

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY
ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

1952 Youngstown Sheet & Tube Steel Strike

Personal Experience

O.H. 1218

RUSSELL L. THOMAS

Interviewed

by

Andrew Russ

on

October 28, 1988

Russell Thomas resides in North Jackson, Ohio and was born on January 18, 1908 in East Palestine, Ohio. He attended high school in Coitsville, Ohio and eventually was employed for the United Steel Workers of America in the capacity of local union representative. In this capacity, he worked closely with the Youngstown's local steel workers' unions. It was from this position that he experienced the steel strike of 1952.

Mr. Thomas, after relating his biography, went on to discuss the organization of the Youngstown contingent of the United Steel Workers of America. He went into depth into the union's generation, it's struggle with management, and the rights it obtained for the average worker employed in the various steel mills of Youngstown. He recollected that the steel strike of 1952 was one that was different in the respect that President Truman had taken over the operation of the mills in order to prosecute the Korean War effort. He also discussed local labor politics as he had run for the position of local union president. Although he was unsuccessful in this bid for office, his account of just how the local labor political game was played provided great insight into the labor movement's influence upon economic issues and public opinion. His interview was different in that it discussed not only particular issues that affected the average Youngstown worker employed in steel, but also broad political and economic ones that molded this period of American labor history.

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INTERVIEWEE: RUSSELL L. THOMAS

INTERVIEWER: Andrew Russ

SUBJECT: 1952 Sheet & Tube steel strike

DATE: October 28, 1988

R: This is an interview with Russell Leroy Thomas for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program on the 1952 Youngstown Sheet & Tube Steel Strike, by Andrew Russ, on October 28, 1988.

Okay, are you from Youngstown originally? Were you born in Youngstown?

T: No. East Palestine.

R: How did you end up coming to Youngstown? Your family. . . ?

T: There were seven boys in my family and two girls. My dad was a section foreman in East Palestine. He wanted to go someplace where all us boys had a chance to advance or get a good job. He moved here to Youngstown to let that happen. He got a job in the Truscon Steel Company. In 1926, I came out of Coitsville School, and he got me a job in the Truscon Steel in 1926. From 1926 until 1929, I worked in the Truscon Steel. I got to where I was only getting one day of pay. The last pay I got was for 56 cents after they took the insurance out. Yeah, insurance. I still stayed there until 1931, and then, I went to the company. I said to the company, "Look, as long as I have this job, I won't look for another job. So, lay me off. When you get to the point where you can call me

back and give me four or five days a week, call me back and I'll come back." So, I worked in the Dodge Plant in Detroit for four years. I was helping, at that time, to organize the autoworkers. One night I went home and my wife had a telegram for me. It was from Truscon. [They wanted me] to come back. [They said] that they could give me four, five days a week. I quit the Dodge Plant and came back to Youngstown because all my relatives and everybody was here in Youngstown. Then, Truscon still was in a depression. While I was in the Truscon, the strike started. The strike didn't start, but we started to organize the steel workers in 1935.

R: 1935?

T: Phil Murray called a group together. He called a group together from the different steel plants to try to organize the steel companies. Then, we tried to organize. I was in Truscon at that time. Then, I began to try to organize this Truscon Steel. There were 2,200 people there. When I was helping to organize, I was also organizing the Truscon. I'd go back and forth to the steel companies that were on strike. Down at Stop Five there were quite a few pickets. The company had a machine gun just above Stop Five, up above the opening. They got to shooting with that gun, and they killed a man by the name of Eperjesi.

R: Is that right?

T: They killed two of them. I don't recall the other fellow's name yet, but they killed this Mr. Eperjesi. I remember that because in 1960, late 1950s, the Republic Steel was running with a group of people that was connected with thieves and was stealing the treasury. Philip Murray put me on as an administrator over the whole Republic Steel. At that time, they had 6,000 people there.

