

BOOK 17

HENRY PFAFF

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Interview with Henry Pfaff

By Ann Allen

1972

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Interview with Henry Pfaff

By: Ann Allen

Date: 1972

I. Maybe you can just talk a little bit about your own personal experience and what your background is, how you first got into the Wobblies, what it meant when you first joined.

R. Yeah, well I got into it at the age of about past sixteen. I wasn't quite seventeen. It was during the Akron rubber strike. I was still a greenhorn kid, new from the hills and I never even heard of a strike or did I ever see a policemen that I can recall. So one day I see this mass of people out on Main Street. I worked at the rubber shop facing Main street.

I. In Akron?

R. Yeah, and we all flocked to the windows to see what's going on because Main street was just packed with people all the way as far as you could see. So, not knowing any better, I says, 'What are they doing down there? Let's go down and help them.' Then everybody looked down at me. "Stupid kid!" They knew what it was because those were all mature people around me. I was the only kid in that department.

I. Yes.

R. So, at noon we ended. Noon Saturday we were told to go out the side gates and come back the same way Monday, but the strikers had already anticipated this move, that they would let the people go out the side doors. So they had surrounded the plant entirely and when we come out they just started marching down towards Main Street and Howard Street to their headquarters. A massive procession going down Main

Street and the rubber plants, too, had walked out at the same time and we all got into the line and down into the Union Hall. There was Big Cab and Bill Haywood and Fischer and a lot of others speaking the different languages. To me they were all Greek because I didn't understand either the English philosophy or expressions or the Hungarian or the German.

I. What did you speak?

R. I spoke all three of them equally bad. I understand some, but it was just like water on a duck's back. It rolled off, you know, it didn't catch like it did with probably everybody else and most people there. So we all lined up. The dues in those days, the initiation, was 50 cents a person and there was no time to make out membership cards or anything. They just gave us a little bit of red ribbon and a pin to stick in our lapels. And as enthusiastic kids we went into the dry goods store. They made a land office business selling ribbons. We wrapped them around our hats and went parading up and down. We had a picnic. So then we went on a picket line and one day I see a scab coming out who was working in the department I was working, I just wanted to greet him and be friendly with him and I walked up to him and I grabbed him by the lapels and the first thing I knew I got a police club across my back. That's the first experience I had with policemen or a police club. Well, in those days, of course, I was always a non-conformist. I couldn't take anybody's gaff or orders. I started out when I was fifteen, the first year I had fourteen jobs.

I. All in rubber factories?

R. Oh no, other things too. I worked Quaker Oats and I practically tried

everything so I've gone through a lot of experiences. It did me good in later years because I was pretty handy with tools and everything. I mean I used my head in figuring out things. Well I went to work for three weeks. I was on the picket lines working. Then my funds run out, I had to leave, so I took off for Milwaukee. Then I was in Milwaukee which I hadn't seen since I was nine or ten years old. The family had broken up.

I. You left before the strike was over?

R. Yeah, I got a job, a couple of jobs there. Worked for Schlitz and then Pabst and then I finally went back to Akron again. By then the strike was over, but I didn't stay long after, about a week or so. Then with another friend we went on the road, riding freights and seeing the country. I got stranded in a mining camp down in Logan, West Virginia and that was the greatest experience of my life in exploitation and robbery and so on.

I. Did you work in the mines?

R. Oh yes, I never saw a hole deeper than six feet. It was killing work in the mines, especially for a young kid who had never seen a mine. Well at that time, the 1913-14 depression was already in the start and things were slowing down. We were getting 47% cents per car, which come to about two and a half tons.

I. How long did it take to fill the car?

R. Well, some of the older miners probably didn't take as long, but we didn't get too much. Anyway, we got one car one day and two the next, so one day we made 47 1/2 cents and the next day 95 cents and it alternated

every day. And all the equipment we had to purchase from the mining company store. That was on consignment or credit rather, and I was never able to pay a penny on that bill. Finally I just gave up and went to another place where this friend of mine that I was with had gone to a little ways up from. It's called Amherst. When I got there I got into the mine working with one of the bosses in that camp. One day this friend of mine tells me not to go to work the next morning, we were going back to Akron. He made a couple of hundred dollars so we went back to Akron.

