

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Youngstown Sheet & Tube Shutdown Project

Youngstown Sheet & Tube Shutdown

O. H. 151

MICHAEL J. KATULA, JR.

Interviewed

by

Philip Bracy

on

December 28, 1981

MICHAEL KATULA JR.

Michael Katula Jr., a son of Michael and Ann Katula has been a life long resident of the City of Campbell, Ohio. He attended Campbell schools and graduated from Campbell Memorial High School in 1957. After spending three years in the United States Marine Corps, Mr. Katula entered Youngstown University where he received both his BS degree and MS degree in Education. After teaching in the Youngstown Diocesan School System, he then began teaching in the Lowellville Local School District where he is still employed at the present time.

Mr. Katula became interested in politics in the 1970's and was a successful candidate for a Campbell councilman's seat in 1972. In 1975, he ran for the office of mayor and served as the Mayor of the City of Campbell in 1976 and 1977.

Mike Katula currently is on the Board of Education in the Campbell City School District. He and his wife, Marian, and their three children are members of St. Michael's Byzantine Church. Among other organizations, Mr. Katula is a member of the Lowellville Teacher's Association, N.E.O.T.A., O.E.A., N.E.A. and the American Slovak Club.

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INTERVIEWEE: MICHAEL J. KATULA, JR.

INTERVIEWER: Philip Bracy

SUBJECT: Youngstown Sheet & Tube Shutdown

DATE: December 28, 1981

B: This is an interview with Michael J. Katula, the former Mayor of Campbell, for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program by Philip Bracy on December 28, 1981 at approximately 9:30 a.m. The topic for discussion is the Youngstown Sheet and Tube Shutdown and how it affected the various communities involved.

First of all Mr. Katula, could you give us a little bit about your background?

K: Well, my name is Michael J. Katula and I have been a life long resident of the City of Campbell, Ohio. I graduated Campbell Memorial High School in 1957. Thereupon, I entered the United States Marine Corps, served from 1957 through 1960. Upon my discharge, I entered the then, Youngstown University in the winter of 1961 and completing my Bachelor's requirements in the year 1966. In the meantime, I started teaching for the Youngstown Diocesan Schools, namely the Byzantine Catholic Central School and that was in 1962. Upon completion of my Bachelor's requirements, I then moved to the Lowellville Local School District in 1966, where I have been employed to the present time. In the meantime, I have gone back to Youngstown State in 1972 or thereabouts and completed my requirements for my Master's Degree, specifically in Secondary Principalship in the summer of 1980.

During the 1970's however, certain situations arose where

I became interested in the political arena and I was a successful candidate for a First Ward Councilman seat in the City of Campbell in 1972 and I served one term from 1973 to 1975. I ran for mayor in 1975 and won that election and served as Mayor of Campbell in 1976 and 1977. Upon leaving the political area, I really didn't do too much, a lot of work at home for the wife. And in 1980 I aspired to run for the office of Board of Education in the Campbell City School District. I was successful and I am currently serving that term which will expire on December 31st of 1983.

- B: Where were you and how did you find out about the announcement of the shutdown of the Youngstown Sheet and Tube facilities?
- K: I was one of the people who were called up to the Youngstown Sheet and Tube offices that morning, which I believe was September 19th. And we were presented with letters. We were up in the office--I can't remember the individual's name. And the letter specifically stated what was going to happen. We were given those letters prior to them being given to the press. We were the first ones to be notified. Present were myself, the then Mayor of Struthers, Anthony Centofanti, and I believe Jack Hunter, Mayor of Youngstown was there, a number of other individuals whom I can't recall at this particular time. But as soon as we were informed, then approximately an hour later, that's when the public was informed as to the shutdown of the various mills within the Campbell Works within the Youngstown Sheet and Tube.
- B: How many people would you say attended that meeting prior to the public announcement?
- K: Prior to the public announcement, I would say there were about eight to ten of us there.
- B: Were the County Commissioners there?
- K: Yes, I would have to assume that the County Commissioners were there.
- B: How did you first learn about the meeting? Were you called or did somebody notify your office?
- K: Yes, I was called and I was told that it was imperative that I be there because, I recall, I had to call my principal to ask for the day off mainly so that I could be there.

B: What did the shutdown mean to your particular city, to Campbell?

K: To coin the word that I used, I imagine I was the first one to use it, devastating. I knew immediately what that meant to the City of Campbell because the majority of the plants that were being shut down were in the Campbell Works that were located within the corporate limits of the City of Campbell. It struck me immediately, first of all, I knew a number of Campbell residents were going to lose their jobs. Secondly, I knew what this meant to the city in terms of income taxes. And thirdly, on a very small basis, a small percentage, but in addition to those losses would be property taxes. I was aware at that particular time that this would mean a loss in revenues of--oh, I think I estimated approximately at that time--more than 50% of our annual income in the City of Campbell.

B: Would you be able to give us an approximate percentage of job loss. I mean, I realize the property loss and so forth, but what percentage of the loss was jobs?

K: Okay, what we originally estimated, as far as I can see, turned out to be incorrect. There were 5,000 jobs affected or thereabouts and we estimated that Campbell residents affected would probably be, perhaps, 2,000. This was the reason, at that time, that I almost pushed the panic button. Try to realize 2,000 breadwinners or thereabouts would be losing their jobs. But as it turned out--and I never did get the final figure--I would say perhaps it affected 700 to 750.

I was made aware later on that out of the 5,000 jobs--and I think a lot of people aren't aware--there were many people that were working the Sheet and Tube from Pennsylvania, from New Castle, that area. So, that took up quite a bit, a lot of people from Youngstown and the surrounding area. In the end, probably I would say a safe estimate would be about 600 to 800 men were affected from the City of Campbell.