But in 1941, Phil Murray had put me on the staff, on the payroll, here in Youngstown. I went down to the Republic Steel and helped them off and on in their pickets. And the thing that scared me the worst was one day while I was standing there, a stranger came up to me. He said to me, "Is there anybody in here that you hate so bad that you want to get rid of them?" I says, "No, I don't hate anybody that bad." "Well," he said, "Is there someone in that company that you don't like? For 50 dollars, I'll do away with him."

R: Wow! What year was this? Where was this at?

T: That was in the 1937 strike.

R: Oh, 1937. Okay.

T: He said, "For 50 dollars, I'll do away with that guy. You'll never see me again. You'll never hear about it. I'll do a good job for you." I said, "I don't dislike people that bad, and I don't want any of that," and I turned him away. I never saw him after that.

Well, then the Republic Steel Company, like I say, was stealing money out of the treasury, and they had some crooks running the thing. Philip Murray assigned me as the administrator of the Republic Steel. I went down there. They had their office on Poland Avenue. One night, while I was having a meeting with all of the fellows and the union hall was filled, a guy shot a gun off. And I said to him, "Don't do that because there's a restroom in that basement and you'll kill somebody." Well, I finally had to end up to moving their meeting office from Poland Avenue up to the center of Youngstown Square. I had that administration for two years. While I was there, Mrs. Eperjesi came up to see me one day, and she said, "Mr. Thomas, you know my husband was shot here. I'm losing my home." She had four children. I said, "Well, let me have a week or so to make a decision and I'll get a hold of you." So, I got all of the people to agree that we would pay for her home, so that she wouldn't lose it. So, we paid for her home and we helped her get a job. I don't recall anymore what the job was.

But from then on, I was then assigned to Warren. [I] took over all of Trumbull County. I was in the First Federal Bank. That's where my office was in Warren. I organized a lot of plants around in Warren. I was there until I retired. I retired out of the steelworkers when I was 32 years old. That's about the history of what happened.

After the 1929 depression, the steel companies give people maybe one or two days a week to keep the personnel, you know, the union. Each of the company's head departments, like the open hearth, the blooming mill, and all that had a main boss. In the morning, the boss would come out to the outside of the mill, and he would pick out all of these boys that was working. They had no way of putting a schedule on. The boss would come out from that department and say, "I want you, you, you, and you to work today." They had their lunches, all of them. [He would say,] "The rest of you go home." Now, everyday that would happen. There was no program or nothing, you know, only that they would come there in the morning with their lunch and he would pick out a certain amount, a few, and tell them to come in and go to work that day. So, that's the way the company ran

the plant at that time. There was no pension. There was nothing, you know. All they [did was] went in and worked.

R: How many hours a day would they usually work back then at the time?

T: Well, at that time, I don't think that the 40 hours a week had come in yet. They were working anytime. They never paid no overtime. If they stayed there all night or all day, they didn't pay no overtime. Now, the main thing that helped us after that, in 1934, Roosevelt put the Wagner Act in. The Wagner Act made the statement that, union or legal, they could organize. And then, in 1942, we had our first convention.

R: That's the United Steel Workers you're talking about?

T: The United Steel Workers. We had our first convention in Cleveland. Now, I attended that convention. So, that's the way the unions started. From then on, it was just common fight that we had.

R: You mentioned Roosevelt. What did you think of him as a president?

T: I think he was the best president that we ever had. He put in social security, unemployment, Three C's, WPA, because all of the young people were just running around. Nobody had jobs. Roosevelt put all of this into effect and that's what got people back to working again. I think Roosevelt was the best president that we ever had.

R: What do you think about Truman?

T: I think Truman was next, second best president we ever had.

R: Yeah. Youngstown Sheet & Tube, the Brier Hill Works, did you work there at all?

T: I never worked there, but I helped them with their work. And I went there once in a while.

