

Tape 1 (51) - Side 1

Q: What were you doing before, how did you come to Seattle?

A: Well, there's really a long history in that, too, you know. I came to the U.S. in 1916. But before that, I had (*through the European continent*) countrymen for a period of six years. Working here and there, working my way. I was a painter, house painter. And I learned a great many lessons during that period of six years. Well, I worked in Germany, of course, () Switzerland, and I worked in France, (*relatively briefly*) I worked there. And then I (*traveled with*) two Germans who were both socialists. Then to Italy, over to Greece, I went to Egypt, Palestine, and then up to Romainia. Now, on that trip, we didn't work. We had saved money, so we () as always, but of course we had to try (). That is, all this time we just needed a knapsack, everything we needed was in the knapsack. Stuff to keep yourself alive. In Romainia, I worked for two years. And that's one place where we happened to learn a good deal in my trade. And, I made money, too. So that's the last of my travels. But, at the same time, you know, this accumulation of experiences. Now take, well, the working class experience, there I got into my (*first strike and a messy death*). An entirely new lesson for me, couldn't help to begin to do some thinking, because I was just a (*ditto*) when I started out. My father was a (*proche*). And of course we were poor () we moved to this, we were aliases in Denmark, so I didn't have much schooling, either. They had only two grades, the school. And, so, of course that ~~was~~ was one of the practices, one of the particularly (*into me*) completely surrounding Denmark. But I learned one lesson after another, you know, and finally became class conscious, I became convinced I'm a socialist, and I want ^{to} work for socialist ideas. Socialist movements. And that was the state of mind that I landed in the U.S.

Q: Why did you come to the U.S.?

A: Well, you know, after having traveled in other countries, and mostly bigger countries, particularly Germany, France, highly developed technologically. I came back to ^{Denmark} Germany, I couldn't get into the (*restrictive*) surrounding that I once tried to escape. And it was very difficult to go back to Europe, because of the first world war was on. That went on when I was in Romainia. So, of course, there was many lessons learned. Many experiences.

So, then I came to the U.S. and decided, well, I'm going to join the Socialist Party. I () in Chicago, because coming to the U.S. at that period, you had to use the name of a relative to whom you were going to see. You had \$25 in your pocket, it wasn't much, but (*i named that alright*), because I made good money in Romainia. So the second day I was here, I saw a sign in Swedish. The Swedish Socialists. I remember (), and ~~we~~ ^{they} were flabbergasted. But I was convinced that I wanted to be a socialist. I wanted to work for them, be a part of it. That's all we had ~~in them~~, ^{the} Socialist Party. Then you had to join the IWW.

Q: Was this in Chicago?

A: In Chicago, yes. Yes. () the IWW headquarters. When I joined the Socialist Party, it was organized by language, foreign language federations. So I was assigned to the Scandanavian Federation. And I soon learned about the IWW and ~~the~~ ^{it attracted me} (), their ideas. So I came to IWW headquarters knowing they'd ask me for a speaker to come before all branches of the Socialist Party. And one day I was sent up to speak to (*Haywood*), himself, and he said, "Well, ~~what's~~ (*the se*). You fellows were never (*line*) up anyway." So I said, "My God, I'll line up right now." I was attracted to the IWW.

Q: What was attractive about the IWW as compared to the Socialist Party?

A: The Socialist Party was predominantly oriented on electoral politics. The IWW was oriented (*on fighting the battle*) wherever you are on the job. And we also helped out the (*idea no wave*) for a new social order. ~~they~~ ^{fighting} weren't too clear, just what that new social order would mean, nor was I, so that didn't hold me back at all. But, in all the aspects, also coming here, I wanted to see more of the U.S. I didn't stay in Chicago for very long. I skipped out, you know, at that time you could get free fare if you would go to a certain city to work. ^{US, Mex, Wyoming} Booming because of oil.

Q: Right.

A: Big oil drilling, the town was booming. I went up there, I got up there and worked as a painter, and I was there when they when the triumphant (*news*) of revolution had come (*from Russia*). And that, of course, got me very much excited, too. Interested. Emotionally, sentimentally, and physically I began...

