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K: I'm speaking to Elmer Voerwald, 1060 Edina Street, Dubuque. Mr. Voerwald was born in 1907. He's a former President of the Metal Trades Council, an officer in the Machinists, delegate to central bodies, and so forth, now the President of the Seniors Club in the Dubuque area.

V: Retired Union Seniors Group.

K: Retired Union Seniors Group, right. Mr. Voerwald, if you will, just start in and tell me about yourself. You were born in Iowa?

V: That's right. Born in Dyersville, Iowa. Before I started to school the folks moved to upstate New York, near Syracuse. We lived there four years. The folks came back and moved near Dubuque. At that time we had to walk two and a half miles to school, winter and summer. I got my first job with the Interstate Power Company, on the railroad rather, driving a team.

K: This was around Dyersville?

V: No, this was near Dubuque, the Illinois Central. That was right after World War I. Then from there I got a job with the Interstate Power Company building the Star Line from Dubuque to Clinton. I started out as a laborer and then I was their dynamite man until we finished the job.

K: That was 1921 when you were driving a team for the Illinois Central. Were you a member of the local Teamsters at that time?

V: No, we had no local at all. Unions out there were

unheard of then. They had a Teamsters union in Dubuque, but this was outside of the city. This was out in the county where we worked.

K: No jurisdiction.

V: No jurisdiction. There wasn't anything that the union could . . .

K: So in the twenties you were still a very young man. You were a teenager.

V: That's right. I was just a teenager then, but, of course, being one of eleven children and the oldest boy in the family you didn't get much education. You went to work. This was the way it was back in them days. Even a high school degree at that time was like a college degree today. Well, like I say, I finished the job with the Interstate Power Company, on the construction end of it. I went down to this plant and they hired me--Farley and Loetcher's. This must have been in about 1925, which would have made me about eighteen years old then. I worked there, and in 1929 I got married. In the fall of 1929 the crash came, the Depression hit. We had 108 people in our group, a certain department area, the veneer door department. When they got through laying off there was three of us left, a foreman and a straw boss. I got cut from 54¢ an hour, which was considered pretty good pay in a factory at that time, down to 22¢ an hour, like you see on the stubs there.

K: Mr. Voerwald has a number of his check stubs and payroll slips and things. Could I see a few of those?

V: There's a good one there now. They paid twice a month, and that's a half a month's work at 22¢ an hour.

K: We're looking at a check stub that appears to be $1.67.

V: That's what it is.

K: For two weeks' work.

V: Half a month.

K: Here's another one dated January 31, 1931, 98 hours on the clock, 22¢ an hour, $19.80, and about $5.00 in bonuses. It says here, "Deductions," I wonder what kind of dues those were.

V: There was no dues. I probably bought something there. I might have bought a piece of molding or something. We were able to buy something there at the shop. Maybe it was a door, I don't know, a screen door or something. I don't remember.

K: Now this plant, Farley and Loetcher, was a cabinet-making shop, furniture?

V: Sash and door factory. They made cabinets, et cetera, molding. They said it was one of the largest sash and door outlets, mills, in the world at that time. Well, we got married in 1929. Then the crash came on, and they started laying off and cutting wages. There were no unions, and they'd post a bulletin on the bulletin board, "Sorry, but we have to cut the wages 10 percent, 15 percent." I think the largest cut we got was 20 percent at one crack, at one time. Like I say, I was getting 54¢ an hour, and I wound up with 22¢ an hour. They'd call you in, and you had to be able to run any machine in the whole department.

If they'd get a little order they'd call you in, and with the three of us working there we'd get the order out. If the order was out they'd send you home. They might call you in at eight o'clock, let you know that morning they wanted you to work. At noon they'd send you home. You'd get four hours pay. We had a girl working there, feeding core, getting 9¢ an hour. She had to take either a bus or a streetcar at that time which cost her 10¢ each way. So four hours made her 36¢, and she spent 20¢ coming to work and back. She had the sum of 16¢ a day left for half a day's work.

