

**Ernie DeMaio**  
**Narrator**

**Carl Ross**  
**Interviewer**

**May 25, 1988**  
**Norwalk, Connecticut**

CR: This is an interview with Ernie DeMaio in Norwalk, Connecticut on May 25th, 1988. The interviewer is Carl Ross, this is for the Minnesota 20th Century Radicalism Project.

...Well I'm ready to go here I think.

EDM: Okay.

CR: Well why don't we begin with your first experience in Minnesota organizing for the United Electrical Radio Machine Workers, that would have been about 1940.

EDM: It was the very beginning of '41, February of '41.

CR: Well wait a minute, you were just telling me about the original Moline, moving over from the machinists to the UE.

EDM: Well let me give you a little background.

CR: Yeah.

EDM: In the '30s the Left was mainly org...and the Communist Party was mainly organized in the Bill Foster's Trade Union Unity League, that was liquidated or dissolved, whatever you want to call it, in 1935 and a number of people in the old steel and metalworkers section... Is that in your way?

CR: Yeah, this is.

EDM: All right. Just throw it up here.

CR: [Unclear]

EDM: ...went into the I of M. Jim Mattless who was the head of the, was secretary of the Steel Metal Workers Union became a Grand Lodge representative of the I of M. I broke with him on that, I was all wound up in the whole concept of industrial unionism. The I of M was a very old line craft union clinging to its craft policies, so I continued to build an independent set-up in Connecticut. The, in April of 1941, wait a minute, I'm getting...April of 1936 the UE was founded in Buffalo, I went to work immediately on the General Electric plant in Bridgeport. I don't want to go into the entire background other than to say that when the UE was formed it applied for a charter

to the AF of L. It was rejected by Bill Green and we set up an independent union. Well it was all set up but we continued as an independent, in October of that year, the CIO which had been a committee within the AF of L was expelled, founded the Congress of Industrial Organizations and we affiliated in October of 1936. Things began to break loose just prior to that period and right after that. Long repressed workers in a number of communities where unionism was verboten broke loose and in the upsurge the UE grew like [unclear]. We, I had in the meantime gone from Connecticut into Pennsylvania, from Pennsylvania into Ohio, in charge of, I wouldn't look at a plant of less than 5,000 in those days because there were, we went for the strategic plants in the industry. In 1940 I had completed the campaign in Dayton, Ohio when where we, in charge of the electrical division of General Motors, we organized some 43,000 people in Dayton. From there I was transferred into Chicago. We had very little in Chicago but in the meantime the, I believe it was the 1937, look it could be 1938 convention of the International Association of Machinists, a number of people in the Twin Cities area belonged to the I of M and they were chafing at the bit because of the very strict craft policies pursued by the I of M at that time and because they had some basic differences on other questions such as the question of industrial unionism, craft, the industrial battle was pretty hot at that period. The question of the blacks being included, the question of women, all of these issues came to a head, it was fought in that convention and the fight from the Minneapolis group was lead by Bill Mosseth together with Bob Bergstrom and some of the others. The fight was lost, they, together with Jim Mattless they pulled out of the I of M, joined the UE. So when I went up there in the, February of '41, Bill Mosseth was the president of a subdistrict of the UE which included Moline plants, all of the automobile mechanics in a separate local and also odds and ends in the 1139 whole series of small shops. We had a paper local 1145 which represented Honeywell, but it wasn't organized. I took over the organizational drive there or took charge of it to make a long story short, we organized it. The only comment I can make in that period, I was attacked by the Honeywell people as the 'big fat Jew from Chicago'. Well anybody could look at me, you know, so I figured the best way to deal with that question was to go on the offensive, got a microphone, got up in front of the main plant and said 'you're being told that I'm a big fat Jew from Chicago so I want you to look me over, you can see that I'm not big and you can see that I'm not fat, you can also, I will admit that I am from Chicago, I'm not a Jew, if I were I would tell you so'. Anyway I debunked that whole thing, we took that plant. The company of course fought us tooth and nail and it was one of the first break throughs in that industry, the electronic industry which was burgeoning then. We had the Honeywell plants in Chicago, so we were in a key position not only in the Honeywell chain, but also this put us in the dominant position because along with it we scooped up I don't know a couple of dozen plants. The result was we were the dominant union in the Twin Cities and as such we played a political role. Active in the union at that time we had Clarence Hathaway, former editor of the Daily Worker who became the business agent of Local 1139. Well either that or the treasurer, I don't remember which, he and Bill...Bob Bergstrom were the two full timers in that local. We had a George McDonald in the Honeywell, the big Honeywell local in Minneapolis and there was another one in Hopkins. We had Howard Fortier who was the business agent of the automobile mechanics...

CR: Local 1140.

EDM: 1140, and after we organized the plant, Wishart was put in charge of 1145 which was Honeywell.

CR: Was Wishart working in the plant?

EDM: No, I don't know that he ever worked in a plant, he was unemployed when we put him on the staff.

CR: I see.

EDM: He was on the staff before I got there, but he didn't amount to much, he wasn't, I don't think he was even assigned to organizing Honeywell, Bill Mossin was doing that and anyway to make a long story short, after we organized the plant, we just negotiated our first contract sometime in '42, well you know the war broke out. In '42 we lost practically our entire staff to the army, to the armed forces. Wishart for some reason or other had some, was 4F and I don't know what the reason was, heart problem or what, never asked, and so he became the, in a sense the only one who had any conn...Bill Mossin was getting old by that time and he was more interested in fishing than anything else, Hathaway had not yet come up there, he came later, I don't remember exactly when he came but, it doesn't matter. One problem I have just to interject, my records were stolen by the FBI, now how do I know, I know for two reasons. One when we got the Freedom of Information, through Freedom of Information Act, my wife, they pointed out that they had all of the records of the paper we put out in Chicago, there's only one way they could have gotten that, steal it. The other is an FBI agent who had been doing this, who had broken into my home and apparently was doing other acts of skullduggery, he, his conscience bothered him and he told Krutsen was a reporter for the Chicago Tribune who called me to tell me about it, that, he said do you know your home has been broken in by the FBIs, I didn't know it was broken into but they did leave a calling card. So he said well this guy did it, he was the guy that busted in, he was the guy that had my records. Anyway just, I tell you this because I have to rely on memory, I don't have my own papers to go back on, so I'll be confused on dates.

CR: Yeah, few of are because most of us travelled light and took little paper with us. The dates can be straightened out, they can be found in newspaper files and elsewhere as the background information and ins and outs of the organizing work etc. that, and the influence of the Left in all this which present the problems. The problem I was going to ask you about is this, now Moline was already organized left-wing leadership...

EDM: In the machinists union...

CR: ...had a considerable experience as a group. Likewise the people who were coming into 1139 had experience in a number of strikes, [unclear] that matter the garage workers strike, the Ornamental Iron strike, so what happened when this big body of 4-5,000 people come in who obviously did not have the political insight, training, or background of the rest of the UE.

EDM: You mean at Honeywell.

CR: Right, Honeywell.

EDM: True, and the composition was different, you had a lot more women, you had, it was a light industry as compared with most of the other shops which were machine, basic machine shops. The, well there was turmoil. You have to understand what happened in that period. I lost the entire staff

in my district, I had to put on women, 4F-ers, old time retirees, you know, try to patch up the best we could for the next three or four years and I was appointed to the War Production Board, Radio Radar Commission, which meant going in and out of Washington, I was also on the regional manpower commission of the government which was taking me the hell out of, I was spread very thin is the point I want to make and so I couldn't keep track of all the things that were going on there and it was obvious though that there was friction because I would from the very beginning when I went to Minneapolis people would come up to me and say are you a Stalinist or a Trotskyist? Those were the two strong movements on the Left in the Minneapolis at the time and I quickly said well I'm a trade unionist, I didn't know who the hell these guys were, I was trying to feel my way around and everybody was suspicious of everybody else and it was the kind of a situation that made it possible for the FBI and the employers to infiltrate the organization and they did. And those that, and sometimes some of the guys were easily bought off, only too goddamn anxious to get out of the struggle, cross over to the other side, and the Left I think contributed to that with the, they pursued unity by liquidating themselves in 1946, you know the whole Tehran development, you were around then, you, and I think they contributed too much of the splitting activity that went on there, they pursued, they pursued a goal without knowing what, they pursued a goal without having an invitation, without any idea of what the hell was going to happen when they got there and the result was you had political liquidation, you had the in-fighting of Trotskyites, shysterites and Stalinites, we called them in those days, plus the companies of course were, I have never known a company who accepted basic honest democratic rank and file unionism, never once and I don't know anybody else that has unless he wants to lie about it. The, their class interests have always been uppermost. Sure they make concessions but only when, in their opinion, failure to do so would be more costly than whatever expenses were involved in the concessions. You had to wring concessions out of them. Well you have to take into consideration that with all of the turmoil that was going on the war had come to an end, the objective of smashing the fascist axis had been completed and Roosevelt died, you had a complete 180 degree reversal in foreign policy, you had the Cold War ushering in almost immediately with the bombing of Hiroshima and everybody began to take sides. Now into this picture, bear in mind, Roosevelt having a little, I'll be going back and forth, but Roosevelt had decided to run for a fourth term, towards the end of the war and he came up with a program I think it was called the New Economic Bill of Rights which we thought was very important, we supported it, it was in many ways similar to the beverage plan put forth by the British Labor Party and adopted almost entirely by the World Federation of Trade Unions and the CIO which at that time was affiliated to the World Federation of Trade Unions. The, well, in the local politics, Humphrey ran for mayor, '43, somewhere around there.

CR: Yeah, '43.

EDM: He was defeated and he stuck around though and he had some job at the University. It was brought to my attention by other leaders of the union movement there that he was a very likely candidate for mayor and that we ought to support him and, I didn't know him from a bale of hay, much of anything else, so I relied on what the, our people up there thought.

CR: Well he was a logical choice and in that election he accepted the support of the left and the labor movement and didn't make a bad mayor.

EDM: I'm coming to that.

CR: Yeah.

EDM: I'll come to that, anyway to make a long story short, we threw support, we put staff people on, we put money on, we assured him that we would elect him. Now all we wanted from him was the Chief of Police and he agreed. We elected him and he came to our district council, he thanked us, threw his arms around me in front of the entire delegation, said he would never forget us for what we did for him and he was right, he never did forget us, but I'll come to how he remembered us. Well he was elected, a few weeks after he's in office, I get a call from Minneapolis, I don't remember whether it was Bergstrom or one of the staff guys, that the mayor was red-baiting. I was in my Chicago office, and I said well what do you want me to do about that, why are you so surprised. They said well we want you to talk to us, fine set up a meeting. Bob Wishart was the one, that's right, because he was the one who took me to the mayor's office and then he left. The mayor threw his arms around me as though he was greeting a long lost brother and when I disentangled myself from his warm embrace I said Hubert, the boys tell me you're red-baiting and he did something that completely disconcerted me, he looked at me and tears welled up in his eyes and my first reaction was when I get back to office I'm going to beat some guys over the head, I've injured this man. And then he said but Ernie you've got to understand I have to red-bait. And I said come on what do you mean you have to red-bait, why do you feel you have to red-bait. He said I have to red-bait to maintain my credentials as a liberal. I have never forgot it, you know, and then to change the subject he turned, there was nothing on his desk but a pile of letters with checks attached to them. He said Ernie, I'm being asked to run for Senator and he handed these to me and [unclear], those checks in those days, the smallest one was \$500, \$1,000, \$1500, \$2,000, those were big checks in 19, this must have been '45, '46, right in that period, I don't know the exact, I can't remember the exact timing.

CR: Well he was mayor from '46-47.

