

Harry DeBoer, Pauline DeBoer and Jake Cooper
Narrators

Sal Salerno
Interviewer

March 24th 1988
Minneapolis, Minnesota

SS: The first question is where you were born and when you were born.

HD: 1905 at Pole County, that's north...Minnesota.

SS: Northern Minnesota.

HD: Yeah.

SS: Okay, and that's where you spent most of your childhood.

HD: Yes, let's see, fortunately down in that area I used to, my dad used to, he had a big farm and he had, he'd hire mostly Wobblies and they'd have discussions every night practically so my mother would want to chase me to bed [unclear], so I hid behind the stools a lot of times so I could hear the discussions. So there's where I got some ideas [unclear] how folks will survive. That, to the extent of course we, my dad had a reputation as a Socialist but he was born in Europe, one of the reasons that stopped him from getting too active.

SS: Ah ha, where was he born?

HD: In Holland.

SS: Ah ha, and so he worked as a farmer here?

HD: Well, he never was a farmer, he was a horse trader, but they used a farm to take of the horses see.

SS: And so what did he hire people to do?

HD: To take of horses and then to do farm work, whatever, to raise food, to raise grain for the horses you see. But there'd always be Wobblies, course he hired Wobblies too, but there'd always be Wobblies coming over and talking with him and discussing [unclear] matters and so forth, yeah.

SS: And so how long, how long did you spend in that part of Minnesota.

HD: Well, I left when I was 15 years old, I was, I thought I'd be a boxer so I went and done some boxing, that's why I left there, but...

SS: Did you stay in the state or did you...

HD: No, I went, I kind of travelled, some of the Wobblies, there was one Wobbly who was kind of my trainer, he was an ex-fighter and we'd even [unclear] someplace.

SS: Yeah? What was his name? Do you remember?

HD: Golly, I should. It just slips my mind.

SS: That's okay, yeah, that's all right. So you went out of the state, which states did you go to?

HD: Well mainly in this area. Iowa and Omaha...

SS: Mostly in the Midwest.

HD: Mostly in the Midwest, yeah, and oh I think we got to Dallas, and stayed there, and, so...

SS: And you rode the rails wherever you went.

HD: Yeah.

SS: Did you go to Wobbly meetings?

HD: Yeah wherever we run into some, but that is to the extent I'd listen, but I never took much discussion and so forth.

SS: So you never joined the Wobblies.

HD: I never felt capable of holding my own I suppose in discussions and...see where I started then I fortunately went to work in a coal yard one winter, it kind of kept my legs strong, so I was boxing so, I run into the coal yards, Carl Skoglund, the Dunn Brothers and so [unclear] and I would purposely like to ride with Skoglund, they had their own trucks you see and then a lot of times they'd get a carrier, they'd need, the coal had to be carried from the truck to the home cause they couldn't drive up to it and then that was just what I wanted for my legs and most of them then'd take me then because I was young and strong legs and so forth, so that's how I got involved with the Party.

SS: Do you remember what year that was?

HD: That's be around '33 I think. Probably, it'd be '32 to begin with, ya see I'm talking about seasonal work you see, the coal it is...

SS: Just in the winter months.

HD: Yeah.

SS: Sure.

HD: And so there's where I finally got to meet them, finally had met Skoglund in various

discussions and so forth and then when they called the coal strike then they nominated me for captain of the pickets, that was the job I got for the coal strike. And then from the coal strike we on right in to organize workers, as a matter of fact, after the coal strike was won, you see Minneapolis was an open shop town, and no one, as a scab town you couldn't organize the Swedes in Minneapolis [unclear] so, it was Skoglund and the Party is what really taught the workers including me how to fight and needed a contract and so forth and so forth. And so I recall after the coal strike, it was the first strike that was won in 16 years and so Farrel Dobbs and I would spend nights at the union hall writing up members, the members would come in and the things they said was we want to join that coal drivers union and we pointed out, this was the Teamsters, they belonged to the Teamsters and the Teamsters International, and we didn't want to get in no fight with the Teamsters or the International you see, but they wanted that coal drivers leadership because we'd fight, wouldn't just carry a banner and holler at a guy, we'd stop them.

SS: Well, how long were you a boxer?

HD: Hm?

SS: How long were you a boxer?

HD: Well, just, I started when I was 15 years old and I recall...