K: Mr. Voerwald, for purposes of the tape, there are a lot of young people around who don't really have any idea what kind of work goes on in various factories and what not. I guess there are a lot of jobs that no longer exist today that were present in those days. You said the girl was "feeding core." What does that mean?

V: Core was a wood block set into a machine. A man operated a glue machine. They were glued up into what they called slabs, and they went through a big planer, of course, and were cut down. They were used for solid core doors. Her job was strictly to feed different sized cores on these conveyer belts that went into the machine and were glued up. But the point is that during that Depression in the cutbacks she was cut down to 9¢ an hour.

K: That's incredible.

V: There were no unions then. What really made a

union man out of me, and I was determined to do something about it, was they laid off men that had put in all their lives there. Seniority didn't mean nothing. They just laid them off. Some of them even cried when they got laid off, because there was no place for them to go. There was no Workmen's Comp or Unemployment Comp. When they were laid off they went home and told the wife that they were laid off, and there was no relief for them. This was the way things were at that time. So when we started coming out of the Depression and they started hiring some people back, we decided to do something about it, so we organized. I think this must have been along in about 1933 or somewhere in there. I signed up with the union then.

K: You have a dues book here that says 1933.

V: Yeah, there's the dues book. I think I paid 50¢ initiation fee. It says in the book here. You can read that out of there if you want to.

K: Well, how did you fellows go about it when you organized the union? Did it come on you all at once, or had you been talking about it over a period of time?

V: Well, if you talked about it you couldn't let the foreman or anybody, a stoolpigeon, hear you, because if it got back up in the office you would probably be fired. So you had to do this under cover, and you got the people interested in it by talking to them in the latrines and places out of the way, you know.

K: Well, they say the American Revolution was started

in a tavern. So then I suppose the working fellows had to go some place else to have their first meetings.

V: Well, at that time we didn't have taverns. Beer didn't come back until Roosevelt brought it back I think in April, 1932, when he took office. So after that you had a few taverns, but we didn't have any money to go into taverns at that time anyway. Hamburger was 5¢ a pound, but you didn't have the 5¢ to buy it. But this was the way it was back in them days. You know, I think my initiation fee was 50¢, and I paid dues. We got organized and got a charter set up, and we weren't organized very long until we went on strike. I forget just how long we were on strike, but the company had a number of people there that they carried food in to. We finally got them out of there. We had some pretty rough battles.

K: You mean the company had . . .

V: People in the plant that they carried food in to. They wouldn't let them out. They slept right there.

K: I see. Were these people brought in to break your strike?

V: No, they were local people who had worked there, but they didn't belong to the union. Of course we called them scabs back in them days. Everybody didn't know the definition of a scab . . . what we do now.

K: How would you define that, by the way?

V: Well, I don't know. Of course, we got to hate people that snuck into a plant and worked while we were on

strike. And, of course, it took us a little time but finally we went to their homes and asked them not to go in. We persuaded them not to go in until we had them out of there 100 percent. Of course, while this was going on the company had their stool pigeons out. They knew who the active people were. This went on until we got recognition, and got a settlement, and we went back to work. The second day I went back to work I was fired, along with a few others that were active in this. Some of them who were real active didn't go back, because they knew they were going to be fired.

After being fired you were more or less blackballed. The manufacturers association in this town was pretty close-knit. If you went to another place or factory to get a job they just didn't have a job.

K: What did you fellows do?

V: Well, you had to pick up what you could get. I went to work then part-time, I got a job up at Dubuque Stone Products. An old well driller from Decorah hired me and I worked with him until that fall it froze up. We finished that job. And then I got a job with a fellow by the name of Coffee. He came in from out of town. They were taking the old railroad gates off and were putting in signal lights, which are still there. I worked there about three or four months, and you saved every buck or penny you could to carry you over. You knew you were going to be laid off again. Finally, I knew a bunch of boys in the foundry at A. Y. McDonald's, and I got a

job there, as a laborer. I think that was in 1935. In 1936 they had a long strike there. It started in August and was settled I think in January of 1937 when I got back to work.