By the time we got back to Akron the depression was in full swing and it was a total depression. Very few people worked, everybody was laid off and there was no relief of any kind. In those days we just had to- live on our credit with people we stayed with. The influx of labor from Europe and the surrounding farm communities was all spontaneous growth in this big rubber industry. Most of the people lived in boarding houses with maybe twenty or twenty-five people in a house. And they each paid the boarding house wife at about two or three dollars a week for cooking and doing the laundry and things of that sort. At the end of the week you help them get together and figure out the total bills that had to be paid, groceries and something and another. Then they prorate, so each one had to pay so much. Well as things were then there were only about two or three old people who were still working at manual labor and so on. The rest, especially the younger people, were not at work and so we kept living through that winter by living on the credit that was established already. The merchants and the breweries, they used to deliver once a week all the stuff that was needed during the week. And we could get all the food and even beer.

The beer companies would send truck loads of beer to these boarding houses and they'd pile it up in the basement. So we could get everything but fuel because the fuel merchants had already learned their lesson from the other merchants. Well, when the thing started they dropped behind in paying their bills and then the merchants were hooked. They couldn't stop bringing more. They had to, not to lose what they already had coming, they had to keep on bringing. So for about six months these bills piled up and nobody could pay because we, the boarders and roomers, couldn't pay our share so the landlord himself couldn't pay the merchants. Of course, the landlord himself was responsible for the bills, and eventually in the spring when the war started in Europe he sold the whole setup to another person who had a few hundred dollars. Luckily the depression ended shortly after that so he wasn't caught the same way, but this landlord that sold us out with the equipment and all, he skipped town so then we were absolved of our responsibilities. We didn't owe anybody anything. That's how things worked out in those days and that's how people lived.

Then the war started in Europe and things started picking up because things are all intertwined and dependent on one another. Eventually this country started getting involved in the European war. I wasn't a radical at the time. Oh I had some ideas. I'd read a Socialist paper or something occasionally and heard some Socialist talk and all that. But then when this country got into it and they started conscription and things of that sort I just couldn't see my way clear in pulling into a war and it wasn't none of my business. So I didn't register and I was dodging the draft all the way through. I finally ended up in New Brunswick, New Jersey, and got into a rubber shop there, which I was caught in. I couldn't leave, I had to stick it out.

I had no registration, nothing to prove I was legally out, and there was a fifty dollar bounty on people like me. Occasionally they were looking for us, so I worked in this shop for the duration. Shortly after that I got a white collar job, in a supervisory position, on a salary basis. The other was piece work. I worked up a good relationship with the workers in my department. All through the plant I was well liked because one thing I was always fighting the Plain office, the management. I could never take in Justice. I was always fighting for the right all the time. So then when the Armistice was signed, they wanted me to stay where I was, but I just couldn't do it, so they put me to start to build up a night shift and break in some of the returned petty officers as supervisors and the likes. One night the manager gave a banquet at the Hotel Statler to all the supervisory personnel and I told this fellow I had already broken in on that supervisory position, "I can tell you just what the boss will have to say." He says, "I'll report when I get back." They come back about two-three o'clock in the morning. Then the entire department come up to my bench and listened to what the report was. And naturally it was as I had predicted, that they were trying to intensify the exploitation and to make us work harder, but they didn't talk about more money. The only way we could make more money was to work harder and that was the idea.