SS: So that would have been in 1920 you started.

HD: Yeah, yeah. And I left and didn't use my name because of my mother, she didn't want to have no people know she raised beef, beets I mean, what am I trying...beans, so...but I never was good enough to into the, well the big time, but even today the only people, the only boxers that make money are heavyweights, yeah that's about the extent...

SS: But you were still doing some boxing when you started to work in the coal yards?

HD: Yeah, the first one of the, we had a stag and at the stag there was a big Irishman who was supposed to thought he was from the, then the Dunn Brothers, particular Grant Dunn, he said we want to get that guy in, you fix you can whip him, I said well I'll try, and it turned out he couldn't, I could lick both of them, [unclear], but he never had no experience and I did, see I followed the shows for quite a while taking on all comers. And then we would, we made some pretty good fighters too. But in the main when you travel the shows, I was in shape because I'm fighting out, but most of them the crowd would push some of these slick fighters that maybe were bragging you know how they could fight and then they'd say well here's the guy now there's a fighter, take him on and they fully weren't in shape. But I kind of liked this for a while.

SS: Now did you do that then in the months where you weren't working in the coal yards or did you...

HD: No, no, no, I [unclear] because I decided to go to the coal yards in the fall of '33, things were changing and I met Skoglund and that's how I got to stay in the coal yards and organize the drivers and so forth.

SS: So when you went to work in the coal yards you went to work as an organizer.

HD: Yeah. The [unclear] you see was in my favor because I had been fighting so I didn't care which one of these coal drivers I had to [unclear] to stop these trucks, you see I didn't care I knew I could protect myself and that was a big advantage when you go around town and stop trucks. But as it turned out I don't recall ever having to fight one, I was always able to get them to [unclear]

SS: Always able to?

HD: To get all of them to join the union by talking to them and pointing out to their advantage and so forth.

SS: Well now did you do other jobs when the, you know, you couldn't work in the coal yards?

HD: No. I, I think the first, let's see it was '34, no in, after the coal strike then they had to haul and there were a lot of unemployed working, [unclear] staying in the hall waiting for work and so I hung around that hall playing cards and then finally when the union had to have extra organizers they'd hire one of, I got hired and I stayed right there until we went to jail. So...again, like I said before I didn't mind because I was sure I [unclear] some of these [unclear] and so forth, whip 'em that's what some, you know, the average drivers, see that was an advantage for me...

SS: Oh, I can see where that would be a great advantage.

HD: And on top of that I was born a Socialist and then working in the coal yards I met Skoglund and Ray Dunn and the Dunn Brothers and they already were known as Trotskyites, they were kicked out of the Communist Party and they [unclear] organizing, and that's how [unclear] I kept working with them organizing, getting workers to join the Party.

SS: Did you also join the Party?

HD: Oh yes.

SS: In the same year you started working in the coal yards?

HD: No, I think it was the following year.

SS: '34?

HD: Yeah. As a matter of fact, matter of fact I got the assignment to work on the Market cause it was pretty tough place there and so one morning I stopped a driver and here comes Jake, you need help [unclear], [unclear] come around, do you remember that Jake?

JC: Um hmm.

HD: So, then of course I continued being in charge of the market and once we got them in the union they took care of themselves, it was just a matter of talking to them once in a while and then of course I'd always get different assignments too in the union.

SS: What other kinds of assignments would you get?

HD: Oh, I mean different places where you'd be, maybe some shop where there was 10 or 12 of 15 working inside and the driver would turn in a report that I talked to them and they won't join the union, and them kind of assignments I'd get.

SS: Ah ha, okay. So...

HD: It was an interesting period.

SS: Yeah, very interesting period.

HD: I'd like to go right back through one.

SS: You'd like to, if you had the chance you'd go through it again in the same way.

HD: Yeah, yeah.

SS: So after the coal strike, what happened?

HD: Well, I was saying after the coal strike, members'd come up there and [unclear] really every night just signing up members, of course then the coal strike, we knew that's where the experience and also organizing, cause we proved to the workers how to win a strike and so forth and this was what caused the first of May strike. I was picket captain of that and we had a lot of, a lot of I W...IWW guys would come to the hall and help.

SS: No kidding.

HD: Yeah.

SS: Was there still an IWW in...

HD: At that time yet they had their own wall office.