K: At McDonald's?

V: At McDonald's. I believe I was making 35¢ an hour when I started there. Then the NRA came, I think, and we brought it up to 40¢ after that.

K: Did the programs like the WPA, the NRA, and things like that have a lot of effect in Dubuque?

V: It helped a lot of places that weren't organized or course. It brought this 40¢ an hour in, you remember?

K: Was that a minimum wage at that time?

V: No. I think the NRA set a 40¢ minimum. I believe it was on interstate commerce only, plants that worked on interstate commerce.

K: Sounds like that would be the way.

V: But again I ran into a strike there. I joined the Molders union. After the strike we still had people who refused to join the union, so we had sit-down strikes to force them all in. I worked there after the strike about a year. The company cut back and laid off a bunch of people, and I was down on the seniority list. So again I got laid off. I belonged to the Molders union then. I was called to work at the General Dry Battery factory, General Dry they called it at that time. I went to work nights there, and lo and behold they had a company union out there. So I went to work there. I was approached to help

sign the boys up in the union, break up the company union, which I did. I worked there about four weeks, and the company found out about my union activities. I was fired again.

K: This was about in 1936-38?

V: I think that was in about 1938.

K: Well, let me go back just a minute here. This strike at McDonald's in 1936, a sitdown strike . . .

V: Well, after the strike was settled we had people who refused to join the union. They were all called back to work. They came back to work, union people and non-union people, so then we had sitdown strikes to force those people who weren't union members into the union.

K: What was the cause of the strike in the first place?

V: Mainly to get, well, better working conditions, of course, better wages, and get recognition mainly at that time. I think we only got a couple of cents an hour increase when we went back.

K: This was probably the first time--I'm trying to remember--but about 1936 you began to have some protection under the law for your unions. I'm trying to recall when the National Labor Relations Board and that sort of thing was established.

V: We did. We had some protection. But in the Farley and Loetcher strike we had none.

K: What was the cause of that strike? The same kind of thing?

V: Well, get a union started, get recognition mainly.

K: In the Farley and Loetcher as well?

V: Well, the Farley and Loetcher strike pre-ran the McDonald strike.

K: Right.

V: But it was to get recognition and to get--at that time they called it--a memorandum of agreement. They didn't call it a union contract. You had very little on it. At least they recognized the group that was organized. The increase you got was little or nothing, but you did get recognition. That's where we worked from.

K: When you fellows had the sitdown at McDonald's did you sort of occupy the building? Is that it?

V: Well, we were organized well enough that we just quit work. We stayed by our machines and shut the machines off. Top management would come out. We only had two or three. I can remember two of them. Top management said that they'd do something about it. It wasn't long until we got the non-union people signed up. We had a 100 percent shop then. We had the Machinists union, the Molders union, Pattern Makers union, and the Polishers union. The four unions had a joint contract. We had a 100 percent shop. It took a lot of hard work, and a lot of discharges to get it there.

K: You mention the General Dry Battery Company having a company union. How did they do that? How did that company union operate? How did it keep control of the people?

V: Well, the company got next, I presume, to some of

the employees, like you always have your fair-haired boys in the shop. They organize the company union to keep them from organizing an international union. When I first started to work there the company put on a big celebration one night where the company would furnish all the eats and the beer and what have you for the company union members.

K: That's my question. What did the company give the boys? What did they gain by having a company union? Was it a lot of, as you say, free beer, and pie in the sky?

V: Well, they had to keep them a little happy. This is the way they carried on for some time. Just how long they were in there I don't remember. But I do know that when I was there I belonged to the Molders union. The Molders came to me and said, "Elmer, we got to organize that union." There were 13 of us fired the same time I was fired for organizing. But we had the lower end of the plant all signed up in the union. What we called the lower end was the sink room, well, a good portion of us. Of course, like I say, people that I know worked there at that time. But we came in one night to punch in, and the girl told us that our cards had been pulled and that we had been discharged. We asked her what for and she said some work went out of there and got to Cleveland and had a little scratch on it. There were 13 of us fired, but that didn't stop them. We were well enough organized that they went on and organized the balance of the plant. And they got a contract.