EDM: So it was in the early, right after he was mayor in 1945 and they were all from Louisiana, Texas and Oklahoma. I said Hubert this is the oil crowd. He said well I haven't made up my mind yet and I said come on Hubert, this is your campaign fund, your mind's made up, what the hell, why would you want to become a mayor if you can be the Senator of the state of Minnesota. Well to make a long story short he went on became Senator, and he became one of the leading persons in the United States Senate in the attack against the UE and against the Left generally. And for this of course he became the big hero, here was a man with oh, you know I'm missing the whole struggle, the Democratic Farmer Labor Party, but we can touch on that later.

CR: Yeah, we'll come back.

EDM: I, you know, I used to hit the hill quite a bit in Washington in our lobbying activities and I would run into him very regularly. Never once did we speak, we would pass each other in the corridors, we would sometimes be in the same meeting place, not even so much as a hello to each other.

CR: This is when he's in the United States Senate.

EDM: This is when he's in the United States Senate. He was a, what you might call, well he was a political chameleon, you know the story I tell on that because as an organizer you tell stories about

the, this, they threw this red flag over this guy and he turned red, they threw a blue, over this chameleon, the blue flag over and it turned blue, then a green flag, it turned green, then they threw scotch plaid over it and the damn thing busted trying to make good. Well that was what in my opinion eventually wound up with the reason why with all the successes he had he never, he never got the real prize that he wanted. We, then what began to happen in the, as you know there were two basic movements in the CIO, in 1949 the, Phil Murray, the CIO convention in November, we had a meeting, UE delegation, of top committee of 6, 5 or 6, [unclear]. We met with them in the hotel and to make a long story short it was the, we tried to patch up whatever differences we had. Sometime before that convention in the 1946 strike steel settled for a one year contract with a re-opener the following year, which to say that I believe it was '47 that they would negotiate what the company, what the basic steel industries in the month of February for 28 days and if they failed to achieve any resolution of their differences the old contract would remain in effect for another year. So in my little paper I wrote an article entitled "You Are My Meat" and I started out by saying the theme of Phil Murray's marching song reminds me of the old hit tune "I Surrender Dear", went on to explain the whole steel deal and then wound up with something that I, that Debs had written, I may have polished it up a bit, but something to the effect Debs said follow not such a leader for a leader may lead you into the land of milk and honey but in all probability he will lead you into the wilderness for when a leader says ye are my sheep he means you are my mutton, in other words you are my meat. I'd forgotten about the damn thing but Slim Connelly who was the director of the CIO on the West Coast at that time, he got a hold of it, printed up 50,000 copies of it, spread it up and down the goddamn West Coast and I get a call from Fitzgerald and, the UE president, said what the hell are you, what are you saying about Phil Murray, I said I'm not saying a, a couple of months had rolled by and hell in a couple of months I was involved in a one hundred and one things, what are you talking about. He says something about 'you are my meat' and I laughed like hell, I told him what it was about. I refer to that because the 1949 where we're at this meeting, Murray wagged a boney finger in my face and says hey Ernie wipe that sneer off your face, sneering he went on is a peculiarly reprehensible form of idiocy and you know he has his whole pack around him, everybody laughed like hell. And I was sitting between Mattless and Emsback and I got up and they said, I'm credited with having a temper, I says I'm not going to hit him, I'm going to piss on him. Well the next day the convention opened and he gave a long big story about he had made the greatest settlement, negotiated the most advanced position in the whole history of organized labor, a private pension plan calling for \$100 a month including social security, which at the time was 68.50 and a few months later was raised to 98.50, so for a buck and a half a month he took the attention of the whole delegation away from the split which seemed to be a foregone conclusion, the Catholic Church was lined up, for Christ's sake you didn't know whether that was a meeting of seminarians or of trade unionists. The Catholic Church played a very bad role in that entire period. They were particularly powerful in the trade union movement because in the wave that came in prior to World War I, workers from central and southern Europe, they were mainly Catholic and they were the ones that were being organized for the first time. Here we come into the first real crisis and you have the Catholic Church playing a very reactionary role lead by Father Owen Rice. The association of Catholic Trade Unionists was the organization they led so we had, we had to deal at that time with the split in the CIO, the attacks of the Catholic Church, the attacks of the so-called liberals, the employers of course who the ones who were orchestrating the whole damn thing, and confusion in the Party. Absolute, in my opinion absolute confusion. Oh you've got, the Party didn't think so, they were convinced that they had the goddamn touchstone, but they didn't, they, and I think the reason for that was so few of them had a real trade union background, had no idea what

the hell was going on in the trade union movement, some guy in a room would be making policy. Christ we who were involved in it on a day to day basis would have one, do we go this way do we go that way you know based upon what we saw, we who were intimately attached to the problems, some guy who doesn't know what the goddamn problem is was giving us the answers or thought he was. Anyway to make a long story short, the employer attacks, and they were endless, we were in one goddamn strike in that district after another, no let-up for several years. Never had a situation in a period of I don't know a dozen years without having anywhere from five to twenty strikes on our hands simultaneously, never let up and some of the guys got tired, wore out, others were glad to look for any goddamn way out of that kind of a endless struggle, resources were, [unclear] we were taking losses. The, Walter Reuther was playing a vicious game, his guys were fingering people that they called reds, I don't know what was, who knew who were Party members, who weren't, they were doing a lot of fingering, they were making back door deals with employers, the employers would force a situation where the workers would strike and then the, they started it, the UAW started it. They would meet with the company, come out with a deal, they'd go to the workers and say look, the company will never deal with those goddamn reds, join the UAW, we'll get you back to work and we'll get you a contract. This was done in many places. Then others got into the scheme. Well by 1949 Carry, Jim Carey, the Cockroach we called him, now this, he had a special distinction Jim Carey did, he's the only US trade unionist who was the president of two international unions, one considered left, the other considered right. His distinction is he was kicked out of both. He was the, he was a, like Lech Walesa, he was a media event, he was a nothing, you know how he got to be president of the UE. A footnote, when we formed the organization in Buffalow in 1936 we didn't have two thin dimes to rub together, we had hopes and dreams and desire and the will to do something about it. He was the president of a federal local union at Philco in Philadelphia and what with the deal he made with the company and Iron Pants Johnson who was the, headed up the, goddamn, the Blue Eagle, the NRA, National Recovery Act, you got a union shop out of it, you'll get, and he came up with two months per capita, \$5,000. Well in those days \$5,000 was as big as the moon wrapped up in gold foil so what did he want for that, he wanted to be president, what the hell did we care about it, we weren't interested in offices, we wanted the, we had something with which to work. He got to be president, it was the biggest goddamn mistake that was ever made in my opinion but that's history, we made it, we turned down the guy who was the head of the ILGWU for years, his name escapes me. Always rode a bicycle, red-baiter, he put what's his name on, Lovestone on as his international, head of his international department, who offered to give us at one point \$30,000 provided he could get three people on our Board of Directors and he'd give us some staff people. We told him the organization wasn't for sale. Now, go ahead maybe you have some questions.

CR: Yeah, to place this in time, you're talking about the period from the end of '48 into the early '50s.

EDM: Well I've gotten as far as '49 because now we have a split in the CIO, we have a split in the UE's, well you know we say we withdrew, in a sense we did, we withdrew one day before we got expelled.

CR: Okay, but placing this employer offensive and the strikes into perspective, you were talking about right after the war like '46 to '49.

EDM: Well there was a period when a guy by the name of Earl Browder, you've heard of Earl

Browder...

CR: Yeah.

EDM: ...came up with the theory to build around Tehran, idea capsulized it into his position was that the enlightened capitalists of America would recognize the inevitability of communism and would be cooperate with the inevitable. Well I saw Earl and I said Earl where the hell are these goddamn enlightened capitalists you're talking about. We're battling them for one goddamn end of my district to the other and of course he dismissed that as being a non sequitur...

CR: That's '44-45.

EDM: '44-45. Talking in the, just as the war was ending because we had the no-strike pledge you know and the Tehran came at the tail end of the war, it was the beginning of the negotiations which resolved the whole peace operations in [unclear] east, and the European phase of the war at that time. We're talking about the latter part of '45 and the early part of '46, now when the hell was he removed, sometime in '46 wasn't it, I don't know...

CR: No, actually it was the end of '45. The end of '45 or early '46.

EDM: It would have been early '46, in my recollection, now I as I say I'm basing that on memory, so we had, you had division in the Party, everything there was division everywhere. The country was embarked on new directions, there was considerable talk, I think Gene Dennis came in and he was forecasting a depression as you know and when we got a recession in 1949 it looked like, it wouldn't for, with the depression still fresh in everybody's mind but it turned out it was just one of these cyclical recessions that are normal under the whole capitalist economy. The, I, we were involved in so goddamn many things, oh we, one name that escapes, just comes back to me, he was not in the union, but in the general left, Sam Davis, he edited the, I don't know whether he was...

CR: Minnesota Labor.

EDM: That was it, that was it, and Sam was a, was an inflexible left-winger with, tended to be a little sectarian in my opinion, maybe it didn't look that way to others but he was in all kinds of hot water, there was always a battle about that goddamn newspaper, we always, right to the very end we supported him and I supported him because people up there said well it [unclear]\_ support, the...when the, after the split took place, I'm talking the '49 split now I was pretty worn out, I was in a hospital in Chicago and what's his name, oh, just before we come to '49, the Progressive Party campaign, I was gung ho for Wallace, as a matter of fact, District 11 which was our district up there was the only labor organization that officially endorsed Henry Wallace. We paid a heavy price for that. The politician from Independence Missouri may have been a great guy as far as the power structure in this country is concerned, in my opinion he was a no-good vicious bastard and he proved it time and again. With a little bit of sophistication cause he had around him great liberals like Humphrey, and Paul Douglas in Chicago, reactionary no-good son of a bitch in my opinion, but he wore the label of Mr. Liberal, the, that I think began to establish some basic differences because at about that time and shortly before it you had the whole struggle to destroy the Farmer Labor Party. I use the word destroy, it wasn't a merger, it was a merger only in terms, in actual fact it meant the destruction of the old Farmer Labor Party. The Farmer Labor Party at that time used to



operate in caucuses and it may interest you to know that Mondale could never get himself elected a delegate from his caucus and they decided to do something about that sort of thing and they set up gangs who they kind of prettied it up a bit but they used gangs with baseball bats to break up caucuses to keep people out if they, we'd find out later you know they were tied in with the whole, I think the guy's name was Ryan who was elected, who was made the Chief of Police instead of the person we wanted and he was working closely with J. Edgar Hoover, they had the names of all the left wingers, whether they were Party people or not I don't know, but they had the names of all the people who were active in the Farmer Labor Party, they were kept out of the caucuses and control was established, and there was a very democratic thing, democratic in the sense that those who were permitted to be in the meeting, a majority of them voted for the merger and for the new Democratic Farmer Labor Party. There's some people would be disturbed about that aspect of it, but I think if you want to know what happened, that's what was happening. Mondale was one of the guys who was active in leading these gangs and I called them fascist gangs, in breaking up Farmer Labor caucuses. I don't know whether you've come across that phase of it or not.

CR: No I haven't.

EDM: Well I felt all along that the Left didn't know what the hell it was doing or where it was going at that time. Its policies were wrong then, I think they're wrong now as far as the labor movement's concerned. But that's another story. You're talking about the Left though and I don't know how you can talk about the Left without talking about that too.

CR: No, you have to talk about it in the context of the politics.

EDM: Have you seen Gus on this trip?

CR: No, I haven't seen him or talked to him for 20 or 30 years.

EDM: Okay. I, it hasn't been that long, but we're not on speaking terms either.

