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Interview with Mr. Harold Bockman at his office in Wilmington, Delaware, April 15, 1971, by Myron Blackman. Project: Delaware in the Depression.

[There is no sound except a background hum for the first 050 counts on tape recorder counter; Mr. Bockman is picked up in mid-sentence as follows:]

A . . . built up a grocery bill.

Q [Inaudible] . . . I made a mistake, I haven't used . . .

A When Franklin Roosevelt was elected, he came to Delaware before he was elected. Yeah. Or was that his second, that could have been his second term he came here. Poured down rain. Ch, it poured down rain. Fortunately by that time I'd gotten a job. I took the day off, just stood in the rain over at 3rd Street bridge, watched him come in on the other side. I think that was the beginning of me having pneumonia the rest of my life, too. I really got sick. But he was the savior of this country, let nobody be mistaken about it. I don't say everything like the N.I.R.A. that was declared unconstitutional--I don't say everything he did was absolutely right, but he didn't sit back and wait. It's well this initial business started, at least he started.

Q What was the feeling about Hoover at that time?

A Hoover in those days--history may prove, you know, that he was a much more intelligent man than what he was ever been accused of, but that was a disgusting word in those days to even mention the word Hoover during the Depression. He was always preaching prosperity around the corner. Well, too many people had too much time to go around the corner and look and get disgusted and quit looking. You know, they'd just stand on the corner with their apples or whatever, you know, in the big cities. We had it here as well. We had a big sign up here on the highway, they put up. "Delaware can and will take care of its own." Don't believe 'em.

Q I heard that the DuPont family, one of the DuPont people contributed an awful lot of money to the welfare fund.

A I don't know whether they contributed anything towards the welfare fund or not, but fixing up projects and such, William B. Francis, for instance, had a situation where they hired people to like fix up the city streets and things. That was 25¢ an hour you worked for. William E. Vaire [sp], one of the top political leaders in Philadelphia, when he put the electrification system in on the Pennsylvania Railroad, one of the most dangerous jobs you could ever think of, was 25¢ an hour. That's what they paid people, for seven days a week you were allowed to work. So it wasn't a question of being a shortage at that time, it was a question of he didn't want a labor turnover. He didn't consider 'em feeding a large number, you know, it was get it done as cheap as you can possibly do it. And that's what they did it with.

Q Were there many bread lines in Wilmington?

A Yes, there was bread lines. People that were on relief, you know--an awful lot of people were on relief. Fortunately I was young and I didn't get on relief. And I had just gotten married, which that took a lot of courage, to get married in the Depression. And I was a painter, I had had a trade, and what I did was go around knocking on people's doors, "How about varnishing your front door for a half a buck?" And I varnished--right in this area--and I varnished an awful lot of doors. And one time I went to Philadelphia and bought up a bunch of neckties, cheap, put 'em in a suitcase with a wire hanger across it, and come in these barbershops and things and tried to sell neckties. So that was the only way I stayed off of relief. It wasn't a job, but it was trying to earn something, you know. And families had a tendency then to everybody go back together. When a son that had been married couldn't make out, he went back home. What little bit he had, he contributed to the home with his own, and that way a lot of people made out.

Q Was there much help between neighbors?

A Yes, I think during the Depression--people always have a tendency during hard times to get more together, you know. Like I say, I was young then, so a bunch of fellows who knew each other, every two weeks one would get paid for one of these jobs, we'd go down to the bakery and buy a lot of bread, go home and toast it and make cocoa and set there all night, talking about the Depression, eating toasted bread and cocoa.

Q What did you talk about, do you recall?

A Well, wondering if there was another place in the country where you could go to work. We hitchhiked--I did, with a bunch of fellows, well, three--to Great Boulder Dam, which was later named Hoover Dam. We thought we could get work there. We got there, people that were working there were sleeping in tar barrels that they were using on the project, hardly eeking out a bare existence. That would be interesting, also, a history of how that dam was built, and the people--how they were treated as far as employees is concerned. So we--all we did then was thumb it right back; between there and here was no work, as far as we could find, you know. You could volunteer your services for something, but it was an in-kind thing, you got--you know, meals or something like that.

Q Was there ever a time that you were unemployed for a long period?