Q: Were you working as a Wobbly up in (), or were you...

A: I was working as a painter, but also a member of my union, paying dues.

Q: But there was no Wobbly local?

A: There was no Wobblies in (*Casper*). I, yeah, I once met one. Sort of, more or less (*traveling through*), too. But there were no Wobbly organizations. But, then the news (*of the Russian Rev*), the news, you know, then I realized that's something really big. And really new. And, of course, I wanted to know much more about it, and I also wanted to, I wanted that life, so that was my outlook. And I knew about the northwest, the IWW had (*carried on*) some very intense and very (*effective*) kinds of () battles. Particularly for better conditions in the ^{*logging*} ~~laundry~~ industry. This was a big industry. A big business. So, that was what was to become to my conscious. (), there were three of them, as a matter of fact. Two they released, I was born in Denmark. () Swiss, somehow, connected up with ~~every~~ (*in Casper*). Then () through Yellowstone Park, on the way we wanted to see that. There were two other, two comrades of mine, (*They had bought*) poor, Model-T's. I had known (). So we went through Yellowstone Park. At that event, I was interested in ~~all~~ (*got*). I did sketches of Yellowstone Park, and then I, finally I also became (*obsessed with the idea to get to Alaska*) National Park, I was up by the Canadian border. And the others wouldn't go with, I went there alone. Hiking through it. And well, () took photographs, and seen what it was. But the landing in Seattle, that was my objective. And then, naturally, () this wild rumors there. They effect, you know, of all these IWW travelers. We also (*had*) of the Socialist Party. Was no () to up the labor movement. And many of the IWW there, were working in the working in the AFL unions. We were not the (*syndicalist*) type. Well, we wanted to work in the mass movement, why, and we carried two cards. ^{*so did i.*} So we sort of had a, kind of a loosely formed left wing development here. The IWW was particularly strong among the longshoremen and, well, it did quite well in the shipyards. They were two big () here. Seattle was almost the center of the ship building industry, here. So, of course, that ^{*made*} ~~means~~ the Seattle labor movement could be different from the rest of the country. (*It was*) in the forefront. Otherwise, I don't believe a general strike would have been possible.

Q: How did it happen still, that the, I guess I'm not clear on why some of the unions risked so much to go out and support the shipyard strike? How did that happen? I mean, when people had, when ^(the CLC), I think a year before ^{the CLC} ~~socialists~~ had to have voted on whether to back a general strike ^{for MOONEY} (), and how do you ()? There was some support, there wasn't ^{the} a type of mass rank and file support that seemed to carry the general strike. There was that, [?] why didn't the Mooney general strike happen then? The first one was called off by Mooney, himself, is that right?

A: That came after the general strike. ^{The} ~~since~~ ^{that} strike was supposed to be called, ^{was nationwide} ~~Mooney~~ () ~~survive~~. I was sent out by the Seattle Labor Council, as one of the organizers in it, and the Council sent out three organizers, I became one of them. And my territory was down in Centrailia. And there I didn't find much sympathy, because they were all bitterly hostile to the IWW. Except the railroad workers. Well, anyway, but that happened after the general, the general strike took place in February. Well, look, the shipyard workers wanted a wage increase. There were 35,000 of them. We were lead together in the (MT) Council. (). And the shipyard owners were adamant. They wouldn't negotiate at all. () the war had actually ^{come to an end}. And, naturally, the shipyard owners, they could foresee that the industry would be on a down-grade, there would not be that great demand for new ships, once the war's over. But they were so adamant, they wouldn't even negotiate at all. And it really meant that the (MT) Council, all the workers in the shipyards, they were completely stymied. So we turned to the ~~Civic~~ Central Labor Council, asking for support for a general strike. And the night that was debated in the Council, I think it was way past midnight, way past.

Q: Now you were, some of the things that you've told me, I don't think we've got on the tape, so, you were a member of Central Labor Council at that time?

A: I was a delegate, yes. From my local union.

Q: Which was the painter's...

