HOWARD KIMELDORF INTERVIEWS FOR *REDS OR RACKETS?*

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SAM DARCY OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY

INTERVIEWEE: SAM DARCY

INTERVIEWERS: HOWARD KIMELDORF

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[00:00:00] **HOWARD:** This an interview with Sam Darcy, in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, on—today's the tenth? Okay. May 10, 1986.

[00:00:16] **SAM:** You know, I have often wondered, how fortunate the human race is, that these tape recorders were not invented at the time Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, that surely is one of the greatest literary documents in human history. But Lincoln had a high piping voice, and it must have sounded ridiculous, at the time.

[00:00:38] **HOWARD:** You know, I don't know what it is, but none of us think we sound very good on tape recorders.

[BREAK IN RECORDING OF INTERVIEW]

Okay, one of the interesting questions I wanted to ask you is—well first, why don't you tell me how you got to San Francisco, in the first place, the year you came here and the circumstances.

[00:00:54] **SAM:** As I told you, earlier, my conflicts with Browder, began in '29, when he became secretary. And all during 1930, there was just one confrontation after another, between us. It came first with the [?Catovis Events?] , then with the March 6, 1930 Demonstrations—the unemployment demonstrations, he was opposed to them. With the May 1 Demonstration, which was a tremendous thing in New York. Later, he tried to have me removed, as—I was acting district organizer, and for a time and had to work in school, and educational director for the New York District for a time. And he tried to have me removed at a convention of the New York District. [?Ian Hathaway?] came down to convince the convention that I ought to be transferred to other work, meaning out of New York. I was sick of factionalism by then, and I appealed to the convention, that they should go along with it. And almost unanimously they turned him down.

He was quite desperate to get rid of me in some way, and so he—they got me appointed the same, about the same time to be editor of the Daily Worker because [J. Louis] Engdahl, who was—Engdahl and [Robert] Minor had both gone to Europe, they were the original editors. And I worked on the Daily Worker, and almost immediately we ran into trouble, because I wrote articles against his policies. For example in the trade unions, he had—he didn't understand the working class at all. And he had—his idea of being a revolutionary in the trade unions was that if the employers were willing to concede 10 percent, we should ask for 20 percent. If the workers wanted, the regular workers, the non-communist workers in the union, wanted a 10 percent increase, we must ask for 15 percent. I wrote an article against that. Which what I said, "What the hell kind of revolutionary stuff is this? This is plain stupidity!" Well of course, you know, he didn't approve of it.

And then finally, what happened was the International Labor Defense got into really bad trouble, financially and every other way, and so he got their board to make an appeal that I be transferred to head the International Labor Defense. Well I went in there, but we immediately ran into trouble. One of them was for example, one day he called up, he said, "I have a chap here, Eugene Dennis, the state's attorney in California got a warrant out for his address for his arrest for his activity in the Imperial Valley situation, and Sam, would you have him arranged to go to the Soviet Union?" I said, "I never heard of Eugene Dennis, and this sounds, not legitimate to me and I'd like time to—" "Well you can't have time!" He says. And then I said, "Well I won't do it." He says, "It's an order from the national office!" I said, "Well give somebody else the order, I won't do it." And I wouldn't let the International Labor Defense be used for such purposes.

Later it turned out Dennis was liar, there was no warrant out for him. But I went to California, I took great pains to investigate the whole thing—it was a fraud from beginning to end! But of course, Browder was eager to get rid of me. Next thing I heard, was that the California district, which is really down in the sewer by then, had passed a motion appealing to the national office, to send me out there to help him out. Now you know, by good luck was that Guam was not in the United States at that time, or else I would've ended up in Guam. But I finally did end up in the California district for that reason. And I couldn't do anything about it because they were the Political Bureau of Decisions, you see.

[00:05:16] **HOWARD:** California requested you specifically?

[00:05:19] **SAM:** Yeah.

[00:05:19] **HOWARD:** How would they have done that? Or why would they have done that? Or was that Browder manipulating things?

[00:05:23] **SAM:** I think he manipulated it. I think he—somebody in California said, "Look we're in lousy shape." And he said, "I got just the man for you." I mean, I mean I'm inventing that, but I think that's what happened. He saw a chance to get rid of me.

[00:05:39] **HOWARD:** So you came to California in what year?

[00:05:41] **SAM:** December 1930.

[00:05:43] **HOWARD:** Oh okay, so early on then?

[00:05:46] **SAM:** Christmas. Actually Christmas week.

[00:05:48] **HOWARD:** Oh yeah, I read that account in your—you came into the hall that first day, yeah.

One of the things that intrigues me is you decided early on to concentrate organizing on the waterfront, can you explain your reasoning for doing that?

[00:06:03] **SAM:** The Party at that time adopted the policy of concentrating organization of unions in the basic industries. And in California, particularly San Francisco, they weren't a great many basic industries, there was an iron works behind the Mission District and so far as I can recall, that was the only large industry we had, accepting the waterfront—which is very important, California was an important port—and transportation, and they were street car workers and stuff like that. So, so far as San Francisco was concerned, the waterfront became a point of concentration for that reason. Also of course, there was the Agricultural Workers since California's a large agriculture site, so we also concentrated on that.

[00:06:55] **HOWARD:** Okay, how about the Marine Workers Industrial Union? We talked about this before, I just want to get more reflections on it. In that article you wrote called, "In the Midst of Great Historical Battles—" or something for the communists, you wrote in 1934, you indicated that it was pretty much a failure, and I think you said you didn't recruit a single worker off the docks. Why? What happened there?

[00:07:18] **SAM:** Well, the Marine Workers Industrial Union was one the biggest examples of a dual union policy, which I was opposed to from the beginning. In fact, [William Z.] Foster's policy, Foster was our leading trade union person in the Party, began as opposed to dual unionism. He organized the Trade Union Education League [TUEL] , which was aimed for winning people to left positions, within the AFL. But then, the dual union policy started growing out, stimulated in great measure by [Solomon] Lozovsky, who head of the Red International of Labor Unions, and who championed the Foster group as against the Ruthenberg group [following C.E. Ruthenberg] in the Party. And they transform—one of the first things that they did was transform the Trade Union Educational League to the Trade Union Unity League, to organize dual unions, you see?

And in the case of the Marine Workers Union, [clock chiming] we had seamen's unions, we should've gotten into and tried to revitalize them—that would've been the sensible thing, and the way I did with the longshoremen. But instead, they tried to organize the dual union. And [pause] it was a disaster. One of the worst things that could've happened. What was so terrible, what was tragic about that is that the men who were involved in it were beautiful people. Harry Hines and all those people, fine people, [?Keith?] in New York and all those splendid people! And they were wasted. In this futile business of creating more factionalism—which is all they achieved in the Marine Industry.

[00:09:10] **HOWARD:** Well, just as an aside, what about in New York? Didn't it bear out the fruits of that policy with the seamen at least?

[00:09:16] **SAM:** Well, in New York it was better, because see, on the West Coast we had Seamen's Union in the Pacific [sic, Sailors' Union of the Pacific] , the SUP, and the Seamen's International Union [SIU] , who still had large memberships, a lot of ex-IWW [Industrial Workers of the World] people and the like of that. In New York, they had completely disintegrated, the seamen's unions. They didn't have—they had almost no organization at all. And by throwing a lot of people into it, they made some progress.

[00:09:45] **HOWARD:** So there was a viable seamen's union on the West Coast in the early thirties?

[00:09:50] **SAM:** You have to define "viable." There were two functioning seamen's unions there, the SIU and the SUP. There were two functioning seamen's unions, but they weren't very effective in affecting worker's industries.

[00:10:03] **HOWARD:** Okay. They had no bargaining contracts, did they?

[00:10:08] **SAM:** No. [Andrew] Furuseth, he was an old leader of seamen, and in his younger years, he was really effective, account for some things. Later, he was a broken old man who used to weep and he'd go—he'd make an appeal to the ship owners, to make some concession and cry—he was a caricature of a leader; he wasn't any leader at all. On the East Coast, there wasn't even that much. And so, the Marine Workers Union were the only, the Party threw into it and so on [pause] began to make some progress.

[00:10:48] **HOWARD:** When I talked with B.B. Jones, he indicated to me, in his opinion, that he thought that the policy of working with him, the existing union was correct for the longshoremen, but that it was incorrect for the seamen and basically supported what the Party did there, which was to develop the MWIU—

[00:11:02] **SAM:** Well that became the prevailing view, partly because, partly because we had to refuse—to support the Marine Workers Union would've been tantamount to being anti-union within the Party. And so, I too went along with it. I disagreed with it, I opposed it, I wanted to do otherwise. And on the West Coast, the reason, part of the reason we didn't succeed in penetrating the other unions was because there was this conflict between Bridges and [Harry] Lundeberg. Which made it difficult, of course with Furuseth, you couldn't even talk to the guy. He was a hopeless relic. But Lundeberg was an active, intelligent man in many ways. But bitterly factional, and Bridges was somewhat like that too. And as much as I tried, I got nowhere with him.

In fact, the last time I saw Lundeberg, Bridges and I and Lundeberg had a lunch, and as usual, it began all right, then towards about the middle of it, Bridges and Lundeberg developed into a cat and dog fight. And I didn't succeed in doing anything about it. And so we finished our lunch, and we left, we shook hands, we left, and I went back to my office. The next day, Lundeberg came around, to my office, and he said, "Sam, you know Bridges is a loser." I don't know on what basis he said that, it wasn't true, Bridges was a coming man. He said, "You know Bridges is a loser, why don't you stay with me, and the two of us would make a hell of a team and we'll take over this—"

[00:12:50] **HOWARD:** Is that right?

[00:12:51] **SAM:** Yeah. Well you can imagine, I cussed him out and I said, "Lundeberg, that's the scummiest thing I've ever heard! You're a louse for proposing it!" He left, and he never spoke to me again. They were really bitter factionalists, both of them.

[00:13:09] **HOWARD:** Huh. Let's go off the tape here. I want to ask you something.

[BREAK IN RECORDING OF INTERVIEW]

Okay, what about Albion Hall? You proposed to me that it was more of a steady group rather than a caucus which is the way that everybody writes about it, or a faction with the union. Can you elaborate on that?

[00:13:23] **SAM:** We organized it as a class, really. There was no question about that, it wasn't a caucus, it was a class. But it is true that we had—we invited everybody involved in the Marine situation, and the leadership of it to join it, and we must've had about twenty or thirty people there, I don't remember exactly. It was a smaller group, it wasn't very large. And we met Sunday mornings, where I taught trade union structure, tactics, and strategy, and history and so on. What I was trying to do was to provide these guys with some experience in trade unions, which they didn't have, you see. To give them some background to it. And it really accomplished in a sense, the purpose of a caucus because it solidified the group a great deal.

[00:14:10] **HOWARD:** Now were—what did you talk about? Did you talk about general things like the development of labor movement, or did you talk specifically about what was happening in ILA [International Longshoreman's Association] ?