A Well, as far as having a job was concerned, as I said, this necktie business that I considered, you know, not a job. When I got real hungry I worked that much harder trying to sell a few more ties. Well, people didn't have money, you know. I think I used to pay three for a dollar for these ties in Philadelphia and come down here and sell 'em for 50¢ apiece. They were real good ties, you know, not junk. The same way with the varnishing of the doors. People--no matter how hard they're up against it, they see somebody up against it, if they've got anything at all, they try to help. And that's--I'd paint more, being a small thing, the reason they would have their door varnished was more to help me than whether they were concerned too much about the door or not, at least realizing I was trying. So I did make a few dollars that way to put food on the table and pay the rent.

Q A few people that I've spoken to talked about public assistance, and they

say that they would do anything, their parents or themselves, to keep off of it.

A My only experience with public assistance, and I've had a lot since then in helping people in one thing or another, but my experience then was, my wife at that time--we were really bad off, because I had had an attack of ulcers and couldn't get work and I didn't much feel like working with these ulcers that I had at the time. And my wife was pregnant and needed a pair of flat-heeled shoes, that was the thing then, you know, you wear flat-heeled shoes if you're pregnant. So I got brave one day and went into one of these state agencies, asked, you know, if there was any way I could get a pair of shoes for her. Well, before I asked, I walked up to the desk, and the lady behind the desk, I explained it to her, and she says, "Well, what do you expect us to do for you?" And the tone in which she said it, and the attitude that she had, I just told her politely, "Not a damn thing," and turned around and walked out.

Q Was this during Roosevelt's term?

A This was in the Depression--no, before Roosevelt.

Q Was there a change, you know?

A Well afterwards--I think the change didn't come that fast. It was more or less that people's attitude with the change--that they were promised--that things started to get better and people were then starting to spend a little money, those that had money were realizing, "Well, maybe it's over now, we can take our chances," and things started to slowly pick up. But like I said to my wife many a time, I look at our children and I hope that they don't ever have to go through it, because the temperament of the world--not just this country--is such today with the educational system that we've had and the difference between a 16 and 18-year-old now than what it was 20, 30, 40 years ago--40 years ago, to be more specific. They wouldn't stand for a depression. I'm sure of it.

Q That's exactly what Gilbert Lewis said.

A You could say they might--you know, people will make that kind of a statement, you know, a lot of people will say, they'll make a statement like that, and then when it hits you, they live it, too. I don't believe it. I think in this case, people are much smarter today, they wouldn't stand for a situation, politically, government-wise, to use an excuse, you know, and say there's nothing we can do at this point, later. Uh uh, not today. And there is the intelligence there that if they don't know how, they say we do. And you know, I don't think they would ever put up with it. In fact, it could get to be a real bad situation, because I'm sure the young people today would not stand for that type of a depression again.

Q Do you think that we might have one?

A It's possible. It's always possible. Government has come a long way in being able to control the picture financially in this country, but look what happened just recently with--we were told no later than a little better

than a year ago, "Don't worry, it'll go to 4% maybe, but that'll be it." And vividly I can remember strongly Meany's strong statement that this thing could go to 6% and we're in trouble. It is at 6% now. And statistically you can find areas of unemployment in this country that are now worse than they were during the Depression. But it's because of--the government structure is such, being in the different things now, it's now like it was, but when it gets that bad. For instance, the unemployment statistics now are in the overall labor picture 6%, we'll say. That's not true in construction. In building and construction, the unemployment figure's at 11% now, right now. And Nixon is saying this is one of the areas where he's gonna attack inflation. It has the highest unemployment record; he's gonna attack the inflation through them? That doesn't make any sense. And now you got the steel workers. Well, you know, our economy based at different times like on the auto industry, the construction industry, the steel industry and such, this thing could get out of hand by not intelligently using the government structure, the controls and stuff that they could use, and doing it intelligently--it could get out of hand. And that would be something that I say the young people in this country wouldn't stand for. Because once explained, you can't bluff it no more. And for that reason I don't think they'd ever stand for a depression. It isn't a question of whether they could live through it or not, it's just a simple question, they'd choose not to and wouldn't, period. And that's my feeling about it.

Q A book I was reading describes--the first chapter was called "The Gloomy Depression of Herbert Hoover," and the second was "The Exhilarating Depression of Franklin Roosevelt." What was this change?

