wife only had \$35.00 with her -- they had to have \$50.00 down before admitting me. So, my wife had to take me all the way home to my in-law, where she moved after my injury.

Dr. Kaufman was called in on the case -- bless his soul, he's dead now -- but he did a miraculous job on me because we were suspicious of those bullets later on, that they may have been poisoned, I don't know, because it seemed that infection set in on all of the injured. Dr. Kaufman couldn't perform the operation that he wanted to because the infection was a half-inch from the brain already due to lack of attention. So he was able to take out the slush and save my life by doing that. Later on, he was going to perform an operation to graft some skin from the back of the neck to make a little lid and he then was going to take out the nerve after the infection was gone. I asked him

if he would guarantee that nothing would happen to the other eve, but he said he couldn't. Well, "I said, "no matter what you do, I can't see any better than I am now, so I would rather you leave it alone; at least now I can see."

Well, later on, there were mass meetings held in protest of that slaughter, of shootings and clubbings which were unnecessary. Testimony was brought out in Washington before the LaFollette Committee: I believe they called that the Labor, Education, and Welfare Committee at that time. Robert LaFollette Jr. was the chairman of it. So, later on we found out that ten were killed and one hundred and thirty-two were injured. Thirty-two were shot. Now the testimony was brought out in Washington that Republic Steel had a shipment of hatchet handles brought in there so that the police could use them instead of batons. These hatchet handles were, oh, several feet long, and they're shaped like a sharp edge, if you know how they go in, and the ends were greased, all prepared, in case any would grab and you couldn't hold onto it. Pathe Films, incidentally, had made movies of that, which later on were confiscated, but Mrs. Harper had seen

them in Washington. You could see the police bashing the brains out of strikers that were prone on the ground, using these hatchet handles.

I: You didn't happen to see any newspaper accounts of this, did you?

R: Yes. She has. Mrs. Harper has clippings of the early days.

I: If I'm not mistaken, most of the newspapers called it a riot, didn't they?

R: That's right. As I said, they wouldn't do that today, because in those days it was the survival of the fittest. At that time they were under the impression that they could destroy the unions. It was just a flash in the pan, like it had been in 1919. See, I was just a kid then, and I was on strike in 1919. I worked at the Republic Steel Corporation, but it wasn't Republic at that time. It was the same plant though. It was called Inter-State Iron and Steel Company. Well, William J. Foster was at the head and instead of organizing us 'on a horizontal basis, they organized us on a vertical basis. I was a mill-wright helper and I was put into the machinists union. And we never

met together. So this time it was on a horizontal basis, and, no matter if you were the lowest laborer or the top mechanic, you all met: your problems were the same. So, it was a different story this time. And, of course, we had John L. Lewis, and Phil Murray, from the United Mine Workers. They laid out a good program, Well, anyway, it was a brutal treatment the way they handled me and the other injured at the hospital. So, later on, in Washington, I was in pretty weakened condition when I testified there. Mrs. Harper was with me. We were subpoenaed to come there. So I gave my version of the story. And also at the testimony it was brought out that the police had brought out a big trunk, containing all kinds of pipes and bars that were supposed to be used by the strikers. It was a great fallacy because later on it was proven they got all that stuff from the scrap yard at Republic Steel and the people in that vicinity testified that there was nothing there at the site of the massacre. May be a few sticks from the banners, you know, that were broke, lying there. Well, anyways after I was well enough and came back from Washington I was still an employee of the Interlake

Iron Corporation. So I went to see the plant manager and I told him what had happened. He said, "Yes, we know a lot, we know every movement that you made in Washington, we know where you stayed, where you went, who you met with." So, they had their spies even then. So I said, 'That's all right. I'm not in a position to come back yet.' I still had the white bandage on my head, and I'd been pretty sick from the gas I'd inhaled, my face burned, very poor vision in the right eye. The plant manager said, Before this had happened, you know, we had intentions of putting you in charge of the boiler shop." See, I was a layer-out at that time. "No," I said, "that's news to me." Well, we want you to consider it and that's still open for you." I said, "Well, I don't know, I'm not in a position to come back to work now. The International has offered me a position to go to work with them. I haven't made the decision either way." "Well," he said, "I once knew a man who didn't amount to much until he lost a leg. And then, after that, he became a success in this world" He was trying to convince me that I shouldn't consider myself to be under a handicap; that if I

would give up my union activities, I had a future with the company. Well, I got in touch with him a week later and I told him that I wasn't coming back, that I was going to go to work for the International union -- the Steelworkers Organizing Committee, which I did do. I went to work for them, organizing the unorganized at the Carnegie Illinois Steel, and helped out at Wisconsin Steel, Interlake Iron Corporation. And then in 1939 I was sent to the Chicago metropolitan area because in the Chicago area proper, there were a number of fabricating plants that were unorganized. In fact, in Chicago proper, when I came over here from the South Chicago sub-district I think there were only three or four hundred dues-paying members in this area. So, I set office at 12th and Oakley, where the United Farm Equipment Workers had an International office. At the time, I had several staff members with me. The United Packinghouse Workers were just beginning and Van Bittner, who was vice-president of the Steelworkers Organizing Committee, was also chairman of the Packinghouse Yorkers. And I assisted in organizing the Packinghouse Workers and also I worked with Harry Wohl

of the Newspaper Guild when the strike was on at the Herald -- what was it, the Herald and the Examiner?