CR: I'm willing to talk to him but he won't talk to me. I ran across him in a celebration for Johnny Bernard up in northern Minnesota. And Gus walked in, he was the main big speaker there and just as I was walking out I says hi Gus and he went on by.

EDM: Yeah, funny thing, the last time I saw him was almost the same way, they had this affair for John Randolph the actor, just a few months ago at the Plaza Hotel, the only time in my life I've been in that goddamn fancy hotel and I was in the john and as I was coming Gus, going out Gus was coming in. He says Hi how are you and I said fine how are you, he stuck his hand out, I stuck mine out, we shook and that was it. But the...in that period right after 1949, early '50, cause the split took place in November of 1949 as I think I've already mentioned, in 1950 Wishart made a deal with the IUE, International Union of Electrical Workers. I don't know what the deal was, Fortier made a deal with the Teamsters, Moline made a deal with the auto workers, the idea was to partition the UE among as many unions as possible, everybody was assured a piece of the pie. Hathaway was in 1145 and that still held with the UE...

CR: 1139.

EDM: 1139, right, yes. And we had some differences. I liked Clarence by the way, I liked him very much as a person, policy we had some differences. He had the feeling that 1139 would be like a rock of Gibraltar and no question about it, there was awfully good people there, we had a lawyer there by the name of Doug Hall, I think he's still around, he was involved, we had the Western Electric Plant in St. Paul and I don't want to go into a lot of detail other than while we're sitting down with him and discussing how, I'm sitting down with him personally working out how we'll go about dealing with Wishart cause there's a lot of legal questions involved, the question of property, the question of funds, existing contracts, and while I'm doing this with him, there's a registered letter in the mails telling me how sorry he is that he was leaving and...

CR: Who?

EDM: Doug Hall.

CR: Doug Hall.

EDM: Doug Hall was double dealing you know...

CR: Yeah, okay.

EDM: In any other situation he would be disbarred for that sort of a thing, talk about conflict of interest anyway, I mention this because when the, when the vote came for disaffiliation I was barred from the Honeywell meeting. They were afraid that I would be able to sway the audience. Well in 1939 there was no problem about that, Clarence Hathaway took off, he was not at the meeting where the vote was going to take place, I don't know why, I don't know whether the, it was a moment of indecision or he didn't want to be out in front and...

CR: Probably didn't want to be out in front.

EDM: Yeah, anyway...

CR: He was under a lot of fire...

EDM: Oh, I could tell you about fire, anyway to get back to what was happening, we had this meeting of 1145 and Doug Hall is going to speak for the IUE and he insisted that he be the last one to speak and I said listen this is a UE meeting, you want to speak for the other side, that's fine but I am the last one that's going to speak here and I'm going to deal with what the hell ever it is you have to say because you're trying to tell these people to leave. Well he spoke, he didn't make much of an impression, to make a long story short, when I got through speaking we got the vote overwhelmingly and then suddenly Hathaway appeared and I said what the...I have to turn this around, I guess you'll have to do the same...

END SIDE ONE TAPE ONE

TAPE ONE SIDE TWO

EDM: Yeah, that's working, okay. The, where the hell was I?

CR: Hathaway has just come in the [unclear]

EDM: Oh, yeah, there were a couple of guys in the locals, a fellow by the name of Freeman, I don't, not related to the, to Jim Shield's son-in-law...

CR: No.

EDM: But, plus another guy whose name I can't think of at the moment, they, I said to Clarence I think these two guys are going to lead a breakaway movement. Clarence said oh no, you're defaming them, I disagree with you in [unclear] but I don't [unclear], I'm not giving you, I'm just telling you in my opinion these guys are going to, to make a long story short on that local elections came up, Freeman ran against Clarence Hathaway. Clarence Hathaway left the meeting in Minneapolis before the count was in, he was on his way to Chicago, he was going to, telling me see you're all wrong you little son of a bitch, but before he came to the office he called Vera, his wife, and it turned out that he lost by four or five votes, and Vera, however I knew this before he did because Vera called me and says where's Clarence, he left for Chicago and I said I don't know, if he's in Chicago I assume he'll [unclear] get in touch with me, when he did I gave him the news. And he said that's not possible, I said Clarence then you'd better call Vera because she's the one that gave me the vote. Well he called up there and he insisted on having a recount. Well instead of picking up votes he lost a couple, to make a long story short he was wiped out of it. The Party there was involved in the wrecking of the UE, this I know for a fact and you must know that.

CR: No, I don't.

EDM: Where the hell were you, you were supposed to be in charge there.

CR: We didn't [unclear] enough people in the UE or anyplace else to make much difference.

EDM: Well let me give you a couple of examples, you had a guy by the name of Leo Govanini.

CR: Okay.

EDM: He was the chief shop steward in electric machinery, the plant about 700 people at that time. The raid was on so what does he do two weeks before the goddamn raid, he takes his vacation. Now he was a red-hot red, Christ he was peddling that goddamn Daily Worker everywhere he went. But two weeks before a convention where the life of the union was at stake he took a vacation. We lost that election by two votes, now I don't know how much influence he had as chief shop steward but if he took off two weeks before the election he didn't want that goddamn election won, he didn't even participate in the election.

CR: What year are we talking about here now?

EDM: Shit, I'm not sure anymore.

CR: '49-50?

EDM: Well that would have been '50.

CR: '50, yeah. Yeah, I left there in the fall of '49, I'm not, I'm not familiar...

EDM: Well it would have been '50 or '51 because you see it depends, some of the, where the contracts were are still in effect, it would have to have been done in that way. The, when the, and Local 1140, I think that was Howard Fortier's local they had election on the voting procedure to go into the Teamsters Union and it was done at the union hall with the participation of all the employers, they let their workers off with pay to go the union hall. You know these countries believed in democracy, companies believed in democracy and they were practicing it. I'm giving, you know, I'm jumping back and forth because one thing tickles my memory on something else but the overall situation was one where disintegration was taking place, it was taking place. The CIO was being gutted of its best forces. Yes, some of them were communists, many of them were, more of them were not communists, good decent hard militant workers who wanted to fight to improve their conditions. They were cleaned out. In their place company agents, they were, with connections they had with the police and the FBI, guys who were felons were paroled to the companies, given jobs, put in the goddamn union because we had, that was part of their job, join the goddamn union, if we had union shops they had to join, if not they joined paid their dues because there was a period when the union shop was not as common then as it is now so you had, you had a turmoil inside the union, you had people who were Party, Wishart was a Party guy...

CR: He stopped being a Party guy before [unclear]

EDM: Well, I don't know when he stopped, nobody...

CR: I never could figure out why he was a member of the Party, do you know?

EDM: Well I wouldn't, who the hell up there was in charge, I don't know it was a, it was a strange operation. But anyway he made his deal with Honeywell. We, the only other connection was the chief shop steward, the Honeywell plant in Chicago was also a Party guy and but we didn't have a union shop there we were collecting in, you know, the stewards would collect the money, turn it over to the chief shop steward who would then turn it over to the secretary treasurer of the local union. He ran off, he stole the money and I went in there and told him that he had to pay up or we'd run him out of the goddamn plant. Well he didn't pay, he ran and I forget the name of the plant manager down there, he said well you're getting rid of him because of the internal turmoil in the union, I said since when are you supporting a goddamn thief for a union officer, he backed off on that and that was end of that. We still, the UE still has the Honeywell situation in Chicago. The well you have the, you have the failure of the Progressive Party, you have the Cold War, you have the Taft-Hartley Law replacing the Wagner Act and that there was a difference. The Wagner Act protected workers' rights to organize, the Taft-Hartley Law protected the company's right to oppose unionism and still does. So they will, you know, those an impartiality here, the employer who has the economic power, who has the same right to oppose a union as a worker with no economic power to want a union. The result was that the employer's hands were strengthened considerably and where they had contracts that they didn't like they forced workers on strike with the hope of breaking the union. And with the militant forces being gutted, with the prosperity of the post-war period, the hell you had a devastated world and we were the only ones in a way that could supply the needs of a vast portion of the world, created jobs for a generation that knew mass unemployment and those who were working at practically nothing, very low wages, we had made a tremendous change in the economic conditions of workers and so many workers felt what the hell,

the whole purpose of the move was to get jobs wasn't it, and to get decent pay, well we got these so what the hell more do you want of us. In the meantime the people, the workers were leaving the inner cities, they were buying homes in the suburbs by the millions and the, the whole character of their lives changed. There's a hell of a big difference from being in a cold water flat to having your own little place in the goddamn suburbs and the value of these homes with inflation kept increasing. I was, I remember telling Vic Purlow once, he was worrying, worried about why there was a loss [unclear] in the work, well for one thing, the decent leadership was destroyed by the government, by the government with the help of many other forces. The conditions of the workers changed, and they gave us an example, there's a brother-in-law of mine was in the army, he got out of the army, gets a Vet loan to buy a home, 4.25% interest, he pays \$17,750 for that home, he lived in it for 22 years and he sold it for \$80,000. This has happened to millions of American workers. You've got these money stores running around, don't sit on your asses, come. They're and people are living much of the, because people are spending more now than they're earning, not just the government you know, it seems to be the American way now, the American dream is to get by, let your kids worry about the bills. The, I'm giving you some of the things that were happening because no one single event, no one single force, it was a combination of forces that overwhelmed the decent progressive forces in America and I hope, and while I know that Humphrey is considered as a saint up there in my opinion he had a tarnished halo. We had an election end in Massachusetts when he was Senator and we would have won that election, but two Senators took out full page ads in the Lynn newspaper, Senator Kennedy, before he became president, and Senator Humphrey. Humphrey was at that time, I don't know whether he was chairing the Armed Services Committee or not, but he had, he had a lot to do with military procurement and his statement said that if the purchase of the, and they had big government orders up there, it was a large plant, that if they voted for the UE he would see to it that it would get no orders. That, well half your liberal, you do what a liberal has to do, huh, you defend the capitalist system.

CR: What, was this the Lynn...

EDM: The Lynn General Electric Plant, at that time I think the, there, 7 or 8,000 voted and the difference in the vote was a swing of 50 votes would have made the difference, or 100. I don't know, some, it was that close a vote. The so you had, you had as I see it, the capitalist class is a very well organized, up until the '30s, Minnesota was practically a, Minneapolis was a scab town.

CR: It was open shop.

EDM: Completely. The battles that took place in the early '30s, the Teamsters, the Dunn Brothers, Fallon - was that his name, I don't remember, God help my memory...

CR: You mean the Dunns.

EDM: The Dunns, yeah, Vince Dunn, Bill Dunn was active in the mines up in, not Minnesota, Montana. Plus a number of strikes in the metal shops, the upsurge that we went through in the early '40s changed the character of that town, and I'll say for them that they, they knew how to bend with the wind. They, what they couldn't stop, they accepted on the surface, changed their tactics, bored for within to change the characters of the unions. Since smashing the unions has happened after World War I, the tactic after World War II was to change the character, keep the old wine bottles, but pour in a new wine. That's essentially what happened. The Left wasn't equipped to understand

that or to face up to it. Assuming that they wanted to, I don't know.

CR: Well let's assume they wanted to. What do you think was the impact of the 1948 Wallace campaign [unclear]

EDM: I'll answer that, but first cause you just railroad, in 1946 Gene Dennis replaces...

CR: Browder...

EDM: Browder, new militant left, huh, at least that was the picture that was given. November of 1946 he's in power of office a few months, we have a CIO convention in Atlantic City, the delegation to that convention who were Party people were instructed to vote for a resolution, the famous resolution on [unclear] communists. Did you know that?

CR: Yeah.