SS: No kidding.

HD: Oh yeah.

SS: Do you remember where it was? Was it on Nicollet or...

HD: No...at one time it was on Washington Avenue, see Washington Avenue was kind of row where all the bums come in and all the, you'd get coffee and doughnuts free and so forth at that time.

SS: So the IWW still had a presence in the '30s in Minneapolis.

HD: Oh yeah, yes.

SS: Did they have any, did they have any shops organized or were they...

HD: No, they, I don't recall anything they had, but they supported the [unclear] strike, you know...

SS: So they were kind of like a mixed local, they had people working in a lot of different jobs?

HD: Yeah, I would say that's what would happen, yes. SS: Were there any other groups that came to the support of the coal strike?

HD: No, oh you mean in the other unions?

SS: Unions, or yeah, or other radical groups?

HD: Not hardly, yeah as individuals they probably came because if it got known they'd probably lose their jobs [unclear]...

SS: Sure, yeah, yeah.

HD: I know a lot of workers that came that way, different [unclear] different names...

SS: Ray Dunn lost his job, right, in this strike?

HD: Not [unclear]

SS: Right after it?

HD: No, Ray Dunn lost his job before, before the strike. He lost it and that's what helped us organize as a matter of fact. Get him [unclear] the Party, Ray Dunn he must, they must have fired him I would say in '33 about [unclear] cause then he got active in the unemployed movement, [unclear] he couldn't get no job, they heard what he was, of course that helped us, he actually stepped in with some unemployed workers to win the coal strike and then the other strike too.

SS: Do you remember the name of the group of unemployed workers that Ray worked with?

HD: No, as a matter of fact I don't recall any specific name, they just came there and [unclear]

SS: Yeah, I know there were some tremendous demonstrations of the unemployed.

HD: Oh, yes, yeah yeah. Well they, well, we were fortunate that we had Ray Dunn, Carl Skoglund, cause they understood how to win strikes and [unclear] what they had to have and so forth.

SS: Where did they get their experience?

HD: Well, Carl got the experience in the woods, Carl did. And Ray apparently got it from the Communist Party, he was a member of the Communist Party when, before they expelled him for supporting Trotsky.

[inaudible comments in background]

SS: Was Ray also in the IWW at any point?

HD: Oh, yes. Skoglund...

SS: They were both in the IWW.

HD: ...[unclear] workers, that was one of their policies to get them to, into politics and they used, you see they were, they used the Russian Revolution, they used that quite a bit to get workers to understand how to win fights and what they need. They also need to overthrow this capitalist system.

SS: So, well what happened with Wobblies at that time, did they, did some of them join the Communist Party and others just stayed in their...

HD: Well, apparently, [unclear] even I knew right now, they just gradually dropped out, [unclear] most of them were older anyway, they [unclear] at that time young, they didn't pick up [unclear] young workers you see. You see Wobblies, how they kept going was the harvest fields, they [unclear] harvest fields and then lumber mills up north. They were a big help, the Wobblies were a big help to the strike, oh yeah.

SS: Ah ha, so they got along okay with the Trotskyists.

HD: Yeah, fighting, fighting for the union to win, they actually come and wanted to assign [unclear]. Of course [unclear] most likely because they'd seen that Dunn and Skoglund they knew how to fight and how to win, and that's what brought them down.

SS: I see. So the success of the coal strike got more people to join the union.

HD: That's no question in my mind and I was the captain that winning that coal strike is what got all the drivers to draw the, to join the Teamsters and then following [unclear] the Teamsters the inside workers try to settle what, [unclear] take us in too and so forth and we finally did, you see [unclear] the International it was only Teamsters, drivers, helpers, and then we did, I think we got the agreement to begin with to organize the inside workers and then they came in because they seen what the Teamsters did and they were a big help of course, but there was no question the Teamsters had the power you know, top men were saying [unclear]

SS: And there were some new things that people tried too in that coal strike in terms of pickets, like a roving picket, was that one of your ideas or was that one that was thought up by...

HD: Well it, I was picket captain, I used to have to, I had to report back to headquarters at least every hour maybe, [unclear] whatever and Kelly [unclear], you've heard of him...

SS: Oh, yeah.