[00:14:19] **SAM:** Not generally about the labor movement, but about trade unions. We talked, I tried to give them a brief background to the trade union history in the United States, and how trade unions are organized. The difference between industrial and craft unions. And how one should organize a strike. See, I already had that experience in the needle trades, the textiles unions, and I knew what their failings were, so I tried to work out a strategy to meet this situation.

I'll tell you an interesting thing about that, of course I never knew anything about a general strike, I only knew the concept of a general strike. One day, I ran across a little pamphlet, curiously I don't remember exactly where I got it, but I think it Emma's [Blechschmidt, Darcy's wife] father had it in his library, and I got it from him. And this was a little pamphlet was called, "The Dream of Debs" by Jack London, in which, in San Francisco, Eugene Debs organized the general strike! And he writes—Jack London must've been a marvelous man, I never met him, I met his wife Charmian after a while. But he must've been a marvelous man because he foresaw, in very clear terms, what a general strike was like. And it's not a simple thing, it's a very complicated thing, because you must be careful not to hurt the people so that for example, when organizing a general strike you must be careful to see that doctors have gasoline, hospitals get food, poor neighborhoods get milk—you have to watch all that stuff. You have to watch the roads to see that only proper authorized vehicles go in and out, and so on. And Jack London had that all in there. And instead of following Lenin, or somebody else on the leadership of a revolution, I followed Jack London! And I'm sure that pamphlet must be around someplace, people must still have it.

[00:16:22] **HOWARD:** Can you tell me some of the names—I don't want to red-bait here, I just want to get the names of the people who were involved in Albion Hall, because the one thing that strikes me is, almost all the leaders of the—what become of the ILWU, were rooted in that Albion Hall, I mean I can think of—

[00:16:35] **SAM:** Many of them, I wouldn't say all, many of them. I would say maybe eight or ten, who were in the longshore situation. Then there were maybe a few, two or three from the Marine Workers Union. And then the rest of the people, we were trying to put into the situations. For example, Schomaker, we assigned him to go into the longshore situation.

[00:17:02] **HOWARD:** Bridges was there, [Henry] Schmidt—

[00:17:07] **SAM:** Bridges, Schrimpf, Schmidt—

[00:17:11] **HOWARD:** Bulcke?

[00:17:12] **SAM:** No, no.

[00:17:13] **HOWARD:** He wasn't in on that? [?Dutch?] Dietrich?

[00:17:13] **SAM:** No, no, Dietrich wasn't there, he came later. I really didn't remember very many of them.

[00:17:30] **HOWARD:** But you say a good group of about eight or so?

[00:17:34] **SAM:** About—yes. About eight would be—whom became leading people under—on the longshore local.

[00:17:45] **HOWARD:** And when was that formed? To the extent that it was an official Albion group forum meeting?

[00:17:51] **SAM:** I would say late 1933 or early 1934, during that winter. Because I was up to my ears in the agricultural situation at the time, and kind of handled both at once. But I remember it was the winter of '33 to very early in '34.

[00:18:14] **HOWARD:** I remember reading a quote from B.B. Jones, he said something like, "Bridges emerged as a natural leader among us because he had the real work experience. We studied, we had the ideas. But Bridges knew what was going on." Was there some sense that Bridges was moving to the forefront of Albion Hall? Even before the strike took place?

[00:18:32] **SAM:** Bridges once spoke up in class and said—after I had—the procedure used to be, I would make an introductory lecture for twenty minutes to a half hour on the subject we dealt that morning. And then those questions and discussions, everybody said what they wanted to say. And Bridges at one point said, I remember that very clearly, he said that his father was a socialist—no, no, his father was a laborite in the Australian Labor Party. And he went to socialist Sunday school—wait a minute, I might be injecting that word "socialist." He went to the Labor Party Sunday school, may have been socialist but I don't remember that for sure. And he said, "A lot of what you said today is what I heard there," that was what Bridges said.

I think that background probably helped him some. He, apparently—he must've been or I don't know that for certain, he must've been something in relation to his father that I was to my father. My father was just an ordinary trade union guy, rank-and-filer. Didn't amount to very much as the leader—in fact he wasn't a leader of any kind. And I think Bridges' father must have been the same. But I could observe, I grew up in the atmosphere, I could observe what they did as a kid that made impression on me and I think Bridges must have had the same thing in Australia. So that he had some background to it.

But I don't think that's what made him the leader. What made him the leader was first of all, he had a very good platform manner that came to him naturally. I mean he got up and spoke to the men in a way that made them feel at home. I mean this wasn't somebody from heaven lecturing them, this was one of their people. And that went, Bridges was very good that way. And then Bridges had a sense of sorting out things in his own mind and reducing them to simple terms. And that helped him. And then of course he was a longshoreman, he was in the star gangs, and they accepted him as, you know, one of them. And he was attract—he was attractive to them, not alone because of his virtues, but also because of his faults. Everybody knew he screwed around a lot. Everybody knew he drank too much. Everybody knew he had fights with his wife, constantly. So that—really, fights! I mean she threatened to call the police on him several times. And most of those men—not most, a lot of those men had similar problems, you see, one kind or another. You can imagine the frightful pay they were getting and the miserable work; it didn't make them very good husbands and fathers at home.

[00:21:30] **HOWARD:** Let me ask you a related question, down in the waterfront, you started doing your agitation in what? ‘Thirty-one, ‘thirty-two? Something like that? Getting up on soap boxes?

[00:21:39] **SAM:** Well, in ‘30 [pause] in ‘32—well I almost never got up on a soap box on the waterfront. Jim Branch and Emmett Kirby, they did most of that. Well, I was there all the time, but I tried to make contact moving about the longshoremen, making friends, listening to them—so's to see what they're thinking about and so on. And Jim Branch, he was a very appealing character, on the stage-on the platform. And then Emmett [?Kirby?] did pretty well. I mean he wasn't as good as Jim, but he did pretty well.

[00:22:16] **HOWARD:** Now, were these former seamen? Kirby and Branch?

[00:22:19] **SAM:** Neither of them.

[00:22:20] **HOWARD:** Neither?

[00:22:21] **SAM:** Neither of them.

[00:22:23] **HOWARD:** Just MWIU activists or—

[00:22:24] **SAM:** No, neither of them. They came, they came from the Party. We brought them down from the Party. The only trade unionists we had was [?Finn Hannof?] , and you couldn't get them to make a speech or anything like that for a lump of money! He was a worker, you know? Day-to-day worker. He had very little seaman or longshore experience, he was mostly a lumberjack.

[00:22:51] **HOWARD:** Now, in your account, that you wrote for the Hawespipe, you said that your initiating group, as you referred to, had three to four men. So would it be Branch, Kirby, you and—

[00:23:01] **SAM:** [?Hannof?] . There were two or three others but this was the core of the group and the initiating group, this was first group that decided to do it.

[00:23:11] **HOWARD:** So Branch and Kirby were not recruits from the waterfront?

[00:23:13] **SAM:** No, no.

[00:23:14] **HOWARD:** Were they from New York?

[00:23:16] **SAM:** No, no. They were—Finn was born in Georgia [country] , came here when he was a kid. As my understanding is, they went right to the West Coast. See, the West Coast has quite a population of Armenians and other people of those groups. And he was in that immigration.

Kirby was a wonderful Irishman who hardly spoke, but he was one of the editors of the Western Worker, and in the day, he wasn't much a conversationalist, but when he got up on a platform he spoke sense. That was alright.

[00:23:58] **HOWARD:** And Branch?

[00:23:59] **SAM:** Well Branch was a [pause] well he was fantastic! He got up and made gestures that appealed to the men. He spoke with a slight British accent, a slight Barbados accent, probably, because that's where he was born. And blonde hair, and slim, and tall—he was a movie character, you know, a really attractive person. And—but he never worked on the waterfront. His wife was a school teacher in San Francisco.

[00:24:32] **HOWARD:** Was that right? So how did their talks go over? What would they talk about to the men. This is back in the Third Period [position held by Communist Third International from 1928-1933, marked by hostility to reformists and establishment of dual unions] I guess, right? Parties pushing its—

[00:24:43] **SAM:** Oh no, we didn't talk about the Third Period. Not where I was the organizer or leader. [laughs]

[00:24:48] **HOWARD:** Okay, what did you talk about?

[00:24:49] **SAM:** We talked about the conditions on the waterfront, the importance of the Union, why the blue book was no good. We prepared all of that in discussions. We didn't prepare speeches, but we prepared the subject matter and the line of policy we should follow, and every once and awhile, we would depart a little, by speaking about the things, or fascism in the country and things like that; we introduced such questions. But basically, we talked trade union questions.

[00:25:14] **HOWARD:** Not a lot of appeals to join the Communist Party or joining—

[00:25:17] **SAM:** None at all. None at all. All the appeals were to join the union.

[00:25:22] **HOWARD:** Even in the early period like '32?

[00:25:24] **SAM:** Oh sure.

[00:25:25] **HOWARD:** Because I remember Bridges, in a testimony, in 1950 or something like that, he was talking about guys like Branch and others coming to the waterfront, and he says, "Well, when they talked about conditions they had them in with them, but when they talked about joining the Communist Party as a way to improve things, we lost interest."

[00:25:41] **SAM:** Bridges probably said that to defend himself against the charge that he was a communist activist or something.

[00:25:46] **HOWARD:** Yeah. You don't remember that?

[00:25:48] **SAM:** I'm quite sure there was almost no appeals for the Communist Party. We did talk to them about the Communist Party, personally. And everybody knew I was the leader of the Communist Party—

[00:25:59] **HOWARD:** That's what Bridges was talking about, the personal—

[00:26:01] **SAM:** It could be. Yeah, it could be.

[00:26:04] **HOWARD:** So Bridges was in the Albion Hall group early on then, I assume, right?

[00:26:07] **SAM:** Oh right from the beginning.

[00:26:08] **HOWARD:** Right from the beginning?

[00:26:09] **SAM:** Through the entire thing.

[00:26:10] **HOWARD:** Do you know who contacted him? To bring him into this group?

[00:26:15] **SAM:** Well, I wrote about that. There was a chapter named Larson, John Larson.

[00:26:21] **HOWARD:** Oh, Pirate John?

[00:26:22] **SAM:** Pirate John. One of the most wonderful characters. I wish I could write like [pause] any of the people wrote great sea stories. Like [Herman] Melville, or somebody. I wish I could write like that to describe Larson. I loved that man beyond belief. He had the patch over one eye and I can't remember any longer where he lost the eye, but he was such a wholesome, decent, loving person. But how I got to know him was I wrote that I out.