EDM: I voted against it. One other person voted against it, Joe Stack of the seaman's union, National Maritime Union. They took him into a back room and beat his brains in and he recanted. I was told that I had broke discipline and I said wait a minute fellas, our people are being red-baited, how do we defend them with this kind of a resolution, I'm against it. Stubborn, I wouldn't change my mind, never have.

CR: That was the turning point.

EDM: That was the beginning of the end of the Communist Party being an effective force in the American trade union movement. You see a guy like Ben Gold who was openly a communist [unclear] voting for that kind of a resolution, as did everybody else, do you know what it's like to stand up in a goddamn convention where everybody is yelling for the goddamn scalp of a red and this is the first time in the CIO by the way where you have a rising vote, all those in favor stand up and I remained seated, all those opposed stand up, and I looked around that fucking hall and see my, I'm like Custer at Wounded Knee and I was reminded only a few years ago that I broke discipline, some memories are very long. They learn nothing from history, course that comes from being infallible. On the question of the impact of the Wallace campaign, the, there was considerable...

CR: Do you think this isolated the Left?

EDM: Shit, the Left, the Left, there were many other factors. I felt that too much of the Left was concentrated in an ethnic group that didn't have its roots in the trade union movement, in the working class, that and in that sense were sectarian, a guy like Jack Stachel, for years leading the Labor Commission, he didn't know shit from shinola about the labor movement. You had Fred Fine, now you know Fred Fine...

CR: I know Fred and Jack both.

EDM: Yeah, what did Fred know about, he played up as a guy who voted once on a resolution of an AF of L convention, and that was the fucking highlight of his activity in the trade union movement. He operated out of Chicago, didn't know that UE had the Stillwarner(?) plant, the big Stillwarner plant. He said to me you never had it, and I said, I don't want to go into it [unclear],

anyway to get back to there was just, you know, there was considerable concern in the country as Roosevelt died, the war came to an end, the whole question of what was going to be our policy, would it be one of continuing the grand coalition against fascism, a new era in international affairs, or would it be what appeared to be in the picture at the time, the first indications of a bitter cold war. Wallace took what we thought, and I personally thought, was a progressive position, I supported him. So did Murray, so did the CIO but then some strange things happened...

CR: Early on it was one thing.

EDM: Yes.

CR: Later it became something else.

EDM: Well, so let me, you see, you have to be intimately involved in certain things in the trade union movement to know what makes certain people change their minds. I am not one who had much respect for Phil Murray, back in 1937 I was, John L., if you want a little bit of background, John L. Lewis assigned me to, oh he asked the UE for an organizer with Italian background to go into Alaquippa and to make a long story short, he'd, four people, they wanted an ex-coal miner, that was Porter, because there were a lot of coal miners in, working in the steel mill. They wanted a Jew, Mallinger, because they wanted contact with the merchants in the town, they wanted a Slav, that was Smiley Chatack because of the Slavs and they wanted an Italian, that was me. Well...

CR: They get them all from the Left.

EDM: All from the Left. The head of the, of Jones and Lockland was a guy who later quit and became the president of Republic Steel, a little massacre involved, I can't think of his name now, but he published a full page ad in the, in the local gazette there saying that the community, the tranquility of this community is about to be disturbed by mad dogs, CIO organizers are mad dogs and there's only one way to deal with mad dogs in parentheses you shoot mad dogs. He signed it, that's when John L. Lewis called on us. Well I won't go into all the details but we didn't operate openly in Alaquippa, we had to do it in underground fashion, in cellars, in the woods, across the river in Ambridge. We succeeded in signing up I don't know something like 85-90% of that plant, and we were in a very crucial point now with no, we couldn't go any further, we had to act, now mind you the Wagner Act had not yet been, was being contested, appealed to the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court hadn't ruled yet and so we decided we had to strike. We went to Pittsburgh to meet with, there was Phil Murray, McDonald, Clinton, Van Bitner, I always refer to him as Van Bitchner, they couldn't make up their minds and Mallinger leaned over to me and says to me oh why don't you tell Phil that if he can't make up his mind that we'll call John L. Lewis to make the decision. So I said well look Phil if it's difficult to make up your mind maybe we ought to bring in another one who's had vast experience in these matters, John L. Lewis. He hit the fucking ceiling, I never saw anything like it, he went into a tantrum and finally settled down, he wagged his finger at us, says okay, you have my permission to shut that plant down, but if you don't succeed you're all fired. Hell, we went back to Alaquippa that night, we were as happy as sparrows on fresh fallen horseshit, got in front of that plant at the Y and we shut her down. Next morning Governor Earl in big open, I don't know whether Lincolns or Cadillacs were in the front car, and you had a whole series of them, all the way, the four of us who did all the goddamn dirty work, who's necks were stuck out a mile, Gurdler, Tom Gurdler is the name of the guy who was the plant manager, said he

would never deal with the union. Well the thing was, the strike was settled on the basis of an election, the election was held, the steel workers won, the steel workers organized, the first integrated steel company won exclusive collective bargaining rights, it was a big break through and Murray got dizzy with success and thought he could do the rest of it with little steel and to make, you know what happened in little steel. Murray was for, I'll go into, give you background now, what happened, what suddenly changed, there was a, I forget the name of the committee, it was a broad committee of scientists and community leaders that in which Phil Murray was involved.

CR: Independent Political Action Committee or something...

EDM: Yeah, something, you know I can't remember all these various committees that have been set up over the years, but something was happening in Chicago that changed his mind. During the war liquor was not obtainable. The only thing you, the only thing you could was Southern Comfort which was, and Puerto Rican Rum. If you wanted real whiskey, that was hard to get. Now our ambassador to England, Joe Kennedy, he was signing up the deal to control Scotch Whiskey sold in the United States and Canada, I don't know whether you knew that or not, but the, if you wanted liquor you could get all you wanted in Canada, so there was a guy, and his name escapes me, who was the regional director for steel in Detroit, Joe Gamano was regional director in Chicago, John Dougherty was the international representative of, [unclear] pardon me, he was the special representative of Phil Murray for steel in Illinois and Missouri and there was a, the regional director in Missouri was and southern Illinois was a guy by the, Koigitinsky I think it was, Timmons who was the vice president of steel was also involved, they were running booze from Canada into Detroit, into Chicago where they had an operation on the south side which was the distributing headquarters and they were shipping that stuff into downstate Illinois and Missouri and of course into Wisconsin. An investigation was made and the pressure was on. The guys who were supporting the re-election of...

CR: Truman?

EDM: Truman, and Truman, they got a hold of Phil Murray, and said hey, you don't change your position, we'll have your ass. And all of these guys are going to go to the slammer, nice clean politics the way they're played in Chicago. Well, Phil Murray was a weakling anyway, you should know that, I regarded him as one of the weakest bastards I've ever had to deal with. The only time he could be tough was when he was going after some left winger, he could be a vicious little bastard then, well what the hell it didn't take any great strength to be [unclear], here's some poor little guy believing you know whatever his beliefs were, but he's alone, he's isolated and the whole goddamn world is against him, and this guy here has a goddamn, he went in for physical beatings of people. Guys who were active left wingers in the steel workers union were beaten up, I was beaten up as chairing the, I was the chairman of the resolutions committee and vice president of the Illinois State CIO, the resolutions committee had three steel workers on it, we were, no resolution could be reported out unless it was approved by the committee. I'm reporting a resolution and someone yelled out look out DeMaio and some goddamn ape is coming at me from the rear to give me a karate chop, I turned my head in time, he caught me in the temple, and my damn head [unclear] for two weeks. Lloyd McBride who later became the president of the steel workers union, an asshole if there ever was one, but reaction was looking for strong men because if you're going to have a democracy you have a strong, you need a strong man to impose their brand of democracy. The union and I was having serious differences with the guys, with the Party guys, tried to convince me



that I misunderstood and didn't understand the intricacies involved in supporting Murray and I said you guys are full of shit, he's a company man, he's a vicious bastard, he's playing, he's playing footsie, he thinks he's going to buy his way into heaven, and his name in history by selling out to the bosses. Anyway he changed. This created all kinds of consternation, confusion, and with everybody falling off the bandwagon. And [unclear] amazing thing is principles are not very strongly held things in this country. I now refer to a labor statesman as a trade unionist who rises above principle. And they've done that consistently in political moderates, they're the ones who wring their hands in agony over the excesses of the capitalist system which they're sworn to uphold. That was my good friend, Humphrey, who could agonize over the excesses as he participated in them. The, there was no way, there was no way that the whole question of improved relations with the Soviet Union could stand up because the Cold War was aimed not only at the Soviet Union but at the progressive forces in the United States. It was a class operation and the class position prevailed not only on an international scale but very much at home cause you have to know what was also going on in the background. Foster Dulles who played an important role in foreign policy, when Eisenhower became president, went to him and said that he had a program for the, with the support of the, no he had a program for the destruction of the Soviet Union, the problem then was that they needed 50 atom bombs and I think they had only 6. Later on when he came back in the, and for that reason the joint chiefs of staff wouldn't support Dulles, but later on when the joint chiefs, when they remedied that shortcoming and the joint chiefs of staff agreed and Foster Dulles went back to Eisenhower, Eisenhower said but what will the people think. We now arrive at a point around 1954, that's when the second split took place. Because even though with the split, the UE remained a very strong and viable force and together with others it was the only thing that was left that could have rallied the people in this country against a war. The role of the Left at that time was to seek unity by liquidating itself again. Now I'm going into, there's no short easy answers to the questions you've come to find they're the answers to. Because it's a highly complicated picture, there are many forces at work and the, I feel that the American working class under the most extreme difficult conditions, managed somehow to maintain some honor, some credibility, I will not say that for the trade union bureaucracy. In the main they became whores, if they weren't whores already, if they weren't agents. They abandoned all struggles of the people, a no struggle policy. Oh yes they would engage in seeking little legislative crumbs, we, I'll give you an example of the kind of crumbs we got in the very early period right after World War II. Have you ever heard of the Burns Act?

CR: I don't think so.

EDM: Burns was one of the big political, he became a Senator and I don't know whether he was Secretary of State of a while or not, or, Secretary of the Department of the, Department of Defense, I don't, one of those positions, but anyway while he was in the Senate, he introduced a bill to outlaw the transporting of strike breakers from one state to another with the intent of breaking a strike, and that was played up as a great victory, great legislative victory for labor. No case has ever been prosecuted under that law because you can't prove intent. We got legislation that was meaningless, we got the Humphrey act on...

CR: Full employment.

EDM: Full employment, huh.

CR: Yeah.