B: Before you left your office, did you authorize or did Council have you look into an impact study of how much it actually would cost the city per se?

K: We attempted to do a study on our own. Now I couldn't really give you the exact figures at this time. But oh, as I think I mentioned already, we were projecting that eventually this would mean a loss of 60% of the operating

income that the city, at that time, was living on. And we even projected further for the school district that they would, as far as the property taxes that they collect for that, we estimated at that time they were going to lose upwards of 70% of their income. Now, I don't know if that has really come to be, but those were our initial projections. And of course, you have to understand at that time, you actually were feeling like the entire world was falling upon you. Those are about the figures we did come up with. Say 50% to 60% of the city income and the school district was going to lose 70% of its income.

B: After this meeting with--I think it was Mr. Lambreth?

K: Yes, now I recall.

B: Was there any meeting immediately following that between all the Mayors or the individuals who were present at that meeting? Was there a follow-up meeting that day?

K: No, not at that particular time. If I recall correctly, we all kind of walked around in a daze that morning. More or less, at that time, there was no congregation of the people that were present, not for a couple of days that I recall. The then, Congressman Carney, came into town either the next day or the day after that and we finally convened over in Strouss', all of the county officers. But at that time, it seems to me it was not, what are we going to do about it? It seemed at that time--and really this is what upset me--was that everybody was looking at what caused it. This was already when the Environmental Protection Agency was being attacked and foreign steel was being attacked, and everybody was looking for someone to blame. Even though I contributed a little bit to those conversations, I was the poor individual who kept trying to yell, "What are we going to do about it." Not so much look for who you're going to blame, but it's not going to satisfy our cities just to find out who to blame. What are we going to do about this disaster that is impending?

Now the day after, now that I recall, the day after the announcement, Governor Rhodes did come into the City of Campbell. In fact, he came throughout this area. He was here in Youngstown. I recall that morning we had a session down at the Youngstown Council Chambers and then that afternoon he came over to Campbell with myself and we had, naturally, a great turnout of individuals, those that were losing their jobs et cetera, retirees, who were

concerned apparently, about whether or not they were going to lose their retirement. But I remember a packed council chamber listening to all these things that the Governor--I can't recall if he said the things he was going to do or if he was there explaining what had happened. But I'm sure somewhere in there that Governor Rhodes pledged his support for the entire Mahoning Valley and the City of Campbell.

That Monday I called my superintendent and my board members and I got a leave of absence from my work. And the next week, week and a half was quite hectic. I attended quite a number of meetings, Trumbull County, here in Mahoning County. And there we got into the meetings, more or less, what you're talking about with various organization, various officers from different political subdivisions. But what amazes me, through all this time, everybody was continually looking for the blame and nobody was really talking about: What are we going to do about it? Where do we go from here? To me this was quite disappointing.

On my own, I took it upon myself within that period of time--I believe I had about a week off from work or eight days if I recall--that I, on my own, formed within that week what I called a Campbell Recovery Commission, which basically, if you want to look at its format, you can take a look at CASTLO at this particular time. My idea behind it was that I did not foresee that we were going to get any help. We had to take it ourselves and through the Recovery Commission and through its various committees, we were going to find out what we could do as far as our own city was concerned, to begin to get it back on its feet even before it started to lose its income. And unfortunately, the Campbell Recovery Commission was allowed to terminate after I had left office. That following November I lost the election and I never heard anything about the Campbell Recovery Commission again. In its place I assume CASTLO came.

B: Can we back up a step?

K: Sure.

B: The meeting that took place on September 23rd that Congressman Carney, I guess, convened, you mentioned your frustration of the fact that everybody seemed to be looking for a scapegoat.

K: Right.

- B: Anywhere along the line, did anybody finally address your issue? The second meeting that took place, I think it was October 11th, was that a follow-up to what was being voiced because of your concern? I believe Mr. Bat and Mr. Shepard from Studebaker were brought in for the second meeting. I'm not clear whether you attended that meeting.
- K: I don't recall. When was this meeting?
- B: That was October 11th.
- K: Where did it convene?
- B: Higbee's.
- K: Higbee's? No, no I wasn't there.
- B: Okay, so the first meeting you came away with the impression that nothing really was going to get done, that people just were looking at who was to blame.
- K: Right, and there were even some meetings in Pittsburgh. Excuse me if I forget the names of all these things because it has only been four years ago or five years ago. Oh, I know what that was, the Steel Community's Coalition. Again, there, they were looking for reasons that caused it. And in fact, I don't know, I guess just being outspoken or at least saying what I happened to have on my mind, I remember I was booed down there by a number of mayors and officers of various counties from throughout this whole northeastern area. Everybody was looking to foreign steel or to EPA and I asked if anybody is going to bother to investigate the cost of employment over the last twenty years that may have caused this. And naturally, there were a lot of union people there, they didn't appreciate it. I brought up the idea of raises that had been given over the last twenty years, benefits and what they were costing the companies and could this perhaps be one of the reasons why. What I guess I was trying to tell them was there was no one reason why the mills closed down. They're closed. I just added that in there. I said, "You're talking about all these other things to blame. I'm just adding one more if you want to look at it that way." And once they booed me down, I just shut my mouth.
- B: There was speculation, and I've heard from various quarters, but nobody has been able to pin it down, that there was a



Japanese delegation that went through the Sheet and Tube property either a week before or somewhere during that period. Do you have knowledge of that? And if so, do you know who was involved, the company or the people involved?