I: Yes, Herald and Examiner.

R: Yes, and we went to see the merchants on State Street to withdraw their ads, and attended their meetings and spoke to those people. So I was able to get a staff of sometimes three, sometimes four men with me. And i started an organizing campaign. We organized all of the American Can plants -- one on Clyburn Avenue, one over on Western Avenue, and three plants in Maywood, on St. Charles Road. Also, the Amertorp plant in Forest Park --a torpedo plant which was operated by the American Can Company but which was a Naval ordinance, with 10,000 employees. The last organizing job was the Crane Company, at 4300 S. Kedzie, with 10,000 employees. We had to go all through labor board elections at these plants and we won every one of them. But it was a terrific job, Organizing in those days isn't like today. You had to get out early with your staff and Pass out literature, set up meetings, get leaders, meet secretly and protect them. Sometimes management would get a hold of your leaders,

find out who they were, they'd fire them. Cases had to be prepared before the labor board to see that you got your men back with back pay. For instance, after I had left the Interlake Iron they had fired a lot of leaders there. I had to prepare their case and had a labor board hearing and got them all back, with back pay on the job. So that curtailed somewhat my activity. However, certain people, like the press, were against US. In certain instances some of those mislead or misguided people in the factories -- they read that, and they'd abuse you out at the gate and want to kick you or start a fight. When you had a sound truck for a, noon day meeting, you were talking to them on their lunch hour, police were ready for you, to grab you and nut you in jail. Of course we had lawyers then to get us out. So, my last job was the Crane Company and the reason I left was because I had fifteen contracts open -- I negotiated all the contracts. Each factory was under a seperate, individual contract. Nowadays, they're tied up to Big Steel. You know Big Steel negotiated a master agreement and then they put it into these plants. so, the AFL at that time was not with us. The AFL

were on the ballots in several units at the Crane Company, and we were on all of the ballots, and there was an independent union there too. So we took every unit at the board election -- won everything. I had gotten some men from the C.I.O. to assist in that campaign. And immediately thereafter, these other locals' leaders had me out, passing out material, preparing for the election. In the meantime, their contracts were expiring. They were only one year agreements. So they extended them. They didn't want anyone else to come in and negotiate their agreements but myself. So I had approximately thirteen or fourteen contracts that had to be negotiated. So, I, knew I was going to lose the C.I.O. organizers who were loaned to me 1 think there were three of them but I had a stiff of four, and Joseph Germano, District Director, was going to take two of my staff representatives along with three C.I.O. representatives away from me and I just couldn't take that. And I presume when you become popular certain individuals resent that. They're afraid of their jobs and I knew that I'd either kill myself or couldn't do the job that was supposed to be done. So my

whole staff resigned -- I resigned and they resigned with me. After we left, we were replaced with 15 staff representatives. And that's the way it was. I stepped out, I think one of them went back, but I could have gone back, and gone to other parts of the country. I don't want to mention the names of certain individuals in the A.F. of L. who wanted to set up a charter for me and all these locals would have gone with me, but I went through plenty. And I knew what that would have meant, some more trouble, and I was pretty tired, so I decided to step out. So I took a rest for about a year and then went to work in a political job. When I was Sub-District Director for the USWA I did do some radio work for the International, that is, Hank Johnson and myself. They had to lock us up in the hotel cause they were going to kidnap us, because there was a fight. Then John L. Lewis went out in support of Wilkie and our leader at that time was Phil Murray. He supported Roosevelt, and we were making speeches for the Democratic Party and Roosevelt. And they got wind of it so they locked us up in the hotel room until it was time to go on the air. And Art Goldberg at this par-

titular time, who was the Supreme Court Justice, he was our lawyer, at that time and he helped us in preparing the speeches and protecting us. So we went on the air -- I went on, I think, two or three times. At one time I did a broadcast with Hank Johnson who was in charge of the Packinghouse Workers. He was a Negro, and a very good organizer. So we went on the air, and of course Roosevelt won -- labor supported him. Of course, John L. Lewis broke away from the C.I.O.. He set up the -- we called it the catch-all-as-catch-can union. He's trying to go ahead and raid and organize all -- whatever he could. And I guess he put his daughter in charge of that. He called it district fifty. So it was very interesting and at that particular time we couldn't touch white collar workers and, of course, we didn't bother too much with them. We had the factory workers to organize. We were called a lot of names in the early days. Even the Superintendent of Interlake Iron Corporation, before I went out, he even pulled out a book, I don't know what it was. He said, "Look here, do you know that so-and-so is a communist; Phil Murray is a communist; John L. Lewis is a communist," and