R: Now, do you remember in 1952 there was a . . . at Youngstown Sheet & Tube, I guess, the union, the contract ran out with the company. They went through negotiations in 1952 and there ended up being a strike that lasted like almost 120 days. And Truman came in and seized the steel mills because of the Korean War. Okay? And eventually, there was a case that went up to the Supreme Court called Youngstown Sheet & Tube Company versus Sawyer in 1952. Do you remember? What do you remember about that?

- T: Well, I remember about it because Dick Lemon was a plant labor relations man. And I never met a company man that was any more fair and nicer to work with than Dick Lemon. And Dick Lemon wasn't for the strikes. He didn't say anything against it or for it. He kept quiet. But he wasn't for the strikes that I was. I had a chance to meet with him once in a while. Dick Lemon was a real nice company man and I'll always remember that. This statement here makes a statement that the Sheet & Tube had a union way back. That isn't true. They never had. . . .
- R: Do you remember when they first started to build a union?
- T: Well, they kind of cooperated with the workers while the 1937 strike was going on. Sheet & Tube was always quiet about that. They never gave us much trouble. I could go to Dick Lemon and get plenty of anything I wanted to.
- R: During the strike in 1952, did you go and talk to the union, the local union leaders at the Brier Hill Works at all?
- T: Oh, sure.
- R: What did you talk about with them? You know, trying to organize?
- T: Well, I talked about why they needed a union, what they could accept with a strike or with a contract, you know. I just talked about things that I thought would encourage people to continue to strike until we got a contract.
- R: What was the dispute over? I mean, what did the workers want more, an hourly wage, a vacation pay?
- T: They wanted seniority for one thing and they wanted the company to make schedules for work. We finally settled. The first contract we signed was U.S. Steel. Instead of having a seniority in the contract, for the first contract we signed, the man that had the most children was the one that would be kept for the last. It wasn't on length of time, you know, it was on the amount of children that a man had. That was how the first seniority was signed in the contract. [There] wasn't much raise in those contracts we signed first. Then, I was in with Phil Murray when we signed the contract in Republic Steel. And the company, we couldn't get anywhere with them. They just. . . .
- R: So, you had a lot of problems negotiating with the company? They wouldn't give up too much?

- T: Yeah, yeah. We called Philip Murray in. Bill Dunham was the director in Cleveland. He was chairman of the committee, but he had to call Phil Murray in because we couldn't get anything accomplished. And we didn't get anything accomplished that time either.
- R: Do you remember in 1952--during that strike, the 120 days--what was the attitude of the people around Youngstown, the general public, towards the strikers?
- T: I think they were in favor of it. All of the people I talked to thought that it was all right because the way they were handling the work force or one thing or another. No, like I say, people was always interested in a pension, you know. And they had no pension of any kind. We fought hard for the pensions and seniority. We finally changed that seniority to the length of time. So, these were the main things that we were driving at.
- R: Do you remember, like the Youngstown Vindicator, when they reported on that 1952 steel strike, were they taking somebody's side? Did they take the worker's side or did they take the company's side? Do you remember?
- T: No, they took the company's side. The Baptist church right on the square there in Youngstown, that minister took our part. They finally fired him and we put him on the payroll in our state organization in Columbus. Bishop Malone took our side. He was for us. Well, that meant that most of the people that he was over, you know, they were for us, too. That helped a lot when Bishop Malone and this minister, a Baptist minister here in Youngstown, got on our side. It helped us. But, you see, the governor of Cleveland, he sent the militia in here. That was something that people resented real bad.
- R: What, to take over the mill?
- T: Yeah. Well, they took the picket lines over.
- R: They took the picket lines over?
- T: [They] let the men go in that wanted to go in. But, there was hardly anybody that went in. That didn't last too long. They took them out of here. Bishop Malone and this Baptist minister and them, they were strong for us, you know.
- R: I think congress passed a law called the Taft-Hartley Act? Do you remember that?

T: Yeah. That was passed in 1934 by Roosevelt, the Taft-Hartley Act.

R: What was that? How did that deal with labor in. . . ?