K: Oh, I can't remember the name of the company, but there was say, a story, that this was so. And Mayor Hunter became quite involved in that. And he and a certain number of people were supposed to be taking a trip to Japan to check this out. And we had a meeting in the Mayor's office at that time, which included myself, Mr. Centofanti, and the Youngstown City Councilmen were present. It was at that time, more or less, upon the insistence of the Youngstown City Council that Mayor Hunter and whoever else he was supposed to go with, include in his entourage, the Mayor of Campbell and the Mayor of Struthers, being that we were the hardest hit by the whole thing. And it seems that when this happened, that's when everything fell through because that whole day I recall, we went through the process of getting our passports and so on, getting packed and what have you. We were supposed to leave the next morning.

Well, this is where I think the politics came in at the time. I don't know, to this day--if you recall I said it was a story--whether it actually occurred or not or whether it was a political ploy on somebody's part, and I don't want to mention any names. But I know, as soon as Mayor Centofanti and myself were included in the group that was supposed to go to Japan, it seemingly fell through by that night. I recall a conversation with Mr. Hunter, which wasn't a very nice conversation because, in the meantime, I had been in contact with some other public officials and I was being warned that what the papers were saying and what Mayor Hunter was saying were not necessarily true and it could be something that's just political. And so, he and I had a little heated discussion--I won't say argument--about it. And I guess I was getting the point across to him that I wasn't trusting everything he was saying and this seemed to cool him a little bit. But at any rate, by that evening around midnight, the trip was off.

B: Just so I can kind of see if these dates are right, I just want to kind of try to put them in a frame. I have listed Sunday, October 2nd, there was a 7:00 a.m. meeting. Is that the one?

K: Yes, that was the one.

- B: Okay. Mayor Hunter, when I interviewed him, implied that there was a Frank Coglin, I think his name was from Boshi. Now, was that the outfit that was supposedly showing interest?
- K: Yes, Boshi Industries. Frank Coglin I never met. He was not present when we had those meetings to my recollection. There were members of the press there. One in particular was--oh, I can't remember his name right off the bat.
- B: They had about four, they had Ponzio Peskin, Clingan Jackson. It's hard to say because they had a bunch of people they threw on the story.
- K: One in particular that I recall, he was the younger one. If I see his name. . .
- B: But your impression though was that it may have not been in fact, what it was presented to be?
- K: Well, my initial impression was that it was true, but as I say, throughout the day I was being contacted by various people. Well, first of all, I think the suspicion was thrown upon the whole thing by the Youngstown City Council. It was very obvious, sitting in that meeting, that the councilmen were not believing their mayor, that everything he was saying and reporting was true. You could very well see that there was no trust whatsoever. And I think this is the reason--in fact, the then President of Council, Emanuel Catsoules, he was the one that insisted that the Mayors of the two neighboring communities also take this trip. Mayor Hunter did, in fact, agree to it at the meeting, but it just seems to me like the whole attitude changed from a positive to a very negative atmosphere.
- I know, I spent most of the day with the Youngstown City Councilmen and there were remarks made: "You can't trust him. He's just trying to do something political," and so on. "We have to keep an eye out for him." They even appointed a Youngstown Councilman, if I recall, one or two to go along with us. I don't recall exactly, it could have been Mike Crogan, but I'm not certain, but I think they also delegated one councilman to go along on the trip. I could be incorrect, but there's a possibility there.
- B: Well, could I maybe pressure you about the people that were telling you--outside of Youngstown City Council--

that perhaps this whole thing needed further investigation or was a little bit questionable. Were these labor people or could you identify any of them without naming them?

K: No, they weren't labor people. I didn't talk to any labor people on that particular day. I know I was in contact with Congressman Carney. Well, naturally, I was talking a good part of the day with Mayor Centofanti from Struthers. And I wouldn't go very far beyond that other than talking with my own officials back in the City of Campbell. I believe we had a special meeting that night too, not a special council meeting, but we called together the councilmen to bring them up to date on the events that were happening on my upcoming trip, and what the purposes were and so on. But other than that, as I say, I just got the feeling, after it was decided we were going, I got the feeling that there was an atmosphere of distrust. And I didn't know really what was going on or who to believe, let's just put it that way!

B: Were your apprehensions shared. When you talked to Congressman Carney and you talked to Mayor Centofanti, did they echo the same kinds of concerns that you had?

K: Yes, I would say generally. I would say that Congressman Carney didn't trust everything that the Mayor was saying. Mayor Centofanti and I, we were almost like the tag-alongs here. We didn't know what was really going on as far as the whole situation was concerned because we were the so-called minor leaguers in the big league ball park. Both Mayor Centofanti and myself, I believe, we felt, "We have to be cautious, we have to watch out. Are we going to be used in this and what have you?" Nobody could figure out in the end what in the world it was that Mayor Hunter wanted to do and exactly what he had in the works.

I can recall a conversation with him, in fact, he said that none of this was supposed to be let out. I can't remember the exact circumstances, but I recall in my conversation with him over the phone when he told me that they were backing out, that they had people around here who had listening devices, either listening devices listening to people's conversations or they were tuned into all the radio stations or something like that. And the so-called representatives from the Boshi Industries didn't want this. And when it started to hit the news media, supposedly people listening in on conversations, what have you, this is when they backed out. This is when

he told me that the trip was off.

B: Who did he imply was listening in?

K: The people from Boshi Industries. I recall that he said that they had people in this area who were keeping an eye on this so to speak. And it more or less boiled down to: Maybe something can come out of this if we do what they say and we do it the way they want us to do it. Apparently, one of the stipulations was that you just can't blast this all over the newspapers and the news media and talk to reporters about it and so on. And this is exactly what was happening. In fact, this didn't make sense to me because the very morning that we had that meeting, that Sunday paper had it in big headlines I recall. But this was part of the reason given to me of why the trip was cancelled. The whole deal was off because they didn't like the way this thing was being publicized and what people were saying already.

B: If the point of it was to be quiet even if it was in the paper, which obviously it was, there were reporters present at that meeting, which seems to be kind of the antipurpose in other words.