EDM: That's all it was, the full employment was a full statement, there was no meat in it, it never worked, it was never intended to work, it was to make this liberal look like he was a liberal because the role of the liberals is when the right wing, which is the Republicans which are the preferred political party, when they engage in excesses and their mass base erodes, the Democratic liberals step into the picture and they play that role, as he played it well. I'm not questioning the ability with which he pursued whatever it was he wanted to pursue, but his game was to appear to be a friend of the people, to be a liberal, at the same time to deliver the people to those who were exploiting them. Now you can't say you know that the fault was with the trade unionists who under pressures broke, some left the fight, others crossed over to the other side, or the Party people whoever they were, whatever they were, wherever they were, who for various reasons broke, abandoned the movement, or so I don't put the full blame at all on the Left, I think it was overwhelmed, I think it was infiltrated, I think the trade unions were overwhelmed, I think they, I know they were infiltrated. I've had, I could give you chapter and verse on that. This is a capitalist system and it's a capitalist system because they're in control. They were not about to share that control, they aren't about to do it today. The Reagan policy is their policy and it's a short-sighted policy as it always is because greed, there is no end to it, it becomes excessive and they engage in excesses, this stupidity, I don't think that the, this trade law is going to solve any problems, I don't believe in protectionism because protectionism protects employers in this country who aren't able to compete on equal terms with competition either in this country or abroad and I don't believe in giving them that protection. But some companies want it, and so they have to make, because of the conflict of interest that there is in the Congress, they, barrel, log-rolling, one thing or another, they made the, they came to this bill, but what excuse does he give that giving 60 days warning will create a hardship on employers. Well the facts are that 11 million workers have lost their jobs because of plant closings in this country and they say let it be voluntary. Well if it's going to be a hardship why would they volunteer, you know, it's a, but I mention this because their power is great, it's not endless, they have overstepped their, in an effort to destabilize the Soviet Union, force it to divert its resources and manpower from construction to defense, we've slowed them down and created problems for them, but in the process we damn near destroyed ourselves, we're up to our eyeballs in debt. We see no way out, and I'm, cause I think all of the forces that are at work and all of these excesses as a period of gestation, there's going to be real hard, there is already real hardship in this country for some 40-45 million people who live below the poverty line, this is in a period of relative prosperity. There are cracks showing in this relative prosperity and there is genuine fear developing, the debts, the Latin American debt which we can't collect, our own debt which is growing, it's one thing to pay interest on an internal debt, but when you pay that interest to debts outside of the country and it's now the fastest arising item in the budget and it's the third behind social security which is not really part of the budget but, next to social security and the Department of Defense is the rising cost of defense. Now they say what we need is savings in this country, that's a code word for austerity, there is no way that we can save the kind of money that we're paying out annually in debts, over 50, 150 billion dollars a year now. The, if we don't have the money to rebuild, I'm not saying they can't adjust it, but I think Humpty Dumpty has fallen off the wall, and I don't think they're going to be able to put it together again, they talk about the next generation paying the tab, the next generation is next year, the next president no matter who he is is [unclear] to have to impose a much heavier tax load, that tax load will have its adverse impact not only on the living standards of the people, but on industry generally, we're going to see unemployment rise, at first it may be just a short burst,

there'll be a slight pick-up, then I expect to see the thing unravel, don't give, ask me for a time, I know you've heard this for more than 50 years, but there's a big difference in the situation after World War II and today.

CR: Do you expect a resurgence of the American labor movement at this point?

EDM: Yes.

CR: Do you think the American labor movement can organize the lower 2/3s of the, economically of the working class in America.

EDM: I say yes but of certain conditions and the conditions are a new leadership will have to come out of the trade union movement. The current leadership and I'm talking about Kirkland, he couldn't organize his way out of a wet paper bag, he's not interested in it, his interests are foreign, because he is, through his national endowment for democracy, through his AFELD(?) and the other sibling organizations in his foreign policy program, he is the pursuing the policies of American imperialism. He's gotta go, now if you're not going to fight the employer at home, you're not going to fight him abroad, you create the conditions of abroad that American industry has found so appealing, that they've been closing their goddamn plants and going abroad. You know, the beginning of the century we appealed to millions of foreigners to come here because we were building up the country. Now we are shipping the work out to the them, there's a difference. But to get back to your question, yes, I think that the American working people will, are sorting things now. I'm beginning to see certain things happening that are indicating a change in direction, a change in direction calls for a change in policy, that calls for a change in leadership. That means there will be a struggle for leadership in the trade union movement in this country and that I'm not talking now very far down the road, the scraps that will be thrown to the people will be small potatoes, the country is too bankrupt to make the kind of concessions that it should make. We have not only bankrupted this country, we've bankrupted all of Latin America and the problems that we'll, because of the globalization of capitalism, you cannot have a crisis here without creating a crisis in the rest of the system. There will be differences, the uneven development of various economies, but yes I see a resurgence, I see a rebirth of democracy, if I didn't think that, I wouldn't have a, I would have no reason to go on living.

CR: How much of the problem of the...

EDM: Would you like a cup of coffee?

CR: Yeah.

EDM: Well I'll answer your question, we can take these things in there and...

CR: Okay, well I was going to ask you in terms of a historic view of this whole thing, the, you refer to the importation of the American working class to construct the industry in America, that's exactly what it was, the thing about the CIO organizing drive, the drive of the '30s and '40s is that it finally accomplished the organization of those workers and their immediate descendants. As recently as 1937 you presented the American working class was still foreign born. With that organization accomplished, and with the rise of...

EDM: And you know we need another one...

END TAPE ONE, SIDE TWO

TAPE TWO, SIDE ONE

EMD: Cline, Trown Ironworks [unclear] in Minneapolis, there were some Trots there, local shop people worked together, work out whatever their demands were going to be to the company, this going back, anyway the proposal was to get a 25 cents an hour across the board increase. The Trot's position was ask for \$1 an hour, no way of getting a dollar an hour without a strike and even with a strike you don't get that. You settle for, you settle for the 25 you expected to get, what was their position, the leadership sold out. They took that position in situation after situation, or variations depending on the particular platform, I'm giving you just this sort of a thing as an example, to the point where I got it up to here with them. Party people were so goddamn sectarian you know, they would come in, I remember once having a district council meeting, somebody sends me a little piece of paper scribbled on it, you got to pass a resolution supporting Bulgaria on something. I didn't know what was going on in Bulgaria so I said to the guy, I'll give you a fucking piece of paper, what is it specifically you want us to do, don't tell me support Bulgaria, go to a meeting say hey let's pass a resolution supporting Bulgaria, what kind of bullshit is that, he didn't know either.

CR: Well the same thing holds for the incident about the Trotskyites in Crown Ironworks, the Party probably came out with a leaflet attacking their most international betrayers of the working class or something else with general phraseology that had nothing to do with issues the workers were [unclear]

EDM: Nothing, nothing whatsoever.

CR: And it was of course a characteristic of the Party to engage in this kind of general politicking that in fact often alienated them from the working class.

EDM: And the mainstream puritan [?] movement in 1955, '56 I refused to liquidate the union cause that's what it was, mainstream my ass, you know they were peddling the line that you would be permitted to pursue your policies, you know, you would be, you would no longer be isolated, you would no longer be under attack, you would be in the mainstream of labor, you'd have a nice job, paid more money than you're getting now and, everything is wonderful except for one thing, you're full of shit, it isn't going to happen. What you do is liquidating the, when I refused to do it Clud Lightfoot and the Pig, that's the only thing I ever called him, Fred Kushner, called a meeting in Chicago, all the Party people and they denounced me as an enemy of the working class. I was standing on countless affidavits in those days, they were setting me up.

CR: You had to sign the affidavits.

EDM: Sure, every year.

CR: Sure, sure. Well I think it was pretty much of a dead-end on that issue, where could you go.

EDM: And, you were caught in the middle on that one, if you signed it you were a no-good son of a bitch cause you wouldn't stand up for your rights, why didn't you come out in the open see. I

think the praise they used were, we disdained to hide our views, I said later I want to tell you guys something, you can't kill an idea but you sure as hell can kill people who have ideas. If you guys can't distinguish between those two points you don't know where the hell it's at.

CR: I remember sitting up until four o'clock one night with you and Matt Weiss in Minnesota, I had a council meeting coming up the next morning and you were critical as hell of the UE because you said the building trades were getting better settlements than we got and I said you don't understand, you're talking about skilled workers whereas in industrial unionism, you have both skilled and unskilled and where our averages will be lower, but our skills, skill for skill is as good as theirs, and some cases even better. But Matt Weiss was proposing something that I wouldn't buy. Matt Weiss said why don't you call a meeting in Minneapolis, Twin Cities of all the Party people and progressives. I said I don't know have to tell you what that period was like, for Christ's sake, red hunting was one of the great sports in America at that time, every no-good son of a bitch in America was involved in it, and I said to him Matt, I would assume that at least one person in that crowd was a goddamned agent, you're asking me to pull together in one fucking room anybody in this area has got any balls so that the fucking enemy will know who they are and chop their heads off, oh he couldn't convince me and I couldn't convince him. He went down to Chicago, you weren't involved then, with the same fucking position. Then I'll show you, he Gil Green, and I like Gil Green as a person, but he Gil Green, Kushner and the woman Kushner eventually married, I forget, Chloe Halvor she was at that time, and Lou Torry, met in my home and their proposition was that we all come out in the open as Party people. In the first place, there's a Taft-Hartley law, this is 1949, the goddamn Taft-Hartley law, how can we do that and survive? Well they couldn't convince me, so we had a democratic meeting, huh, five to one, I told them they were crazy, they voted for it, Lou [unclear], Sam Cushin wasn't in the plan, he had nothing to lose, what did Matt Weiss have to lose, what did Gil Green have to lose, Flo Hall, she's steward of the, [unclear], of the Storewarner plant, she came out, but this is how she came out in the open. She was assigned to get the permit for a park, where the local union would have the picnic and she reported, I think this was in, I don't know, March or April of 1949, would have to have been March because she was, what happened in April, maybe it was February, I'm a little hazy on dates. She got up and reported that she got the permit and where the picnic would be held and she wound up her report on the picnic by saying incidentally I'm a member of the Communist Party. I wasn't there, but people told me about it, I got a call that night from someone you see you no good son of a bitch, she did it. Well what the hell are you talking about, who the hell are you and what the hell are you talking about. Well, Flo Hall got up and admitted she was a communist and he says and nothing happened. I said well you caught everybody by surprise, when they get over the surprise the goddamn roof will cave in on her, sure enough it did. Not only did it cave in on her, but she would come to the union hall and she would go visiting all the other leaders in the shop at their homes with the line that if they didn't fight for her they would be next. They were next. On April 1st, 1949 the Stewart Water Company, Sunbeam and Foot Brothers fired every officer and steward we had, those three plants fired 500 officers and stewards in one day. That's a piece of history you won't read about. The, and there was, the first recession had hit, post-World War II recession, work was slack, there was no way you could put pressure on the goddamn company, we are caught in an impossible position. She went around telling people that I was going to lead a national campaign for her. And I said I don't know where the hell you got that idea, I've got a goddamn union to run, she was a very modest person, she would refer to herself as the Rosa Luxembourgh of the trade union movement. And Lou Torry who, I don't know whether you knew them, Lou Torry was equally modest, he would refer to himself as