all that. Well, I told him I'm going to go ahead and find out for myself. And he said, "We know your background. We know you're a Catholic. You've been baptised." They had everything there. "We know that you were married in the Catholic faith. We know that your uncle works here he's a staunch Catholic." It was all propaganda, I had a seven week strike -- no, an eight week strike at the American Can Company here at 60th and Western and the Clyburn Avenue Plant. They tried a back-to-work movement. It fizzled, but they threw some of our leaders in jail and they appeared before Judge Quillicy and of course they were all discharged. When the company failed on their back-to-work movement, we were all called in Washington for a settlement of those plants, because there was a war on and they were manufacturing a lot of ration cans for the army. So we moved into Washington. Attorney Arthur Goldberg came with us. We were there approximately a week, negotiating, and finally we settled it. We were able to get seventeen cents an hour increase on the minimum and then an adjustment of all the rates throughout the plant. Some got as high as fifty cents an hour increase, and

retroactive pay to a certain given date when the contract expired. The reason that we called that strike, we wanted to eliminate the differential between their plants here and on the West Coast-- West Coast was much higher. So, once we were able to settle this strike, it was easy to organize the other plants of American Can. They just fell right in to the union. But hen I sit back and reminisce a little today and see these men who are organizers, the job looks mighty easy. In those days it was hard. You had trouble in the plant; at two-three o'clock in the morning they'd get you out of bed, SO you'd grab a cab. You're organizing with the sound equipment, the police'd throw you in jail and you'd try to get out. So it was a hectic job. But, I became very popular amongst the people because I never betrayed them, never did. I never met with management without a committee of the local with me. I've got old agreements, contracts in book form, showing my signature on all of these. And then, of course, when you do ail these good things for people, you become popular and they won't forget they were elected by their locals and delegates. I spoke at sub-district meetings where

the Carnegie and, Gary Works, Indiana Harbor and Inland Steel workers were present. So that's how I was able to be pushed to take over the district directorship at the first constitutional convention. Before that time an organizing committee appointed the district director and then the district was broken up into five or six subdistricts and I was a subdistrict-director here in Chicago. There was another subdistrict director in South Chicago. There was one at Indiana Harbor, one at Gary, and then one at Harvey, taking in Chicago Heights. But, I was responsible for all the fabricating plants to be organized in the Chicago Metropolitan area, outside of South Chicago. So that's how that convention came about. When I was at the convention and every time I came back to the hotel, I was told there was a message for me to come to such and such a room, and that's how I knew that I had ninety percent of the delegates pledged to vote for me as District Director.

I was requested by President Phil Murray and Vice President Van Bittner not to run at this time, because it would not look too good for them as they had already appointed Joseph Germano, who was the

district director at that time. From that time on, if you were popular with your local unions, the district director was afraid of you. Others have tried to run against the District Director, but couldn't make it. That was the first and last time that they had an election of officers, including district directors, at the convention. Then they solved the shortcomings. Then they decided to have elections by locals, by ballots and then they had a number of tellers at the International. I think they were appointed or elected by the International. So he was able to perpetuate himself in office since, and he's still there. But I, could say a lot of things off the record. There was more democracy displayed at the convention than by so-called secret ballots in each local. So, here I am, reminiscing a little bit; I know there's a lot to my experience. For instance, we were organizing the Amertorp Torpedo Manufacturing plant. There were approximately ten thousand workers. It was during the war and they had broken all production records of manufacturing torpedoes for the Navy. The Navy had an ordinance plant in New Jersey. And these people were rela-

tively new. They were taken from all walks of life. There were jewelers, doctors, dentists, everything put together to manufacture these torpedoes. We put on a bond drive at the Amertorp Plant in Forest Park. The local union went over the top on the sale of the bond drive. Commander Jack Dempsey was there, we picked him up at the Morrison Hotel. I spoke and he spoke -- management representatives and Commander Flint, from the Navy who lived on the grounds, spoke. The local union went over the top of the bond drive. It showed you how we were cooperating with the management. We negotiated a liberal contract there for increases in wages and other benefits.

I: Is this when the strike occurred?

R: No, we didn't have a strike there. This was the Amertorp Torpedo Plant.

I: Wasn't there a situation where you had reached an agreement with management and there was a strike which was really against the War Labor Board?

R: I think it's the Amertorp you're talking about. There was a little slight stoppage. There was a contract negotiated and the War Labor Board locally

denied it. So then, we were able to convince our people to go back to work. We went to Washington. Both management and labor moved in. We had no dispute with management. We were able to convince the National War Labor Board that it wasn't above the area set for the rate for comparable work. They were all practically machine operators, but they specialized in the machine that they were operating. The National Labor Relations Board conducted an election between the Steel Workers Union and the A.F. of L. to determine who was going to become the bargaining agent and we won this election. Subsequently, we were certified by the National Labor Board as the bargaining agent. We had to set up headquarters across the street from the plant, I think it was an abandoned restaurant we had to use. But that was the only one. There was one over at the American Can, I think it was an eight week strike. No, it was against the company. They wouldn't give us what they wanted and we were able to settle that in Washington. I remember I was holding out for everything that the union wanted and we were there a week and it was hot and Art Goldberg then said, "Harper, You better