At one point, Jim was talking, Jim Branch was talking, and some smart-aleck cop came and said, "Get off the platform!" And there was quiet for a minute, and Jim was a little, nonplussed. And then we heard Larson's voice, I didn't know Larson at the time, just by, just by luck. He [Larson] said, "Men, are we going to let some cop tell us who we can listen to?" And the [inaudible] _____ said, “No!” He said to the cop, "Beat it!" The cop saw all these, I don't know, three or four hundred longshoremen with hooks in their belts and slowly go—he wasn't about to start anything, so he beat it. I went over to thank John, I said, "Thank you, that's a wonderful thing you just did." And we became very good friends, he liked me and I liked him and then he introduced me to all these other guys. He introduced me to Bridges, and Schmidt, and Schrimpf, and half a dozen other names that don't come readily to me anymore. But anyway, and then from there on, we just all were together.

[00:28:06] **HOWARD:** Okay. When was, when did Schomaker join the scene?

[00:28:10] **SAM:** Early, but a few months later. We sent him in, we asked him to—he was, he was without—he was unemployed. And one day, his father was—his father-in-law was sympathetic. His wife's father. And one day, we were together—they weren't Party members, I think his wife may have been a Party member I'm not sure, and she got John to join. And one day we were together, and I said, "Look, you're not working anywhere, why don't you go down to the waterfront and try to get a job." And he did it, and he was accepted. He was a big, strapping fellow—very good for that kind of work.

[00:28:51] **HOWARD:** The Waterfront Worker then was under Harry Hines editorship earlier—

[00:28:54] **SAM:** Yup, oh yeah. The whole time.

[00:28:56] **HOWARD:** Because Schomaker claims it was under his later on.

[00:28:59] **SAM:** He had probably helped, but it wasn't so. Harry Hines was the man who did it.

[00:29:03] **HOWARD:** He did?

[00:29:03] **SAM:** Yeah, no question about it.

[00:29:07] **HOWARD:** Somewhere around mid-1933, it seems, The Waterfront Worker seems to go through a little bit of a transition, and really, become really focused on grievances and conditions on the Front, speaking to the men's concerns.

[00:29:19] **SAM:** Yeah, that's correct, that's accurate. When it began—

[00:29:23] **HOWARD:** Schomaker says he takes over the editorship at that time, at least he says that in his public court testimony.

[00:29:28] **SAM:** He probably joined a group to work on it. Harry Hines began it as a Marine Industrial Workers Union paper, and we transformed it. And Harry Hines himself cooperated in that, he saw the real

reason for that and that's why I told you earlier on, that I think Harry Hines began to doubt the wisdom of the Marine Workers Industrial Union. And I'm sure Schomaker helped in that, but Harry Hines was the responsible man, there's no doubt about that at all.

[00:30:00] **HOWARD:** So is it correct to say that there is two kinds of groups, working in parallel directions. One is the initiating group around you, Branch, Kirby, and Finn? Is that his name?

[00:30:09] **SAM:** Finn, yeah Finn.

[00:30:10] **HOWARD:** Finn. And then, the MWIU group of Hines, Bra—no. Well, where does Hines fit in to all this?

[00:30:20] **SAM:** Well Hines was one of the leaders of the Marine Workers Group, they were a very small group. But—

[END PART ONE/BEGIN PART TWO]

We just fused together, but you know the—Hines could talk to Bridges, and say, "Let's do so," or I could talk to both of them. There was no separate groupings, we were just all working together.

[00:30:48] **HOWARD:** So, okay, in July of 1933, the Open Letter [document issued by the Communist Party that called on members to focus on workplace organizing] is issued. Do you remember the Open Letter?

[00:30:55] **SAM:** I surely remember the Open Letter, but I don't remember the dates, or anything like that.

[00:30:58] **HOWARD:** Yeah I think it was July 13, or 7 or something like that. What impact did it have on you?

[00:31:06] **SAM:** None.

[00:31:06] **HOWARD:** None? Why?

[00:31:10] **SAM:** Well, first of all, I was deep in California life and struggles, and drew conclusions, and made adjustments in my outlook and practice out of what I ran into, my experiences. And much of what was written in the Open Letter, I had come to believe, a long time before the Open Letter came.

[00:31:37] **HOWARD:** Did it give you greater legitimacy in pushing your line? Pushing your interpretation?

[00:31:43] **SAM:** I don't know. In California, it didn't matter much. In the East? Maybe, I don't know. Maybe, maybe in that Browder, no that wouldn't be accurate, Browder was just as tough to work with later as before, he did everything he could to sabotage us. He was a real bastard.

[00:32:03] **HOWARD:** Why was it easier for you to basically be innovative on the West Coast? You're saying in the East it may have made a difference, in the West, it didn't bother you at all.

[00:32:14] **SAM:** Well, in the East there was a traditional bureaucracy in the Party that grew up as Party functionaries. In the West these were all new people I recruited. [pause] As I told you, we had less than 300 members when I got there in the entire state. In fact, in three states: California, Nevada, and Arizona, which were all in my district. And we grew to over 4,000, so you can imagine, these were new people. And they were my people, because they came up while I was there, and led them, and recruited them, and taught them. We had schools for them, which I was chief teacher.

[00:32:57] **HOWARD:** How about in the period from about mid-1932 up to the strike, how many times did Browder intercede?

[00:33:04] **SAM:** Not—wait a minute.

[00:33:07] **HOWARD:** Before the strike.

[00:33:07] **SAM:** Yeah, before the strike. Hardly at all, until the strike began [pause] in the late spring, I think it was, of '34. And early that year, Browder sent a number of people with presumably authority of the political committee to straighten me out. One of them he sent was a little, a little jerk, from the furriers union [International Fur and Leather Workers Union] . I made sure to make work of him, because he demanded immediately that I call a general strike. He read that some place, some Comintern document or something. And we just threw him out, told him to get the hell out of the state, before I kicked the shit out of him. I mean I just didn't make—the second one, was a guy by the name of George Morris who was sent out.

[00:34:11] **HOWARD:** George Morris? Was that the same guy who was the writer for—

[00:34:13] **SAM:** Yes, yes. A sort of a writer. He was a, actually a cutter in the clothing workers. Men's Clothing Union, he was a cutter sold—

[00:34:22] **HOWARD:** He's still alive, you know.

[00:34:23] **SAM:** Is he?

[00:34:23] **HOWARD:** Yeah, I interviewed him.

[00:34:25] **SAM:** That's funny he must've come in alive, because he was dead to me when I worked with him. Well I didn't have to take care of him because out in the Mission District, he came out once, with all his stupidities, and they threw him out a second floor window, believe it or not. They really, literally threw him out of a second floor window. Fortunately, he wasn't too badly hurt.

[00:34:44] **HOWARD:** Who's the they? I mean the people of the Party?

[00:34:46] **SAM:** The members of the Party! We had a clubhouse there in the Mission District. And in fact it was on Mission Street, I think. Yeah, it was on Mission Street. One of our better clubhouses there—

[00:34:58] **HOWARD:** What were they coming out to tell you, I mean you said that the—

[00:35:01] **SAM:** They were ordering me about, the Party for dual unionism and withhold on practical terms, You know, why don't you support Marine Workers Industrial Union, why aren't you doing more for them, and stuff of that sort. And bellyaching about it in a—Browder primed them, so they criticized everything or opposed everything. And in the Mission District, this is literally the truth, he was out there, bellyaching and some of the guys just grabbed him and threw him out the window. They had big windows, like this in the front of the hall.

[00:35:35] **HOWARD:** Why didn't Darcy remove you? Or why did Browder remove you?

[00:35:39] **SAM:** He tried, several times. After the [?Cotovis demonstrations?] , he called me up before the Poll Bureau, they were the national office on Twenty-Fifth Street on Manhattan. He called me up before the Poll Bureau and charged me with adventurism [risky enterprise without proper procedures] .

[00:35:55] **HOWARD:** When was this? This is when you were still in New York?

[00:35:58] **SAM:** December 1929, yeah. I think it was December, November? December. And at that time, [Jack] Stachel was a member of the committee and Stachel hadn't yet become a complete hack of Browder's. And Stachel was another guy who was with us in the Youth movement. In fact I recruited Stachel. He was cap maker at the time. I recruited him into the youth movement. And some of them, were a little resistant and so Browder didn't push it. He made the charge and they were going to pass a motion censoring me, and they didn't push it. And I didn't yield on any charges, I told them to go screw themselves, that I was going to organize—that every time, I was going to organize masses of workers. I wasn't there to fool around in some committees or something like that.

Second time was March 6, 1930. He called me up again, and got ready—now that was provoked because I had a co-worker named Shapiro in Harlem, and everybody called him Red Shapiro, he was a red-haired guy. And he and Browder had apparently attended some kind of a social thing up there, and he made some critical remarks, and Browder brought him up on charges and expelled him. And I denounced Browder for them. Well, Browder was gunning for me after that.

Now we had a building on Union Square, 26-28 Union Square, and because the police were so damn provocative, I was afraid of stool pigeons [informers] , on the days immediately preceding the March 6 unemployment demonstration [International Unemployment Day] , I posted guards—everybody that came in with packages had to be examined. Browder came in and the men examined him! And he was National Secretary of the Party, so he figured he shouldn't have been examined. So he came up, frothing in the mouth, and I just paid no attention to him, and that added fuel to the fire.

Now when the street battles began, in March 6, 1930, that afternoon, when 400 cops on horses moved in and they put machine guns up on the building on Union square and stuff, and for two hours there was a battle. Then Browder really thought he had the evidence to accuse me of adventurism. I was called up before the national office and—before the political committee and charged with adventurism and that's the time I got real defiant. I told him, "You want to expel me? Go ahead and expel me. I have to do the same thing outside the Party, because I'm fighting for the American working class. That's what I'm fighting for! That's what you should be fighting for, and you're not doing it. Instead you're conniving up here against me." Well it got very bitter with me, mostly speaking from my view, but I can, see I have some sympathy for some those guys up there. And it ended up in nothing. Nobody made the motions, to censure me. Actually, Browder had introduced it by saying I deserved at least, to be censured. But nothing came up. Well this was, I mean, one time after the other. He acted.

[00:38:52] **HOWARD:** But did he ever try to remove you from your position on the West Coast? Because of your—

[00:38:56] **SAM:** Well, how do you think, how do you think I got to Moscow? To stay in Moscow?

[00:39:02] **HOWARD:** After the strike then?

[00:39:03] **SAM:** After the strike. Well, even before, you see, this came up in Minnesota, after the strike. This was also after the strike, in 1938. I was National Committee representative. See, when I came back, they made me National Educational Director of the National Office, and I was a member of the Poll Bureau. And I hated that place. I think I said that to you yesterday. Maybe I'm repeating myself. I always felt there should be a love relationship amongst all those people. I never saw so much backbiting, so much knifing, so much gossip. And I hated that national office, in fact I called it the Cave of Winds. It was the ninth floor and they had all bare offices. Everybody was spouting and there was no relation to the people outside, to the workers!