the Lenin of the trade union movement. Egos. Unbelievable, well you know I won't say that they were the main cause of whatever disasters befell us, but they contributed. It was a slaughter. So you see the American ruling class can afford to be gentle when it sees no threat, but when it sees a threat you can put that on the tape if you want to. The American ruling class will tolerate a trade union movement or left political organizations as long as they aren't a threat, but if they are a threat they will move to destroy them. And in many ways with their economic power, with their police power, infiltration, court rulings, I'll give you an example, we were raided in 1956 I believe by the Machinists Union at the Sunbeam plant, big plant. At the time I don't know, maybe 4,000 people in the bargaining unit. We won the election, the company contested it on the grounds that the trustees of the local did not sign a non-communist affidavit, the rules did not require that trustees sign. The company appealed it, the regional director Bock, of the National Labor Relations Board, ruled in our favor, but then a change took place at the national level, they took the power of the decision on appeals from the national board and put it in the hands of a general attorney, general council. Regional director Bock was elevated to general consul of the national board, general consul Bock overruled regional director Bock, same goddamn case, except two different rulings. It didn't matter, the law meant nothing, they had made the law, all of the things that had been happening to sections of the trade union movement were perfected in that period, when the rest of the movement not only sat by but often participated. They were, the lions were doing the killing and they were the jackals going in for the kill, picking up whatever bones and pieces of meat they could, and what they couldn't get the vultures took. It was a, I go into this because I am concerned that I don't think that what happened to America has been that good. We've had soft years, we've lived high on the hog, we haven't faced up to our real problems and they're all coming home to roost. We're living in a world that can be a very great danger to this country. They're concerned about their way of life, forget it, I think this is nothing but the, the bluish is nothing more than the fever and it's a deathbed fever. Now I am not personal about these things, I think that some capitalists can be very decent people, as a matter of fact I know and demonstrably it shows, on Mother's Day they love their mothers, they love their wives and they love their mistresses too. They love their children if they're certain of their paternity and to the extent that this country will indulge their greed, they love their country. But only to that extent. Very often the leadership of the AF of L will talk about good capitalists and bad capitalists. It has been my experience and I've dealt with many of them across the bargaining tables from big companies to small and everything in between, in the struggle for the marketplace whether it's at home or abroad price, quality are two basic factors, and that's true today, more so now maybe than ever because we thought we could get away with dynamic obsolescence, putting out shoddy products, putting our best engineers to work on how to make them shoddy. I'll give you an example, in 1950 we met with General David Sarnoff, chairman of the board of RCA, we congratulated him on the new TVs they were producing at the time and he said yes, but they have a problem. We were curious to know what the problem was, he said that they were making them too good but he had his engineers working on that, if he were alive today and I were to run into him I would say General your engineers did such a goddamn good job the Japanese has the business and your company doesn't exist anymore. We, to get back to this competition, the best employer assuming there is a person who isn't motivated by greed, who isn't concerned about the bottom line, every three months, wants to do what is right, he has to compete with the most vicious bastard in his particular field of endeavor, if he doesn't the other guy will undersell him, it will soon drive him out of business, so regardless of what scruples he may have, he is compelled to play the game of the worst bastard in his field and he does, that's business. That's the system. So if you kick your people in the teeth, if you run roughshod over them to the extent that you can exploit others,

for example today in the Macleadora, in northern Mexico, across the Rio Grande border, where hundreds of thousands of jobs from this country have been transferred down there, three years ago at a, I was invited to speak at the University of Mexico on some labor problems and the question of money, loans, those two issues. The UAW was represented there, someone in their national office by the name of Price. The automobile industry in Mexico is the largest industry there, employs many thousands of people, they're organized into unions that are affiliated with the ICFTU, that's the International Confederation of Free Trade Unionists, so is the UAW now. But for 30 years they've been trying to arrange meetings with the UAW to co-ordinate their policies on trade union matters with the same corporations. The UAW refused to meet with them. They would meet with them on a personal level, on a social level, but not on an organization level. So I raised this question and Price spoke after me, mind you, this, there are all Mexicans around us except for a few of us from the States, he said he resented my remarks and he wanted to know, the audience, people there to know that the UAW was not opposed to meeting with unions in other countries. He went on to say we meet with the unions in Japan, they're rich, and we meet with the unions in West Germany, they're rich. I, you know, what kind of an idiot is this, I turned to the audience, there [unclear] really have it folks, get rich and the UAW will meet with you. Well the point is no trade act is going to change that. The real issue on the whole trade act was this, there's no way that big business in this country will agree to legislation that will prohibit them from bringing the goods that they're made, that are being made with cheap labor abroad back into the country. Until the dollar gets so goddamn cheap that it no longer is profitable to make it abroad, so the prospect is that the dollar will get cheaper or if it doesn't get cheaper, they'll rebuild factories in America, but it'll be a slow process because they want to get their investments out of those countries before they do it. Now that's a long, and those problems confront the situation in Minnesota, many of the shops up there, there was a tremendous exodus from Minnesota to South Dakota as you must be aware. Did I tell you a story on the phone the other day about Ball?

CR: Yeah.

EDM: Browder, Bridges and Benson. Thank god we Republicans of South Dakota have no Browders, no Bensons, and no balls. The, they ran aware for cheaper labor and the UE ran up there after them in Sioux Falls, they took on Litton, terrific battle, finally won it. Now there's several other plants that they've organized recently in South Dakota and the Crown Iron Works which abandoned the operation in Minneapolis and moved to yet Anoka, is there Anoka central...

CR: Yeah.

EDM: Maybe, I think it's there they moved, well the union followed them there and organized a plant there, so some of the, some of the loose ends are being gathered. This is in response to your question, is there any hope, is there a prospect, very much so. I don't think the universities would be interested if they didn't think so.

CR: I was going to ask you your feeling about this question of the nature of the organization of the CIO with respect to achieving the organization of the immigrant workers in the first generation. Subsequently of course through membership in the CIO they have elevated their position to very substantially to constituting almost an aristocracy of American labor...

EDM: Well what happened, go ahead...

CR: ...but is there some actually long term historic in the fact that this in a sense completed a cycle of the history of American labor.

EDM: Well I wouldn't say it completed, I would say it would be a continuation of a sort of a cyclical rise and...

CR: In other words...

EDM: [Unclear]

CR: ...those workers achieved their mission in life, to have industrial organization, to attain some better status in society.

EDM: Yes, but I would not put it that they were satisfied with that, this is where the crushing of the progressive forces to achieve that objective, the capitalism can afford to be a bit paternalistic if it in the long run is profitable to be that way, after all the main objective of the New Deal was to provide buying power to be part of the pump priming process of trying to get American industry back on its feet. It was never complete and because of the, that, it never achieved the objectives set out for it, but in the failure of these objectives, where the workers realized that while they had a government had a benign position on organizing that if they were to get anywhere at all they would have to take matters into their hands because what we got out of the NRA, the National Recovery Act was company unionism, America was, every major corporation in America had a company union, employees' representation plan, Section 7A of the NRA said workers had the right to organize, when the Wagner Act came they took that same position, section 7A of the Wagner Act, there's still section 7A of the Taft-Hartley Law, but the difference was that the Wagner Act put some teeth into the law that protected the workers' rights. The employers however much they might collectively agree that this was necessary for the furtherance of their own system, you remember the famous phrase of Roosevelt, unreconstructed economic royalists. The system knew that it was, it had to do certain things. But the anarchy came in that nobody could control the system. [tape clicks] These people would get together on the various codes of the NRA, they would agree on pricing, they would agree on wages and what's, they couldn't get home fast enough to their home offices to see who could be, take advantage of the guys who were honest by cheating. That is what led to the demise on the one hand of the employer's support for the NRA and the realization on the part of the workers that if organization was to come, it was to come from them. So it was in that sense a broad democratic movement that swept American and what appealed to them and the reason why I think the UE grew so fast and became so powerful and so active was we put forth the whole concept of democratic rank and file unionism with all inclusive, involving all sections of the working class, age, sex, color, skills, religion, politics. And to aggressively pursue a policy that would defend and advance their interest and welfare, it caught on, it grew. The, what undermined it was a combination of forces, the war, the loss of changes that were taking place in the economy, the opportunities that were opening up in the post war period of expansion of production and world trade. This, these opportunities led to upward mobility, workers could go from the blue collar to white collar, go into the communities, set themselves up in small businesses, one thing or another, a lot of that happened and for the great masses of them those who had jobs who were working for the first time, not only a full week but as many hours as they wanted to put in, Christ with that overtime they bought homes in the suburbs, suburb living, well you no longer had the cohesiveness of these foreign groups, but you had little ghettos in every major city, you had the Italians here, you had the



Poles here, you had the Jews here, you had the Germans and the Irish and so on in their own little communities, that vanished after World War II with the exodus from the inner cities to the suburbs. At the same time the Russ Brothers developed a cotton picking machine, they developed it before the war, but it didn't go into production until after the war. The cotton picking machine made it possible for one machine to pick 20 acres a day as against an acre a day for a cotton picker. The only thing that kept the south together with the blacks in practical slavery was the fact that they needed them to pick cotton. The rest of the year there were, they had plows, they had the tractors, everything was mechanical. When that was mechanized they no longer needed the blacks so while the whites were leaving the inner cities for the suburbs, the blacks, the southerners were giving them bus fare to leave the south and go to the north. And you had here this tremendous upheaval taking place, not only in the southern economy but in the northern economy. I got into heated arguments, I went down to Dixie twice with cameras taking pictures to show what was happening down there and the argument that the Party people were putting up was that they will never mechanize because it's cheaper to exploit labor than it is to buy machinery and I said for Christ's sake that's theory, this is practice, this is what the hell is going on. They wouldn't buy it. When it became a moot question they were no longer arguing, let's not talk about the past, let's talk about the future. So all these factors were playing, now, as far as the outlook of the workers. My experience was that the white worker began to feel that the conditions in the factory were such that if he possibly could he didn't want his children to get a job in the shop. That whatever else might happen he wanted his kids to get an education, a better education than he had and we had this tremendous expansion in popular education, my God we had, a college education when I was a boy was a rare thing, that was only the wealthy, you go from that to where almost anybody could go to a college and millions of them did, plus the GIs who were given all kinds of loans and [unclear] then there are still certain kind of loans that you can get that were not available in my time. The result is you had a white working class that was glad to leave the factory, the grease monkey jobs to the blacks or the Hispanics and to the Asians as they were coming in to replace them. So you had a shift taking place in the composition of the working class and with that shift you had new problems, some of them dealing now not only with problems in the shop but in community relations. The black, as they moved in from the south they concentrated into black ghettos. The black politicians for the first time had a mass base and they were able to develop at first a little bit of political power, an alderman in the cities, or city councilman, some got jobs, appointed jobs in the various communities, mayors later on, congressmen, they got a piece of political power and one of the first things they fought for, now this is where the backbone of the conservatives of the AF of L-CIO were broken, well let's say the old AF of L, the skilled trades. One of the first things the blacks did was to fight for control of the vocational schools, they saw to it their kids got jobs learning how to be machinists, tool and die makers, lathe operators, in the building trades, how to be a mechanic, how to be a carpenter, a plumber, an electrician, so on down the line, bricklayer etc. Well the big thing that made the old AF of L so conservative was the fact that the building trades had a lock on construction and the deal that they had was as follows. The deal was with the contractors, they would supply the skilled labor, the contractors would hire only the union members and the union would try to, would keep out of the field any contractor that wasn't a member of the contractor's association so you had the contractors in the association dealing in a master agreement with the unions and each supported the other, whatever increases they got was passed on to the public. So it was a good deal for the contractors, it was a good deal for the unions, but then when the blacks began to train by the thousands, these young blacks the question of jobs came up and the union thought they would pull a fast one, they, you remember there was these struggles of the Pittsburgh