take their last offer." The last offer was ten cents across the board. I said, "I can't accept that. I can't go back after these people have been out on strike about eight weeks now. I can't. If you can sell it to them, you take it to them. Well, go on past me." He wouldn't do it. "It's your job." "Well," I said, "I could go back in there and tell the management we can't take it." I said, "Well?" He said, "How about getting in touch with Van Bittner?" So we made a long distance call to Van Bittner, who was the vice-president of the International Union. I got a hold of Van Rittner and Arthur Goldberg started talking to Van Bittner and it was listening in on his phone. And he said, "Let me talk to Harry." "Well," Goldberg said, "Harry is listening on the other phone." "Well," he said, "Harry, what is this?" And I told him. I said, "Van, we merely want to eliminate the differential between the West Coast Plants and the Englewood and the Clyburn Avenue plant." So he said, "Put Goldberg on the phone again." He said, "Goldberg, you go back in and tell management if they don't give Harper what he wants, I'll pull out all the American Can plants throughout the

nation." Boy, that made me feel good Art Goldberg had to go in there now. We all went in. He didn't meet alone with them. We all went in, including the local union officers. This is what he told them: "Now, you'd better get busy, Van means business." I think within a few hours we had everything that we wanted. We returned home with a complete victory. But I want to say, I want to give credit to Art Goldberg. Management of the American Can Company, their big officials, their lawyers, said that he knew more about their business than they did themselves. He was a very smart and intelligent man.

I: People from the American Newspaper Guild have said the same thing.

R: He's tops. And I was criticized by the district director, Joseph Germano, in the early days for using him as my legal counsel. I was supposed to use Lee Pressman or somebody from the International but I recognized Art Goldberg for his ability. He was a law partner of George quillicy. He was a very good friend of mine and later on became municipal judge. He is now deceased. At one time I used to go on speaking assignments with George

Quillicy when he was active with the Civil Liberties Union.

I remember when I started organizing the worker in the Chicago Metropolitan area. I had a mimeograph machine on our enclosed back porch, and my wife had a typewriter to cut stencils and prepare leaflets until I was able to locate a sub-district office and headquarters. In the early days we had to attend a lot of meetings to convince the people about that Memorial Day Massacre at Republic Steel. So a lot of our work was in speaking tours. I was sent to Cleveland to talk to the Republic Steel strikers at a joint mass meeting. The press was present at this meeting and they gave me quite a write-up the following day. So I was constantly on the go, plus my own local activities to service and organize new plants in the Chicago Metropolitan area. I knew the testimony that was brought out in Washington was in regard to the Cleveland area strike. A plant official told the Chief of Police, "Why don't they handle these like they did in Chicago to beat the union?" In other words, massacre them, which will set them back. The reason why I was so popular with the workers was because I never

did red-bait at any local meetings or any committee meetings. We do know this, that John L. Lewis got some men and hired them as International representatives. They were to the left of center. They made no bones about it. I worked with them and they sure could organize! John L. Lewis and Phil Murray knew they could organize. Now there were other representatives who did more fighting against the communists than organizing the unorganized. And my job was to organize the unorganized. And when we organized some of the plants, we found that the company had a few communists who were part of the bargaining unit, but. at no time did I ever go before a meeting and red-bait, which certain individuals did. I figured this; that this country is made up of a lot of people and of course, we were coming off a depression and people were groping. They didn't know where to turn and they, decided, well, this is a savior, so they went with them. Even the government came here after I left the United Steel Workers, They wanted to know about certain representatives that were in the union, whether I knew if they were communists. They were contemplating deportation proceedings. Some

of them were born in foreign countries. I said, "I have my idea where you got those names." "But , they said, "we know you're not a communist. We checked your background on that." Well," I said, "I never have seen their cards, or anything. I was told to work with these individuals that you mentioned here, to use them, and that's as far as I can go." Which is true. And even today, as soon as you become a liberal and want certain things, a certain element wants to brand you as a communist, or to the left. And that's not so. I've got a son that's married. He has three children, beautiful grand, children. All his children attend a Catholic school, and he married a girl who is a Catholic. When I testified in Washington, many of the police were of the same faith that I am. I could never understand why they would use such methods. It was so unnecessary. They had 900 police and they formed a semi-circle and the paraders were marching towards the center of the circle. Instead they had one policeman for every person in that parade of approximately 900 people. That was part of a plan to destroy unions.

I: How long after the Memorial Day massacre was the LaFollette investigation?

R: It was June 30, July 1, 2 and 3rd of 1937. There were so many mass meetings being conducted. I think there was a big one at the stadium. Certain representatives were sent out to interview people who were in that march and who had something happen to them. So, agents from the Federal Government came here and interviewed me and then finally I received a subpoena to go to Washington.

I: How long did it take?

R: There's a nice book out on that. I don't know if you have ever seen it, you should get it. Must be in the archives of Washington. (The book is Violations of Free Speech and Rights of Labor First Session Pursuant To - S. Res. 266 (74th Congress) Part 14 - The Chicago Memorial Day Incident June 30, July 1 and 2, 1937.) With all of our testimonies, including the company's, and the police's, and the decision of the committee, which was against the Republic Steel Corp. and the police for what occurred on that day. A law suit was filed against Republic Steel Corporation by a Cleveland Law Firm selected by the Steelworkers Organizing Committee,

claiming damages for all those people killed, maimed, and injured by the Police on Memorial Day of 1937. Republic Steel Corporation was found guilty by the Courts and damages were awarded to all those killed, maimed and injured.