A: Painter's Local No. 300. I became a delegate shortly after I come to Seattle, because I was a live wire, and growing up in these AFL unions, very few people are interested in being delegates to central parties. That's really how things happen. Most of them are

more interested, they're only looking to follow you. That's very often the case. And this ^{was a good deal} could be the case in Seattle, too. So when I was willing to be a delegate for the Central Labor Council, I was elected right away. Now, then you have to remember, also, the Seattle Central Labor Council published a daily paper. "The Seattle Union ^{Record} Worker". ^{Something unusual} So we could use it. No other Central Labor Party would ever think of undertaking that, at that time, elsewhere in the country. Although some of ^{these bodies} you probably were much bigger than in a city like Seattle. And the Seattle union locals had, generally speaking, hold of the left. Very sympathetic to the ^{Bolshevik} Boston revolution. Published at one time, Lenin's speech, completely.

Q: ^{was} Does the union ^{Rec editorial policy} represent () to the left of where most of the rank and file were?

A: The ^(rank & file) file was really good, left oriented, too. Because of this impact of IWW (), and the Socialist Party, to some extent, because we were just beginning to organize the left wing in the Socialist Party. And our policy, there was, first of all, follow the class struggle. Fight the class struggle. Not so much the parliamentary people, but it would happen, so wherever it may be, ^{in the shops} you (), Or wherever it may be. Fight the class struggle. And then, also, industrial unions as against craft unionism. Which was also a very progressive idea. Left idea. And had taken great hold in Seattle. At one time, I ^{recall} called a Seattle union ^{Rec headline came out} rep ^{who came over}, in great ^{headlines} detail I said, "Want to be on the payroll?" And that ^{reflected the} was the () rank and file. The Seattle union ^{rec} did not go entirely cut loose from the rank and file, no, ^{it} could have had followers. But it was in the forefront.

Q: Why were the leaders of the AFL, like () and those people seemed to accept the idea at one degree? Why was this hostility that they sometimes showed towards the IWW as a dual union? Was that real, or was that...

A: That wasn't, that was real here. I'll give you an example of the exact opposite. The exact opposite. The secretary of the Central Labor Council, a Scotsman, ^(red headed) fellow with a powerful voice and a brilliant orator. His trouble, one of the left ^{sparkheads} (), the left was () and he's the secretary of the Council. Had a high post.

Q: Is this Jimmy Duncan?

A: Jimmy Duncan. Yes. What's his name, ^{Wells} () Wells, who, so at one time he was the chairman of

the Central Labor Party. Now that, itself, gives you somewhat of an idea of (). Is a body really reflected the rank and file, and responded to the rank and file, and ^{the general character of the body} ~~was in front~~ (), but not moving too far. No. To move away from the rank and file, that would never do.

Q: M-hmm.

A: So, there's sort of a phenomenon that we found in Seattle at the time, that could not be duplicated in any other city in the U.S. At that time, not. At other times, yes. There have been other cases. Seattle is not the only case. At that meeting, you know, when the shipyard workers asked for support to the general strike, of course the conservatives there were against it. That's obvious. ^{They} ~~we~~ said, "Well, can't (we) reach an oral contract?" The bosses, well, that was hooted out. Every mention of a general strike was cheered to the echo, you know. And many faced, you know, (^{it was not in formal}), but it was very demonstrative. So, great majority carried ^{the vote} ~~home~~. And re-submitted, the Central Labor Council submitted twice, a referendum to all the unions. Carried by a big majority. So the whole labor movement was well ^{advanced} ().

Q: What was the strike like?

A: The what?

Q: What was the general strike like, once it started?

A: Length?

Q: What was it like?

A: Oh, oh, yes. I'll give you some idea of that. Now, every union shop, no exceptions, there were about 65,000 organized workers. Some Japanese trade organizations joined in our trade organizations, more or less. IWW was, we had our own, separate, apart organization, from the ^{general} ~~country~~. And many unorganized, not many, but some unorganized workers. There were not so many, because Seattle was a very organized city. The strike was complete. The first ^{problem} ~~one~~ of course, was to feed the people. Many workers there were just young fellows, unmarried. And they ^{had not} established a family tradition here. You'd come to Seattle, you know, to work in the, particularly in the ship building industry. So you set up a number of feeding stations. Feeding, oh, 20,000 to 30,000 people a day. Owned by the culinary trades.