A Well, they used a different phrase there than I did. It wasn't changed that fast, but they had hopes. And he was doing things. And whether all were successful or not . . . for instance, one of my first jobs was I went around placing N.R.A. stickers in windows, the National Recovery Act, asking people to buy from those people, you know, that they were fair employers and such and were helping. And these stickers went in the store windows. That gave you hope, you know, that people were starting to do things. And again, as I say, with the change, money started to loosen up a little bit because people felt, "Well, we will change." But you see, it wasn't so much that Hoover was a bad guy, but Hoover didn't know what to do. That's my opinion. And when he went out, whether or not everything Roosevelt did was good, to everybody's thinking, at least he did everything he could to try, and some of the things worked. And by doing what he did, I think he saved this country. Now, as I said, the young people being a different breed completely from the young people 40 years ago, they're not gonna set back and watch it happen again. And I think it's gettin' close to that, in this country. I talk to students, high school, eighth grade on up, and I've been to seminars of our own in different parts of the country now. We always invite young people in to give their opinions of the things. A lot smarter, they know the ways in which to make change, and they don't just gripe for the principle of griping, just to be griping. You know, 90% of the complaint on the Vietnam War is not all of this young people's gripe. That is what they can make the clearest, the easiest. But the real basics are, they are concerned about all of these other things. And truthfully, they see--the hope's not there, and they want the change. If, for instance, the war was over tomorrow, you don't think you'd shutup

all these students, do you? Not by a long shot. Boy, they'd be right in there battling. And this is the change come about.

Q Well, why were people in the '30s . . .

A They had never faced it--those people, time had been so long past, that you know, the standard of living and everything was different. And that's the reason I say today, when I tell you, for instance, Nixon's policy of curing the inflation, the statistics in this country of unemployment is 6%, but where does he go to hit at the inflation, at the area of the job-holder whose unemployment is 11%, that's the construction worker. You see what I mean? That's not the way to cure inflation. Now, he's not gonna tell the construction worker that long before they in turn--and when that is explained to the younger people in those terms, young people understand that, you know. And this is where the problem would be then is those people that are trying to say this is the way to cure the inflation and do this. Because the controls are there in the government, it's been proven; we've been successful in trying to balance the economy for years. And the changes that have been made with the Securities and Exchange Commission and different commissions of government has been such that they have a better and an easier way of doing it, the banks and the security there with the F.I.D.C.S., things like this. People have more confidence and are not as prone to a depression. But you know, when you're trying to control an economy and calling the economy an inflationary economy, I don't care if it takes a wheelbarrow load of money to go buy a loaf of bread, as long as I got that wheelbarrow load of money to get that loaf of bread. It's as simple as that. In those days, you know, you used to have a priest on radio, Father Coughlin, who used to attack all the money lenders and the money people in this country. Only one place has the right to make money, that's Congress--let's make it, you know, and get this country on the road. But whether you believe in him or not, this is the thing in which I say the young people would be interested in. They would say, "What have you done? And if you haven't done anything, here's what you can do and why aren't you doing it?" And "Let's get it done, let's try." They'll call it their way, for instance, if it's not being done. And I don't believe that they'd stand back and watch it, at least the young people I've talked to, and I've talked to an awful lot in this country.

Q Were the W.P.A. and P.W.A. programs and programs like that effective?

A I think they were, yes. They helped. But they were controlled programs. For instance, you couldn't stay employed on a project just because you were hired there. You had a certain limit of time you could stay and then there was a change, somebody else come in. Seniority, or whatever way they picked them and how they picked them, you know, is another question. Whether that was all done perfectly right or not, I don't know. In my own case, I think there was a mistake made. For instance, I had just come out of the navy and they had me down as a veteran. And the intent of that program at that time was to be a veteran you must have been in the First World War. They had me down as a veteran, so I got cards to go report for work, see. You don't think I went in and said, "Hey, I'm not a veteran"? Not when you're hungry, you don't. You go to work on that card.

Q There were a lot of complaints about goldbricking on jobs like that.

A Well, you know, there was always the critic. For somebody to work and to be working, you don't just work for the sole purpose of maintenance of livelihood. He's got to have something he's working for, some goal. And when you take that away, when you say this is a--they call it the dole system or you can call it whatever you want, if you give a guy a rake and then accuse him of just leaning on the handle, you had to give him more than just the rake. You had to give him an incentive, and that was the thing that was missing all the way along the line. This was just to put bread on the table. So people that criticized was also criticizing putting bread on anybody's table, in my opinion. There are how many programs today, for instance, are ineffectual, but still they are programs. And because half of those people don't learn or don't get jobs, it doesn't kill the program today. They're still maintaining the programs. They're still critics, but less. They're saying, "Well, why should we do this? Let's kill this program because these fellows are not doing anything but going through the program because they're being subsidized to this point, and that's it." But they're not as many critics today about things like that. In those days there were. Every night there was a picture in the paper of a bunch of guys leaning on rake handles almost, you know, you fall down and stick the rake through you. But there was also an awful lot of guys that raked leaves in the parks for the sole purpose to get their minds off of their bellies, kept working just to keep their minds off their bellies; they didn't care whether they piled up a big pile of leaves or whether they didn't do any or not. It was just--that was there, you know, what was the future. It was done for one purpose, to put bread on the table of those people--the most people that they could possibly do it with.