I: How long did it take the union to convince the general public that the newspaper accounts were false?

R: Not too long after. I think the first chance that we were able to give a good account of the story was when -- what was the name of that newspaper that came out during the early days?,

I: That was the Chicago Sun.

R: Yes, it was the Chicago Sun. Representatives from the newspaper came to our locals and solicited subscriptions for it and we representatives helped to put it over.

I: It must have been the Times because the Sun didn't start publishing until 1941.

R: Yes, it was the Times, which later became the Sun-Times. They gave us a pretty fair break, after they heard the statements and followed the testimonies in Washington, and the committee's recom-

mendations -- not only in the fairness of their editorials but also their published pictures of the brutality of the Chicago Police in action. By then, of course, labor was here to stay. Contracts were being negotiated and signed. So nowadays, when I look back, some of the old time representatives and leaders of the unions have retired or passed away.

During the early days of organizing the employees into the union, you constantly had to have your dues paying memberships always retained because in those days there were no union shops, checkoffs or maintenance of membership clause written into the union contracts. Management is till had a notion that the unions were not here to stay. Later on, we were able to secure our memberships by maintenance of membershins or have union shops written into the labor management contracts. Companies later on found out by good labor-management relations, their profits increased because of satisfied employees. Under the grievance procedures of the union contract, the grieved employee could take up his grievance with his immediate supervisor and if he did not get a proper answer or settlement, he

would turn it over to his shop steward who would meet with the department head to settle the grievance. If unable to do so, the shop steward turns it over to the grievance committee, who meets with other members of the committee and top management weekly. If they were unable to settle it, then they call in the International Representative, It usually was settled at this stage. However, if the International Representative and the grievance committee were unable to reach a fair settlement of the grievance, it then went to arbitration which was final and binding. so, there were no more disgruntled employees. We didn't want it; neither did management. I heard management representatives state that they never want to be without a union again, because they were making money with a satisfied union employee.

I: It's difficult, I think, for people today, who take things like checkoff for granted, to realize what a struggle it was just to get this accepted by management.

R: Yes, the only reason the checkoff was put into effect, was to stop management from trying to destroy

you from within., And then the steward could devote his time to the grievance procedure instead of going around collecting dues in the plants. It was hard. You had to carry on an educational program and you couldn't do it as long as you were trying to keep your union from dving from within from lack of support. So that was the reason for the check-off.

I: Do you really think that if they had the present day news media, with television and things like that, and the Memorial Day Massacre was shown on television, that people would have had an immediate reaction?

R: Oh, it would have been entirely different. If there was, personally I don't think it would have happened. I don't think that they would have allowed the police to do what they did if they knew there was television coverage of that situation at Republic Steel. I don't think they knew about -the Pathe cameraman. Later on I found out they had the camera on a tripod stationed on the front porch of the last house on the block which was hidden from the police. He could see the marchers coming

through the fields and get a picture of everything, but the police's backs were toward the camera. I don't know who was responsible for having the film being taken. They must have had some rumblings that something was going to happen. The police were being wined and dined all morning by the Republic Steel Corporation in their plant cafeteria.

I: Well, I do know that the newspapers had reporters and photographers assigned there for about ten days before the massacre.

R: Yes.

I: And they were expecting something. They had, in fact, around the clock shifts.

R: Yes. The only thing is that I don't think the police knew, this. I don't think they would have conducted themselves the way they did. And I even told Mayor Kelly later on that it was a blemish against his administration. He said it's one thing that he'd take to his grave, that he wasn't in town on that day that it had happened, or words to that effect. It wouldn't have happened.

I: The Steelworkers later supported Kelly, though,

didn't they?

R: Yes, they did.

I: And some people were a little shocked at that?

R: Well, they were. We had a convention here at the Morrison Hotel. President Murray was the chairman of the convention. He invited Mayor Kelly to speak. They were looking at the whole democratic situation because union labor was born under the Democrats. Labor had a right to organize and they never had that opportunity before because the National Labor Relations Board was set up under the Democratic organization giving unions the right to organize. I remember in the early days how some of the A.F. of L. tried to organize the gas workers at our plant. Well, they had a meeting and the workers' heads were split open. Chairs cracked over their heads, and you had nowhere to go. If you belonged to a union? they could fire you. Where could you go when they discriminated against you for union activities? Nowhere. Mayor Kelly spoke at the convention and he said he only regrets one thing. He said it reminded him of the Memorial Day incident, when he sees the one man with the patch on

his eye. He said, he knows then; that it was wrong what the police had done that day. But I take this position: that in the early days sacrifices had to be made, so that labor might live. And I consider this patch as my union button for the rest of my natural born days. Mr. Frailey asked if I ever regretted; could I have two eyes instead of one? I said no, I said my father was sympathetic to unions in the early days -- he was a steel worker. Great injustices have been done. I saw men come to work and being fired because the foreman wasn't feeling good that morning, or he didn't like the way they parted their hair. I have seen them come and go. If you had a grievance, management would state, well if you don't like your job there's a man out at the gate waiting for it. There was no seniority. You could work for a company 20 years and if you were fired, you stayed fired. Those were the injustices that existed in the mills.