- I. There was no union there and no trying to organize?
- R. No, but I asked the group then, "You heard the report, what are you going to do about it?" "What can we do?" I had a little more experience that most of my fellow workers. So I told them, I says, "There is only one thing you can do, and that is to organize and fight for more." "We don't know how." I says, "I don't know how either, but if you'll

all sign your names on this sheet of paper I'll try and find out how." So they did, all of them signed. Then for the next three weeks I wasn't making any money. I was just going all through the plant collecting names of all the workers that I could contact. And every morning I would try to contact a couple of day people that give me a hand with the day crew. I had a brother-in-law working on the day shift, but I couldn't get nowhere with them. In the meantime I tried to contact unions to furnish us organizers or speakers. I lived next door to the AFL business agent and I got hold of him and asked him if I could get any help from his union and I explained the situation. I had been a member of the AFL Bartenders union previously for a short time, but I didn't understand even the AFL concept of organization. I realized they had no place for mass industry workers and unskilled workers as these were, you know. But he didn't explain this to me. He says, "You can't organize these hunkys." Anybody that was not a craftsman was naturally a hunky and that's what they classified the unskilled laborer, I didn't take that for granted. I had read some place or during my travels I had made contact with the SLP in Dayton, Ohio. I attended a couple of their meetings and they gave me a couple of books to read and things of that sort, but I still didn't understand either. Anyway, I remembered reading they had an industrial form of union that would organize all of the workers in an industry in a given union. So I knew of a man who represented the SLP in New Brunswick. He was self employed, he had a little print shop and he was also playing in a band, a musician. I contacted him to see if he couldn't get me a speaker or an organizer. He promised to get me one from New York. Of course, I wasn't aware that the SLP union was only on paper, that it was just an idea but it was never in practice.

So on the basis of that I called a meeting for the following Sunday and the people arrived at the meeting and this fellow showed up, too. I was in the position where I had to open the meeting, I had never attended a meeting of any kind before or talked to more than two people at a time and I just muddled through somehow and opened the meeting. Then I asked this fellow to present his representative or union official and then I learned he couldn't or was unable to get a speaker from New York, and he himself, was no more equipped to conduct a meeting or explain to the group and nobody else did. So here I'm stuck, I had to carry on as best as I could. And then finally somebody suggested that we have a young Wobbly in our group, who also since he came back from the army had gotten into this plant. He probably worked there a couple of weeks before the strike was called, but I didn't know of him and I didn't know much of the IWW either. So they introduced him and told me that he was here. I asked him to explain his union to us. Well, he was unable. He wasn't a speaker or a talker either. What he did do, he gave me the preamble of the of the IWW to read off to the group, which I did, and asked them what their pleasure was. The consensus was: join the union that gives us the most strike benefits. And it was explained no union promises strike benefits. If there was a need or there is money available, who ever needs it will get it. But here, none of us had paid a penny into it yet. I had collected a lot of names but I had neglected to collect their money, which was a mistake. But, of course, I couldn't do otherwise because we didn't have a union to collect for.

I. Right.

R. And I couldn't collect on my own.

I. Right.

R. That would have made it look bad. In fact management even spread this rumor that the reason I'm organizing them is because I got fifty-cents for each man that I signed up. And nobody had paid a nickel or a penny even. Then it was decided that we join the IWW, and they started to prepare and decide on a strike. This last job in Long Beach was on the same basis, that was the same kind of mistake and others like it. But anyway, we've learned from some of these mistakes and we're still learning and I've been using that to tell the newer members and delegates not to make the mistake that I made. I wrote them all letters explaining this to the fellow up in Toronto; He was in Rochester. Before then, I guess he was here.'

I. Yeah, he was here.

R. Yeah, well he turned out to be a pretty level headed fellow. After, I got into contact with him and explained things to him. So there he is doing a very good job there now. Anyway we were out on strike for about three weeks when they started to sneak back. But the day after this meeting, Chicago was notified that this thing was going on and some help was needed and they started flocking in like Cal Keller. Well, Cal Keller is the one who started me on the way to learning things, and John Alexander and George Speed. They concentrated mostly on me because I was probably the only one they saw worthwhile talking to. I was the only one left after the strike was over out of that whole group. And I've been at it since that for over fifty years now. In the meantime, I was inactive for about twenty-five years. I ran out of bosses so I had to go into business for myself. I was supposed to be my own boss, operating service stations, and that's the worst labor

yet. I used to call them oil companies share croppers. I organized the Buffalo dealers, the service station operators of Buffalo and vicinity, three times within eleven years from 1938 on to 1949. It was just a struggle for existence, not because I couldn't organize them into the IWW if I wanted to because they were so-called business men, but in order to survive I had to organize them so that I could live. Otherwise I had to starve and they were starving too, every one of them. But they couldn't see that.