And so, I kept pushing to be released, I didn't want to be National Education Director, so they made me Central Committee representative to the Northwest Districts. That meant Minnesota, all the way out to Seattle, out to

Washington. And in Minnesota, I developed a very good relationship, well it happened before, a relationship but it was increased, with Governor Benson. He invited us to dinner frequently, we talked things out.

One time, Hathaway—I was away in Boise, Idaho I think it was or somewhere out there—and Hathaway came to Minneapolis, and he instructed them—it was chap by the name of Nat Ross, who was the District organizer at the time. And he instructed them in the name of Browder, they should make no decisions and take no actions, except following the instructions of the Farmer-Labor Party. Well that was ridiculous. I mean all through the Northwest, my problem was that everybody, but most effectively the Trotskyites, who led the Teamsters union up there, were saying that there's a secret conspiracy between the Farmer-Labor Party and the communists to subvert the state and all like that. It was no justification—well there was some justification because everything was done secretly in relations to them.

And I had told Benson, I said, "This is wrong, because first of all we must frustrate this charge against us, and what I would like to do, Governor—if you don't mind—is to make a speech in which, I delineate the differences between the Farmer-Labor Party and its function, and the Communist Party and what it stands for. And to say to the people, We support the Farmer-Labor Party, that's the best we could get! We can't get socialism, we can't get all these other things that we want. But the Farmer-Labor Party does serve the people well, and so we'll support you." He said, "That's right, Sam. You just be careful you don't—the language doesn't get too sharp." Which I agreed to right away.

Now when Hathaway came with those instructions, I came back and I kind of demanded them. They said, “Browder sent these instructions.” I said them, "You have a written instructions?" ”No.” And I said, "Fuck Browder, to hell with him. We just won't do that. We will—we are an independent political party, we will make opposition from that point of view." And I wrote Browder a very long letter, very friendly, I tried my best to blunt the sharpness, which I hint—I said, "You know, our local people must have misunderstood Hathaway—" I know damn well they didn't misunderstand him.

Well, Browder really brought his back up and there was a convention, shortly thereafter, the National Convention, and he got Dennis and Gil Green on the excuse that the Party must function semi-secretly. We had all the delegations from the various states meet secretly, met separately secretly—and Gil Green and Dennis went to his personal emissaries to say that I am disrespectful to him, one of the charges they made, that I'm arrogant, another charge they made, and I should be removed from the Central Committee as a result.

Now these was a—even so they were a few like Lem Harris who was our agricultural, our farm expert or some other—who balked that. So finally what they did, they did remove me from the Central Committee and made me an alternate. So that I was a listening member of the Central Committee. Because I didn't know this was going on until after it was all over, and then various people from various delegations came to tell me about it. So he did try to remove me. Many times.

[00:44:04] **HOWARD:** Okay. Let me shift gears here a little bit and go back to the San Francisco waterfront and ask you specifically about relationships between the ILA and the initiating group, Albion Hall. There's a number of crucial days in there that are still unclear to me, just the chronology of the events. Now my records show that [Lee J.] Holman begins organizing the ILA on June 25, 1933.

[00:44:35] **SAM:** Give me that sentence again?

[00:44:36] **HOWARD:** Holman begins organizing the ILA—

[00:44:38] **SAM:** Holman!

[00:44:39] **HOWARD:** Holman, remember him the guy leader of the blue book?

[00:44:40] **SAM:** Oh sure.

[00:44:40] **HOWARD:** Okay, June twenty-fifth of '33.

[00:44:43] **SAM:** How do you get that date?

[00:44:45] **HOWARD:** I don't remember where I got that one, it's—I think it might be from Schomaker's testimony.

[00:44:51] **SAM:** He begins organizing the ILA—

[00:44:54] **HOWARD:** June twenty-fifth. Now let me add a follow-up: on July second, a week later, the Waterfront Worker calls a meeting, and it tells the man, "Okay, there's an ILA beginning here, we encourage people to join the MWIU, and if they want to join the ILA and organize a fighting group inside the ILA." But a week after Holman begun the ILA, the Waterfront Worker is still saying the MWIU is also where workers belong.

[00:45:22] **SAM:** That whole thing is inaccurate. It's not the way it happened, at all. No, that whole thing is false. First of all, there was a blue book union which was accepting into the ILA, member of the Central Labor Union. It was a company union but you know, [?Scharenberg and Vandelord?] [inaudible] _____, they would accept the police department as longshoremen union—anything that was against labor! Now we got to a point where at first we secretly got signatures to [pause] do away with the blue book union and establish an independent union. That is independent from the blue book.

[00:46:15] **HOWARD:** But not the ILA, at that point?

[00:46:17] **SAM:** Yes! We had in mind, I can't remember the wording of the written thing, but we had in mind, the ILA. At no point that I, or so far as I know Bridges or any of the other people have any thought but to establish this as a regular AF of L [American Federation of Labor] union. We were absolutely opposed to dual unionism—all of us. And I was afraid to let Browder's views, get into the ILA at all and when Roy Hudson and those people came out to the San Francisco, I would steer them to the Marine Workers Union, and keep them away from the ILA people. Now then at one point we had a big burn. A blue book burning, we got together, made a big [inaudible] _____ out of that.

[00:47:01] **HOWARD:** Matson incident or something like that?

[00:47:04] **SAM:** Matson?

[00:47:05] **HOWARD:** Yeah, I thought that's what happened?

[00:47:07] **SAM:** I don't know—

[00:47:07] **HOWARD:** Matson had fired a couple guys for wearing some ILA buttons, I think Schmidt might've been one of them. And after that, they all tossed their blue books in a bonfire.

[00:47:17] **SAM:** No, no, we simply agreed that it would be a book propaganda stunt, to get three or four hundred longshoremen together and burn the blue books. Because that would in fact advance the signature collecting that were doing for establishing a union.

[00:47:32] **HOWARD:** When was that? Do you know? It's going to be hard to remember.

[00:47:35] **SAM:** I would say, it must have been early ‘33 somewhere.

[00:47:39] **HOWARD:** Early ‘33?

[00:47:40] **SAM:** Well, by early I mean like spring or summer—something like that.

[00:47:47] **HOWARD:** See the thing is, I can remember in the Waterfront Worker—I don't have it with me—but earlier, maybe early ‘33 it shows a picture, a circle like this, with a little arrows leading out from it, and it says, "Which way for the Longshoreman?" And around the outside of the circle it says, MWIU, IWW, ILA, blue book and MWIU. And there's a big question mark. And so, early in ‘33, the Waterfront Worker is saying, We don't know where to go, we just know we have to go towards the union of some sort. And it lists the MWIU, along with the Wobblies and the ILA.

[00:48:22] **SAM:** Well, that must have been in a very early issue of the Waterfront Worker, because at that time, it was still unclear—Hines and that group didn't know whose views were going win out. And actually, we didn't even have much discussion about whether to have a dual union or the ILA. I—Bridges and I and the others all agreed without question that was to be ILA, and we thought what's the point of discussion, we'll just keep working that way and that's what it will work out and that's what happened. But Harry Hines and that group were still under the influence of the New Yorkers who wanted dual-union, you see.

[00:49:04] **HOWARD:** So, okay so the real working longshoremen that you had in your group—there weren't many but maybe four to five of them, maybe Schrimpf, Bridges, Schmidt—

[00:49:13] **SAM:** About eight of them.

[00:49:14] **HOWARD:** There were that many? Okay. Who else besides them? Can you remember—

[00:49:17] **SAM:** Well I'm trying to remember but I can't—I probably, conceivably I have notes somewhere around here but—

[00:49:22] **HOWARD:** And they had no question in there that it was going to be the ILA, is that what you're saying?

[00:49:26] **SAM:** No question. There was no question at all. There was no question at all, but there was a question with the Marine Workers Union would represent—there was also no question but the Marine Workers Union would represent the seamen. Despite the existence of other seamen's unions, you see. We accepted that too.

[00:49:48] **HOWARD:** Why do you think—this is a little personal question for you—why were you so in tune with the rank-and-file workers? I mean you—

[00:49:59] **SAM:** That's because I was a rank-and-file worker early on. My earliest experience with trade unions was when my father's union, they had what they call them, run away shops in New York. The waistmakers’ local [International Ladies’ Garment Workers’ Union, ILGWU] for example, that was Local 25, had the experience where the employers—who were mostly relatively small employers, two, three hundred workers each—left Manhattan where the union was strong and got lofts in the Bronx, and established non-union shops. And they sent up a chap by the name of Moskowitz, from the ILGWU, from that Local 25, as the business agent, at 1258 at Boston Road, he had his headquarters. It was the same building where the Young

People's Socialist League, which I was a member. And we tried to organize these shops, and I—I was a kid, I was what? About 13 or 14 years old—there were two or three adults, Moskowitz and a couple of adults, and we had about six or eight youngsters, and we go into a shop and organized it—I think I wrote that off too, how we did that, it was a very primitive type of an organization. And I would distribute leaflets and we each had a job to do when we went into one of these lofts. One guy was to pull the switch, to stop the sewing machines, another guy was to pull the telephone wires so they can't call the cops, you know stuff like that. And the kids, my job, I had a clear loud voice, would be to walk down the aisle and say, "This place is on strike! Everybody to the union hall!" You know, that's how we organized.

I don't know if I ever told, if you ever read or something, about when we finally confronted one of the employers gangs. There's some background to it, which I'll skip to save time, but I had a friend, Tony Angelo, Italian boy, who had a stuffed nose—he'd breathe like that—and my mother said, "He's going to get tuberculosis." So she said, "Tell you what, you bring, after school, you bring Tony Angelo every day and I'll give him a glass of milk." And I got a glass of milk anyway. And we'll stop the tuberculosis. My mother could diagnose complicated medical cases, thirty feet away. Her quick diagnosis of tuberculosis was no great trick. Well, anyway, for a year or more, Tony was a good friend, and my mother took care of him and so on.

One day, in one of those shops in Southern Boulevard, 1328, or 1324, I don't remember, I know some boulevard. We were upstairs about 200 workers, and we were pulling them out on strike. And what we didn't know was that the employers had organized with some protective agency, and they had a button—they didn't use the telephone agency—they got a button, alarm and it rang, the gangsters—the protective agency came because soon one of the people, one of our people came up this little narrow stairs that happened to go up the second floor, and said, "There's a bunch of gangsters downstairs waiting for us. And we looked down and some went down sure enough, a semicircle of about thirty guys with guns and bats—baseball bats and things—now what should we do? We can't—there was just this narrow staircase to get out.

So, there was a lot of discussion back and forth, and when I went down, or looked down, there in the middle of the semicircle is Tony Angelo, my old pal! So I came back and said to Moskowitz, "Brother Moskowitz, do you mind if I go out and talk to the gangsters?" He says, "You're crazy," he says, "Kid, you're off your rocker, they'll kill you!" I said, "No, let me." And we discussed that for a few minutes, and finally I said, "What do you got to lose?" And somebody prevailed on him and he gave me permission. And I came down, and as I walked out, sure enough the semicircle started closing in on me, but Tony said, "Wait a minute! Wait a minute!" He recognized me, he said, "What are you doing here?" I said, "The question is what are you doing here?" He says, "I asked first!" I said, "My father's union is organizing this shop." "Well," he says, "You know that we got five bucks for every striker—for every person, for every union member we beat up. Ten bucks if we have to beat up a cop—"

[00:54:39] **HOWARD:** Are you serious?