I: How old were you when you started working in the mills?

R: 16.

I: And that would have been in what year?

R: Well, there was a 1919 strike, I was born in 1901, so I would say it was in about 1917.

I: Was there any semblance of union activity before the strike in 1919?

R: Yes. There were union activities in the Steel Plant. At that time, it was known as the Interstate Steel Company, later on known as the Republic Steel Corporation. The strike was called in 1919 but several weeks before the strike was called, membership cards were being signed up rapidly. I was out about six months and I was one of the last to return to work. I was sent back by our leaders. The other strikers were dribbling back after four months with no finances. William Foster was our leader and he organized us on a vertical basis. In other words, the maintenance workers were placed in craft unions and the production workers were placed in a local by themselves and we had no John. L. Lewis to organize us on a horizontal basis and the United Mine Workers to finance the situation. So the strike collapse.

I: What about during the twenties, were there any attempts at getting something going?

R: No, that strike hurt. I mean, I don't remember anything going outside. There were a few flashes in the pan when the NRA was formed, some by the Amalgamated Iron and Steel Union affiliated with the A.F. of L., but there was no big league movement until John L. Lewis formulated an organizing committee. He took a number of leaders from the United Mine Workers throughout the country and he set up an organizing committee known as the Congress of Industrial Organization - C.I.O. They, in turn, went out and got organizers. For instance, Clint Golden, who was on the Labor Board with the government, John L. Lewis got him and made him one of the vice-presidents of the Steelworkers Organizing Committee. He knew economics. Van Bittner who was president of a district of the United Mine Workers was made another vice-president. Phillip Murray, also a big leader of the United Mine Workers, became chairman of the Steel Workers Organizing Committee, and later on president of the United Steelworkers, which was the same group. Money was coming in from the United Mine Workers treasury because at the beginning they weren't charging any dues, we were merely signing up our members.

I: Were the company unions formed directly in response to the Steelworkers Organizing Committee?

R: The company unions in all the steel plants throughout the nation were formed by the, company when the NRA and the National Labor Relations Board was set up by the government, giving the workers the right to organize. Management thought that by organizing these so-called company unions, they would be able to keep out any legitimate union, including the Steel Workers Organizing Committee. We were unable to bargain on wages, hours of employment and legitimate grievances. When we failed to do this, we contacted the Steel Workers Organizing Committee to assist us in organizing our fellow workers into the union. We then applied for a charter into the Steel Workers Organizing Committee -- C.I.O. and I was elected president of the local union at Interlake Iron Corporation, now known as Interlake Inc.

I: Actually, in a sense though, the company unions almost backfired, because you used that as sort of a base for organizing, didn't, you?

R: Yes. We always referred to them as company unions

and yellow dog agreements because any agreement we had with the company was on a unilateral and a bilateral basis. Even in Crane Company, that was the last company that I organized. I think it was about ten thousand and I found a so-called company union still in existence at the Crane Company and we called it as such during our campaign. They all had unilateral agreements, not bilateral, And we referred to them as yellow dog contracts because the courts referred to them as such. We were able to get rid of them by a National Labor Relations Board election or by showing our strength by presenting our membership cards to a neutral party. As far as big and little steel, we did not have National Labor Relations Board elections -- just presentation of our strength. John L. Lewis and Phillip Murray signed the first agreements with big steel companies. And then later on when we needed finances to get on our own feet, we charged \$3.00 initiation fee and \$1.00 per month union dues -- \$1.00 of the initiation fee went to the International Union and \$.50 of the monthly dues to the International Union. of course, the union dues is much more now because the locals and the

International are on their own and there is no more money coming from the United Mine Workers.

I: Did the onset of the war change organizing very much?

R: It did to a degree. In other words, we agreed not to strike. Sometimes there were a few wildcat strikes but immediately we got busy to settle them. Sometimes I had to get up two or three o'clock in the morning. If there was a work stoppage or a wild cat strike in the plant, we had to get the workers back to work, but first we had to contact the management to get some sort of an agreement. For instance, there was a sit down strike at the American Can Company - Englewood Plant, because negotiation for a new contract with management had failed. The failure was over wages to correct the differentials between the West Coast American Plants and, the two plants in Chicago who were organized at that time. I was called by management and notified. That there was a work stoppage going on at the Englewood Plant and I either had to get them back to work or out of the plant. Immediately I rushed out to the Englewood Plant and the manage-

ment took me into the plant to speak to the workers. So I told them that they had to either go back to work immediately or vacate the plant. The workers unanimously decided to vacate and strike. This I had to do because sit-down strikes were declared illegal by the courts in the early days, when a sit-down strike occurred in the automobile industry. At that time their union president was Homer Martin. So that is how the strike began at the Englewood and Clyburn Avenue Plants of the American Can Company.