T: Well, that said it was legal to have a union and the companies ought to recognize it. So, we were organizing real strong under that and it helped.

R: Can you go into more detail like how the unions were organized and how often you held meetings and what you talked about at your meetings and stuff like that?

T: Well, unions at that time. . . . It seems as though every worker, when they are for the union. . . . Philip Murray found that out--he come from the mine workers. He worked with him and John Lewis. And finally, John Lewis, after we got going and got our organization under the constitution, John Lewis, he kind of broke away from it. Murray, he stayed with it and he organized it. But what he did, he would appoint so many people in each district. I think we ended with about 15 organizers. These organizers would be assigned different companies to go and organize men in there [and] get them to join the union.

R: Were you an organizer in the early stages, too?

T: Yeah. Well, I was put on as an international organizer in 1941.

R: Would you go to companies and talk to the men that worked there and try and get them organized in unions?

T: Well, sure.

R: What was the attitude from the company when you would go there? Did they give you a hard time?

T: Well, I'll tell you. I think that most of the organizers had the trouble. I was organizing the Truscon Steel and the general manager called me in his office. He said, "I'm going to fire you." I said, "You better talk to. . . ." I forget the name of the fellow that was representing me in the Double C, which is the National Labor Relation Board. I says, "You better talk to him first." So, the general foreman put me on a three-way telephone system and he called the NRB in Cleveland. They told him, "Well, if this man is organizing at dinner time or in the morning or afternoon, after work, you better let him alone. Because, if you fire him, you're going to have to pay him all backpay." Now, this is what the Wagner Act done for us. And so, I told him, "Well, you're the general manager of the plant," I says, "You got a right to do

it." "No," he says, "you go back down and go to work." On that time, the company had sent me or made me a foreman. I was a foreman at one time over 50 people in Truscon Steel. I said, "Well, I can't be a foreman and I can't be honest." This was after I worked for about six months as a foreman. He said, "Well, who are you working for? You working for the men or the company?" I says, "I'm trying to be right with both of them. I'm trying to be fair." Because I had a commitment from him, they were having trouble putting stuff out because we were coming out of the Depression. He wasn't doing the stuff right. He'd told me to go in there and do whatever I could so that they could get stuff off the shipping platform. It was . . . on account of some inspectors. So, I asked him, "Now, if I can get the labor relations man to send a guy down there to give them more money, would you approve that?" "Yes," he said, "if you do the job, we will." He come down about two months later, and he said to me, "Well, Russ, I come down here to congratulate you for the work you're doing. Our production has jumped about two-thirds since you've been here." Well, I asked him then about giving these people more money and he said he would. But then, it went on for months. I told some of these people what I had got, a promise from him, see. And he went on for a couple of months, and I didn't see him. I went up one morning to his office and I said, "When are you going to set that guy, that time keeper, down to restudy the job?" He was mad that morning. He said, "What are you doing? You working for the company or the union or for the man?" I said, "I'm just trying to be fair." "Well," he said, "you better go back on your old job." And I did. That damn Gus Hall was in that Truscon. He tells around now he was welding there. That's a lie because I was the boss of him.

R: You knew Gus Hall?

T: Yeah, Gus Hall. I was the boss of him and all he was doing. They were making sash, you know, for buildings. He had a feeler and he was helping to make these airtight, you know. That's what he was doing in the Truscon. There was so much noise about him being a "Commi" [Communist], that Truscon finally fired him. So, he didn't. . . .

R: Did he ever talk to you about Communism and stuff like that?

T: Not about Communism, but he talked to me about getting people to join, you know. And I damn well let him know that I wanted no part of that.

R: Right. So, he was trying to recruit people where you worked at, at your job, and you were trying to start your own union, too?