K: Did the fellows try to get you reinstated?

V: Well, I was fired, and two days after I was fired I was called back to work at the A. Y. McDonald Company, in a different capacity, in the shipping room. The Molders had the shipping room organized down there, so they got me back to work down there. While I was working there we filed charges against the company, and it came up in Federal Court. There were only seven of us showed up that was fired out of the 13--I believe it was seven. We could have been reinstated out there at that time with full seniority and back pay for wages lost. We had some protection then. But I refused to go back. I stayed with A. Y. McDonald Company. I worked in the shipping room there until I think it was 1940 or 1941 I went in the machine shop and finished my career there. I retired from the McDonald Company out of the machine shop. But during that period we had a strike in 1946. We had a strike in 1945-46. We had one in 1952-53. I retired in 1972. In 1973 they had another strike.

K: At what point did you become . . . Well, I was going to ask you at what point you became an officer and got involved in the government of the union, but from what you're telling me you were always very active. Were you a charter member of your union?

V: The Farley and Loetcher union that I joined, I don't remember how many were signed up ahead of me. I don't think I was a charter member.

K: Was that a Machinists union?

V: No, that was a Carpenters union. Inside Carpenters.

K: Millworkers. Is that it? We're digging through a pile of dues books, membership cards, and mementos of various kinds that Mr. Voerwald has kept. There is a seniority list from 1942--I assume this is from A. Y. McDonalds--of well-known names in the local labor movement. Here is one, the oldest man on this list. It merely states before 1914, John Sutter. The other fellows are 1922, 1923, and so forth. Mr. Voerwald was 16th on the list in 1941. Now what have we got there?

V: This is United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America. It was an affiliation of the Carpenters union. Better known as Inside Carpenters.

K: The date on this book is 1933. This is the book that's 50¢ initiation fee, and your dues were a dollar a month. Is that correct?

V: A dollar a month.

K: A dollar a month.

V: As long as you're speaking about dues, we got a book here from the Molders union where we paid weekly dues of 35¢ a week. I know I got it here somewhere.

K: That was about, what, an hour's pay?

V: It was an hour's pay a week for dues. I tell these young fellows who harp about paying $10-$11 a month dues and making six, seven bucks an hour, hell, they're paying less than two hours work a month for dues. At that time we paid over four hours a month labor for a month's dues, at 35¢ a week.

K: They're complaining about it, are they?

V: Well, nobody likes to see anything go up, but when dues go up you know they kind of gripe about it, which you can't blame them for.

K: So then it was at McDonalds that you went into the Machinists union?

V: At A. Y. McDonald Company I joined the Molders to start with in the foundry. I was transferred in 1941 to the machine shop, and then I transferred to the Machinists union. I got a lifetime membership in the Machinists union.

K: Let's talk about that a little bit. You said you were the Vice President of the Machinists?

V: At one time, yes.

K: Was this early on or later?

V: That was in the forties.

K: And in your union career then you were also a delegate to the central body, and President of the Metal Trades. Can we talk about the Metal Trades a little bit? You were speaking earlier, before we began the interview, about how they were set up and came into being.

V: Well, the Metal Trades Council was set up after they organized the plants in the thirties, like Klauer Manufacturing, The Adams Company, Morrison Brothers, and the A. Y. McDonald Company, which was the main metal plants in Dubuque. They elected delegates from the various unions, the Molders, Machinists, Polishers, Pattern Makers, to the central body, the Dubuque Trades and Labor Congress. And while I was a delegate to the

central body the Metal Trades delegation wanted to expand and get a different building. The Dubuque Trades and Labor Congress used to meet on Ninth and Locust Streets. The building is torn down now. It was called the Carpenters Hall at that time. So they wouldn't go with us, so the Metal Trades Council stepped out and moved to Fourth Street, rented a building there and got started. From there they went to Sixth Street. Of course, Urban Renewal condemned their building there and then they used their resources out of there and put up a new building at 1610 Garfield Avenue. So that's more or less the history of that period of time in that movement.