I. What union did they join, what international union did they join?

R. What?

I. What international union were the gasoline dealers?

R. Oh they were not in an international. The only thing, they were a business association, they were not a union. In fact, during the Blue Eagle days it was against the law for merchants to join labor unions.

I. They couldn't join the Wobblies?

R. No, for one thing they were not wage workers. They were business men so we had no business in the IWW. In fact, though I kept my contact with the IWW. I donated whatever I could and when fellow workers come through I'd fill up their gas tanks and help them out -- have speakers. I did whatever I could but I couldn't be an active member, you know. So by the time I got this thing straightened out for these gas dealers, I went broke in the process, and I dropped out. I never got the benefit of the other things. Then, later on, I worked in the service industry. They started to organize shortly after I started the job, but they tried to get into the AFL, the dealers of that thing. Finally we ended up in the OCW, the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers Union.

I. Now who was this, the gas station dealers?

R. Yeah, the dealers and the drivers. Truck drivers, too, got into it, but they're probably disbanded by now. I know the truck drivers are not in it any more, or few of the dealers if any of them. So it finally fizzled out, and since that I've retired. I was no longer a so-called business man. I retired' and renewed my Wobbly membership. For a time there they didn't want me. Well I had to give up my book during this time that I was in the gas business, I kept my membership for quite some years but then the guys that I had lined up decided that I had no business in the IWW because I'm not a wage worker so I got thrown out. Since then I'm working among the students mostly. Here a year ago, or is it two years ago; I had a group of about eighteen students and faculty, a couple of faculty members. Of course, with those, they're not stationary and they keep coming and going and dropping out and so forth. And now we're down to this old timer who's on his death bed. I'm afraid he won't last until I get back from the convention. He has been a member since 1912 and his dues were paid up until the end of this year. He told his wife to give me sixty dollars, twenty dollars for his dues for next year. His old book was filled up so I had to get him a new book, continuation book and and paid up his dues for all the next year. He wants to make sure where he's going, he's going to be in good standing. He has been a real good old Wobbly all these years. He used to be quite active in the old days. But he's been on this veterans pension because he's been totally disabled. We had one woman that I was really proud of and hoped that we wouldn't lose her, but I think we have lost her because her dues expired a couple of months ago. Usually I never have to chase her for her dues. She'd always send me ten dollars to straighten

up her dues and the last time she came to the house and paid up her dues. And then this fracas and the water and the bulletin and I think that's what got them discouraged. I hope not but that's the way it looks to me.

I. Yeah.

R. I'll try and contact her. And there's a professor that joined up about a year ago when Cedarwall was in Buffalo before he started his tour. side 2 This problem cropped up in New Brunswick, New Jersey. During the strike we held our meetings in the Socialist Party hall which was on the second floor. The person who owned the store underneath.

I. When was this?

R. This was in 1919. And, we held our strike meetings in the Socialist Party hall during the strike. Then after a strike Cal Keller and and George Speed advanced me a weeks pay to open two local halls, one in South River and one in New Brunswick, which are close by for the people that worked in the rubber shops from one community and the others. And I did, but we had trouble with the local, There was some Wobblies, the Hungarian branch of Wobblies in New Brunswick, and after a strike they insisted that we hold our meetings in the Hungarian language because they were in the majority. And the others were just those that were not from the strike group but other people that were members of the IWW, a few of them. Some of them had remained after a strike that came in during a strike, two or three of them helping me along. So, we had this squabble with the Hungarian speaking group there, and I explained to them that this is not a language group. It's an industrial union and there are other people involved, other language