T: Yeah, he worked hard for the Commi (Communist) party. He was getting cards, trying to get cards signed or one thing or another. He was working at Truscon in the daytime and then he'd go down to Stop Five in the evenings, you know, and just start hollering and preaching to those people. I wanted no part of that. I still believe today--I might be wrong--that if the union had lost and he had won, this country would have went Commi. Now, he's still secretary and treasurer of the Commi Party in this country. I don't know if he's run for president every time. I don't know if he's running this time or not.

R: He did. His name was on the ballot.

T: Yeah.

R: So, do you think back then that once you organized the unions, do you think it had a real effect on lives of the workers?

T: Oh, sure. That was under Roosevelt. He put us in a position and we could. . . . I think that's the reason the companies decided they'd start negotiating because of the Wagner Act. They just couldn't fight it. There was so many people that they could fire that they couldn't fight it anymore. And this thing shooting. . . . Now, they shot two in Youngstown. They shot 10 in Chicago.

R: What, union leaders?

T: Yeah. People that was trying to organize.

R: When you would have picket lines and strikes and stuff like that, would you argue back and forth with the company? Would they come out and try to tell you to go back to work? What was the atmosphere like when you would have a strike?

T: No, the company pretty well avoided us.

R: Yeah.

T: All they were sure of [was] to keep that picket line, try to keep them back away from the plants, you know. No, they wouldn't meet with us. They wouldn't meet with us until Philip Murray got real active. Then, after Phil Murray got active, they began to negotiate because of him and the Wagner Act.

R: So, how involved were you in that 1952 strike? You weren't working at Sheet & Tube, but what exactly did you do to help the workers out there because they were off for like 120 days?

T: We had [the meeting] up at Wick Park. We had the meeting up there where Philip Murray came and he spoke. It was just shortly after that that the companies agreed to a pension, because there was so many people there. Wick park was just solid. That's the reason we got the pensions because of the show up at that meeting. They had people all over the country up there at Wick Park.

R: So back then, in Youngstown, there were a lot more political things going on. Now, in 1988, there's not too many people that are interested in politics really, as compared to back then?

T: Oh, yeah. You're right.

R: Was the Democratic Party pretty strong in Youngstown back then?

T: Yeah.

R: Not too many Republicans?

T: No, very few Republicans. They hardly could get anybody to run for a Republican job. All the workers were Democrat, you know, in the plants.

R: Who was the Congressman back then?

T: Kerwin.

R: Kerwin?

T: Kerwin, and he was with us.

R: Would he come to your union meetings and talk to you?

T: Well, he didn't come to union meetings, but he'd come around on the picket lines and talk to the fellows.

R: What would he say?

T: Well, he would encourage them to try to get a contract. He encouraged the Wagner Act. See, he helped both acts. He was encouraging the companies to open the Wagner Act, you know, and treat the unions right.

R: Can you tell me more about your personal involvement with the unions? [Tell me] some of the things that stick out in your mind that you did that were

important that really helped the union out through the years?

T: Well, one of the main things is, like I told you, about me being made the administrator under Republic Steel because the unions started to be . . . steal money, wasn't running the locals the way they ought to be run. It wasn't representing the workers in the mills. All it was interested in getting. . . . See, the company would send the dues to Pittsburgh, and Pittsburgh would reimburse the local unions. I could tell you the name of the guy that was the head of that, but maybe I shouldn't do it because he's dead now. But, they were stealing that money and they didn't have enough money to work on hardly ever. So anyway. . . .

R: So, you had problems with . . . you would collect money for the union and people that were in charge of keeping the money for the union would spend it or take it and embezzle it?

T: Yeah. I don't know where they spent it. They stole it is what they did out of the treasury of the local union.

R: You had that problem in Youngstown a lot?

T: Yeah. Well, we didn't have too much. Republic Steel was the worst. But, Republic Steel, because of them having such a familiar strike and one thing or another, a lot of the other companies found out what they were doing. We were afraid of if we let the local union steal all this money out of there and not represent the workers that that would eventually take work into the other steel plants. So when I went in there, I changed office where we met. I bought a big church right on the other side of the Market Street Bridge on the right hand side. I bought a church there for \$50,000 for the local union. There's where we met from then on.