In regard to wildcat strikes and work stoppages, members sometimes take matters in their own hands. Sometimes these stoppages are organized from the outside and others are spontaneous inside, and overzealous membership cause it to spread like wildfire, as they become impatient. They want a signed contract. The international has had enough time to negotiate, and management won't give, and you've got to report to the membership on your progress periodically at their local union meeting. I remember a plant, I think the name of it was Vulcan Stamping in Bellwood. It was just a small container manufacturing plant, and they came to us to

organize them into our union. This certainly was a sweatshop. I think originally the company had been paying the workers fifteen cents an hour. They would hire students at ridiculously low wages, operating machines that were manufacturing metal containers. I had a similar plant under contract at that time. It was Wilson, and Bennett, located in Clearing industrial area, Later on it became Inland Steel Container. Mrs. Rennett's former chauffeur, who knew enough about the can business started the can plant in Bellwood. I don't know how he did it, but he was taking the business away from companies we had under union contract. And they were complaining, so we organized the workers in this particular plant into our union and obtained for them the same wages and other conditions of employment and a signed contract similar to Wilson and Bennett. But during the war, I think, the United Steelworkers were as loyal as anybody. The only stoppages we had were wildcat strikes or lock-outs by the company, but we tried to settle it wherever we found one. We had orders to go in and settle it as much as we could, like the Amertorp. We settled that one.

When the war was over the Navy was shutting down its naval ordinance plants in New Jersey. It was obsolete because the one that they had here was a modern plant, and American Can Company was merely operating it during the war, and they were going to get out. So, they wanted to supplant all these employees who were members of the Steelworkers union, with the employees who were civil service in the New Jersey naval ordinance plant. And one of my last acts was to negotiate with the Navy an agreement that the employees of Amertorp would stay and blanket them into civil service. But anyone in the future that was hired would have to go through a civil service test. So that was an agreement I made before I left, the United Steelworkers of America - C.I.O., securing their jobs. But, later on the Steel workers couldn't hold that local because of their progressiveness and they went to the United Federal Workers because they considered the leaders at the Amertorp to the left. When you became aggressive and you took issue with your director, immediately, you were considered a left winger. We had a good president in the Amertorp local, though I don't like to mention his name,

he's no longer here. At one of our conventions, the president of this local received high commendation from Phillip Murray, president of the International, for the nice work the members were doing in producing excellent torpedoes. I checked about ten years ago and found out he was a personnel director for a big foundry out on the West Coast.

In the naval plants during the war, I was permitted to go into every department there, even the secret departments. I had a button with my picture on it. They checked my whole background. But a couple of our leaders were not permitted to do that, so I went to a naval commander who was in charge and asked "what about this?" He said, "We know your background and we know these two leaders." I said, "Well, you hired them." And he said, "You know, we'll keep them here. We've got them under surveillance." That was a naval intelligence's statement. So out of ten thousand employees, they had a couple that they had a record on, but they wanted them there so they could watch them. Nothing was ever said, though, not even by management, and Phil Murray even praised that local for the magnificent job they were doing in the war effort and also the

bond drive.

I: Now, could you summarize the difference the C.I.O. made for the worker in the steel mill as far as conditions and wages and hours would go

R: Oh, yes, don't know all the wages and hours.

I: Just a vague idea.

R: I always did the wages secondary. Job security is the main thing. I mean you could sell the old timers on that because they saw some of their buddies get fired without any recourse, and I always called it job security. But at the same time, I didn't believe in the living wage, I believed in the fair wage, according to the company's ability to pay. I always stated this: that the prime obligation was to their employees before the stockholders. When we went in to negotiate a contract, we had the records of their profits. Some of them were exorbitant, and we would point this out to them. They would never divulge their books to us, but we had their records. At my retirement party, just several months ago, many of the local union officers and representatives of the U.S.A.-C.I.O. were there. Also, there were some of the old time

leaders from Jernberg Forging's local union and they called to my attention the time Mr. Jernberg was going to shut down the plant because he could not continue to pay the piece work rate that we had negotiated and that there was something wrong in the plant. I agreed to talk to the men. The men told me after I spoke to them, they said that the company had a great deal of break-downs and had some obsolete equipment. So I made an appointment with Mr. Jernberg to go into his plant. I was there from three o'clock in the afternoon until after the second shift, which was eleven o'clock at night, to see how the men and machines were working. I was there with a committee, so we would make suggestions to Mr. Jernberg as to how he could shortcut, and get better production. He would make money and also the workers. And sure enough, we got him a out of the red. And he was happy that we came in just little shortcuts of operations. You know they were making forgings, but there was always one machine that would jam up on them. They would have to have certain operations at the same heat. It was taking too long, so they would miss the last heat and they could not manufacture it

properly, creating a lot of scraps. So our job was to help management as well because if management was making money, then our members would make money. They would share in the profits. I believe in the profit system, but a fair profit, not an obnoxious one. I wanted the elimination of favoritism. There was a lot of favoritism that was going on in these factories and plants. Now with plant seniority and department seniority everything's in the contract. Now there is no, more favoritism. Well in the later days they negotiated pension plans, hospitalization, which the companies had to pay for, all dealing with the welfare of the members and families. In other words, the men must have freedom of mind to work, not to have their home problems, on the job with them. Otherwise, they can get hurt and maimed. Oh, they protect them pretty good. I have a brother that's retired from Republic Steel. He's in retirement. He's living it nice, he's getting a nice pension, he's got his hospitalization all paid for. They'll take care of him -- all negotiated by the union. In the early days, we couldn't do that. Our big job was to secure our union and membership; negotiate job