Q But if people were in such great need, why was there this feeling of pride, the feeling of not going on public assistance?

A That's something that is in people automatically--and Americans especially. Oh, I don't say especially, either; I'm not that familiar with all the rest of the world. But in this country, I think your background as Americans has always been that pride. There's a lot of people might have been on relief if they thought nobody else would ever know it. But they were never on relief for that reason, I think. There is a pride. People have that. People have actually starved because of that. You know, we have a President's Conference in Washington even now--what do they call that, on Food, Nutrition and Health? The biggest farce I have ever seen foisted on the American people. I have yet to see anything beneficial come from it. Involve more young people in that type of a program in Washington, President's Conference on Food, Nutrition and Health, and I don't think they'll leave Washington until some office is opened and saying, "Hey, let's start now before we leave Washington. What are you going to do? Are you going to carry out the recommendations of this conference and do something about it?" That's what I mean. [Inaudible] . . . they make a trip and come back. They're still doing it in some cases. But if this gets any worse, I'm afraid that's what you'll find. People'll demand answers, not ask for 'em.

Q Did you get involved with the A.P. of L. during the '30s?

A Yes, yes.

Q Could you describe that?

A The C.I.O. and the A.F. of L.--the C.I.O. first, then the A.F. of L. I've been in the A.F. of L.--well, as a member, about 30 years now. And the C.I.O. before then for some time. I always have been active in unions for that matter. If I ever worked anyplace where there wasn't a union; that was my first feeling, was to get a union in there. Because, you know, you can be the best worker in the world, but when you bargain not collectively, and only for yourself, your wages stay down. You don't get the result. Where you bargain collectively with a group of people, whatever you are seems to spread evenly through the bunch, or whatever they are, you benefit more by that. And your power is that much stronger to get what you're asking for.

Q I imagine you were involved in some organizing.

A All my life.

Q Was there much violence? I know there was violence in other places with union organizing. Was there much in Delaware during the '30s?

A Well, you know, violence, it's only your interpretation of violence that matters. Is it violent to cause somebody to be hungry, is it violent to keep wages down, is it violent to not give you any future perspective to better yourself? Is all these things violence? I don't know, you know, whether people look at it that way or not. But if you've got me hungry, you've got a violent man. Who was it that said, John Paine said, "Wherever in the world a man might be that is in hunger or need, that's where I am at." Well, it's true. No matter where they hurt somebody, that's where you're at. That's where you should be, in other words. If somebody's in need, that's where you belong, you know. I don't mean by the mere fact of getting on a bus and saying I go to where he's at, I'm talking about your inner self and your concerns for him. So this is organizing. If you place yourself in that philosophy, that's organizing, because you're telling the man working alongside of you that. "Hey, so-and-so over there just had a wage cut, and unless we organize here, we're gonna get it," you know. This is organizing, in the real sense. Now, you know, those kinds of organizers in those days, there wasn't that many that got paid, you know. Today it's pretty hard to get a guy to volunteer to do something, in labor organizations. But at the same time, from the founding of labor organizations 'til today, the basic principle is organize. And we do sometimes not enough of it; sometimes we've been a little lazy. That doesn't mean it isn't necessary and should be continually. In fact, they have to continue. Any group that stays still becomes stagnant and disappears. So there will always be organizing.

Q What was the response on the part of the companies?

A Well, organizing has never been easy, it never will be. To get into rehashing whether or not there was violence in the way of organizing, there's a public record. Wouldn't be no sense for me to get into that. And who was at fault? You can say, well, in a sense somebody here in the union end was violent because he wasn't being recognized. But if you accept the fact that somebody is being hurt for trying to organize, look at the miners who were slugged by hired goons and murdered. Look at the history of the butchers

or the meat cutters and packers, how they used the foreign labor market and the advantages they took of those people--that's violence. So to resist that--it's like civil disobedience. There's a lot of unjust laws. You won't rule out civil disobedience, I hope; if you do, why, we're never gonna have change. So civil disobedience in a lot of cases is necessary. There are unjust laws at times. You have to get up and fight about it. So as far as punching another guy in the mouth and this thing, that would just be rhetoric, it would be wasted. It's all in the paper.