K: You were instrumental, were you not, in getting the present building?

V: I was one of the members on the building committee when the present building was built. We think that we have a nice building there, which I suppose you saw.

K: Oh, yes, I've been in there.

V: I think the money derived out of the other building was well spent, and when the building was finished we had it paid for.

K: That's an accomplishment these days.

V: You want to believe it! This was built in 1969, which made it cost more. But what really made a union man out of me was to see those old fellows laid off during the Depression. They had no voice in anything. The company set up a bonus system, which the men had no control over. You had to produce so much

in a group of a hundred. There were probably a hundred and some people in our group. If you produced over an X amount at that time, they'd come up with a bonus. Maybe you'd get a bonus and maybe you wouldn't. But the workers had no control over it at all. The men, of course, didn't like this, and I think this was instrumental in their starting to organize. When they laid off, there was no such thing as seniority. They picked men that worked there all their lives and just laid them off. This was what really made a union man out ofme. I want to tell you that when I got fired for what I thought was right and just I was more determined than ever to help organize. When I joined the Molders and got to work at McDonalds, I went out and helped organize the truckdrivers. We stopped trucks on the street, and if they didn't have a card we were able to maybe tie the truck up. They'd wire in and get the money to sign them up.

K: Mr. Bennett told me a story of that type when he was in the Teamsters, you know. In fact, I think he was a charter member of the Teamsters. I'm speaking of Ormal Bennett. He mentioned that they once prevented the oil companies from delivering oil to the Roshek Building down town and would stop meat trucks, and so forth, and block them from unloading unless the fellows joined the union and supported their situation. Did you ever get into it with management? Did management ever try to force you fellows? Did they use the police against your organizing, or the courts?

V: In the early thirties they had everything their own

way as far as the city went. I think it was 1936, after we got organized somewhat, we elected three labor people on theCity Council. After that we did have a little voice. But prior to that they still had the City Manager form of government, which is all right, but they had their own people on the Council. We didn't have much voice. After 1936 we put three people on there, and I think it kind of turned things--at least it was balanced out a little better. But in the 1936 strike at McDonalds they had a bunch of us in jail. We overturned cars. They wanted to run in a bunch of scabs you know, and we just didn't stand still for it that time. The people that did try to scab, we'd go to their homes at night and talk to them. Most of the time when you'd talk to them they'd listen. They'd listen to us.

K: Well, what about the fellows who did not want to join the union? What was their objection?

V: You wouldn't believe this possibly, but there were people that admired the company for even letting them work there at that time. Of course, people had no idea what some of the companies were like. I know there were people that would even register as a Republican for a primary election so the company would kind of pat them on the back. And you wouldn't believe how deep some of this stuff runs with a few people. There was a minority of them, but they didn't want to hurt the company by joining a union. But of course that changed after a few sitdown strikes. Some of the same people that were forced into the union the company tried to fire. I know one man refused to join the

union and the company was missing a certain--maybe this shouldn't be in the record--but anyway, he was discharged for stealing from the company. This was a man the company thought the world and all of.

K: He was supposed to be one of their fair-haired boys?

V: He was supposed to be one of their fair-haired boys. It turned out that he wasn't quite as fair-haired as they thought he was, you know.

K: So he was buttering up the company?

V: He was buttering up the company and at the same time stealing off of them. As time went on the people got a little better educated. I think that there is no way American labor can continue without having unions, that's for sure. If they went through the stuff that we went through they'd know this.

K: When you were on strike and had picket lines out and were doing whatever activities were going on, you mentioned that you had some battles with people of various kinds. Did management ever hire people to try to intimidate you? Were there any strikebreakers that came in?