[00:54:40] **SAM:** Yeah, I'm serious. I said, "Well, go ahead Tony. If you're going to do that." He said, "Well you go, you go ahead, we'll let you get by." And I said, "The hell you will. These are my people, I stay with them." And he says, "I can't beat you up! What would your mother say?" So I said, "Well my mother wouldn't like it. What do you think she'll say?" So we talked some more, then he says, "Wait, a minute." And he goes back and talked to his people, and then he comes back to me and says, "I'll tell you what, you tell your gang to come down and run in all directions, we're going to holler and shoot off guns and swing bats and nobody's going to get hurt. It's just going to be a lot of noise. And we're going to make believe we had a big fight and we're going to get paid anyway." So I did. I went upstairs and Moskowitz didn't believe me at first, but finally it was, it went.

Now then, we all, all of the workers were instructed to 1258 Boston Road, where the union hall was. When we got there, two other shops had also been organized, there was about, I don't know 800 or over 1,000 people at the hall that was meant for 400—it was jam-packed. A lot of buzzing and finally, Sasha Zimmerman [Charles S. Zimmerman] had come up from Local 22, he was the vice-president of the union, he'd come up to supervise some of this thing, and he heard all about how we got out of this difficult situation we were. And so he calls the meeting to order, and he says, "You know you heard some exciting things that happened and so on and so forth. And just to see how he did it, we're going to call on Sam Darcy to tell you." I was panicked! What the hell am I going to tell them? That my mother was mothering gangsters? I couldn't tell them that, so I got up and I said, "Well—" And they said, "What did you say to them?" And I said, "I just gave them a little talk about class struggle." I mean what the hell should I—and they applauded and everything and I was the hero of the occasion! [laughing]

[00:56:36] **HOWARD:** I bet, that's good. [laughing] I was asking about why you were so sensitive to the rank-and-file demands—

[00:56:49] **SAM:** Well, I was one of them.

[00:56:52] **HOWARD:** Another thing that came out thing that came out of [inaudible] _____ Daniel's book was your insistence against—when you were working in the valley, by having organizers who were really working class of origin.

[00:57:02] **SAM:** Well, not that so much, but that they had a good—they didn't, they shouldn't organize from the outside. I insisted that all my organizers get jobs inside the plant. Wherever we organize. So that they were one of the workers. And that was very good, because from the outside, we were—everybody who tried it in the outside didn't get—that's one of the trouble in the AF of L. They are a very expensive organizers who were outside the plants.

[00:57:26] **HOWARD:** Outside meaning they're not part of the actual work force?

[00:57:29] **SAM:** They'd hand out leaflets as outsiders. But if he's inside, and he's one of them, that creates an altogether different atmosphere.

[00:57:38] **HOWARD:** Okay, in fact that comes through in your article that you wrote in ‘34, you said, "We were not able to come—overcome our outsider status."

[00:57:45] **SAM:** Yeah, from—

[00:57:46] **HOWARD:** Can you elaborate on that a little bit?

[00:57:48] **SAM:** Well, we tried in several places, for example, in Chicago we tried to organize the Nabisco plant. The national Nabisco company had 3,000 workers, young workers. And we distributed leaflets outside, and the place was a ripe for our organization, and why we didn't get anywhere, nobody knew. And then later, as I got more experience, I realized why, we were outsiders.

[00:58:10] **HOWARD:** What's the difference in the workers minds, do you think?

[00:58:13] **SAM:** Well, there's a world of difference of two men are standing at a lathe working together, and one says, "Did you see how dirty that toilet is, and the sons of bitches won't give us towels." And the other one says, "Yeah, that's why we've got to do something about it." And they say, "Well, let's try to get some others and

we'll do it all together." That's one way to do it. But if you're outside on a sidewalk, handing out leaflets, they [say] , "Who are those people? I mean they're strangers—we'll just lose our jobs!" That's all.

[00:58:42] **HOWARD:** It a question of trust, you think?

[00:58:44] **SAM:** Trust, that's great measure, trust and identity.

[00:58:53] **HOWARD:** Now, the interesting thing is this period of time is the Party in the internal, there was something called the Party organizer, do you remember that? So they were aware of the problem of being outsider status. But they didn't either understand it, or didn't apply it, or something, because in 1933, a lot of the Party literature on the waterfront is talking about the need to overcome our outsider status—Roy Hudson's harping at it, constantly. At the same time, he's pushing the MWIU. So your vision of an outsider status, or what you meant by it was probably different from what the Party had in mind, I'm assuming.

[00:59:26] **SAM:** Well you know the MWIU did have seamen in it, I must say that for them. They didn't have many, but they had seamen in it. So they really weren't, in my use of the term, outsiders, but [pause] there's—the problem was clear after—I don't recall that I was the first one to raise this question of outsider status, but surely I was one of the early ones—I may have been the first one, but I'm not sure. But anyway, the point is that, as experience accumulated, we realized, proper methods of organization, realized why the AF of L was failing in many industries.

[01:00:16] **HOWARD:** What about the Steel Workers Organizing Committee? That was pretty much outsiders, wasn't it?

[01:00:20] **SAM:** In part, you have to say which. For example in the National Steel Plant, we were outsiders, but then Jones [steel company] and Lachlen Steel and Bethlehem Steel, and the Cleveland [Ohio] plants—we had workers and so we inherited some of the old steel workers and the people who were in the old steel workers union.

[01:00:41] **HOWARD:** Let me pose a hypothesis, and you tell me if you think it makes sense, that as outsiders it may be possible to organize plants, but the kind of union that you build is probably a very different one in terms of rank and—

[END PART TWO/BEGIN PART THREE]

[01:00:56] **SAM:** I'm trying to think of which industries. And on the waterfront in New York, not in San Francisco. On the waterfront in New York and in what they call the "sub-contracting shops" in New Jersey—the clothing shops. And in the carpenters union [United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America] , gangsters came in and took over. In some cases, in connivance with the union officials. And the way they organized, they moved in and beat up the employer and beat up the workers, and forced a contract with the union. And all they really got was dues-collecting privileges, that's all they got. And of course, that kind of a union was one kind of a union, you see. In ILWU—I have been out of touch with it for the last three or four years—but until then, that was the most democratic union in the country, I think. Nothing was done without a vote of the membership without broad discussion and so on and so forth. So in that sense, what you're saying has merit like that.

[01:02:21] **HOWARD:** Okay, so from you standpoint, Albion Hall, never seriously, or never period, pushed the MWIU as an alternative?

[01:02:31] **SAM:** No.

[01:02:32] **HOWARD:** Okay. And so when Schomaker says—let me tell you what Schomaker says in his testimony, he says, "Holman begins organizing the ILA in June. In July, the Waterfront Worker is in a quandary over which way to go. But as the ILA continues to grow in size under Holman, it forces the Waterfront Worker group to join the ILA movement."

[01:02:58] **SAM:** About the quandary part, I think that was correct. The early phase of the Waterfront Worker, they were in a quandary, they didn't know whether to follow what we were doing, or to follow the instructions from New York. The Holman business is crap. Holman did not start organizing the longshoremen, the movement. It wasn't spontaneous, but it was widespread. And it was not, in the sense of beginning to organize. It was a transformation of the blue book membership into the ILA membership. Which is quite a different thing.

[01:03:32] **HOWARD:** And you said it wasn't spontaneous, did the passage of NIRA [National Industrial Recovery Act of] , section 7a [protected collective bargaining rights for employees] —did that galvanize the movement at all? Or was it not much a factor?

[01:03:41] **SAM:** In that early period, it wasn't much of a factor, no.

[01:03:46] **HOWARD:** Okay now let's see—

[01:03:47] **SAM:** And I'll tell you, the ship owners on the West Coast, regarded the whole Franklin Roosevelt administration as a bunch of Reds. And whatever the government did, the federal government did, they were against it. So that the NRA, which required under certain circumstances, negotiations, between workers and unions and employers, was never observed by them.

[01:04:21] **HOWARD:** Let's see, let's move ahead in time a little bit now. In March—let's see, there's a convention in February, ILA convention, remember that? In February in '34 I believe it is, where you people present the demands that will eventually involve the—

[01:04:40] **SAM:** West Coast Convention.

[01:04:41] **HOWARD:** Yeah, West Coast Convention. And there's a deadline on March 22 or something like that, set for the strike. Roosevelt intervenes at the last minute, bumps it back for arbitration. In April, Holman is expelled from the ILA local, San Francisco local, for being too conservative, do you remember that?

[01:04:58] **SAM:** No. No, I don't remember him being expelled. I remembered we had to fight with them constantly, that whole right-wing crowd. He had formed a nucleus of right-wingers, [clock chiming] who cooperated with the "King" [Joe] Ryan, to send the men back to work and all kinds of things like that. And we were able to push him aside.

You see what happened—I better explain that a minute? At the convention, the conservatives got the majority of the organization, and I didn't really care very much about that because I figured if the people we had were so new and inexperienced, became the officers of the union, it would bog them down and dues-payment problems and all the bookkeeping. They'd be useless for any political things, and political I mean in the sense of trade union politics.

So what we did was, we adopted very good resolutions, at the very same convention, the conservatives—they concentrated on capturing the offices, they wanted the Treasury and so on. We concentrated on having progressive resolutions passed. And then we proposed to establish an organizing and strike committee to enact these resolutions, and let the existing officers do the routine work of the union. So that as events developed, our organizing and strike committee became the important leaders of the Union and these other guys became office

clerks—they became less and less. But I can't recall that anybody was really expelled, I don't remember that at all.

[01:06:46] **HOWARD:** Well, I've seen that in a couple of sources actually, these formerly expelled—this is in April, just before the strike now—

[01:06:52] **SAM:** Now, it could be and I don't remember it. Could be I would say.

[01:06:56] **HOWARD:** Okay. Also at that point, I think when you began to form these rank-and-file strike committees, do you remember that?

[01:07:04] **SAM:** Sure.

[01:07:05] **HOWARD:** What was the rationale for that?

[01:07:08] **SAM:** Well, it's the only way to run a strike. You have to create initiative from below, if you don't do that the strike loses its vitality. I mean, you can't run a strike with just the officers with the workers on the picket lines and the officers in the office, that's the old AF of L concept. So what we did, we formed all kinds of committees—a committee to run kitchen, a committee to run legal activities because people were being arrested, a committee to negotiate with the mayor and the chief of police, over those matters, and as the strike developed, the workers themselves formed committees, subcommittees. And I discovered, suddenly, that we had neglected to establish a patrol on the road to San Jose [California] out of San Francisco [California] to be sure the scab goods stuff doesn't move. And when I intervened at the union hall, to be sure we do that, and it had been done. The workers themselves had done it before I woke up to it, you see. A lot of that happened, which was pursuant to the policy we follow, but not necessarily at our initiative. They did it themselves, you see, following the policy. So that was the strength of the strike of course, that we activated as much as we could, the rank-and-file of the union.