Q Did you ever realize, why you were doing it--organizing--in the 30's, did you have any idea?

A Yes, I was raised that way. My father was always concerned about unions. So I realized what I was doing from the very beginning, I was trying to better myself.

Q Did you realize the gains that you would . . .

A No, no, no. Everything I ever became or ever got involved in as far as the labor organization was concerned, was not because I was after it. My friends around me either decided that I was the one or whatever, and I certainly at that point, when I seen that happening, didn't back off. I never backed off from any responsibility in the labor organization. I'm biased, everybody that knows me knows that, all through my history, they know I'm a labor man. I don't deny it and I don't think that I ever will as long as I live. I hope I don't.

Q You mentioned the radio. That's something that I'm interested in, it was the start of the radio in that era. Do you remember things that you listened to?

A Oh, yes, all the way through the Depression and I think clean up to Orson Welles' Martian invasion. I think the radio--people was glued to the radio in those days. For instance, one--not to be critical of anyone again, but not looking into it too much either, you know, everything has to have its beginning. The credit unions at one time was looked on as a communistic endeavor, and there's an awful lot of people involved with credit unions today in this country. I think the Corn Exchange in Philadelphia started as a credit union; it's one of the wealthiest banks in the country. One of the news analysts of the day, reporters, used to knock the co-ops and the credit unions, continuously, until all of a sudden he received a few slips of dividends where he himself belonged to a co-op; he was buying his seeds and stuff in a co-op, and he received the dividends and I think he shut up and got off the air. But people were interested in those things then, you know.

Q What was your reaction to the War of the Worlds, the Orson Welles' . . .

A The what?

Q What was your reaction listening to Orson Welles' Invasion from Mars?

A Well, everybody's case was just a little bit different. Each individual family, wherever they happened to be, everybody's happened to be different. I walked into my house when my mother had just been operated on and was laying on a cot, they had just brought her home from the hospital. And

she was advising the rest of the family to get in the car and start. Now, you know, that was to nowhere, they didn't know what they would do. And she says, "Whatever you do, when you go out the door, turn the gas off." She couldn't move; she was laying there--just brought her home from a gall bladder operation. But my family, when I walked in the house, it was a fact to them. Well, I had just--we'd moved into the suburbs by that time and I had just come out of Wilmington, and I hadn't heard it. So all I said was, "Well, how did this program come on?" Well, they didn't hear the beginning. They had just tuned it in. I said, "Well, I want to hear the beginning before I get in any car and start anywhere, because if it's gonna happen there, it's gonna happen here. I may as well stay here." But there was an awful lot of people took that serious because of the way they had tuned in, you know. And of course he made it so real, his life since then has proven that he could make it real, you know. It shook the country up, I think.

Q I saw a picture yesterday in a book of a farmer with a gun getting ready for the Martians to come.

A Yeah, a lot of people were really sincere about it, because, you know, they--I guess some people did die over it. I don't know. But to me, I was younger then, and I guess I wasn't at that time too apt to be shocked at anything, I guess. I walked in the house and seen the turmoil that they were in, I thought, "Well, somebody here has gotta say something," so I said, "Well, wait 'til we hear the beginning and maybe something will be on the radio later, and we'll be able to decide whether to go take this ride to where I don't know, because I don't know where you would go." They were landing in Jersey, you know, according to him. It was funny afterwards, but it wasn't funny during that to a lot of people I don't think.

Q Did you listen to any of Roosevelt's Fireside Chats?

A All of 'em, continuously. Of course, each time, people were living in hope for improvement, and each time there was something to give you that much more strength. And I think this was the reason for the Fireside Chats. His greatest expression was, "There's nothing to fear but fear itself," and if you're here with your government, you're talking it over, you know, we're all in this together, that was the theory I guess, that we'll inform you of what's going on and what we're gonna do. And he got my vote every time he ran. If he was still living, I'd still be voting for him if he was still running.

Q Did you get in to see the movies much?