speaking people and so we have to hold our meetings in the English language that most of them understand. They wrote into Chicago. In those days we had these language papers. Bach had it's own editor and secretary-treasurer. Cal Keller was editor of the German paper, Klausen Kampf and John Alexander was the secretary. And in the Hungarian paper we had Newman and Bartlett. Newman was the editor and Bartlett was the secretary. So these Hungarians from New Brunswick wrote to Newman about this thing that's going on and wanted to get their information or ideas. Newman wrote a letter to this fellow Weizer that the IWW is not a revolutionary union because the bosses haven't recognized it, and so on. Well, I got a hold of this letter somehow, the guy not realizing I was going to use it. I think he either read it off or let me read it. Well that wasn't the right thing to do, so I wrote to Bill Haywood and I told him, I says, "This is what's going on here." Then we had a large group in Chicago here, Hungarian group, and organizers and union Wobblies. Bill Haywood told these Hungarians what's going on, so they threw these two guys out of the hall bodily. They had already made some commitment to the newly formed Communist Party among the Hungarian language groups throughout the country.

I. Who had made the commitment?

R. This Newman and Bartlett.

I. Oh.

R. They took the membership list and I don't know, sold it or just gave it. They were thrown out of the IWW hall. So then, in the meantime, before the Palmer raid, that same day, we got a notice that one of our members

that had joined the Mitchlen tire group from South River had been arrested and put in jail. So, I and two other fellow workers that came during the strike and stayed there, (They were construction workers and they were the only ones who had jobs then) three of us went down to South River and looked up this fellow worker to see what we could do for him, He lived out in the country some place and we had to hike for miles to find his home. We did find his home. Then we learned that he'd been in a New Brunswick jail, at the Middlesex County jail, I guess it was. And then we had to hike back. By the time we got back to his jail it was getting close of midnight, and we had a talk with this man. This was a Polish speaking fellow, and the American fellow there was scabbing during the strike so the two of them were always fighting. One of them called the other Polack and he called him a scab and finally it got so this Polish fellow knifed the other guy in the shop, So that's how he got into this. Anyway we decided, the tree of us, that I take off for New York and go to see the Civil Liberties Union to see if we can't do anything for the man. On the way home we decided to stop in. We had rented our own hall then above the Socialist Labor Party hall, or Socialist Party hall on the third floor, which was new, and we decided to go up into our hall before we go home and discuss things a little more. When we got up to the second floor the Socialist Party Hall doors were smashed in and the furniture is all scattered all over the place and wrecked and so on. Well, this Looks Like a raid and we went to see if they did the same to our hall. Then, of course, they didn't know about this yet. We just had it about a week or so, and they thought we still used the Socialist Party Hall for our strike meetings, so they figured we were still down there. We got up and nothing, everything

was intact. So we went home, still not realizing what had happened. We knew it was some kind of raid. We thought it was a local white terrorist or something. So next morning early I started out for New York and to the Civil Liberties Union to talk to Roger Baldwin. He was the originator. of the Civil Liberties Union. He was the head of it then. But then, when I got there I was kind of early and I figured the office don't open till nine so I'd stop in at the Wobbly Hall. I go in there and just as I get to near the hall, the secretary comes along to open the hall and we both got to the entrance and the other door is smashed in and the piano is all splinters and the typewriters, all the equipment is all smashed. Well, something is wrong here, so he goes down the corner and gets a newspaper. Of course the newspapers are blasted with the Palmer raid that night all over the country. So they arrested a couple of our young fellow workers in New Brunswick, a fellow by the name of Tizer, he worked in a shoe store for a fellow that was sympathetic to us, he used to donate and help us. So they got this kid from home, picked him up from home and another fellow worker, a Hungarian. He was somewhat of an inventor. He invented things and he got a window frame of some kind. I don't know just what it was like, but the papers made a bomb drawing out of it and all that stuff. After that I couldn't get a job in the town and I was blacklisted. I got a job under an assumed name as a streetcar motorman, and one day the Sheriff of South River saw me on the car and the next day I was fired. I took off for New York City and there I had several jobs. I worked in a garage most of the time. Then later on I worked in a welding shop with one of our fellow workers, Louis Barta. He died some years ago. He was one of the most effective Hungarian organizers. He used to go on trips, and speaking tours and the likes. His brother

was part owner of this welding shop and he was kind of an inventor. At the time he invented a new type of spark plug that wouldn't foul and the government was going to buy the patent from him. I don't know, I guess they offered maybe a thousand dollars and they wanted a one hundred and ten or something. They were for airplanes. It was a good thing, but it didn't work in cars because it took too much power to fire them so it wasn't practical. Anyway, one day I told him, I says, "There's too damn many bosses here." And I offended him so he fired me. So I came to Buffalo.