K: Yes, right. To this very day I'd have to say that I don't know if this was a reality or not. I don't know if it was just a big put-on or whether it was a matter of fact, that there were people who were interested in coming in, because I never met one of them that represented this Boshi Industries. I was strictly going by word of Mayor Hunter.

B: Okay, we'll leave that. Who comprised the Campbell Recovery Commission?

K: Well, that's another thing I have to dig back in my memory. All I did, myself personally, I set up the format for it. I actually wanted to have no official part in it even though I was trying to organize it. And I more or less just set it up as a main body, interested individuals, businessmen, what have you, from the City of Campbell comprising the main body. And then split it off into various committees. For example, one committee to actually take a look at our financial situation, the way it's going to be in the future and project what we're actually going to realize in losses. Another group, they were to take the city zoning ordinances and the layout of the city and look for lands that would be available for commercial establishment to bring in other industries already. A third committee was to investigate other industries, try

to go out and find out who might be interested in coming into the City of Campbell and establishing a business. Even a fourth committee, more or less like a committee that was the go-between between the entire Commission and the City Council. Because in the end, the City Council would be the body that would have to pass whatever legislation had to be passed as far as rezoning or tax breaks or whatever. At that time we were thinking of a lot of things.

Now, unfortunately--and I say this truthfully and really I couldn't care less who would ever listen to this--unfortunately the politics got involved again. Now, my idea wasn't ideal; what this commission should do and actually who it should be comprised of. My main thought was that neither I nor any City Councilman--give or take one or two who are businessmen--had any idea of the business world. And my idea was to involve the businessmen of the City of Campbell because I felt they had more know-how than any of us. But it didn't work out that way.

We had a lot of interested citizens, which was fine, which I accepted, but in my own personal estimation, probably 80% of these citizens were not qualified to do the things that, ideally speaking, I felt this commission should do. Naturally you had a lot of steelworkers, who were just going to lose their jobs. Now, nothing really derogatory about the steelmen, but they are members of the force of labor. What we're talking about is something above that. We had retirees, people who had retired, who apparently, as I said before, probably because they were anxious to find out if they were going to lose their retirement benefits. But the main thing I think that really disturbed me was the Councilmen of the City of Campbell. They wanted to have something to do with it. And in my estimation, they had enough to do without getting involved in that.

But in the end, that because an election was upcoming at the time, that City Council and I did not get along for the two years I was the Mayor; but in an attempt to appease them, I gave the City Councilmen the positions of chairmen of the various subcommittees, which I think discouraged a lot of people from actually participating in the Recovery Commission. I think it more or less scared away potential businessmen members because most everybody was aware of the political situation in Campbell and as soon as they saw that I appointed various Councilmen as committee chairmen, they figured it was

going to be nothing but a political football and so they stayed away. And I think because of that we got off on the wrong foot.

You had Councilmen who were aspiring for various positions, well, re-election, and I know a few in particular, they already had their sights on my job, who wanted to have part of the limelight. It seems there was a lot of internal jealousies. They didn't like the idea of me getting all the publicity. But that's the way it is in Campbell politics. So, I gave in, which maybe at that time I shouldn't have, but I felt I had to at that time to at least get it off the ground. I felt that maybe in the ensuing months that some of the Councilmen would eventually admit, "Well, I can't handle it. I've got too many other things to do," and they would drop out. Then I would start appointing other people in their place. But it never came to be because that November I lost my election.

- B: What was the main governing body? Did you have an executive committee and if so, who comprised it?
- K: Yes, well once again, it would have to involve all these committee chairmen of these subcommittees plus representatives from the main body of interested citizens. I guess this is basically it. That was the so-called governing body. We're talking about something that was in its embryonic stage. It became defunct before it ever became functional. If I recall correctly, this was eventually going to be the so-called executive committee, all the chairmen of the subcommittees plus members elected at large by the body, say five more. So, your committee would have consisted of however many executive committee-men there were, let's say ten for a round figure, plus five, at large, members elected by the body. Then you would have had a fifteen member committee.
- B: The development of CASTLO, first of all, it wasn't funded I guess, until after your administration was out of office.
- K: Right.
- B: I suppose, were you calling yourself CASTLO and how did those meetings come to be?
- K: I haven't the slightest idea. All I can recall from CASTLO is my talks with the then State Representative George Tablack. And all I ever got at that time was quote, "We have something in the works." Now, CASTLO

did not come about, as you've mentioned, until quite a while after I had left office. And apparently Mr. Tablack, whom I know this was his brainchild, this is what he had in mind when he told me that. And that's about all I can tell you about CASTLO really.

B: He didn't go into the detail. I mean, it seemed a little odd that here you were, the Mayor of a community that was impacted. . .

K: Heavily. That's politics. A man won't share his ideas with somebody else who might be able to use them. I guess that was my big mistake. Maybe I should have shut my mouth too. If we take a look at the years that came afterward, not to be derogatory to Mr. Tablack either, I believe he firmly felt that his idea of the organization of CASTLO would indeed be an organization that would truly help this community. I know for a fact at the present time that Mr. Tablack is very disappointed in the way it has turned out. His brainchild has been turned into a political monster.

B: How, in what respect?

K: Okay. What--they have received their grants and so on to keep themselves going, but he just feels that it has become a political football too, being used by certain individuals of whom I haven't the slightest idea, for the purpose of people keeping their jobs. . . It has become a bureaucracy in itself. For example, it's no longer actually CASTLO. It is no longer Campbell, Struthers, and Lowellville. They have included other political subdivisions. Their executive committee has become so large that the Cities of Campbell, Struthers and Lowellville, even if they voted as a block, would not have enough votes on that executive committee to help their own cities. I can't really tell you who is on that board at this particular time. It is spread throughout the county.