HD: He was in charge, he was a [unclear] at a big coal yard way up north and so went to the headquarters and they assigned me and a couple other guys, there's some trouble going on there and he needs help, so we was on the way down in the truck and here we meet a truckload of coal what come from [unclear], got out of the yard by Kelly, so naturally I said we'll stop them here and take that SOB and it turned out it worked good and it got spread around that we were stopping coal right out in the streets and so forth. Matter of fact it was the next day we used to stop a truck and make him drive in the poor district where the workers were and we dumped the coal right out in the street. One time we dumped it right on a guy's porch, so it was a very interesting period.

SS: Yeah, I bet people didn't mind having a bunch of coal dumped in their yard.

HD: No, not these workers, yeah.

SS: They knew what to do with it.

HD: Yeah, so from then on of course we, they organized, I was the captain of them, rolling pickets we'd call them.

SS: Rolling pickets.

JC: Roving.

SS: Roving or rolling? Roving, that's what I thought, okay.

HD: Did I say rolling?

SS: I don't know I might have heard it rolling.

HD: Anyway, then practically every independent truck would go out on the street and they'd be take a buddy with them and try stopping these trucks, so...[unclear] actually then you see this was [unclear] getting near the end of February and they couldn't get rid of any coal and so apparently this was one of my ideas, [unclear] it was getting to the end, spring was coming and they wasn't selling no coal and they'd say to theirselves looking at these piles of coal and you know no money to buy it and so that actually was won the strike. We, of course we had them tied up, but at the same time there was only three days, so that's one of the reasons it was a short strike, was they wanted to get where the coal was.

SS: Oh sure, yeah, yeah.

HD: And we didn't no more than win that strike and word got out that we won the strike and so, amongst the drivers, I'm talking about transfer drivers now and so we actually like I said it was Farrell and I, we were a couple of young guys and every night we was up to the union headquarters signing up workers because we also wanted to talk to them and that old bureaucratic leadership, they weren't even a, that's all they'd care to do was sit in their little group you know, they was actually opposed to the strike.

SS: Sure.

HD: But it was because of the Trotskyites that understood unions and politics, it was they were the ones that caused us to win that coal strike and continue to go on winning getting commissions on [unclear]

SS: So what happened after that?

HD: Well, the, after, we got all the companies signed up, the transfer companies, we had the coal truck companies and then the drivers would come in and say these inside workers want to join the union and we had to, we didn't want to get in trouble with Tovlund so we finally John Gerry[?] an

old Irishman, he was our vice president and we talked him into writing to the national office and so that's how I got, we got the permission to organize inside workers.

SS: Inside workers, ah ha.

HD: What we did then, we had separate groups, the drivers was one group and we'd meet one, with one month, meet generally, another month their group met, so you could, see else you could hardly hold a meeting, one guy'd be talking about their problems, another [unclear], so it worked, it really worked really good, to [unclear] the workers to understand that the union is the only thing for them that would assure them their job, conditions, so forth, so actually it wasn't hard to get the workers to join once we won that strike. Then I was [unclear], I was put on the payroll after we got a contract, Farrell was put on the payroll, and the main job was negotiating contract and after we got the contract with some of the these transfer companies, [unclear] some we hadn't organized before, they used to come in they'd seen what the union done.

SS: So then the truck strike happened very close after the end of the coal strike.

HD: Oh yes, they're close, the truck strike came after, a couple months, and we couldn't, you see the Citizens Alliance was really, boy they were really the leadership of the employers.

SS: Ah ha, sure.

HD: And so some of these coal companies, I mean some of the employers they wanted to sign but they couldn't on account of the Citizens Alliance, so when we found that out we started to put the, publish what's going on in the, they were the ones that [unclear] slave drivers, and once July, [unclear] just what date, we got them to sign a contract and so after the contract was signed, and the drivers got a raise, the helpers got a raise, but the inside workers they refused to sign, saying that they thought they had a team, the International Teamster President told them, they figured they'd have [unclear] on their side. And to a certain extent it did but we had done such a good job, we got connections for them and helpers that they came to the workers, inside workers....