[01:08:41] **HOWARD:** Now when you wrote that article in 1934, when the idea of a rank-and-file strike committee was proposed, some members of the rank-and-file objected and said that it might be, you know, questioning the recognized authority of the ILA officers.

[01:08:55] **SAM:** Well, I told you now, how that happened. We just, we let them get elected, we pushed them aside and concentrated everything into the strike and the organizing—strike and organizing committee, which was preparing for the strike and we took all the membership into activity and these other guys just collected dues.

[01:09:17] **HOWARD:** Okay, I'll be Lee Holman, "Darcy, what gives you the right to decide how the strike is going to be organized? I'm the elected official of this union, what the hell gives you the right to decide how to organize things?"

[01:09:27] **SAM:** Because the convention elected this organizing and strike committee, and I didn't organize it. The convention provided for it and gave them the authority to do it!

[01:09:39] **HOWARD:** The rank-and-file strike committee came out of the convention?

[01:09:41] **SAM:** No, not the rank-and-file, that was the extension of the original idea, to elect an organizing and strike committee. But the rank-and-file subcommittees and so on was done by the strike committee itself, out of their authority.

[01:10:01] **HOWARD:** You talked about it as being an example of dual power, do you remember that article?

[01:10:04] **SAM:** Sure.

[01:10:05] **HOWARD:** You compared it to what happened in the Soviet Union in 1917 [Russian Revolution] —

[01:10:09] **SAM:** That was in relation to the city administration. That was not in relation to Holman.

[01:10:15] **HOWARD:** I think it was in relationship to the administration within the strike, wasn't it?

[01:10:19] **SAM:** No, we didn't have any dual power there. The union leadership—well maybe I used the term—maybe, I wouldn't argue that. Maybe I uses the term, maybe I don't remember but in the actual activity, the administrative offices of the union played almost no role. No role, really. The strike committee did the whole thing. They became the authority, and the workers kind of looked at him and they're the ones who organized the food distribution, we had to raise some money to pay rent for some of the workers who couldn't pay it, and things of that sort. But the strike committee did that whole thing.

Where the dual authority came, was the general strike organizing committee, the general strike, for which I had initiated through the painter's local, the general strike organizing committee took on many of the functions which the city abdicated. All [Angelo Joseph] Rossi, who was the mayor, did was to organize a committee of 500 vigilantes to go around beating up people. We organized to try to get food supplies to the working class neighborhoods, milk and stuff for the hospitals, doctors should have gasoline and things of that sort—we did all of that. The city was completely out of that.

In fact there was an interesting incident, at one point, this very patrol that I told you about that the workers themselves organized on the road to San Jose, stopped a car that was coming from San Francisco, and it turned out Mayor Rossi was in it. So they had him get out and said, "Where you going?" And he gave some excuse as to where he was going. And they said, "Do you have a committee passed from the strike committee?" No he doesn't have a pass and they says, "Go back, get a pass." He says, "I'm the mayor!" And they said, "Shove it! Go in the car and go back." So, I mean they're the ones that initiated a lot of these, we didn't give them instructions to do that, they themselves did it.

[01:12:22] **HOWARD:** So that takes us to the, the very threshold of the strike, before we get there I want to ask you some questions about other ports. How much contact did you have with ports outside of San Francisco, leading up to the strike?

[01:12:34] **SAM:** Well, with Seattle we had very good contact. With Portland, not quite so good, but we still had good contact with them. And with Pedro we had quite good contact, although they themselves led that strike, we really did very little with them. We consulted—I used to go down every couple of weeks and spend a day, meeting with committees and individuals and trying to correct this or that, and that's the way we did it—but they mostly did it themselves in Pedro.

[01:13:03] **HOWARD:** What kind of strategies were pursued in those other ports in terms of dual unionism versus MWIU or. . .

[01:13:11] **SAM:** They had pretty well the same experience that we had. There wasn't very much difference. The ILA came as the strike—as the organizing effort progressed, more and more the ILA emerged as the union. And, when actually, when the strike began to effectuate, the Marine Workers Union become very important.

The reason for that is, take San Francisco for example, we had two or three small boats. And a ship would come out into the harbor, they go out into the ship, go on-board, call a meeting of the crew. Now, the captain already knew, no doubt through his wireless and so on what was going on. So they weren't altogether unexpected. They would then take a vote, the strike vote with the crew, and in all cases, the workers voted to strike, to join the strike. In fact, in one time several of us got a boat and we made the rounds—let's see, it was Harry Hines and myself, and I think [inaudible] _____ Rappaport was with me, and one or two others, about five or six of us—and we counted, from my recollection, 175 boats in the harbor tied up. And most of that was done by the Marine Workers Union. They're the ones who got aboard and took strike votes and called the workers down to the union hall. But of course that activated the SUP and the SIU also. So they began contacting those workers. And in the end, the employers, towards the end, tried to salvage this defeat they were experiencing. And they seized upon the separation between the seamen and the longshoremen. As a result of which, they finally negotiated an agreement with the longshoremen, on the promise they would negotiate a similar agreement with the seamen, and that never happened. See, they made some agreements with the seamen but that wasn't worth a shit. In my opinion anyway, but the longshoremen had a real agreement.

[01:15:26] **HOWARD:** What was the size of the left-wing forces on these other ports, among the longshoremen? I guess I'm talking about people close to or in the Party.

[01:15:47] **SAM:** Relatively small, very small. In Portland not at all, but in Seattle you had some.

[01:15:53] **HOWARD:** Like maybe five people or something like that?

[01:15:55] **SAM:** About that, I couldn't really count them, but I would—in my view as I recall it, it couldn't have been very much more. The organizer was Stark, I think.

[01:16:07] **HOWARD:** I don't know that name.

[01:16:08] **SAM:** The Party organizer and the union did what it did, out of—following the leadership of San Francisco, and not following the local.

[01:16:20] **HOWARD:** And that's definitely the case?

[01:16:21] **SAM:** Yeah, the Union, the Seattle union was in constant touch with San Francisco, and Portland and Pedro the same thing. The local Party people had relatively little influence on them.

[01:16:35] **HOWARD:** Okay, because I remember reading the Voice of Action in Seattle [radical newspaper, 1933-1936] , do you remember that one? And it seemed to me, which was very impressionistic, that they were a little more closely tied to the MWIU before the strike than you guys were in San Francisco.

[01:16:50] **SAM:** I don't think that's true. I think it's about the same.

[01:16:52] **HOWARD:** Really?

SAM Yeah, I don't think there's much difference. It's about the same.

So that in all—so how do you explain the fact that the strike developed so much better, so much broader base of support in San Francisco than in any other port?

[01:17:04] **SAM:** We prepared better over a long period of time.

See, this is what I was teaching at this class we had in the Albion Hall. A strike isn't just a business. A properly organized strike isn't just a business of the union voting to strike and they go out and get picket signs—that's the way it looks, but that's not the way it is. The way it is, is you have to plan every aspect of the strike. First of all, you got to research the employers, to see, how much can they afford to give. Now that's a very important thing almost no union does. I have often wondered, if I were ambitious and wanted to make money, I would establish a research organization of accountants and alike, which would check every employer that gets into a situation like that to see how much you could hit them for without putting them out of business. Because the last analysis that's the point, you don't want to put the guy out of business, you want to be sure he has justly, fair wages. So the first thing you have to do it you have to know the position of the employers. How much can they do? [inaudible] _____, we researched it carefully. We knew they were making exorbitant profits and they could make tremendous concessions.

Secondly, you've got to carefully survey the question of your allies. What could the employers rally to their support and what could we rally to their support, and how do you do it. For example, I had a schedule worked out. We didn't call on everybody we possible could the first day of the strike. I had carefully worked out that each week, the strike would expand to a certain extent, that is each week some new people would come on strike, or some new actions will take place so that feeling was that strike is growing and the organization is growing, and so on to maintain a elan [enthusiasm] among the strikers.

Then you've got to set up your subcommittees, that's very important. And subcommittees, and by subcommittees I mean, certain industries not all—in fact, I would say in most industries, you have to set up food supply, you would have to set up those workers who would lose their homes or unable able to pay rent. So somehow you take care of them. You have to prepare legal assistance, you know, damn the government administration is going to be on the side of the employers. You have to prepare medical people so that if there's bloodshed or something, that your people are promptly taken care of. I mean, it's a vast, complicated organization to set up. So that when you vote to strike, you're ready for action. You don't flounder about for days and days. And in San Francisco we did all of that. When I threw that furrier out who Browder had sent in, and he wanted to call a general strike, we hadn't anything prepared, I mean this would have just been a bag of wind. It was nothing. But after putting in months of preparation, then we were ready to do something.

[01:20:30] **HOWARD:** Did the furrier—he came out before the strike, I assume?

[01:20:33] **SAM:** Oh sure. Months before.

[01:20:36] **HOWARD:** So then, in your recollection, the policies or the strategies [inaudible] _____ within the ILA that was pursued in San Francisco, similar to the policy and on other West Coast ports.

[01:20:46] **SAM:** Now wait, [inaudible] _____ the situation was boring. We organized a union and fully applied for a charter from the National ILA.

[01:20:58] **HOWARD:** Okay, see in Seattle and Portland at least, they already had ILA chapters from the twenties that were still viable.

[01:21:05] **SAM:** They didn't amount to anything.

[01:21:06] **HOWARD:** I know they weren't much, but they were there.

[01:21:08] **SAM:** Yeah, yeah that's true.

[01:21:09] **HOWARD:** And you don't think the local communists, were reluctant to get involved in that?

[01:21:15] **SAM:** If they were, I didn't see it.

[01:21:20] **HOWARD:** Yeah, I don't—I'll drop this. But I just talked with the, you know the Stack Brothers? Joe Stack? What's the guy in the West Coast, I forget his name, does all the running. Walter Stack. He told me, he thought—he was a seamen at the time—but he thought that the longshoremen in Seattle, pretty much pushed the MWIU up until the beginning of the strike. And he said he really—

[01:21:45] **SAM:** The longshoremen, who do you mean by the longshoremen?

[01:21:48] **HOWARD:** Well, you know, the people who were on the docks, who were working, and people in the Party, I guess what he was talking about—

[01:21:53] **SAM:** Well, I'm sure people in the Party did, he's right about that. But the ILA local, that little local they had up there? I don't think they did anything, I don't recall that they were active in anyway. It was only after the actual meeting—that convention that you mentioned, you were talking about—took place, that they got talking, that they got any action done, where they had to send delegates to the convention.