B: They've added Poland, I think.

K: Poland Township is one of them. I don't know if they have included other areas of Mahoning County. What I'm getting at is, I think the executive committee consists of 25 members now and when you take the combined votes of Campbell, Struthers, and Lowellville members, I think you only have five votes, you see.

That's one thing. And then the other thing is--and I'm sure you've heard about it--that seemingly CASTLO is not

- B: That's your main problem now?
- K: Absolutely. I think their concentration should have been on the impacted cities and it seems like Struthers is being taken care of and nobody else.
- B: During the period of time between the shutdown and the time you left office, did you ever meet with George Wilson?
- K: No. I only met him one time and that was just recently within the last year.
- B: Were there any people from the State that contacted you, prior to the election, I assume probably, about anything similar to CASTLO other than Mr. Tablack?
- K: Not from the State. I did meet with--oh I can't even remember who they were now from the Federal Government-- but that was just a little meeting that took place in Campbell.
- B: Were they EDA people?
- K: I couldn't recall, I couldn't tell you. But anyway, no, nobody ever contacted me in regards to anything on that matter.
- B: I suppose the one question everybody looked back on and maybe speculate on, is there anything that you would have done differently had you to do it all over again?
- K: You mean as far as the entire steel closing?
- B: Yes, anything that took place.
- K: No, actually I thought I was handling it very well. I mean, even with the negatives, some of which I mentioned, some of the things I ran into, I thought I did a hell of a job in the eight days that I had to work on it and continued to work on it. But admittedly, obviously after I had lost my election, which was by 70 votes if I recall correctly, I myself even lost interest because naturally, you had that feeling, "Well, apparently my ideas weren't good enough, the people didn't want to hear it."
- B: Should the communities, perhaps, have known that this was coming. Everybody says it was a great shock and it must have been traumatic, 5,000 jobs all of a sudden wiped out but weren't there any danger signs? I realize that you



weren't there in the mayor's office long enough to have seen it progress for say, ten years. Probably the best way to put it; some of the criticism that was put forward against, well, specifically Youngstown, but some of the other communities, that there were reports and the information was there and they should have seen it coming.

K: I don't know. To tell you the truth, you'd have to start somewhere and apparently, that decision had just been made. Now, in the hierarchy of the steel industry, Lord knows that's a different world; we don't understand what goes on there; we don't know what those people talk about. I will give them the credit for knowing a lot more about that than any of us. Perhaps they projected that eventually the mills would shut down, but I really don't think in our area, we're so spoiled, we would have never believed it anyway. We wouldn't have believed it until the first people started getting laid off.

One trouble with those of us that live in this area, we have lived in a dream world, a dream world that the Sheet and Tube is always going to be there. We don't have to worry about anything. In fact, I guess that's why we've all, in our own way, become selfish, because we felt, especially in the City of Campbell, we had it made. "Those mills are never going to shut down." Who could comprehend the shutdown of such a great complex? And if we were told two years ahead of time. . .

There were--I never heard them myself, personally, from any official--but I heard it through rumor, through discussions of steelworkers and so on, a possibility of the mills shutting down in the future, but as I said, who would have believed it anyway? Nobody would have taken steps to try to prevent it.

B: One of the things that people point to, I believe it was 1969 when the merger took place.

K: Well yes, that argument was that we lost our local control and therefore that's why it happened. See again, all that's doing is trying to put the blame somewhere, that's not solving your problem. To me, that has nothing to do with it. Okay, they blamed the Lykes Corporation for having interest in ship building. Hey, Lykes Corporation couldn't care less. Who are you to think that they are going to hold you in such high esteem that they're not going to do anything to you. I said, "They're out to make a dollar too, and if they're making a dollar somewhere else they're selling this place if they're not

making a dollar." And it wasn't so much that they were not making a profit, they were making a profit. But I think they weren't making enough profit to justify what they were throwing into the place so they got rid of it like any business in there would. If you went into a business stature and you were putting in \$100 and you were only getting \$110 back after a year, you'd say, "Well, what the heck, I'm doing all this for ten bucks." So, you pawn it off on somebody else.

Again I say, those people in the industrial hierarchy, they think so much differently from the way we do, and who do we think we are that they should be looking. . . we're nothing! And this is what I try to tell people. Well, I got a lot of steelworkers mad at me for that too.

I don't think the takeover by Lykes really--it could have had some effect on what eventually happened. I think, myself personally, what happened, it had been in the works not for five years or ten years or fifteen years. . . to those--again I go back--to those who knew way up there, way up in God's country, they knew this was eventually coming because they're the experts. They're the experts in projection and steel output and imports and everything else. Those are people that are not concerned with the people themselves that work. They're concerned with this steel mill here, that plant there; what's this bringing in; what's that bringing in? It's a massive conglomer-ation and they're just not concerned with the impact it has on a city or the people that live within it or the people that are losing their jobs, what have you. There is probably some concern. I didn't mean to say absolutely no concern. I think US Steel has been the best in follow- ing up after they've closed down an area. They seem to be the one corporation that I have noticed that do try to go back and help those people that they affected. But other than that. . .I just don't think that it mattered to them. The other corporations.

B: There were two proposals that came out during the period following the shutdown after you left office, but I'd still kind of like to get your reaction to them. One of those was the proposal put forward by the Ecumenical Coalition concerning the Employee Stock-Ownership Program.

K: Yes, I was there at the beginning of that.

B: First of all, what was your involvement and did you see that as a feasible venture?