END TAPE ONE, SIDE ONE

TAPE ONE, SIDE TWO

HD: After we got the contract signed, the strike settled, the employers they thought they'd get help from [unclear] and they did and wouldn't recognize the inside workers, they said we didn't represent them and so after a couple weeks of negotiating and not getting any, and not getting anywhere because they figured Tolbin [?] wouldn't support them, and so that would be forced on strike, and then we got, well it was just simple then, the workers, the drivers, inside [unclear], I mean the helpers, they were, they understood and we pointed out to them but it's to their advantage, it's to their advantage to see [unclear] insider workers, work that can protect one big union, and that was a great... So that took care of the inside workers and then we called a meeting because there was workers from various unions but they weren't in, the union, old bureaucrats wouldn't take them in, so we called a special meeting, an open meeting for all workers and there we just explained we would support any union as long they fought for a contract and that [unclear] we was able to get the workers to put pressure on these old bureaucrats who just sit around doing nothing, and well it

didn't take... yes, that was the first strike. Then they still refused because the employers and Dan Tolbin the President, said we didn't represent and so then we fought with them in the second strike to represent these workers and the Teamster support [unclear], so after that strike, I got shot in that strike, that was the strike where...

SS: The second part of that strike.

HD: Yeah, yeah. And to give you an indication how workers, particularly drivers [unclear] some of the drivers that had to deliver stuff to the hospital, they would sneak up in my room to have a talk with me about this was going on, this was going on, is that right and so forth, so I was doing organizing work right in the hospital room. And that took care of organizing, we had contracts mainly and then we also made a practice of telling these unions that weren't organizing [unclear] and we'd support them, matter of fact is we were in a position to win the strike for it cause we got the merchandize was on wheels, we could stop it, and that is the way we organized the town, organized rest, get the rest of the workers to put heat on these old bureaucrats who were satisfied sitting there doing nothing, so then after the, it got out that we were organizing not only the inside workers but we were helping all of the other unions and so they call [unclear], we got a wire from Omaha and they wanted to know if we could send somebody down to help them and we done that but then we, it was [unclear], but the other towns, not only Omaha, Lincoln in Iowa, Des Moines and so forth, South Dakota, so that's how come we organized 11 state area, we had, we had the experience and we had the fighters, see, got a contract, we got that contract and one of the arguments we had in organizing these workers was to protect us because these companies, if they're paying 10 cents an hour less we were going to have trouble keeping our union getting, so that's we added another reason why we organized the area.

SS: Sure, yeah. What was the role of the Party in the truck strike?

HD: Oh, the Party in the truck strike, Carl Skoglund he was a member of the Party and he was active all the time in the strike and Ray Dunn was but he had been already fired and he couldn't get back in but he was then the organizer of the Party, [unclear] a lot of, [unclear] used to go down and have a talk whether we'd need something, and that was a big help of course in building the Party and building the union. Ray had experience all the way through. Matter of fact if I recall it but one time we had over, probably over 100 members [unclear] they had to be kept quiet and so forth, but they also they found out how from the Teamsters, a lot of them, they were fighting whenever we had trouble they'd be right there to be help, so...the Party played a great role in it, from that point of view, not only helping them physically but mentally.

SS: Rais...and I imagine they had meetings to raise funds and benefits and things like that.

HD: Yeah, yeah.

SS: Do you remember any of those, what types of things were done to raise money and people's awareness of...

HD: Well, we'd, I recall the first time everybody [unclear] is we organized a rummage sale and see a lot of these wives, they worked in the kitchen in the strike headquarters you see, they understood what was fighting for, in other words we getting short of money they organized these great

rummage sales.

SS: There's actually a picture in here of the, some women that were in the kitchen.

HD: Yeah.

SS: Any of them look familiar?

HD: No, I can't, see the two women that were really [unclear] as the organizers, no I don't see...

SS: Don't recognize...

HD: [unclear]

SS: So the main women that were organizers in the kitchen...

HD: Yeah, that mainly was their assignment, and that's like, it was pretty rough out on the street, we didn't want to send women out there to get hit, the special deputies, they would beat up women too.

SS: Were some women beat up?

HD: I recall yes, the Tribune, there was, we got a report that there was trouble in the Tribune alley, the paper...

SS: Yes.

HD: And some way these women, this was at night, there wasn't supervision, some of these women they wanted to fight you know and by god they sneaked, they got out of the headquarters and went down there, they were doing a pretty good job but several of them got beat up pretty bad. You all right, Jake?

JC: Yeah.