R: Oh, I see. That was your meeting place.

T: When I was relieved of an administrative problem, I had elected people to run the union. They turned out to be quite a group. They weren't quite satisfied with this church. They wanted their own building. So, they went and built their own building up on South Avenue. Now, that's how they were saving money, that they could build these buildings, you know.

R: Right.

T: Now, I bought the first one for them for \$50,000 that I had saved the local union.

R: How many members were there back then?

T: Six thousand.

R: When you would go. . . . What was a typical meeting like when you would come? You know, who was in charge of the meeting and stuff like that?

T: Well, I was the administrator. I was the president, the chairman, of the meetings. I ran all the meetings.

R: Okay, what would you talk about at the meetings?

T: Well, I would talk about . . . the fellows would come up and talk about having certain grievances, you know. I had a secretary that would take all that down. Then, after that meeting, I would go in a meeting with the company. We'd go in and sit and talk about grievances. Well, everything we kept talking about was to improve the union. We would get a report from the international union. I'd take that up at the meeting and report it to the workers, you know.

R: When you voted was it by secret ballot or was it. . . ?

T: Secret ballot.

R: Do you think within your union itself, like at meetings, were there different factions or was everybody pretty much all together on the issues?

T: Everybody was pretty much together.

R: So, you didn't have people trying to grab power and stuff within the union?

T: Oh, there were people that tried it, but the majority wanted to take and father the programs that I annunciated.

R: Now, that this is an election year and the election is so close, I've been asking some of the people I've been interviewing: what do you think of the candidates now?

T: Well, I'm not in love with either one of the candidates, but I'm going to support Dukakis.

R: Yeah, me too.

T: Yeah. I'm going to support him. I think they could have got somebody better, but that's the way it is and I'm going to support him.

R: Unions aren't too strong anymore in the country? Not as strong as they used to be?

T: The thing that surprises me most when you talk about unions is the Teamsters endorsing Bush. I don't understand that.

R: Why do you think they did that?

T: I don't understand that.

R: Maybe they were bribed?

T: I think what's happened [is] that there's been so many crooks in them Teamsters. If they support the people that's in office, in Washington, they'll vote for them. Just like Hoffa, you know. There's no man more crooked than Hoffa, but he supported the Republicans. And the Republicans kept him out of jail. They kept him out of jail. And that's what is going on in the Teamsters. I think someday, something ought to be done about it. Now, if the Kennedy's would have stayed in office. . . . They were opposed to Hoffa real bad. And to this day yet, I think both of the Kennedy's was paid to shoot Kennedy. Both of them. I think they were paid to do it.

R: That's probably a climax of maybe union power in the 1960s and now, in the 1980s. Unions are still there, but they don't seem to be as powerful as they used to be.

T: Well, we went from--what was it, about 1,025,000 June? [Thomas asks a third party, June, this question] We got about 50,000 or 60,000 now.

J: Yeah, 650,000 isn't it now?

T: Something like that. Yeah.

J: In the international.

T: Yeah.

R: In the 1940s and 1950s, when you were involved with the unions, was there like a push, or did people kind of label you like as socialists or communists because you were in unions? Because I know back then, from reading a lot of history, there seems to have been a lot of people from the upper classes in this country [who] seemed to view a lot of labor unions and movements as socialism and communism. Did you have to battle a lot with that typically?