plan and the Philadelphia plan and the Chicago plan. Essentially what they were was the unions found that they had to give way so what they agreed to do was they would give working permits to blacks, not membership, working permits. What they thought was well what the hell, when things are busy these guys will have jobs, but when things are slack they'll get laid off and our members will have the jobs. What they didn't bank on was or stop to think of the side effect which was that now you had contractors who were barred from construction because they didn't have skilled labor. Now there were thousands of blacks in every community who not only had theoretical training but practical experience and they were available. So these got into the field, first in bungalow busting as they called it, you know repair work. But then they got bigger and they bid for jobs and since they were unorganized they were able to underbid the contractors who were organized. In desperation the contractors went double breasted which meant they set up a dummy corporation, they would put forth two bids, one as an unorganized, and the other organized. Obviously, except for government contracts, all private contracts went to the unorganized. And then they would go to the union and say look we've always gotten along, we like your people, but we've got this job on this basis and your people, are welcome to have these jobs but they'll have to take a smaller wage so you had a situation where union members paying union dues would work two or three days on the other government job, and the rest of the week on a private job getting maybe 2/3 the pay. To make a long story short, some people got more union, more government work, others got less, get divisions in the union, you have a breakdown. So a big struggle took place over the common situs bill, you may have heard of it. Common situs meant this, in the building trades if you cannot, the Taft-Hartley law says you cannot have a secondary boycott, so if one union's on strike you cannot strike in sympathy. So what they wanted was an exception for the building trades, that if one union in the building trades struck, all others would recognize the picket line. In the Ford administration the Congress passed it, Ford vetoed it. When Carter ran for president, he promised the building trades that if he were elected he would sign it, and Congress passed the bill he would sign it. I said to our friends on 23rd Street, that's the tip-off, the Congress will not pass the bill, you got to know how these guys play the game, as long as they knew the goddamn bill was going to be vetoed a lot of these guys passed it, and they could go to their friends in the trade union and say see we supported the bill, it's that no good bastard in the White House. Well once they got a guy in the White House who promises to sign, they didn't pass the goddamn bill. Now this is the way the game works, this is how some people can be liberals and never do anything. So you see my friend, it isn't just a question of if people were satisfied. My God, you find, you show me, here and there you'll find individuals who are satisfied, but as a group, as a mass, people always want more. Hell, if they're spending more money than they earn and you know that's, that can be, I don't have the statistics handy but I could sure make a case for that, people are up to their eyeballs in debt. They're going into debt at a, at a three times faster than their wages and salaries are increasing so you know that the debt keeps getting bigger and bigger and bigger. Now I don't know of anybody who likes being in debt, or who likes paying the high interest rates on that debt. So it wasn't a question of being satisfied, it was a question of their, the cohesion, the forces that held them together were destroyed and everybody, then when you have, when you have the decent leadership killed off, the guys that took their place, what have they trading on, what they hell, they've been trading off the things that were won in the days when the labor movement was in motion and getting things. That's called concession bargaining. The trade union leadership loses credibility, that goes on for a while until the union itself is threatened, when that is threatened even though the top guy may be getting his fancy salary, there's a lot of secondary leadership who begin to get restless, uneasy, because they see their futures dipping, vanishing and so what I begin to see and I think I'm a fairly

perceptive observer of what's going on in the labor movement. I not only follow it closely, I read up on it and I'm in touch with a lot of people. There's a many indications that I see of very hopeful signs, not just for the labor movement, but for the country, cause I don't think we can have in the long wrong a healthy America if we don't have a healthy working class. The working class is different, it's the constructive force in the society, they're the builders, they're the ones who keep the, who run the country, it can't operate without them. It can operate without capitalists, that's been proven, it can't operate without workers. And unless that working, once the working class begins to understand that and what is happening is as a result of more education and where some of that education is badly flawed, it does force some of them to think and in the thinking process as the squeeze is on more and more minds will eventually turn to why am I in the mess I'm in and what do I about it. And the best indication of that was the response and I don't particularly like the guy because I operated with him in Chicago for a number of years, but the response that Jackson has been getting to the pitch he is making, there is a longing for a basic program, there is a recognized need for it, what is absent is a, and this is what bothers me about Jackson, I want to see a strong democratic movement run from down below. The concept of rank and file as I understand it is the rank is the, are the soldiers, no the rank are the officers, the file are the soldiers but in rank and file unionism those officers are elected by the men, and women as the case may be, they're elected, and responsible to them and controlled, the policies controlled by them. Now this process is not going to be an easy one, there's going to be failures, but the efforts are underway and progress here and there is being made, right now. Harvard, I spoke in New Haven when the workers who run the, were organizing and this guy Barmothy who is now the national president of the American League baseball, he was the head, he was the president of Yale, he fought that damn union tooth and nail. And the union won, the union won in spite of the opposition, they just won in Harvard, Harvard is appealing the election. I spoke at the, at Princeton, I used to go down there annually, they used to speak at the, what the hell do they call it, the Woodrow Wilson School of Political Economy I think it's, something like that, and I was asked by one of the students, they said they were, he was interested in the union and they were running into a lot of opposition, facing all these rich kids and I said well look this is an ivy league school, there are, the children of the rich are getting their education here and part of their education is how to exploit the working class, now you've got to understand that. Well the professor, when it was over, he said you had some goddamn nerve talking to those people like that, do you know there was a Rockefeller out there. I don't give a fuck who was out there, I'm asked a question, I'm going to answer it. The, there is a, labor's been crushed many times in this country but the one thing that's been, that's you know, I'll tell you one other thing, remind me, I was asked the other day to give a definition of Browderism. But before I do that, the upsurges in the trade union movement have always been outside of the mainstream, when the Knights of Labor were the mainstream, it was the AF of L that took up the cudgels for the 8 hour day and the Knights of Labor vanished. Once the AF of L became entrenched then you had movements that began to challenge it, Gene Debs and his American Railway Union which led the great Pullman Strike and then expanded to take in the whole question of transport and of course they crushed it. Cleveland, President Cleveland called out the Armed Forces to crush it, then you had the well before the 8 hour day did not begin, well we're going back. You had Gene Debs, then you had the Wobblies and bits of the struggles that they put up, that was outside of the AF of L. Then you had the CIO outside of the AF of L but then when class collaboration set in, there was no need for class collaborating unions, they united. Now the question in my mind, will the movement take place outside of the AF of L-CIO or in it. I'm inclined to think that it will be inside the AF of L-CIO this time, but what is new is the development of coalitions in this country, political

coalitions on just about every goddamn thing you can think of, mobilizing the people, they are not restricted by the bureaucracy of the trade union movement and to the extent that they push hard, they become a balance of power in many ways. Two percent can determine the outcome of most elections in this country, national, regional, local, and you have coalitions that have that, of course it varies in some cases, places, it's more than that. But the coalitions can be the balance of power with their swing vote. That would begin, when the trade unions find those who are active and want to do something, that they are running into blind alleys within the AF of L-CIO, they will move into these coalitions, these coalitions and their presence inside the trade union movement will have an interacting effect and will lead to a new upsurge at a much higher political level than the CIO was.

CR: Do you see a political left in that?

EDM: Well the whole movement will be left, will it be the Communist Party? I don't think the Communist, I think the Communist Party's discredited.

CR: I'm not sure that the working class needs to buy a vanguard...

EDM: Well you know...

CR: ...some little different concept here...

EDM: Well on the question of vanguard, it's one thing to call yourself a vanguard, but if you're going to call yourself one you'd better be one, and if you aren't one then you become discredited. And in the course of time irrelevant I suppose. But will there be a Left? There will always be a Left because let's understand first what do I mean by Left, the term originated in the European parliaments where the representatives of the farmers and workers were seated in the left bank of seats in the Chamber of Deputies and in the parliaments throughout the Europe. So the Left was always the representative of the workers and the peasants.

CR: And theoretically left of center.

EDM: Of course. And then, well then you had the middle class in the middle and on the right you had the landowners, the manufacturers, the financiers. That pretty much is the picture all over the world in varying degrees depending upon how highly developed these countries are, but in the United States, there will always be a working class. As a matter of fact it's growing, the conditions of that working class also are changing. You have, there isn't very much difference between pushing a button in an office and pushing a button in a factory. There's a big breakdown in the distinctions. Some blue collar workers are dealing with very expensive and every intricate machinery. They have to know something about computers, tape controls, their [unclear], all kinds of dials and goddamn flashing lights that they have to watch that can be quite a drain on them. So as I see it, the, all of these changes will...

END TAPE TWO, SIDE ONE

TAPE TWO, SIDE TWO

CR: ...get a little further along here, there's something with your question.

EDM: Okay.

CR: Yes I think the Left has accomplished tremendous things and I think that the Left plays a certain kind of a historic role in the American society and the American political system as it is, certainly it has been a force for energizing protest movements of all kinds. Certainly its advocacy of basic and drastic reforms from time has resulted in lesser but significant reforms and I think its generally utopian views of a better world, unsound as they at times may have been, nevertheless have been a source of inspiration and giving perspective to movements which otherwise tend to get stuck in the status quo. So the Left has been an enemy of the status quo and...

EDM: Well as I see the Left...

CR: ...for that reason it plays a function that needs to be recognized, and this society of ours is a pluralistic kind of society, it does not stay entrapped in the rigid framework of the two party system, it doesn't stay trapped in the form of a Anglo-Saxon culture, it breaks out and to operate a pluralistic system you need the Left, you need the, in fact you need the tension and the struggle which by its very presence creates to generate some kind of progress.

EDM: I have a, some differences in the views, the Left is composed of two basic trends, reformist and revolutionary.

CR: Sure.

EDM: Reformism is operating within the capitalist system to seek whatever reforms it can, to be trite about it to make the system work better. I know in dealing with British, I've got the advantage of travelling around the world a great deal, I spent 12 years you know representing the World Federation of Trade Unions at the United Nations. So I got to meet trade union leaders around the world, socialist and communist leaders. Both are much more accepted around the world than they are here. Of course, and then when you talk about socialists, you have many brands of socialism, I had a debate, Harvey O'Connor was chairing it at Roosevelt University in Chicago a few years ago, quite a few years ago and I forget the name of the person I was debating and he cut me short, in the middle of [unclear], said I want you to know young man that I am a socialist. I said well good for you, now the question is what kind of a socialist are you, Hitler called himself a socialist, Nazi is an acronym of National Socialism. Mussolini was a socialist, he edited the socialist paper Avanti. Now my friend is, the question that occurs to me are you a socialist who believes in socialism. Well that broke up that...the, I think we're getting to a point with the, where there's a polarization of wealth taking place in the country, you have, we no longer, a millionaire is no longer that big a thing, talk in terms of billionaires now. And when I worked on, you know, did a little bit of research work about a year or so ago it correlated to about one million people living in poverty for every billionaire we have. When you have, and even the Wall Street Journal and Business Week now are commenting adversely on the huge salaries that chief executive officers are getting, no other country in the world pays its top people the fancy salaries that are paid here and they don't earn it. I have, I have a very low opinion of American capitalists, and that's because of, maybe familiarity breeds contempt, but I've had to deal with them a long long time over a long stretch of years. Many of them quite shallow, taken them outside of whatever little field they're in and they don't know a goddamn thing, they aren't even coherent. It was easy, you could get rich in this country without working at it too hard. But when you have to deal with people, with capitalists in

countries who come, who have to fight for every damn thing they get, who are lean and hard and hungry, we can't compete with them. We can't sell the goddamn shoddy stuff that we used to sell. I think that what we're going to see and what we are seeing, it's already in the gestation period in my opinion, there is and will be a growing left, maybe not in the same terms that you and I thought of when we were a hell of a lot younger than we are now, the, that's a, I don't know, it's, decay, they've lost, they've lost their sense of direction or what the hell ever it is, but I'm not going to worry about that because whether or not they survive, there's going to be a Left, how it will organize itself, or what organizational forms it will take, I'm not sure at this moment. I gave you, earlier, I thought of these vast coalitions, the huge number of them, somebody will come along with the magnetic personality who can pull together these ad hoc operations into one huge umbrella and move it with tidal force in a progressive direction. And it'll be far more advanced than anything we've had up to now and it will curtail in my opinion many of the practices that capitalists are engaging in now. This deregulation, this laissez-faire-ism, what in the hell, this is going back to the early days of capitalism. And all of the evils of the early days of capitalism are being reconstituted and the you know, you could say, well what's wrong with Reagan, we've had six years of prosperity, the longest piece of, hell if you want to go a trillion dollars in debt, almost a trillion and a half now, I will live high on the hog if the bankers will give me unlimited credit and never bother to call on me to pay up. If I have somebody else to bequeath all those debts to. We have lived in a, we have lived in a false paradise, the dream is, when we wanted an actor, and we got an actor, the symbol was more important than reality, but reality, I don't care how many symbols you have are very stubborn, it will be there when the symbols vanish. And what we're seeing is sort of a tragic thing in a way, here's this guy at the tail end of his political career, a pathetic thing looking to the stars for guidance. It would be, you know and a lot of people have made fun of it, but here's a man who's guided by the stars and yet is almost never, the box that has the button that can destroy the world, is never out of his reach. I sometimes wonder is there a closet diviner of chicken entrails in the White House. You want to ask me about Gorbachev. I've got his book there as you can see.