HD: No, we'd have no, because the Party's actually leadership of Workers League and they understood politics, and that is what actually won the conditions and the workers, a lot of workers would come down and join voluntarily, want to join that truck drivers union, but they had no time getting them in the union.

SS: So the Women's Auxiliary was something that really helped out in the truck strike.

HD: Oh sure, they took the jobs [unclear], we got a full meal, we'd get a full meal at twelve, one o'clock and then there's always something of course most of the [unclear] when the pickets went home at night, and the ones that didn't we'd have coffee and doughnuts and so forth right in the headquarters in the kitchen, we seen to it when we rented a hall that we could use part of it for a kitchen, that's, that'd work out perfect. And of course from then on, from the time we won the strike and we were getting calls to join, that was how we, we organized the 11 state area, that did send the workers, they would send in a leader or one of the young, or they'd come in the car,

five-six at a time, and they wanted to have help to organize their group and that's how come we organized the 11 state area.

SS: And when did that drive take place, was that '37-38 in there? or later...

HD: '37. In all that time, we always, we used Mickey Dunn for the assignment of speaking, he was an exceptionally good speaker and practically kept him busy around in other towns too and so he went around speaking how we organized it, what should be done, what they wanted us to help them with. Matter of fact it got so bad that Tolbin expelled him, [unclear] got expelled...

SS: You're kidding.

HD: And we had already warned the workers beforehand even during the strikes what to expect, see that is again where the Trotskyite movement come in, we had leaders that ahead of time that could warn them so they understood so it didn't affect, matter of fact it didn't affect it at all, if any it made us stronger. In fact, and then you see some other unions even wanted to join because we'd fight and get [unclear] and they were just paying dues where they were.

SS: Now there were other strikes going on too in the Twin Cities at this time and probably up all over the state, that weren't in trucking, like there's one for example that was with the WPA workers...

HD: Yeah, we supported, we support any strike, any bona fide strike, we supported them with pickets and leadership and we was very careful about the leadership, we'd use theirs, we'd help them in other words, but we never took a position, we used their own leaders and members to run the strike.

SS: Now there was one in particular that I wanted to ask you about which this was in 1939 and it was a WPA strike where I think it was seamstresses and women that did sewing for the project, went out on strike, and there were many people that were arrested in this strike, one of those people was Carlos Hudson...

HD: Yeah.

SS: And...

HD: He was a writer [unclear].

SS: He was a writer, yeah, and a speaker too, no?

HD: Yeah.

SS: And also, geez I'm just blanking on his name right now...

?: Max Geldman.

SS: Max Geldman, thank you, yeah.

HD: Oh, yeah, yeah.

SS: Max was also arrested in that strike, and several other people, Sid Fossum was another person that was, I don't know if you knew him, another person that was arrested in that strike.

HD: Well, we mainly we use them to be supportive, we supported any strike and we were always very careful to use some of their own leaders only we told them how to do it, give them some pointers and so forth, we never never tried to put anybody in charge, take over, we always used their own men.

SS: Yeah. Now I think that you know both Max and Carlos ended up doing some time at Sandstone for there...

JC: Not Carlos.

SS: Not Carlos, okay. Just Max.

JC: I don't recall that Carlos got arrested, Carlos [unclear], Carlos [unclear] never got arrested. It was, who was there, there was, I don't even remember the names of all the people, there was Max and Ed Palmquist...

PD: Yeah, mainly...

JC: Was it Roy Ordron.

PD: And Roy Ordron and [unclear]

JC: Was it White? No.

HD: Pauline's husband was with the Unemployed League.

PD: Yeah, we were in the WPA then. Mainly it was Max and Palmquist, they were the two.

HD: You see I don't know...

PD: That was a big strike, Roy Ordron, hm hum.

HD: See that was one of the things we used was the unemployed workers, that is one of the reasons too, we organized and whenever there was a strike of any, we'd always get a group of unemployed workers to help so, no way with the kind of leadership we had and we tied up the town any time we wanted.

SS: Why did they end up going to jail? Do you remember why that was?

HD: Pauline do you remember, I...

JC: Well, it was a federal project...

PD: Yeah.

JC: Aand the government said they were striking against the government.

SS: No, but there were a lot of people that got off too.

PD: Yeah, but there weren't, I'm trying to think on the specific things, what it was because as far as I remember Harold was on microfilm project, microfilming but that was, but the time that Max had led that, where that picture was taken with Stassen, wasn't it, when he was, leading that big demonstration...