V: At that time, you know, I don't recall any outside strikebreakers coming in. There was talk about it but I never encountered any of it. They had the news media pretty much on their side of course. We were Communists, we were this, we were that, we were everything else in the paper. That's certainly changed a lot since then. At that time the news media were absolutely 100 percent against the unions. We had a rough battle all

the way through.

K: Did you boys ever try to organize the workers at the newspaper?

V: Well, you see, the Typographical union is one of the oldest unions in the country I believe.

K: The Dubuque Typo is the oldest in Iowa.

V: They were organized to that extent, but the powers that be in the city and the money, of course, didn't want unions. The manufacturers. No more than they do down south today.

K: Yes, well, you were talking about the newspaper, calling it all these names, red-baiting is I think a phrase they used to use. Were there very many fellows in the unions in this area that were radical or were political in their thinking, that were Socialists or Communists?

V: No, absolutely not, I'd say that all the people that I knew--and I knew a lot of them--were fighting for one common cause, and that's a decent living wage. As you see from some of these check stubs, you weren't even existing at that time on the wages we were making. So you had nothing to lose and everything to gain was the way I looked at it. And we did gain a lot by organizing. I believe to this day that your people have got to stay organized if they want to continue making a half-way decent living wage.

K: I have yet, by the way, to find anybody that recalls any political agitators or Communists or whatever. None of the boys around town seem to think that they were important at all,

if they were even there.

V: No, I don't recall any being here. I was in on about four or five strikes, and in all those strikes I was active in the picket line. I encountered a lot of people, but I have never ever met anybody to influence us one way or the other or anything. The only thing that we did in 1936, we went out and put three men on the City Council which were all Dubuque and good citizens. We went from door to door, and rapped on doors, and asked people to vote for our candidates. We went in by a big landslide. So if they were Communists they wouldn't have been elected at that time.

K: No, I wouldn't think they'd have much of a chance. The question I was trying to think of was the rise of the CIO unions. I was told that some CIO organizers came to Dubuque around 1937 and 1938 and tried to--I guess the word is raid--some of the locals. Did any of this happen in your own experience with these fellows?

V: I recall they said there were some in town but we didn't have too many problems with them. But the CIO was organizing all over the country then, and if they tried to organize in Dubuque I guess it was all right. It gave a little competition, you know. As far as my recollections at that time, we were just glad to organize and this was it. We had a hard time trying to organize. This was prior to 1933. I believe it was a little prior to the CIO.

K: When you were President of the Metal Trades what

period was this?

V: Well, I was President, and then I wasn't, then I was President until I retired.

K: Oh. Up until recently.

V: Up until recently. I retired in 1972, and then I gave up the Chairmanship. I still go to their meetings.

K: You were mentioning the political life of the unions back in the late thirties when you had the men on the City Council and so forth. How about recent years? Are the unions here in this area still pretty effective?

V: They are in elections.

K: Do labor men get elected or do you support the Democratic Party? I mean does the union produce candidates?

V: We back certain candidates. I mean rightfully so. As you know, the manufacturers Association backed their candidates long before we were organized. I think labor should leave politics out of it, back a candidate that somes out and wants to be fair with labor. However, if you back a candidate he's got to be fair across the board. He can't only look at labor's side of things alone. I believe that a candidate should be somebody that's fair to all segments of society, but when a labor bill comes up we expect some support from him, certainly. That's my feeling. We have some labor minded people on the Council now. I'm going to say "labor minded" because they don't frown on labor. They know we have a place in society and we should be recognized. After all, if it wasn't

for labor in this country there wouldn't be much . . . What this country was built on was labor. You can't build a country on slave labor, because they tried that down South years ago and it didn't work. I guess we still have repercussions of that today.

K: Speaking of that question, what about the minority people in this area, in the unions and so forth? I understand there are not a great many blacks and people of Spanish descent in Dubuque.