K: All right, this idea came up at a community meeting we had. I think that meeting took place on a Sunday afternoon, either one or two Sundays after the announcement. And I have a funny little story to tell you about that one because again, politics gets involved. We were in the midst of an election and we have certain individuals that were running for various offices and one individual came to me and believe it or not, this is how it happened: he wanted me to put forth the idea of employee ownership, but he wanted it definitely stated that it was his idea, and he was an aspirant to a political office. And he wanted to get his foot in the door before somebody else, who he probably had knowledge was going to do the same thing. So, when we had the community meeting, one of the political aspirants, even before it came to my turn to speak about what was being discussed, the other one brought it up. And you could tell, there was animosity already: "Oh damn it, it was my idea and he stole it from me." And this guy was standing up there like the big preacher saying, "It's my idea, this is what we should do." All they were looking for was votes.

Myself personally, when I heard this idea of community ownership or employee ownership, yes, fine for a corporation, a small corporation that involves maybe 1,000 people, a small plant somewhere. But I don't really think these people knew what they were talking about; about taking such a large industrial plant and saying that we can run it ourselves. I respect the steelworker; I respect everything he says he stands for and his knowledge and so on, but so help me, in my estimation, they had no idea of what they were asking for in employment ownership. They would have been the first ones, for example, when they really got down to the reality of it that when they start splitting up the profit that they would probably be making one fourth of what they were making. They didn't understand the idea, how can you be a community owner and still be a member of a union because now you're fighting yourself. You're not only labor, you're management. Just running a multi-million dollar corporation like that, to me, was beyond their comprehension. They didn't know what they were talking about.

B: But the originator of the idea was a member of the Campbell Council at that time?

K: No, he was running for a Board of Education office. But again, as a lot of them did, they wanted to be the knight in shining armor and say, "Here's the answer." To me,

I'll tell you what, I never had faith in it, I never had faith in what they were trying to do as far as employee operated plant. As I say, on a smaller basis yes, but for the immense size of the mill we're talking about, there is no way that I can see that it could have ever worked. You've had antiquated equipment. Who's going to determine what has to be purchased, et cetera, et cetera. These people did not have these qualifications. They could run the machines; they could make steel, but they couldn't run the plant.

B: Was the person who came up with the idea also a steelworker? You're implying that they had some knowledge of steel at least.

K: No, the person that brought it up may have worked in the mill at one time. He may have worked, but at that particular time he was not working in the mill. The steelworkers themselves were saying, "We can run the mill," but I think they were speaking strictly from terms of doing their job. Do you see what I mean? And I can understand their hard stand on this. Because if it ever came to be that they would get down, to the nitty-gritty that this steelworker was insistant that, "We can own the plant and we can operate it," he's more or less speaking in terms of operation. When it came down to it he would say, "Well, I'll do my job and you people run the upstairs." And all you're doing is creating another situation.

B: Right.

K: Because then he would get mad at the upstairs when his paycheck went down and he'd say, "They were stealing money et cetera, et cetera." But he, himself, would not venture up there because he's going into an area that he doesn't comprehend, one that I don't even comprehend. I don't know if you can get it from how I'm speaking because half the time I don't even know what I want to say. The bottom line, as simply as I can put it is, the complex operation of that mill, you had very few people that were qualified to do it. I don't know what they were looking for. You're not going to go out and find these people to run that mill for \$1.50 an hour. To bring these steel people in is going to cost a big buck. Where is it going to come from? It has got to come from your own pocket because it's your mill now.

B: Once it came up and it was brought up there, the transition to the Coalition, how did that take place?

K: I don't know how that took place, but I remember my

disappointment when the church got involved. I don't think the clergy had any right to get involved in this. If you ask me, render to Caesar what is Caesar's, to God what is God's. They had their job to do and I don't think they had any right to get involved in this. Although, no doubt, the Bishop was approached--and I'm just doing this on pure speculation--that by adding his name to the Coalition that it should have some force down in Washington D.C. But my own personal opinion is they should have stayed out of it.

- B: Were you ever invited to any of their original meetings that led to . . .
- K: No, none whatsoever. Again, by the time that took place, I was already out of it.
- B: Well, their organizational meetings started about November 1977.
- K: I was already out of it, I had lost my election.
- B: Yes, that's right.
- K: I wasn't invited to those. I was invited to Youngstown though, Mayor Hunter or was it. . . I can't remember now, see we're getting into the transition period.
- B: Yes, he left also the same time you did because Phil Richley was coming in.
- K: All right, Mayor Centofanti was still there. I can't recall whether it was Mayor Hunter, I think it was still Mayor Hunter who was attempting to get the Mahoning Valley Economic Development Committee, [MVEDC] I sat in on a few meetings there, and I'm sure Mayor Hunter was there. Mr. Richley started to come after, naturally, he was going to be the new mayor. There were a couple of other people there, one county commissioner that I recall. And Mr. Mico, who was my successor, was invited, but he never attended while I went to those meetings. But I was there for those meetings, but never for the Ecumenical Coalition.
- B: How many meetings, approximately, did you attend and what were the subjects of those meetings.
- K: Well, basically the same thing. See, at that time you have to understand, this was an organizational period. We were trying to get something similar to the Campbell

Recovery Commission, CASTLO. We were trying to get something going for the entire Valley. We were right there on the ground level right at the very beginning. We were just trying to organize. We knew what our goal was in mind, economic recovery. I only attended, I think two or three meetings because by that time, we were already into the end of November, beginning of December and I knew I was going out and I would have very little say-so after that. All I can say is those three meetings were strictly organizational as to who we should include; what our goals will be; how can we acquire grants to get this thing off the ground; who could we hire to do the particular studies we talked about, naturally they were economic feasibility studies and so on. And that's about where I left.

B: Could you maybe clarify something? There has been speculation that Attorney Paul Stevens, who was Congressman Carney's aide, who I believe was present at some of those meetings if not all of them.

K: He might have been.