A No. No, I went one time, it was to see something that was as bad off as I was, so I went to see Grapes of Wrath when it first showed. And it was a lot worse than I was, so I thought, that was it. Why look for something to keep your spirits down? Try to improve 'em if you can. It's hard to do.

Q You mentioned unemployment lines. Were you [inaudible], I didn't quite get it on the tape.

A What was that?

Q The unemployment lines.

- A Well, they were lengthy. Let's leave it that way, they were blocks long. You were out of work, you were out of work, period. And like I say, you went out to get a job then, you didn't go out and say, "How much are you paying?" You said, "How much are you willing to pay?" You negotiated down, period, to get what you could get. That was the theory, stay alive. Go out and look for it and dig the best way you could. A lot of people didn't feel the Depression, you know. There's always somebody has to be employed, at what salaries, I don't know, you know. Of course, in those days to business people, you know, their prices were down, too, because nobody could afford to buy in any amount, and those that were working, it made it a little easier on those people, because no matter what their wages were, they did have some money.
- Q Is there any lesson in the Depression?
- A Is there a lesson in the Depression? You know, that to me is the one thing that I say secretly. The youth of this country has the lesson, but it is not the argument they're presenting. They're presenting the things to the people that they think the people will be receptive to, like the war, where we all--I feel, I know the war is wrong; it may take some of us longer to find it out than others, but we all feel that way, the war's wrong. So automatically to get the--they criticize the youth because they get into some demonstration or whatever you want to call it, and they'll call it something about the war, and then all of a sudden they get into a meeting and ten other things come up. And they say, "What's this all about?" And they're not only arguing the point of the war. There had to be a reason for it. There had to be some other things involved. And these are the things that the student--once you pin him down, he starts talking about. He don't just talk about the war, he talks about all these other things. So I think the basic lesson is there and they have it, even though the older people, or the people at that time, haven't made no chart or something and said to each one, or each group, "Here, this is it, see what you can do about it." No, I think they have it. That's what I mean by saying that they're much smarter today than they were 40 years ago, at the age groups.
- Q You mentioned something before about forgetting the Depression.
- A I think the Depression should be forgotten, yes. The Depression is history, the Depression's on record. The Depression's there--it's like anything else bad, and the lesson's been learned, I believe, because of the different changes in the law, and now, as I said, the congressmen and the senators have a much more knowledgeable--the people that are serving are much more knowledgeable than the people who served then, and they know what to do about things. And if they don't, there are people that have been to school enough in this country to tell 'em what they're doing wrong, and they're studying it--you don't have to be a senator or representative to know something more than they know, you know. And they're being more vocal about it and telling 'em. You see today senators and congressmen changing their opinions overnight. You never seen that before. You know, you gotta know a senator that was there for 30 years, that was it. It was the same 30 years after he went in as it was the day he went in. That's not the case now. That's what I mean by the people that are involved today have an effect on change. And I don't think they'd be willing to live with a Depression. To use the old phrase, "Throw the rascals out--or chase 'em out," it

wouldn't be. And they wouldn't be so apt to want to run. You know, I believe there's people today living capable of running the government, but because of their age, and because of the existing problems, don't want to run government. They don't want anything to do with it. But they have a tendency for that because they do realize that there are younger people today that's interested and concerned and they are much safer by taking that type of a position. Of course I don't want to rattle on here forever.

Q Just one last thing. A lot of people who grew up in the Depression, you know, who started working in the Depression in the later years, were involved in this quest for security, this need to get things to be secure.