- T: No, I was never charged with that because I always worked so hard to get the Commi [Communist] party. Even the Vindicator one time put in an article in there about me supporting the unions and denying the Commies. You know, [I] worked hard to get the Commies. The Vindicator put in quite an article about that one time.
- R: Today, why do you think unions have lost a lot of strength in, you know, numbers and that type of thing?
- T: Well, I think--I've got to say primarily--this country got themselves in the position where Japan and some of the other countries are sending so much stuff in here, that's throwing our people out of work. Now, I can remember when I was in charge of Republic Steel, and I done it in both of them, Republic Steel and Sheet & Tube, that committees from Japan, engineers from Japan, as high as five and six of them would come in here. They would make an arrangement to go into the mill. The company would send a man in and they'd send me in with this group of engineers from Japan. That was before they ever had any steel working in Japan. Our engineers would explain to them how it was working, how you could improve it. I used to stand and hate what they were saying a lot of times. This is come to pass. That now, the new factories have educated their people and they're sending stuff over here now so cheap. And the labor's paid so cheap that they're sending their stuff here. I think that that's the biggest reason there is, that we're losing so many jobs.
- R: What do you see the future as? Do you think the unions will get weaker or stronger?
- T: No, I think they'll get stronger. I think this greediness of the big people . . . you got people making concessions and workers, you know, making concessions. A day after they make the concessions you hear about the top people being millionaires. How many millions of dollars they got in bonus or one thing or another. Now, that ain't right. That's got to be changed somewhere. So, I think that history repeats itself. I believe in that. And I think in time, that's going to wear out. The workers over there are going to start demanding some of the stuff that we got. These people are going to bring their companies back here. I think in the future it will curse itself.
- R: Well probably World War II and the Korean War really helped, as far as the production and building up the mills. Do you think there will be another war soon, in the future?
- T: No, I don't. Not in the near future I don't. I think maybe in a length of time there will be. But I see

now, I believe Russia's got a top guy over there that is really interested in trying to make friends, you know. And I think if Russia, you know, cooperates, we're going to be real good friends before it's all over with. Yeah. I see good times coming, but of course, the unions will always be here. Because you're always going to have greedy people and the greed is what's causing the trouble, not the people.

R: Do you see a different type of social mood now, in the late 80's, than say 30 or 40 years ago? It seems to me that there's a lot of young people that don't have a lot of respect for authority and older people. And it seems younger people are only after money now a days and they don't really care that much about society and their country and patriotism. Do you see that? How was that like 30 or 40 years ago when you were a younger man as compared to today? Do you see a big difference?

T: Well, I think that younger people in those days had more respect for the top people in Washington than what they do now. You see, in Washington, we blame a lot of the blame on the president, but Congress is just as much to blame as he is because they got to approve all this. We're in the biggest debt now than was ever in our lives, you know. That debt is no good. Someday, somebody got to do something about it because the younger people, they know that they're going to have to be the ones to pay that debt. That's going to dawn on them before long. I saw this morning, you know, they talk about there's more older people now than there is younger people. My wife and I were sitting listening to television this morning and I think they said there was 2.5 million abortions just this last year in the country. No wonder there's more older people. Someday that's going to have to be stopped. At least attempt to stop part of it. You're never successful stopping everything. It's like prohibition, you know, you couldn't stop it. It kept on going. We got people here in Youngstown that got to be millionaires in prohibition. Now, they're millionaires and I'll tell you who they are. They had a place right down on Poland Avenue that I've been in. It was Debartolo and Cafaro that ran a bootlegging outfit.

R: That's how they made their money?

T: That's were they started to make their money. They didn't have no money before they started that. They made so much dog gone money on bootlegging that they become millionaires. Yeah. That's why if you try to make something that's going to cut it out entirely, like dope, you know. Now, there's the thing with dope that they didn't have when I [was a kid]. I never

heard of dope when I was a kid. But, here's this dope going now. I heard last night that Dukakis--and I didn't agree with him--was talking about making friends with all of the small countries around us not to send dope in here. In my opinion, the Army ought to be put in there. We ought to have a big growth of people that would stop every ship and every plane that comes into this country and check them for dope. I think that's what's got to be done. Having other people to stop, they ain't going to stop. They're making too much money.

R: Yeah. That's right.