JC: That was after, that was after the battle, he's talking about some of the struggles that took place, but what they actually got him for, they got the leaders of this unemployed movement which was the Federal Workers Section of Plant 44 was the name of it, what they got him for was striking against the government and the fact that there was violence there you know, that there was a struggle that took place that was precipitated by the police but that's what they jailed them for, saying they can't strike against the government, that was basically it and I don't remember just the specific charges, Max went to jail...

PD: I don't remember the specific charges either.

SS: Well, that's you know that's okay, I'm just, I'm going to talk to somebody that was the attorney I think in that case, who is Doug Hall.

JC: Yeah, Doug, yeah. Doug Hall is, let's see, Doug Hall is really on the other side, he was with the...

HD: Communist Party.

JC: What?

HD: Communists.

?: What?

JC: He was with the Communist Party, he was on that side and there was a bitter struggle going on all the way through this situation between, in which the Communist Party played a vicious role. They attacked the Teamsters Union in the midst of the struggle for a whole series of reasons. But Doug Hall is not the person to see. You can see him, it doesn't hurt you to see anybody, but Doug Hall was actually an opponent to the Teamsters Union in that period.

SS: Well, as I said there were many people on the picket line, some people were CP and some were people from, you know, that weren't even part of any you know any union but were sympathizers, some were part of the Artists Union that were out there on that picket line and so it's just trying to follow through and find out what went on.

JC: The strike was primarily, the strike was led, the leadership came from the Federal Workers Section, 544, and the leadership came from the Teamsters Union and in July, in the actual struggle that took place at that particular period, and there was a reason for that struggle, one of the reasons was because the union demanded that on all jobs that the government pay the union scale on all

jobs and finally they issued an order from the federal government saying that they would no longer pay the union scale and that wages would be cut all the way down the line and the Federal Workers Section of 544 led the primary struggle against them and it was leaders of this, of the Federal Workers Section that went to prison. Now there might have been other people arrested but the leadership of the Federal Workers Section was the one that went to prison, it wasn't, Doug Hall was on the other side of the fence in that period.

SS: And so he wouldn't have defended any of these people.

JC: Not that I recall, they were defended by our own attorneys. I remember the attorneys, Carlson was one of them...

HD: Yeah, [unclear] Carlson and...

JC: Gilbert Carlson and, he's still alive, that's who you should talk to..

SS: No, I'm going to contact him also.

JC: That's Gilbert...

PD: [unclear]

[they're all talking over each other for a few sentences]

HD: Who was the other, who was the other lawyer we had?

PD: Hm?

HD: We had two lawyers, Gilbert and [unclear]

PD: Gilbert died last year.

HD: God damn it, what is his name, I think he died though.

PD: Who?

HD: The other lawyer we had.

PD: I don't know, that's the year Richard was born so I wasn't around that much. Harold was all the time but I don't recall.

SS: Okay, I can probably, I have yet to look at the newspaper stories around this period of time and I might be able to pull out some names.

JC: What you should look at is the copies of the Organizer.

SS: Oh, of course, yeah.

JC: Because there's where you've got accurate picture and by the way if you can read, if you could

find copies of the Militant because the Militant would give you a pretty accurate picture of what happened in that particular period. So if you can find, if the Socialist Workers Party has got a file of the Militant...

SS: Copies, yeah, that would also be another good source.

PD: I gave you Walt [unclear] files.

HD: Did you? To who?

PD: The SWP, yeah, years ago.

JC: That would be...one of the things is you're talking about a period that existed fifty some years ago, and it's hard to remember names and...

HD: I was, when I heard you were going to come down, a lot of those things I just can't even, I know it and that's about all but...but one of the main main reasons was we helped all other unions if they needed help and we had the unemployed organized and so if there was any trouble we had the unemployed first and other unions would come and support us.

JC: The CP had [unclear], the Communist Party had an unemployed movement too, it was called the Workers Alliance and it was a much smaller organization, it didn't have either the clout amongst the unemployed or even as far as recognition generally, it didn't have, the unemployed movement that had clout, and the reason it had clout was because of the fact it was backed by the Teamsters Union was the Federal Workers Section of 544, you know.