[01:22:14] **HOWARD:** See, when I first wrote this chapter that I'm working on, I argued that—and this may be wrong—that the reason they developed so much more in San Francisco was because you guys, early on, decided to get in touch with the mass movement of the docks. And that in other ports in the West Coast, especially Pedro, the Party was concentrating more in MWIU activities, and so it's kind of isolated.

[01:22:37] **SAM:** There's some truth to that, but the phrase you use isn't right, that we were trying to get into the mass movement. We initiated the mass movement. That was sentiment among the workers, that was one thing. But actual mass movement—we initiated the mass movement. There was sentiment among the workers. We were there from the beginning, we started it. Now, of course there was sentiment. For example, I'm sure people like Harry Bridges would've wanted a reunion before we showed up, but nobody did anything about it. We're the ones who did something.

[01:23:06] **HOWARD:** Okay, before we leave the period leading up to the strike, are there any major incidents that I've sort of ignored, that sort of galvanize the workers in any way? You talk about the burning of the blue books for example.

[01:23:24] **SAM:** I'm sure you must have read it in all those things, the story of the [pause] Battle of Bloody Thursday?

[01:23:34] **HOWARD:** Okay, that's during the strike itself, though right? July 5?

[01:23:41] **SAM:** Yeah, I think so. Yeah.

[01:23:42] **HOWARD:** Okay, but nothing that you can remember leading up to it? That was of significance? I mean I think we covered most of the major events of that period.

[01:23:49] **SAM:** Well, the killing of [Howard] Sperry and [Nick] Bordoise.

[01:23:53] **HOWARD:** Okay, that's during the strike though, right?

[01:23:55] **SAM:** No, it wasn't during the strike, no that was before the actual strike.

[01:24:00] **HOWARD:** No, that was before the general strike, that was what prompted the general strike, that's right.

[01:24:03] **SAM:** That's it, yeah.

[01:24:04] **HOWARD:** Okay, before we get there, let's move on to the strike itself, to the waterfront walkout. Do you want to take a break here or? I don't have much more to go but—

[01:24:12] **SAM:** Let's finish.

[01:24:13] **HOWARD:** Okay, Schrimpf, when he was talking about this later, I remember when he testified against Bridges—

[01:24:22] **SAM:** I remember, but I'm not well-acquainted with his testimony.

[01:24:24] **HOWARD:** One of the things he said in there is he said—they're asking about the role of communist in the strike—and he said, "Because we could not have pulled that strike off without the communists. We were all pretty much greenhorns [inexperienced] ," he said. Was that pretty much what—he said, "The communists were involved in every phase of that strike, beginning to end"?

[01:24:38] **SAM:** That's true, there's no doubt that that's true. For example, I organized every subcommittee that worked there, and then in some of the subcommittees I couldn't take strikers away from the picket line; we couldn't afford that. So for example, I organized—I got Party people to work with the kitchen and I even got some liberals to join. Or for example, Elaine Black [Yoneda] ? And I got Elaine Black and [Ida] Rothstein [inaudible] _____ to do the legal end of it, and things of that sort. So it's true the communists did that part of it, but what you said about, "We were greenhorns," well—

[01:25:14] **HOWARD:** Not you, the rank-and-file committee—

[01:25:15] **SAM:** I know, but there was some truth about that, about many people were greenhorns. What the [pause] from the way that we conducted it, I was only partially a greenhorn. I mean I know I had work on the docks. I had worked in unions, I had unions I did the work with and observed closely. And I had an education. Jack London educated me, Lenin educated me—I mean, "Debs" educated me. I mean I had a lot of people who taught me a lot of things. So I wasn't really a greenhorn, I came in—

[01:26:00] **HOWARD:** Actually, he said, "Everyone but the communists were greenhorns."

[01:26:04] **SAM:** Well, that was true to a degree, yeah, that was mostly true I would say.

[01:26:10] **HOWARD:** And Browder came out during the strike, at least once didn't he?

[01:26:15] **SAM:** Not during the strike, he came in on the third—on the Tuesday—on Wednesday. The strike broke Sunday, the general strike—Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday.

[01:26:28] **HOWARD:** I guess I'm talking about the maritime strike. He came in during that, didn't he?

[01:26:30] **SAM:** No.

[01:26:33] **HOWARD:** I thought you said he did, in your writing or something? During the maritime strike he didn't come?

[01:26:37] **SAM:** No.

[01:26:38] **HOWARD:** He came in when then?

[01:26:40] **SAM:** The third day of the general strike.

[01:26:41] **HOWARD:** Oh the general strike.

[01:26:42] **SAM:** When the vigilante gangs were running around the city, burning and destroying and so on, he came in, in a Panama hat, and pointy shoes, and a nice suit. And I was running a 104 [degree Fahrenheit] temperature, not because I was sick, but because I was so exhausted. And he came in, and the first thing he said to me, "Can you get me a hall where I can talk?" I told him to go home.

[01:27:16] **HOWARD:** One of the things that I think that emerges from the '34 strike, real clearly is the degree of violence that was directed against the men. And I argue, that that violence basically welded them into a solid unit and made them identify real strongly with Bridges and people like that.

[01:27:33] **SAM:** Well, I think there's some truth in that. The point is, when there's violence and not organized resistance to it, then panic sets in and everything gets destroyed. If you organize proper resistance, then you grow in such violence. You grow in strength. Because the sense of being able to fight back is a tremendous thing.

Like for example, after Blood Thursday, when everybody realized that the cops, and the gangsters, and the national guard didn't have their way, the workers came through—we even retreated from the Hill [Rincon Hill] in an organized fashion, and I think all the workers felt it was a victory even though we didn't hold the Hill—we couldn't possibly hold the hill with those guys shooting revolvers at us, and then rifles. We had to give up the Hill. But we retreated in an organized fashion, back to the union hall, we held a meeting, we took care of the wounded, we did everything. And everybody felt very good about it in the end. There was no sense of panic at all.

And we had several previous occasions. You see we had some experiences in the Maritime Strike, that it was similar to what I had in the agricultural strike. When the employers began with their gangsters, one day—they weren't very effective. In fact, several of the gangsters took a good beating. But one day, they set from Pier Five—yeah, yeah I'm pretty sure it was Pier Five—Pier Five, they would send the sugar trucks out to what the men called the American Haywire—that is, the American-Hawaiian Sugar Company [sic, possible conflation of California and Hawaiian Sugar Company and American-Hawaiian Steamship Company] , corporation. The workers called it American Haywire. The trucks would go out, you see, the method of shipping was, that there was, what did they call it? Not the port-line. There was a railroad along—

[01:29:42] **HOWARD:** Beltline.

[01:29:43] **SAM:** Beltline! Running the length of the Embarcadero, and the way it was previously, was the ships would unload onto the, those beltline cars. The beltline would go out and meet the railroads, the transcontinental railroads and so on. During the strike, the beltline didn't move; we tied them up. Consequently, what they did was they got a big load of trucks out of Five, and load them up with the sugar and they were going to go out and meet the transcontinental railroad.

How to stop that? And now we got the Teamsters, of course they—at that time they hadn't yet reached the point to where they voted to join any general strike. But we've got a lot of sentiment, they were sympathetic to us. So we talked to the Teamsters and said, "What do we do with you guys? We don't want to—we don't want our men going in and beat you guys up, or you guys beating our people up." So, they said, "Let us talk to the pickets that you put there and we'll arrange them." And I had a sense of exaltation that we're getting cooperation amongst the workers, I didn't know what—I didn't know what they had in mind. What they had in mind, they got sticks, like broomsticks and tied—what the hell do you call that stuff, kind of a tar substance? I was going to say

cordite but it's not cordite. Something that you can light and burn. And they, when the trucks came out, it was very—

[END PART THREE/BEGIN PART FOUR]

The men threw these lit torches onto the truck, and soon we had a bonfire from the dock all the way out to approximately on Third Street. I don't know how many turned, but it was a tremendous amount. Now, if they had asked me, I would've stopped that dead, because I would be afraid of what the reaction might be. I don't like that kind of violence, but it stopped them from leaving the docks, they never tried it again.

[01:31:50] **HOWARD:** What kind of an effect did the violence of the repeated clashes with the police have on the men?

[01:31:56] **SAM:** The men weren't cowed. You know, the way Sperry and Bordoise were killed, the men were all standing in front of the union hall house—Stewart Street I think it was—and two cars pulled up, full of these plainclothes thugs. The cops, the uniforms were all around the whole place. So obviously, they were told not to interfere. These thugs jumped out of the car, fired into the crowd and the men rushed for them—they didn't run away, they rushed for the cars. But they got into the cars and ran away, and pulled away. But some of there were private detectives and plainclothesmen, and the men recognized who they were. So—

[01:32:38] **HOWARD:** So unarmed ran after the people with the guns?

[01:32:39] **SAM:** Absolutely, unarmed men. There was no panic at all. At no time during the strike, I remember, was there successful breaking up, disassembling any groups of workers. And in every case they fought back.

And I think you must have read, because I wrote it up, the story—I think it was, I think [?Bell?] tells the story—the Senate committee for notifying that we're going to have this funeral for [Sperry and Bordoise] . . . They told [?Quinn?] to keep the cops off the street or there'll be bloodshed. Because we're not going to let the cops in sight of the funeral parade. So he said, "I'll do it. I'll cooperate with you. But there must be no communist in the parade." And when they came back and reported this—I was sitting in the committee with them—there was no big oratory, nobody asked me anything, we just sat there thinking about it. And then I think it was [?Buckley?] as a matter of fact—it was not a Party person, it was one of the non-Party people, he got up and said, "I make a motion that Mrs. Bordoise and Sam Darcy be in the first car behind the casket. And that Harry Bridges and Mrs. Mooney, Mary Mooney—Tom's mother, be in the second car." And that was their answer, and there wasn't a cop in sight to hold up the parade. And if a cop had ever showed up I think they would have lynched him. So I mean the workers were never afraid, they were—I never saw such courage. Well, in the agriculture workers I saw such courage too. The agriculture workers fought like that.

[01:34:22] **HOWARD:** Do you think it radicalized the men in any way? The level of violence? For example—

[01:34:33] **SAM:** Well, I don't know what that word radicalized means to tell you the truth. It made them stronger union men, no doubt in my mind about that.

[01:34:41] **HOWARD:** Well, during the strike for example, the Western Worker, the Voice of the Federation, papers like that were constantly pointing out, even the Waterfront Worker, “Look where the police are lined up. Lined up with the state. State and the employers are a class opposed to our class interest. You call this a neutral democratic society?” etc. etc. Did that have any impact on the men ideologically?

[01:35:00] **SAM:** An educational effect, but it didn't, didn't materialize into any kind of special action or special organization or anything like that.

[01:35:13] **HOWARD:** How about recruitment into Party?

[01:35:17] **SAM:** It was slow—I wasn't anxious to bring a lot of them in. I couldn't see what function it performed, but we did bring some in, I mean we grew from up to over 4,000 members and so we must have brought some in. We brought some a number.