In New York we had the same problem with the language groups. I was the go between, between the Wobbly Hall downtown and the Hungarian group uptown. One time we were supposed to hold the unemployment meetings and street corner meetings, soap boxing. And I was to take charge of that district, the 72nd or 73rd street, 74th street district to hold these unemployment outdoor meetings and the propaganda meetings. So I was promised an English speaking speaker and a Hungarian speaker from the uptown group. We didn't have a soapbox but we had a little short step ladder that we used for a podium. The people gathered around us. I got up on this and started to tell what the meeting is for, the purpose and so on. The English speaker hadn't arrived and I'm trying to drag time till he gets here, hoping that he gets there any minute. Well, he didn't show up. So finally I introduced the Hungarian speaker and put him up on the stand. Well he starts talking and a cop on the beat comes and you can't talk in a foreign language there, etc. He couldn't talk English. He was a good Hungarian speaker. Now what am I going to do. So he comes down and I got to go, back up. N o w I gotta talk English, speak so to say. And I couldn't speak. I started talking and flailing with my arms and legs and every other thing

and kept shouting and hollering. Finally this cop got sick and tired of listening to my attempt to say something and he walked away. As soon as he was out of sight I called this guy back on the stand and let him talk. The cop didn't come back. I guess he was afraid he'd have to put up with my nonsense. So, those thing you can find throughout your struggles.

I. Was there a Russian speaking group in New York?

R. Oh yes there was, but we weren't connected with them, they had their own language movement and group. But they're all Wobblies, you know. Their papers were also IWW official papers.

I. I was just wondering what kind of effect the Russian revolution had on the Wobblies, I mean all of the Wobblies not just the Russians. It must have had a big effect at first.

R. Oh, it did there at first because we did a lot of things for them and helping. But you know, after awhile when they started to try to dominate the labor organizations of other countries the local so-called left Socialist who turned Communist about that time, it was the same in the Hungarian speaking group as it was in the Russian or any other group. This was something novel and new and they thought this was the real thing and they became Communists. And naturally, well anybody that wasn't with them must be against them, so they tried to wreck those organizations that they couldn't control. And that has been their policy ever since, I mean they tried several times to get a hold of the IWW, to control it. And we had delegates who turned international.

I. Oh the Wobblies sent delegates?

R. Oh yes, we had delegates in Russia--Williams. I don't recall the names of the delegates. And one of them they had been successful in swaying, was recalled. I think it was Williams. Another man was sent in his place then. But they soon found out their purpose is to dominate or wreck the organization. It wasn't really for the purpose of the Russian organization but the National Communist groups in other countries.

I answered an ad for a car salesman. The ad was, they wanted a car salesman speaking different languages. So I went and saw this dealer, the manager of the plant, and applied for the job. I'm sitting across the desk from him like I do now and he spied the Sacco-Vanzetti button on my lapel. "What's that, what's that?" he says. "Well can't you see?" "Take it off, take it off," he says, "I don't wear no button in business." I says, "Why should I?" He says, "They're going to be executed. Anyway, they're guilty." I says, "That's what you think, millions of other people think different." Finally it got so he left me at the desk and walked out, walked away from me. I knew it wasn't the job for me so I walked out too. And he was one of the Chamber of Commerce members. The irony of the thing is that several months after Sacco and Vanzetti were executed this fellow committed suicide. I was hoping it was because of a stricken conscience, though it probably wasn't. But anyway, that was some poetic justice there. Well, that was the end of him.