CR: Well, yeah, I think it's a legitimate question but it helps to change the nature of American politics as well as of Soviet politics, one way or another.

EDM: Well there's no question is change going there, and there's resistance to change. And I think the changes were necessary. I've been to the Soviet Union more than 50 times. So whatever is there is no stranger to me. I was going through the plant, a huge plant in Leningrad in the early 1970's, I'm 73, somewhere around there. And as I was being taken through the plant by the head of the union and the plant manager, I don't know what the hell their titles were, I, they were working on some generators, to give you an idea of the size of these, the stator, that's the part of the generator being stationary and then you have the rotor that whirls around inside. That stator was over 17 meters, that's over 53 feet, enormous fucking thing and very leisurely pace, and then I noticed that behind the machines, everywhere I went there'd be guys smoking cigarettes and I finally turned to the union man and I said is this a break. He said what do you mean, well is it rest period. He said oh no, I said well maybe, I asked several questions, finally he said to me what are you gonna ask. I said look these guys hiding behind the goddamn machine smoking cigarettes, no he said that's, people, anytime you want to smoke a cigarette, smoke a cigarette. And I said well what bothers me is there are many things this country doesn't have and you're never going to get them unless you make them, you know, if you want to eat bread, you've got to plant the goddamn wheat, you've got harvest it, you've got to mill it into grain, you've got to make the goddamn bread before you can eat

it. Do these people want automobiles and washing machines and refrigerators and better homes, well they've got to build them, they can't do that goofing off like this. I said, I wanted to get away from this damn manager, I said in the United States you couldn't get away from that and consequently we are more productive and because we are more productive in a bigger economy we are a great power. If you expect to be a great power and raise the living standards of the people at the same time, you got to do something about that. Well he said under socialism we can't push workers. I wrote an article on it, in which I stated most of those views. They began to take it easy and as I analyzed it, the trauma of World War II was very destructive, it created paranoia, they entered the Cold War after the Hot War you know, who the hell do you trust, our bosom pals are out to destroy us, Dulles talking about wiping them off the face of the earth, constantly some sort of a picture. I know that Schlesinger more recently called for an unprovoked pre-emptive nuclear strike against the Soviet Union, that was the Ford administration and Ford demanded his resignation because of it but nevertheless they became paranoid. That was one thing, the other is we began to close in, become like we don't, so many of our best young men and women died, were slaughtered in this goddamn massacre that they had to forgive each other. A new generation is coming in, they will no longer tolerate this, the past is over, we've wept, we've, the bleeding is finished. We now have to wipe that off the goddamn books and these guys who are sitting on their goddamn fannies becoming bureaucrats issuing orders without knowing, they knew the fucking answers before they knew the problems you know, and acted that way. The bureaucracy got in the way of progress, something had to give and I'm not saying it was entirely that way because when you consider where that country was and where it is today, obviously there's a hell of a lot of good there. Yesterday's New York Times had the front page story on how they developed a hydro, a superphonic plane that's propelled by hydrogen, we're nowhere near that. That's Tuesday, yes yesterday's paper. The, on the political scene, well I've written some stuff on it, I, this cult of the personality you know is a deadly business for one thing and the only question in my mind is when you condemn the cult of the, a new leader comes, well first you could never criticize the general secretary of the Party either here or anywhere else as long as they were general secretary. They had to die or had to be removed from office before you criticize them. That didn't seem to make sense to me. If you're going to have, don't talk democracy, practice democracy, that's where I come from. If there's democracy, and I don't consider the capitalist system that democratic, you have democracy among the owners.

CR: Does it look to you as though Gorbachev will succeed?

EDM: Yes. I say he'll succeed because I cannot, I cannot conceive of the alternative taking place. There are no viable options but to succeed. That doesn't mean that he doesn't trim his sails here and there, I know what it is and I've had only a small piece of power. When I had to direct a fairly large organization, and the pressures you have to feel, because a trade union is different from a political party, it is not homogeneous, it is made up of all the sectors of the population, you talk about being pluralistic in the trade union you have everything there is in the community. And you have to deal with that, you can't cater to one particular without creating tensions among all the others. So I know the pressure he's going through and I know the bureaucracy he has to contend with but you have a new young group, I remember oh maybe five years ago I was in a meeting with a young, I assume he's a communist, I don't know, you don't ask, and he was very bitter about the particular leader that he knew I was meeting with there and he said he's a no good drunken son of a bitch. He said you wait and see, you're going to meet with him and then he's going to find some excuse to go out and have a drink and then when it's all over in the evening he'll want to go to dinner with you

and then he'll be drinking and drinking and drinking. When the dinner is over he'll want to go to some goddamn place and do some more drinking. And I said you're exaggerating aren't you, he said two days from now we'll meet again. And sure enough I went through that whole goddamn thing. There's, they're tired of guys who are fucking incompetents, playing the game, they got their fannies in the butter tub and concerned only with their own interests. So that's changing and what I like, where he's different from Khrushchev, Khrushchev was making his changes only in the top levels, this guy is going to the people, that's the big difference. He's got a base with which to operate and, there's no question about it, the forces that feel the pressures, they're fighting back, they're creating problems, this thing could not have happened, I've been in the...in, shit...where, where the Mount Ararat is, Armenia. Yeah, I've been in Armenia, and there's no way that these demonstrations could take place unless the Party leadership was giving it the green light, no way. Oh the press will say this is spontaneous. Spontaneous my ass, I've been involved in organizing too fucking many meetings to think that there's that much spontaneity.

CR: No, in Armenia apparently, the official Party leadership took a stand on this question of fair deal for the Armenians, and that is unheard of. Now I don't know if what the Azerbaijan Party leaders [unclear]...

EDM: They did the same.

CR: But then you have conflict, someone has to resolve it.

EDM: Of course, one is to, you have an immovable object against an irresistible force, huh, and so you have conflict. So just this week they removed the leaders of both the Azerbaijan Party and the Armenian Party. I think that what he is, I'm encouraged, I'm encouraged because, let's set labels aside, just as this is an important country, the Soviet Union is an important, and potentially will have a greater impact in the years ahead than this country. I see this country going through a tremendous turmoil which will have an adverse effect on its development in many ways, and while they have turmoil there, what they're doing is at a very high industrial base, are breaking the chains that have been holding it back, they reached a peak and they either had to bust through the restraining barriers or recede and they opted with a new leadership to break through the restraints and the result is going to be a vast, oh yes, I watched the American corporations, a single corporation that's going to restructure. My God for two or three years there's no profits, or damn little profits, huh. Huge losses pile up, but once it's been restructured, then it goes ahead. Well if that happens with a single company, imagine when you're doing this with a vast fucking empire. There's going to be even if there was no opposition, there would be turmoil, there is opposition, there is turmoil but the point is where, from the base from which they're operating where are they going. As I see it, the big problem in this country is the reactionary forces don't want to see the INF Treaty ratified. They will ratify it, they're for the less, but the purpose of the resistance is to slow down any development towards a more important disarmament of the major intercontinental ballistic missiles, plus if there's any ground given at that level, then they want to be assured of a rebuilding up of conventional weapons so that the, the industrial forces of this country and this turmoil, cause I've been involved in this whole question of trade which I've been looking at, they want to do business with the Soviets, but they don't want to give up their war procurement either and this is a conflict. How is, that's for us to resolve, how do we resolve it. Gorbachev has decided the only way to resolve that, if you're going to be a strong nation, you have to have a strong economy. We have been industrialized, now maybe we think that we can, we can continue to have



hegemony over the world by waving stocks and bonds, but even that has proven to be what, a dream. That's, we set out to be the financial center of the world and we're getting the shit kicked out of us by the Japanese and the Germans and the British. For instance, we always thought that our banking system would be the greatest banking system in the world, we rank number three, did you know that? Britain is just about to be overtaken by Japan, and both are way ahead of the United States, they aren't in debt. Foreign, you know foreign debts. We are. So that we have to, we have to straighten out our house. In our determination and the big problem of the world's been the ideological question of what kind of social order will mankind have. Will we have a social order where individuals because of private initiative get up and go, could get rich, or is our whole purpose what we said the government, our constitution is, the purpose of government is to promote the general welfare. I think it's a grand political theory. The practice has been we have promoted the welfare of the generals, general voters, general electorate and the Pentagon brass. Now we have to resolve that problem. I think they're in the process of resolving theirs, pulling out of Afghanistan, and we don't want them to pull out. Right now we are violating the treaty, we're sending in all kinds of arms to the Muha...how the hell ever they pronounce it, to the opposition forces. We want to tie down the Russians, we want to bleed them to death if we can. So this poses a question in my mind, while it, in a world where it's possible for them to knock each other out and destroy the world in the process, a modus of vivendi has to be developed, some way of how do we live together. If we can't beat them, or if we're going to commit suicide in the process of trying to defeat them, how do we get along, now that's one level, and I'm for that, whatever compromises have to be made, because obviously it can't be one way, all one way or all the other way, there's got to be some meeting of minds and purposes. Where does that leave the class relationship within the countries. That struggle continues in my opinion.

CR: Yes, it also seems to me that the prospect of co-existence, the compromises that need to be made can open the door toward what one might call extensive or even fundamental kind of reforms in the American society. There's a great deal at stake in this respect in the question of armaments, whether the economy serves the purpose of army[?] work or not and then of what happens to the money, to the funding that should be available...

EDM: Your son-in-law's going to be coming along any moment.

CR: About five o'clock.

ED: It's five o'clock now, three minutes of.

CR: So, we can't draw the blueprints, we can talk potential perspectives, I agree with you very much on the estimate of what's going on in the Soviet Union, and its implications for America are enormous. Not from the old fashioned point of view that Communists used to look at it, that they're going to model themselves on the Russians.

EDM: I never thought that way.

CR: But on the inter-relationship...

EDM: I never felt that way.

CR: ...of the two countries.

EDM: If each country has its democratic norms and the people will decide what is best for them, and I am for every country determining its own fate. I think what this administration is doing, interfering in the internal affairs of other countries, and to the extent that any other country does it, is wrong. The [unclear], the United Nations has got to work, and by the way it's interesting that Gorbachev has reversed the policy of Gromiko on the UN, they all, when the United States was holding back on its dues to the UN, the Soviets began to hold back. The Soviets have paid up. The United States now is put, is on the spot. They have called for using the United Nations and the United Nations was used to bring about whatever truce they've made in Afghanistan. They are, they've called now again for the United Nations to try to bring about another series of meetings between Iraq and Iran and to try to use their good offices in the Middle East, but Israel here is opposed. Now Israel has reversed its policies. They were for Resolution 242 and the PLO was against it. The PLO is finally agreed to accept 242 and the Israelis won't touch it. Now, but my guess is this, Israel has squandered the good will it had as a result of the holocaust and that the impact of that is only beginning to be felt.

CR: [unclear] backing into a dead-end.

EDM: Yes, they will have to come to terms with the Arabs. And of course that's a mixed bag, when [unclear] see what's going on in Beirut, you know, you can't say that all the Arabs think alike.

CR: Yeah.

EDM: I want to show you what I'm working on.

CR: Okay. [tape clicks] That concludes the interview with Ernie DeMaio in Norwalk.

END INTERVIEW