security, and a fair wage, not a living wage, but a fair wage; the maintenance of membership; and vacations and holidays with pay and many other benefits too numerous to mention. In, other words, if they hired a new employee, he would be given 30 or 60 days probationary period to work without joining the union. After he or she has served a probationary period as outlined in the contract and qualified to work they had to join the union. That was the maintenance of membership. The United Steelworkers were not in favor of a closed shop. Even with our federal and local government, it is usually a six month probationary period to find out whether you are qualified and after that you are certified to their civil service job, with job security. It is the same way with industry. We give them the opportunity to have a probationary employment period with the new employee. But once he has completed that, then he joins the union, has his dues checked off, and has the protection of the union as well as all the benefits that the union has negotiated into the contracts, including wage increases and job security. This is known as a union shop.

I: What would you say about the labor movement since you've been out of it?

R: Well, let me put it this way. A labor union, a legitimate labor union -- no matter how bad it is, is better than none. And sometimes the unions in the early days were more autonomous. Right now, they're tied up with the International on industry wide basis. They don't have too much to say. Their local issues are big issues. Now, although I'm not in contact with some of the International representatives, I meet with a few of them occasionally and talk with them. But in the early days each plant was under a separate agreement, and I had some good clauses, because later on the International took some of my clauses for their industry wide contracts. When I was subdistrict director of the Chicago Metropolitan area, none of my fabricating plants were tied up with big steel -- contracts were negotiated on individual plant basis. At present, clauses are written into these industry wide contracts to take care of local plants issues that may differ. In fact, I took two men that had the capabilities of organizing out of the can plants and made them International representatives. Also,

I obtained for them job security from the can company, by having a clause written into their contract that they had job seniority in case their services were terminated by the International. And even then, they only go back one day a year to retain their seniority in the plant. Also, I wrote a clause into the contract covering our union members who at anytime were promoted to a job outside of the bargaining unit; such as foreman, supervisor, etc., if their services were terminated for any reason, they would have to be placed on the job which they had left with full seniority. This was a protection for our leaders who were afraid to accept a promotion outside of the bargaining unit, that management would promote them up and then out of the plant because of union activities. This clause was essential because on several occasions, management had promoted a few of our leaders outside of the bargaining unit and kept them for a while and then layed them off.

I: Are these clauses still in most of the contracts?

R: Yes, some of these clauses are still retained in a number of contracts. But organizers nowadays

have it relatively easy compared to the early days. I think everything in basic steel is practically organized. At the present time, the International Representatives do very little organizing because they have-union shops, maintenance of memberships and check-off in all their agreements and most of their time is devoted to settling grievances that may arise in local plants and attend local union meetings. They do very little negotiating of contracts for the International officers do most of this. They may call a local representative or two to sit in on negotiations.

I: Aren't there a lot of small plants that are still unorganized?

R: That may be, I don't think so. At least those that would be eligible for membership in the Steelworkers union. The biggest bulk of the metal fabricating plants; such as the metal industry, foundries and miscellaneous metals, were organized under my sub-district directorship. Since then, a number of small fabricating plants were organized so I think very little is left to organize in the Chicago Metropolitan area. Before I was assigned to

organize the sub-district in the Chicago Metropolitan area, I worked in the South Chicago sub-district office organizing basic steel from 1937 to 1939. Mr. Fonteccio who was the District Director at that time, told me to set up a sub-district in the Chicago Metropolitan area. This was in 1939. When I arrived here, I found approximately 400 dues paying members and when I left in 1945, there were approximately 40,000 dues paying members. I think that this is a good account of my stewardship in the Chicago Metropolitan area.

I: And how long was that period?

R: Well, my organizing days in basic steel in the South Chicago area was from 1937 to 1939 which was approximately two years. In the Chicago Metropolitan area, as a Sub-District Director, I organized from 1939 to 1945 which was approximately six year. My success as a Sub-District Director was due to the fact that I always concentrated on one big plant of a company, like the American Can Company and Continental Can Company. I would then negotiate a contract with good increases in wages, liberal vacation allowance with pay, paid holidays,

time and one half and double time pay, and job security with no favoritism. When this was done, I would then proceed to organize the unorganized plants of the American Can and Continental Can Companies for I then had something to offer them as to why they should join our union. There were eleven plants between the American Can and Continental Can Companies, with a large membership. These all came in after the strike of two plants at the American Can Company that was settled in Washington.

Under my supervision in the sub-district, we organized about thirty-five plants - foundries, metal fabricating, can plants, etc. At that time, I could not organize the white collar workers of the can plants. However, at present they are organized. Also, you could never approach a school teacher to join the union. At the present time, they are organized. However, since the union negotiated tremendous benefits for the blue collar workers, the white collar workers saw the necessity of joining the union for they realized they needed collective bargaining. In unity there is

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strength. The Steelworkers Union have the white collar workers in the majority of the fabricating plants.

I: Well, that's about it, unless you have anything to add.

R: Of course, it's been so long, it's hard when I reminisce, and when I think of those days, I don't know how I did it. No sleep. My wife was an organizer's widow in those days.

I: Thank you, Mr, Harper.