[01:35:31] **HOWARD:** I saw some internal documents, it said that by the middle of June, which is only halfway through the strike, 72 people have been brought in to San Francisco.

[01:35:39] **SAM:** That sounds right.

[01:35:40] **HOWARD:** And only some of those were in the waterfront, it may have been from other areas as well.

[01:35:45] **SAM:** I don't remember exactly, but it wasn't a phenomenal recruitment. But my point always was with them was that recruitment among them—see recruitment in the city, could be done at mass meetings. But with the waterfront workers, with agricultural workers it has to be done on a person-to-person basis. Not with any appeals on the platforms. And that's the way we followed it. We were very selective.

[01:36:11] **HOWARD:** There was something else I wanted to ask you about the strike, and I can't think of it right now—it's important too, I can't think of it. Okay, we covered the violence, I guess. Can you think of any incidence of people coming into Party headquarters, or anything like that during the strike, and being very agitated about the violence, or terribly concerned? I mean Archie Brown, for example, told me a number of stories like that. People would come in the middle of the strike and say, "Let's have a revolution!" Maybe that was just Archie Brown, but. . .

[01:36:55] **SAM:** No, I don't remember a single incident. The one, the one thing I was very much alarmed [pause] when we had several acts of violence of this nature, when they call out the National Guard, they put cots on the docks and had them sleep there. And the men were so incensed that among the men there was sentiment, “Let's go up and kick the shit out of these kids. Who the hell are they?” And we were two or three days, arguing with them. I sat up, I remember one night or back there the whole night with the group, convincing them that it would be wrong and so on and so forth. And we did stop that, but then there were other acts of violence, like I told you about this burning of the sugar trucks from Pier Five. So what we did finally was, if you look at one of the old Western Workers, I'm sure there must be one of them, we’ll find it. We printed a box saying, "Addressed to Strikers: If anybody approaches you to come to join in some act of violence, report it to your strike captain immediately." So that we could stop any stoop pigeons from provocateurs and so on. And I can't—I think individual acts of violence were at a minimum, there were very few.

We did get, later in the strike, we got some wonderful reports, because some of the National Guardsmen came out and told them, the pickets, "We just dumped some son-of-a-bitch into the bay, who was a scab.” They said, "Don't worry about him—he's swimming now." So we even won some of the National Guardsmen over, by this policy of not fighting. We gave them, we sent them leaflets. So we found, I don't remember if it was four or six of these national guardsmen’s fathers was on strike. So we issued a leaflet of them saying, “Your father is trying to get enough money to raise you, what are you shooting him down for?” And it was very effective, really went great.

And then there was, at one point, a Luckenbach dock there were all Black workers this was from hang-over, from the 1919 strike. When they hired Black scabs from the south and then the lot stayed on, and they transferred all of those, to the Luckenbach docks. And there were—I remember between two to three hundred of them. And the white workers, there was a strong sentiment, would go over to the Luckenbach docks and kicked the shit out of those guys. We pleaded with them, and finally, we adopted a series of measures—my recollection is the standard initiation fee at the union was twenty-five bucks, we made it one dollar for the Luckenbach workers. And we went—there was a Black paper being published, a Negro paper being published in town, I went up to see the guy, and talk to him and pleaded with him and he said, "Now you know the strike is over, these workers are all going to lose their jobs." I assured him we will take them into the union. When we were there, recently—or not when we there—one of the longshoremen came to visit us, about a year or so ago, and he said, "The majority of their members are Black now."

[01:40:10] **HOWARD:** Yeah, Local 10.

[01:40:11] **SAM:** Yeah, that's what he told me.

[01:40:12] **HOWARD:** Yeah, and their officers as well. Local officers. What about, lastly here, the post-strike conditions? After the strike was settled, the men came back to the docks, went back to work, was there a different mood among the men?

[01:40:32] **SAM:** It was very good. Very good indeed. For example, even some time later when I was arrested and brought back to San Francisco for a trial, the scalers local ,which is one of the sub-locals of the longshoremen, voted to assess each member, fifty cents a week, for the defense fund for me, to pay for the expenses of the trial. And among the men, there was very good sentiment. The men were in very good spirits. But mostly they were exhilarated by walking into the hiring hall, and knowing they don't have to beg on the docks of the shape-up, but it was posted the names of the men wanting work, and if the ships came in and said they wanted eighty men, they would take the next eighty men in line on the list, and sent them in. So that every man got a fair shake. And it changed the whole atmosphere.

[01:41:28] **HOWARD:** Oh, I know the question I wanted to ask you earlier, what about the success or lack of success of red-baiting during the strike? You know they released a torrent of red-baiting against the membership--

[01:41:38] **SAM:** Sure did. The worst incident came, when we sent the first delegation to the ship owners, to tell them we are petitioning for a conference with the ship owners on the conditions on the waterfront. That is the blue book before had it. It was first ILA delegation that went in. The ship owners said they will not negotiate with this committee because the delegates had amongst them some communists. I suppose the police told them who was communist or something. So when they came back to the meeting that the right-wing, the Holman crowd and so on, were gleeful. Because they said, "See, you can't work with communists in the union." But to their astonishment, member after member—conservative people—not politically-minded people at all, got up and said, "Who the hell do the ship owners think they are? They're going to choose our representatives as well as their own?" And so, that was so badly defeated that they were just out of luck. After that there was always, especially by the [William Randolph] Hurst Press, tons of crap about Reds and so on. It didn't affect the members, they knew it was—they knew me. There was just no problem.

[01:42:55] **HOWARD:** Okay. One more question about Pedro. You said that in Pedro they pretty much did things on their own?

[01:43:06] **SAM:** They had a local leadership. See, Pedro had a cooks and stewards local [Marine Cooks and Stewards Union] , that was functioning as a matter of fact. They didn't do anything to help the men, but my

recollection is that about thirty-five or forty men came to the meetings; it was dead in the water, it was useless. And they came to me once, and said they want to break up the local, that is the marine workers came to me, and they wanted to break up that local—the cooks and stewards—and take it over. "Well," I said, "They have a legitimate charter. There's a guy there that has been there for thirty years, collecting dues—more than thirty years—and you can't just do that or, they're going to end up in a gang fight and that's wrong. Why don't you join their local instead?" See it was the same tactic that we find in every place, "And try to activate the local."

So they joined the local, about a half a dozen of them, and the first motion they made was to remove the secretary treasurer, who was an old cocker who sat there and didn't know what the hell that he was doing, except collecting dues. And he got off and he cried like Andy Furuseth and said, "If I knew this wasn't going to be a steady job, I wouldn't have taken it!" He'd been there for over thirty years. But they kicked him out and then the local continued functioning, you see, but under a new leadership. And some of the others—there was the Master Mates and Pilots [International Organization of Masters, Mates & Pilots] , joined the strike after that, and then they formed a cooperative group. I was there that weekend when that happened. And they seemed to manage pretty well, a slightly different course than we did in San Francisco, but quite satisfactorily.

[01:45:01] **HOWARD:** Do you know—do you remember Meyer Baylin?

[01:45:04] **SAM:** Yeah, vaguely.

[01:45:06] **HOWARD:** Yeah, Meyer Baylin. He told me that his impressions of that period up to the strike was that the Los Angeles section of the Party especially, was really ultra-leftist.

[01:45:18] **SAM:** That's true at the Brooklyn Heights group, which was most numerous communists. But actually, we had built up Los Angeles pretty well through the Unemployed Movement [National Unemployed Workers' Movement] . And we had a quite different leadership at the Unemployed Movement. We had people like, a Black fellow, marvelous man named Walker—I think—Harry Walker, something like that. And Pat Chambers, whom we later took out for the agricultural workers [Cannery and Agricultural Workers Industrial Union] —a lot of people like that. And they weren't ultra-leftist, in fact they had no theories at all! They just held unemployed demonstrations and went to work. In Brooklyn Heights, they were shooting their mouths off all the time, with doctrines and theories, left and right, and you know, Third Period and all that crap, that went on in Brooklyn Heights.

[01:46:03] **HOWARD:** Where is Brooklyn Heights?

[01:46:05] **SAM:** Los Angeles.

[01:46:08] **HOWARD:** Maybe it's—oh is it Boyle Heights?

[01:46:09] **SAM:** Boyle Heights! I said Brooklyn Heights. Boyle Heights, right.

[01:46:14] **HOWARD:** Do you know which of those tendencies dominated at the waterfront? Was it the ultra-leftist, or—

[01:46:21] **SAM:** Los Angeles people, not very much. The waterfront—the Pedro people with some exceptions, for example we would send out from time to time, Walter Lambert from San Francisco, would go down there. I would go down there. When legal questions came up, Ida Rothstein who's head of the ILD [International Labor Defense] of Los Angeles went out there. But the Los Angeles people, they didn't—they didn't have the same relationship that we had in San Francisco, it was quite different. And the local people, [pause] they were pretty

good. I say they were pretty good. Of course their—a couple of them were shot, I can't remember their names at the moment, but there were a couple of them who were killed by the ship owners. Just shot dead.

[01:47:07] **HOWARD:** Yeah. [John] Knudsen?

[01:47:09] **SAM:** Yeah, that's right, Knudsen died of wounds—

[01:47:11] **HOWARD:** And Parker.

[01:47:12] **SAM:** And Parker, that's right. Frank Parker [sic, Dickie Parker] and Knudsen. And Knudsen was first only wounded, and then died. That's right.

[01:47:21] **HOWARD:** Okay, all right, I guess that'll do it. That's pretty much what I wanted to get. Thank you very much, sir.

Any parting thoughts? Do you want to make any large comments here about the ILA in New York?

[01:47:36] **SAM:** I knew the ILA in New York, they're run by gangsters.

[01:47:39] **HOWARD:** See, one of the things I'm arguing in this paper is that your decision especially, in to go—to build a mass movement in '33 as opposed to staying with MWIU, was absolutely crucial, and that they didn't do that in New York. In New York they followed the Party line in building the MWIU. And when the strike broke out in the West Coast, they had no mass base.

[01:47:59] **SAM:** And furthermore, had they gotten into the ILA, and locals in New York up and down the coast, they would've been able to eliminate those gangsters. It wasn't that bad that they couldn't have corrected it.

[01:48:11] **HOWARD:** You think so?

[01:48:12] **SAM:** Yeah, absolutely. And the Gulf ports, as a matter of fact, they made some headway that way. In New Orleans for example, they made some headway that way.

[01:48:20] **HOWARD:** Though, I don't think the gangsters are quite as entrenched as they were in New York, right?

[01:48:25] **SAM:** That's true too—but that's true too. But you know this is all iffy stuff. You can't really say how it's going to come out.

Okay?

[01:48:36] **HOWARD:** That's good. Thank you very much.

[01:48:38] **SAM:** Let's relax.

[END PART FOUR]