B: Okay, there seemed to be speculation that there was animosity between Mayor Hunter and Congressman Carney, regardless of their election campaigns, that Mayor Hunter may have just been appointed the token just to kind of show a bipartisanship, but that Attorney Stevens was supposed to actually run the show. Was that an accurate description of what was going on?

K: I don't know if Attorney Stevens was running the show, but there definitely was animosity, mistrust again if you will. I would imagine that it probably still exists. Democrat--Republican, that's all. As far as I'm concerned, it was strictly party lines. So, I would have to say a definite yes. There would have to be some animosity. I think Mayor Hunter was honestly trying to get something off the ground. Speaking strictly politically, I would think the animosity was there because the Democrats didn't want a Republican to start it, that's it in a nutshell.

B: What I guess I was trying to get at was, was there any visible or other signs that there was a conflict going on?

K: No, they're experts at cloaking their feelings. In fact, I became quite an expert myself. I had to copy them or not survive. None of that has changed, by the way. In

public everybody is friendly and cordial and what have you. But in private, their real feelings come out through phone calls and secret meetings et cetera. I know they still go on today. Here, around the table we're all happy; we're all aiming in one direction; it looks great for television; it looks great for the newspaper; it looks great for us because here are leaders, the city leaders. Then you leave, "Hey Mike, do you want to go for a cup of coffee?" "Sure." So, you go for a cup, "Now, you don't believe a damn thing that was said in there do you?" "Here's the way it actually is. This is what that son of a bitch is trying to do." I mean, this is the way it goes.

So, as I say, I know the animosity was there. There was definitely a high feeling of mistrust between Congressman Carney and Mayor Hunter. I don't know that it was so much from the Mayor as it was from the Congressman, you see. And again, I say I'm strictly just getting back to party lines, strict party lines.

B: Well, the fact that there was an election coming up for Congressman Carney in 1978, do you think that also just added fuel to the fire?

K: Yes, I think as far as this situation was concerned, a lot of people were taking advantage of it. In fact, I'll tell you the truth. I felt--speaking once again politically because in that particular position you have to always have one ear to that--I felt that the shutdown of the mills and my work that I had done between September 19th and the election day, I felt practically reassured my election. I felt I was doing a good job as I told you before. And I felt the people would see this. However, it didn't work out for me. Now, in that line of thought, I'm saying that I think every political officeholder and political aspirant were taking the shutdown of the mills and trying to use it to their own advantage politically. I don't think there was one that was really sincere in whatever they said to the news media or on television and so on.

I don't want to be patting myself on the back, but I felt I was sincere, although behind it, I figured this is helping me politically; well I got fooled you see. But as I say, if it could even hit me in the back of my mind that it's helping me politically, I could imagine what these professional politicians were thinking. I was only a part-time politician.

And I would assume, yes, that Congressman Carney was already looking ahead. That's why I said before that I think the animosity was more on his side than on Mayor Hunter's because Mayor Hunter, he was leaving; he was serving his last term and he was getting out. So, he had nothing to lose. He could afford to be sincere in what he was doing. But yes you're right, I think Congressman Carney might have been looking down the line to the upcoming election the following year. I might add that maybe Mr. Tablack, also, was doing the same thing, because if I recall correctly, they ran against each other the following year.

B: Perhaps they did.

The second proposal that I wanted to get your opinion on was the steel research center that was put forward-- I'm not clear if it was Mayor Richley or MVEDC or who.

K: I think it was MVEDC, but again, I'm just speculating.

B: Do you think that was a feasible kind of plan? Do you think that really could have worked? And did the industry need such a facility?

K: No, how could you have a research center. . . Here at the university, we want a research center, we build a brand new one. We don't go into an old building and renovate. Do you see what I mean?

B: Yes.

K: By the time they were talking about that research center you have to figure, with every day from the day the mill shut down, it just started to corrode and each day would cost you more dollars to bring it back to life. Even today I hear people over there in Campbell talking, our esteemed political leaders, I hear words like, "Well, when the mills open up again." I say, "This guy has got to be in dreamland. Where does he think he's coming from." More or less they're opposing new outfits coming in buying one little area and another little area. My feeling is, "What the hell is this guy talking about, we have to save this area for when it opens up again?" It's just impossible. Now, by the time they came up with that research center, the mills had been shut down for quite a while if I'm not mistaken. And it didn't make sense to me, because to me, it just simply meant an expenditure of an awful lot of money and many years of work before you ever started to realize a profit. You'd



have to tear everything down and start from scratch. And who was going to put money into something like that and why here of all places?

There are other situations that become involved: the energy crisis. Who wants to build a mill up here in the North when they can go down South and save a ton of money just on energy alone, year round warmth. They don't have to worry about natural gas and so on. What else is there? Here we are, and a lot of people don't look at this, this was one of the ways--if I go all the way back to the beginning of this interview at that meeting we had at Strouss' when I got up to speak--people don't realize that this Valley, the Mahoning Valley, is very hard to get into and get out of, especially the part of the mills that have shut down. Now if you take a look at the map of Mahoning County and look at your interstate system, your interstates are all on the western end of the County; the mills are down here, the eastern end. So, transportation is very important because time means money in transportation. Conceivably, it could take a truck driver carrying a load of steel out of here. . . Well, let's put it this way: coming in with an empty truck and loading and leaving, he could be here for a number of hours that could cost that trucking company and the company that's buying the steel money. He could come in off of any exit off the freeway, come down Wilson Avenue or come down out of Struthers, the time it would take him to get into the plant, load up and get out, it could amount to a number of say four or five hours, maybe more than that. That's just within the immediate area. Now, once he gets back out on the freeway, fine, he's on his way. But the time he spent here, . . . And I got up to say this. And again it wasn't met with any hand clapping or anything.