T: Yeah. I'm not against social security, now. I think social security ought to be a thing that's kept going forever because it does help the older people. I know older people, if they ever take social security off of them, they're going to starve to death or they're not going to be able to go to a doctor. I think that our medical expenses is too much. I think it's way too high. I think that somebody is going to have to take and go to work bringing that down. These are the main things. I think that they ought to charge people, like Japan--what do they call it when you make them pay extra money to bring stuff into the country?

J: [June says,] Tariff. I think they ought to put a tariff on all that stuff to stop it.

R: Back in the 1940s or 1950s when you were younger, do you think that the leadership in America, the Congressmen and the presidents and those type of people, do you think they were more in tune with what the average person wanted? Do you think there was more of a cooperative mood than nowadays?

T: Yes, I do. I have to--you know, I'm just so put up with Roosevelt. I think that as long as he was in there, he was doing a good job. And then, Truman done a good job. Now, there's two of the main people that I can say that I really think were real presidents in this country. I would hope we could get another one like them two.

R: What do you think of Ronald Reagan?

T: I don't think of him at all. I don't like him.

R: You don't?

T: I don't like him.

R: Why?

T: Well, because he's spending too much money in armory. I think he's spending way too much money. I think that money that he's putting in the Army ought to be put into these people that don't have homes, isn't getting enough to eat. I think this country ought to be priority number one. That we get everything settled as far as our own people is concerned, then once that is settled, then start talking about more ammunition and stuff to support us. I'm not against the Army entirely; I'm for it, but I just think that they go around talking about, "We got enough stuff in this country to kill the people over half a dozen times." We only need that once. Once they kill everybody once, there's nobody that's going to be around for a war. I think that they ought to cut down on making . . . causing war, you know. I think there's people that's making ammunition that's for war because they're making themselves millionaires because of it. Reagan's for it. He won't do anything to stop that.

R: I think when Reagan got elected, a lot of his . . . he was governor of California. I think, I'm not sure, but I think a lot of those big government contracts that manufacture the new weapon systems and stuff, weren't they from California?

T: Yeah.

R: What I'm trying to say, weren't most of his friends, like in his cabinet and his buddies, the ones that owned those companies?

T: Sure. Yeah, that is correct.

R: So, they were basically illegally lining their pockets with money and things, you know.

T: Yeah. Sure. That is correct.

R: But, what do you think of him as a man intellectually. Do you think, like how does he compare to Roosevelt or Truman as far as having brains and stuff like that?

T: Well, I don't think that he comes anywhere near it. I think that most of his stuff, when he gets on the podium, that most of his stuff has been wrote by other people. I think that he listens a lot to his wife, too.

R: His wife?

T: Yeah.

R: Do you think she kind of twists his mind the wrong ways?

T: Yeah. I think that she makes a lot of his thinking on how it should be done. I won't say she's a bad woman. I have nothing against her. But, I think its him that shouldn't have to listen to his wife on how to run the country, see. I have no use for him. I think he's done a poor job. I have a hard time trying to believe why the people even vote for him. I believe that Bush is just going to carry on where he's left off. It's not going to change in the next four years.

R: What do you think of Bush's pick for vice-president, Quayle. That young guy.

T: Well, I have nothing against Quayle. I think sometimes they pick too old of people. I'll tell you that. While I'm over 80 years old, I don't think people should be out in office that old, because I know from experience that your mind starts slipping, see. I don't think that old people should have those jobs.

R: So then, sort of as an ending, do you think your activities in the union and the union over all in Youngstown actually helped people? Do you think that it raised their standard of living?

T: No question about it. Yeah.

R: Gave them a sense of purpose?

T: Yeah. It raised their standard of living. Oh, they helped in many ways. There was people that came to me and asked . . . and I'd send them to certain places where they could get help, you know. There's no doubt in my mind that there should always be unions. Look, how can you say "no" against the unions when doctors have an organization, lawyers have an organization, all these top people have organizations. Even the industries have got a factory organization. Why shouldn't the common people have an organization.

R: Right. Exactly. Thank you.

T: Your welcome.

END OF INTERVIEW