HD: And one of the reasons we helped organize them was to protect our union, the unemployed, mainly unemployed there's where the bosses would be able to draw...

SS: Get strikebreakers, sure.

HD: ...a lot of strikebreakers, and so we organized them for that, to help them of course too, but mainly so that the bosses couldn't use them for scabs.

SS: Now, Jake you mentioned something about a conflict between the CP and the Socialist Workers Party at this time, what was that about?

JC: Well, there again you've got to go into the basic disagreements between the Socialist Workers Party and the Communist Party, the basic disagreements, that's where they flow from, there was real antagonism between the Communist Party and the Socialist Workers Party because the Communist Party in their general conception of the world were for organizing socialism in one country, where the concept of the Trotskyist was to organize socialism on a world basis you know and to use the influence and the strength of the Soviet Union to help do this just like the Teamsters did it with other unions you know and from that viewpoint on there was a vicious antagonism basically on the part of the Communist Party. First of all they expelled all of the members of the Communist League at that, Voles [?] for instance who said that Trotsky was right in this fight, you know, and when it came to the position that they took inside of the trade union movement, the position of the Communist Party was to, was to make us look as bad as they possibly could in the trade union

movement, from the fact that their topics were different and from the fact that they didn't really believe in carrying on the same kind of a struggle that we believed in carrying on you know, they were primarily concerned with everything that they did had to reflect the policy of the Soviet Union, you know what I'm trying to say. For instance they did a number of things that were bad.

HD: Matter of fact is they give us so much trouble in a lot of cases as the Citizens Alliance.

SS: I didn't hear the last word?

HD: They give, said the Citizens Alliance.

SS: As much as the Citizens Alliance, that's a lot of trouble.

HD: Yeah, but it was tougher because they represented workers they said, you see, that's, so we had a lot of problems they give us a lot of trouble from that point of view.

JC: For instance as an example of that, when Bill Brown who was the President of the union was shot and when Pat Corcoran was shot, the Communist Party instead of coming to the defense of the union, said that what we got to do is drive the gangsters out of the Teamsters Union you know and here was a union that, in a struggle you know, and what, who do they attack but the union you know, and what they were attacking was the leadership of the Trotskyist organization saying that there was gangsters in there and from the viewpoint of how you, how you solidify the trade union movement this was a terrible role to play. But the other thing that they did was for instance, they attacked us in that particular period they were saying hey you've got so much power in Minneapolis at this particular time, what you should be doing is taking over the government, you should be taking over the city administration, you should have taken over the city administration, we said no that's completely wrong because what we're basically attempting to do is to organize workers and teaching workers by their own strength that they can achieve goals, and that they have the power cause they are the majority, that's what we wanted to teach the workers and that one of the ways to teach them how to do this was to build unions you know, where the workers control their welfare and so the Communist Party played a very very bad role. There were instances for instance when we were organizing, you remember this Harry, where we were organizing the oil station attendants, you know, into a union, what the Communist Party did through their organization, they attempted to organize a counter union to what we were doing and there was actually an incident which I was involved in where they used their people and at that time we were trying to get a contract from the oil companies you know, to cover these, the station attendants and so forth, and we represented the overwhelming majority of the station attendants, they represented a tiny minority, I think the only company they had was a company called Direct Service as I recall at that time, you know...

HD: Hm hm I recall it. [unclear]

JC: And they actually while we were picketing, the companies you know, they actually attacked our picket lines, physically attacked our picket line. So this is the kind of role the Communist Party, one of the things that's interesting in this whole proposition that we're talking about the Communist Party, was Carl Ross, know he's working with you on this isn't he?

SS: That's right.

JC: He was a member of the Communist Party at that particular time. When he interviewed Max Goldman out on the West Coast, I was just out there by the way...

?: Oh you were?

JC: And Max told me that he was interviewed by Carl Ross, and one of the things he said to Carl Ross was, now Carl Ross was a big leader of the Communist Party then, don't you think the Communist Party played a terrible role and Carl Ross said yes they did, they played a terrible role, so that's an indication...huh?

HD: Is that right?

JC: Yeah, so that's an indication that even people you know like Carl Ross, who, I don't know where he stands with the Communist Party now, do you?

HD: No.

SS: He left in '57.

JC: He left in '57. But has finally come to admit that the Communist Party played a terrible role in that particular period...

END OF INTERVIEW

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