B: (Laughter)

K: I said, "Why didn't the State, when they were putting the interstates in--or the Federal Government, whoever all was involved--run a spur off of Interstate 80 through this Valley and hook up with Interstate 80 once again where you had ramps going right down into the Valley where a truck driver would come right off a ramp right into the entrance to the mill? Like I say, in my own small way, I also was trying to find a fault or a reason why. But I felt that transportation was costing too much money.

Getting back to what we're talking about, put a steel research center here, you may as well put it in the middle

of a desert because it's not that readily accessible.

B: There were a couple other things that were allied. I'm not clear if this was allied to the question you've raised, but somebody brought it up along the line--I think it was EDATA--the unitrain concept.

K: Yes, they were pushing that. I remember that.

B: Now, would that have solved some of the problem? I mean I realize it's not trucking, it's not solving the trucking problem, but would that at least in part address the problem?

K: Now, that came a while before the shutdown on the mills. We were having meetings on the unitrain and on blast furnaces too, if I recall.

B: I think Calderone was talking about. . . the guy from Cleveland. Maybe that was after.

K: The concept of, instead of having all these blast furnaces up and down the line running, just have three or four of them running and send that up to the. . .

Okay, would it have solved the problem? It probably would have solved the problem 25 years ago. I think by the time we actually started to talk about this--and those were good ideas. Let me say that, they were good ideas that could very well have helped this Valley had they been instituted years ago and not now. I think it was already a foregone conclusion by the time this idea ever came out. It was a good idea, but it just came a little too late.

B: Is there any aspect of this that's really important to understand, any events that took place that I've overlooked that I haven't asked you that I should have, perhaps, asked you?

K: All right, we know that our area has been hit economically, but whether or not it borders on a disaster or not anymore I don't know. We're still here. Youngstown is here, Campbell is there, Struthers is there. I think, unfortunately, the only people that really got hurt in the end were the ones who lost their jobs. I don't know how many of them found other work. Somebody did a followup study. I had a previous interview a few years back and of the 5,000 workers that had lost their jobs, I think, all but about 1,800 of them had found other work at the time. Now, whether it was good work I can't tell you, I

don't know. I hope my figures are correct.

I guess, here we are four years later now, yes, that happened in 1977. If there's anything that you might ask, was the impact on this Valley as great as we all thought it was when it started? It's obvious that we're still surviving, which I even said the day of my very first interview when I was right there at the Youngstown Sheet and Tube Offices, they said Campbell would become a ghost town. I remember I said I didn't think so. I think the people of the City of Campbell are very proud and they'll look for alternatives other than moving out of town, which our loss of population between 1970 and 1980 is in no way significant to our loss between 1960 and 1970 or 1950 and 1960. It's not a significant loss. We have been losing on the average of 1,000 people every ten years. And when the 1980 census came out, we had lost approximately another 1,000 from 1970, which is of no significant value.

B: Probably of importance in that statistic, though, would be, of that percentage of people moving out, how many were young people?

K: Well now, that would be significant because obviously now we're talking about your long-range effects. Okay, at the present time, in my estimation, there's nothing for a young person around here anymore. And there won't be until we do re-establish industries. However, now you get into the problem of those who are already established here versus the younger ones. If I were young at this particular time, I'll tell you the truth, I would have been gone from here a long time ago. The only thing that has kept me here is my job and that I've made my home here. Had I been a steelworker and had I lost my job, I think I would have done everything in my power to stay here. I think leaving would have been the last alternative. But with a young person I think it should be completely reversed. Kids today, they have nothing to look for here; they should get out. Now that hurts us, I know, eventually. We're talking down the road fifty years, how that's going to affect us then.

B: But the implications from the figures that you've seen, were they broken down by age group or give you some idea of what groups were lost?

K: No, I never pursued it that far, but I would have to assume the greatest loss was in young people, which again, that was happening before the mills shut down. Probably

it will happen even more so now because these kids just can't afford to stay around. And when I say lost from the City of Campbell, I'm not necessarily talking about leaving Campbell and going to Pennsylvania or Texas or California. A lot of our young people have just simply left Campbell and come over to Youngstown to live because their jobs are in Boardman or Austintown, and just to get closer to work; General Motors. So, I don't think that had really anything to do with the shutdown of the mill.

You bring up a good point. It could be significant. Off the top of my head, I don't think it would be that significant because I know the reason why a number of them have left town, because their jobs are on the other side of the county, that's all.

B: Let me have you gaze into your crystal ball. You mentioned I believe the Lordstown facility.

K: Yes.

B: There is a facility being built, I believe, in Mexico or somewhere down in Texas.

K: I've heard about it, yes.

B: Does that smack with the same kind of. . . Is that going to hit us upside the head--the use of colloquialism--somewhere down the road do you think? Are we just setting ourselves for another. . . It won't be as massive, perhaps, but do you see that turning into a kind of sinister. . .

K: The only thing there, in the long run, I don't think it will happen for, say, thirty years. Now, a number of reasons, that's a new plant out there. You don't have the problems out at Lordstown that you have here in the Valley. Lordstown is easy to get to; it's easy to get out of. I doubt very much that they have any transportation difficulties at all. The only thing that would cause that--and I say we have to go way down the road--well, two things honestly, number one, the cost of operating the plant, which includes employees and wages and benefits and so on; great for the employee, but he doesn't know he's strangling himself by the possibility of just wiping out the whole thing. And then secondly, that the companies may have to, as I mentioned before, they are being forced to move South because of the high cost of maintaining the plants. I imagine a plant being

built down South has numerous advantages cost-wise as well as employment-wise. If you're talking about a lot of aliens--let's put it that way--who would be probably much more willing to work for a lot less.

B: Well, I'd like to thank you for taking the time this morning.

K: Oh thank you, I don't know if I did you any good here.

END OF INTERVIEW