A Well, I've always been concerned about security. Now, I've never worked in a job long enough--I've been changed . . . where I have an established pension system. I've been fighting for pensions for different groups that I've been in, who now have them, all my life. My own local union, for instance, has a pension system. They didn't have it. I fought for it when I was in there, but they finally got it. But I'm not there. You have to be in there as a contributing factor to be a part of it. And each job that I've had, I didn't stay long enough. And moving like that, I've still not gotten to a point of any pension. So when social security in those days--you know, it was called a communistic endeavor, well that's my one hope to get a little bit when I get to a point where I can't work or want to maybe find a way to get out of this business because somebody'll be pushing me out, younger. That's one thing, social security. It, tied to so many other things today like medicare, whatever, is the greatest security, I think, that a person has gotten in recent years in this country. Not a fulfillment by any sense. I'm looking now for national health care. If we don't get it, I think we're going to be in a real, real serious problem in this country. We're in it now, but not enough people are recognizing it. There's a billboard down on the highway now with a picture of the hospitals closed. "Don't let this happen to you. Contact your senators and representatives." Well, you know, that's a possibility. But I think we're tired of the competitive system of hospitals, insurance companies, and people are not getting the health care, no matter what the hospitals and doctors tell you. You're not getting it, especially in preventive care. And I do think that we've got to have national health care. Maybe before I get out of here we'll have it, you know, that'll be another one of things that will cover that. We fight continuously in the A.F.L.-C.I.O. for these things. It's sometimes forgotten today that we were one of the basic groups that fought for public education in this country, and we'd have never had it if it hadn't been for the A.F.L.-C.I.O., in my opinion. Then some of the things we're fighting for today are not just because we'll be the sole recipients. Hopefully everybody'll join the union, but they won't. But it's for the country and the public. And national health care is one of the main objectives, the number one objective of the A.F.L.-C.I.O. today. So as security goes, such--national health care, medicare, medicaid, social security, these things. You know, medicare came about because certain senators changed their minds. Took 'em two years, but they did. Two years is a long time to wait, especially when it affects millions. I think the younger people will recognize more every day, especially the public servant, if you want to call him that, the elected official recognizes that each day is a long time to wait. And I think they're acting not with haste, but with the recognition that they

won't be there themselves unless something's done about the needs and the care there, the necessities of the people.

Q Can the people of your generation forget the Depression?

A No, they should, but they won't. I personally have never made a talk in reference to the Depression to a labor organization. I don't believe in that. It's--you know, you hear labor leaders, as they're prone to be called, reminding the young people of the Depression, what can happen to them. I don't think you have to remind 'em of a depression. I can sit here and tell you how hard and how bad an appendectomy is to go through. But you wouldn't pay me a damn bit of mind. It's not gonna do you any good. But if I tell you what's good for you and how to prevent it, you might listen. And I think this is what we have to be concerned with now, the future, not so much what went on in the past.

Q Well, why can't people forget it?

A Because they were hurt, there's scars left. There's families that were broken up. People actually in bad--so that kind of a position that some people, different situations, even left their families, you know, "Let the state or somebody else take care of 'em, let the relief situation--they'll fare better with me gone," you know. It even got to that. People committed suicide, you know, and the families still remember it. "Look, he committed suicide maybe because of something he thought he was benefiting me," you know? Or she, or whatever did, same thing. But these are scars that'll never be wiped away. They're here. And as long as anybody's living from that era, it'll go on. And all you have to do is read some of the history of it. I've never read anything about the Depression that was a lie as far as the bad part was concerned. Nobody contradicts it, anyway. It was here. The change was a long time coming. Like I say, social security, they said it was bad, so many people, "Oh, it's no good." But you very seldom hear that today. These are social reforms that government was established for, to do for the people what the people can't do for themselves, and this is one of the things, I think, that was absolutely necessary. Again, because of all the factors involved with health care, I think we need a national health care situation in this country immediately, not tomorrow. We need it fast. And whether the young people get involved with this or not, I don't know. That's a case of where the people that are hurt the hardest are the elderly. And I think the elderly and the young people will eventually realize that it's not too long from now, and join forces. You know, the old coalitions politically are falling apart, and new coalitions politically are being formed. The youth are realizing that I get old and the old are realizing to get what's good for me, I got to cooperate. And you know, with these people, and I'm beginning to see their point. You know, the old people said--a lot of them said the war was right. It was the youth that said the war was wrong. It took a lot of courage to say the war was wrong, 'cause they were the ones that were gonna have to fight it, you see. But the older people are beginning to realize, "Hey, they were right," you know. And with this kind of action, I think we're gonna get some of the things we need, not because of the people that are there now, but because the people that go there are gonna have to recognize it.

Q Was there any good in those things in the '30s?

A Any good? Just to be alive was always good, and it still is. You know, to experience those things, you don't want to go through 'em. It's like--you often hear people go through the story of their operation. It's a horror story, but they still want to repeat it, you know. They don't want to go through it again, they've been through it. But I guess it's something to talk about, so they rehash the Depression sometime. I don't like to rehash the Depression. I thought that it's something--took a lot of years away from my youth where I could have maybe done something differently. Maybe I could have furthered an education, maybe I could have done a lot of things. I don't say I would have, but maybe I could. But the opportunity wasn't there. And this always hurts.

Q O.K. Thank you very much.

[END OF INTERVIEW]