^{They did}
 () purchasing and cooking, preparing the food, and everything. AFL ^{Cards} Council or IWW
^{Cards were equally good}
 Council (), but we had to pay for it for a very low price. That was the first part.
 Then, next came the question of, well, what about certain activities (^{that are} important) like hospitals
 and what have you. Now, the general strike committee never ^{disseminated the matter or his} ~~once~~ () councils, but
~~each~~ ^{it was} ~~wants~~ the city government in ^A fact. When those days of the strike lasted, you know,
 it didn't last for very long. From Thursday morning, Thursday noon, till Tuesday, no,
 this is the opposite. From Tuesday till Thursday, the next week. Anyway, it lasted only
 a number of days. The general strike can't go on forever, unless you want to take power.
 And that was not the idea. Now, that was one aspect, feeding the people. Then, next,
 the mayor, himself, the city and hospital administration ^{exec} came before the general strike
 committee, that was not the whole body. We elected an ^{Executive} () of 15. That was sort of handling
 the day-to-day affairs. ^{They} We came before that party, asking for exemption. Now, exemption
 was granted for hospitals, for necessary deliveries. For pharmacies, that is, for drugs,
 to fill prescriptions only. And for city garbage collectors. To collect all garbage, ^{that was} ~~then~~
~~they~~ otherwise become a sanitary problem. But not collect anything else. And in each
 case, turned over ^{to} the particular trade that's concerned. Where, for example, trucks that
 would pick up the garbage, a great big sign, that this was the strike committee. ()
 all over the city. So it begins to look (), you know, the general strike committee was
 the one that decided what was to go on, and what was not to go on. Appeals came also from
 private (^{concerns}). No, they wouldn't let any of them move. Not any of them. No
 exemptions on them () as far as they were concerned. Now, that's another aspect of
 it. And ^{a third} () one, for example, we established our own police, because we were aware of,
 well, not aware, well, () ^{should it become a big demonstration} ~~becomes a victim of~~ (), that meant, maybe just, an excuse for
 the local police. Or the mayor's police, who had hired, you know, a whole army of new
 police officers who promised to help, to help () armed to the teeth. ()
~~they~~ ^{all} private companies (^{purchased guns}). So, we knew that was important that not any
 incident happen that could furnish an excuse for the police. So we had our own police.
 Not armed, (), just a band around your arm. Whenever too many people gathered,
 then the police would go over and say, ^{Alex} "Let's break it up." It's better. The strike

was more successful that way. Everybody agreed. (^{Nothing was}) ^{but} needed ~~was~~ persuasion.

I think this sort of, () points would give us an idea of how complete the strike was. And how complete it was in the sense of undivided support and dedication by the members of the unions.

Q: What about those workers who were not members of unions, or the middle class. I don't know how large that was. Was there support from the general population for the strike? () said that after...

A: Well, the lines were very clearly drawn in the general population, too. Very clearly drawn. To begin with, () the mayor, ^{Ole Hanson who was a big fool} (). ~~He~~ was sort of a ^(part barrel politician) policy, a typical American ^{politician who} policy which was very mediocre, (), ^{now} ~~no~~, nothing outside of political tricks. He had been a patent salesman, patent medicine salesman before. He had been selling kick-a-poo ^(Indian salve oil) . So, he was a kind of a (), try to ~~play~~ both sides. Now, to begin with, oh, by the way, let me give you an idea, also, of the attitude to () ^{Ole Hanson} ~~medicine~~. A central labor council, (^{we had our own building}), owned by the central labor council. And a good-sized hall for our meetings. A gathering. One night, the mayor himself was in the ^{gallery} ~~gallows~~. And ~~he~~ made an interruption in ~~the~~ ^{the} debate.

Incomplete - only the end - something like.