V: Well, you know, I even hate to hear the word minority, because I believe in Dubuque all people that want to work are certainly given an equal opportunity to work. Now if there's anybody in here that feels that he's being slighted, there's a lot of recourse they can take. But as far as the minority people in this vicinity, I don't think there is too much foundation to it at all myself. I really don't believe they do. I was in the factory when so-called minority people came in to work, and they were treated fair. We took them in the union and helped them the same as we would anybody else.

K: Have any of the blacks been interested in the government of the unions? Have they taken an active part?

V: Well, as far as I know we never got to that point here because we don't really have that many.

K: I understand there's only about four or five hundred people in the city, black people, and as far as I know there never were very many.

V: Well, I retired in 1972, so up until that time there were less than there are now. I mean they're increasing, I understand, in the shops. But a lot of these factories are not putting on additional help, you know. But there's no discrimination that I know of, and there never has been, as far as the unions go.

K: I understand that one time back in far-off past days there was some unofficial discrimination against blacks on the part of the police and the city government. In fact, I heard that there was a vigilante group known as the Yellow Hats that operated in the thirties. Does this ring any bells for you?

V: No, it don't. As long as I was in organized labor, and that dates back to the early thirties, this is as far as I know. I don't know nothing about them. Really.

K: Well, this was not a union activity. This evidently was an unofficial police activity.

V: If it was, it was never used to any extent in the unions that I know of. It never ever was used. As far as I'm concerned, a man's a man, I don't give a damn what the color of his skin is. If he goes to work, he does his job, well this is it.

K: Well, that's the theory about the way things should be.

V: That's the way things should be. I mean, I don't care what the color of his skin is if he's hired. I used to set up a lot of machines for a lot of . . . This was my job as a

machine repair man, to set up machines. It didn't make any difference to me what color a man's skin was. We treated them all alike.

K: Let's try to find a place to close here, Mr. Voerwald. We've been talking for over an hour, and, as you say, we'll both think of things tomorrow to discuss. I'd like to hear your thinking on kind of a general question as to your opinion of the unions today in comparison to what they were when you fellows were building them, and what you think about the future.

V: I'm going to say this--that the young people in organized labor are going to have to take a more active role. I believe that some of them are starting in these factories now, and they feel that this stuff is handed to them, and it always was that way and always will be that way. But the way certain elements are undermining organized labor they're going to have to take a more active role in unions to maintain what they've got or better their position. The union members themselves, the younger fellows.

K: Are you saying that today they don't have the sense of purpose, of unity?

V: I think the unity's there, but you take a young man starting at, say, the John Deere Tractor Works today. He starts under conditions that were fought for by the unions for years and years, probably over a period of thirty or forty years. He starts in there with paid holidays, he starts in there with paid vacations, he starts in there with paid insurance, he starts in

there with everything that the unions fought for. Some of these people, I believe, probably take it for granted, that it has always been that way and always will be that way.

K: Dropped down from above or something!

V: Not all of them. You have some good young and active people too, but years ago when you organized you had everything to gain and nothing to lose. When you were working for 22¢ an hour you put in a lot of effort. There was a lot to fight for. But today some of the people I don't think are near as active as they were years ago.

K: What can the union movement do to turn this around?

V: I don't think there's a whole lot you can do. Of course, I will say this--when these big companies go on strike they certainly stand together 100 percent. So apparently they're not hurting too bad in that respect. But I think educational programs have to be set up to tell the people how this all came about and what they have to do to maintain what they've got or better their position in society in the future. I know that we used to have a Labor Day parade and we kind of done away with that. I think it was a big day on Labor Day, and now I went down to the Labor Day mass and met a number of the older people from organized labor, but not too many young people from organized labor.

K: How do you feel generally about the way your life and the labor movement and so forth have gone?

V: I have no regrets what I done and time I spent

fighting for the labor movement. I believe that every hour I put in I don't regret. I was fired, discharged for union activity, and I don't regret it. I was more determined after I got fired the first time to fight for unions than I was at that time. I don't regret anything I done, and if I had to do it over I'd join the union and do the same thing.