I kept active wherever there was a chance to spread education and class consciousness. I, at one time, worked at the Dunlap Tire and Rubber Company in Buffalo. I was one of the first ones. The plant was built during the war but it never opened up; so afterwards they opened up and I was one of the first ones in there because I had

experience working in that line, working in the Akron rubber shops, It was nice work for awhile until we got things set up and started going into production. The plant or the department foreman wanted to make me his assistant. I says, "Nothing, doing." I knew what it was because I've had experience in that line before. So I says, "You get somebody else." After awhile they started timing the operations. And some of these scissor bills, when they saw a man with a white collar or a stopwatch behind them they'd go wild and work their heads off. This guy, he was working on the opposite side of the assembly line, I tried to hold him back. I says, "Don't you see what's going to happen, they're timing it and you'll have to work your head off to make a days pay." And he worked that much harder. I held back and then he complained to the management that I was holding him back and all that. Well anyway, they started then finally to put it down to piece work basis. After shift on the way home the department and I were walking out, and he starts telling me that they're going to put it on a piece work basis and he had all the prices already set up and so on. I says, "I won't work for those prices, I'm through." "Try it," he says, "you'll make money at it." I probably would have but it was tough work. So that was the end, I quit. Then several months later I was working between shops back and forth and one was like the other, busier, so I switched back and forth. The second time I went back they put me on the midnight shift, from eleven till morning. And the foreman on that shift is a real muleskinner, slave driver. He'd shout all day and all night long. You could hear him from one end of the department to the other. And every time that I heard him shout I was just wishing that he'd shout at me. I told some of the fellows too. So I had the best job in the department. I was just at one end of the

conveyor spotting the lids on the molds. So one night after midnight, the general manager, he became president later on, come in to visit. It was after his drinking spout I guess and then he come back. They were standing behind me talking and the crew at the other end got held up. There was a line along the conveyor to start or stop the conveyor, and I'm holding the line waiting for them to get ready. So I pulled the line to start it. And just as I pull the line to start it he shouts, "Come on, what the hell are you waiting for?" And I pulled the line the other way and stopped the conveyor dead. I turned around and took the old leather gloves off and threw them at his feet and I started to swear a blue streak. I says, "God 'damn you slave driving s.o.b., I got too much self respect to put up with anything like this. God damn you and your slave driving system." Then the manager, Watson, says, "Come on, get the hell out of here." I says, "I will, God damn you. Give me a pass and I will get the hell out." So he walks up the line and I behind him, raving all the way up, and the whole department's standing still listening, taking it all in. We got up to his office and he gave me a pass and out I went. Well, in the meantime, this night there must have been a Wobbly in that place and next morning all the washrooms and the men's rooms and everything else was plastered with silent stickers and leaflets. I didn't know about it but I got the credit for that too. Well, they had a system that the night crew, the paymaster come in during the night and give each one his pay. And those that didn't work that night had to come back Saturday morning to the pay office and pick up their pay. Saturday morning I go in to pick up my pay and they refuse to give it to me. They had changed their schedule in the meantime and you had to wait till Monday. Well, then I let loose again at the pay office, and

I was so wild that they had had the whole police department down to put me out on the sidewalk. I continued on the sidewalk, then they come and put off the sidewalk onto the street. The sidewalk is their property too. So what am I going to do with these s.o.b.s? I knew a lawyer friend of mine, 'he was a Socialist lawyer. I used to go out drinking with him once in awhile, a fellow by the name of Weiss. I says, "Irvin," I says, "I got some trouble here." And i told him what it was. "What can you do," he says, "they make their own laws. The best thing you can do is wait until Monday and pick it up." That wasn't the idea, I just wanted to get back at them., Well, I had to wait until Monday. Then, oh about a year or so later, things were slack all over, kind of a recession. So I wasn't doing anything. I knew I couldn't get a job at Dunlap but anyway I was going to go see what's going on. Anyway, I go back to see what's going on during this recession. I see they have a big sign, oh about six feet by six feet big and wide, "Positively no help wanted." So there I was, nobody at the employment office because they see the sign and just turn around and go back home. Well, I went in. The clerk at the desk, "What can I do for you?" "Well, do you need an old rubber neck?" He says, "Are you an old rubber neck?" I says, "Yeah." "Well, where did you work?" I says, "I work in every rubber shop in Akron, Ohio." "You're just the man we need." "Did you ever work here?" I say, "Yeah." "What's your name?", So he goes over to the file, "No we can't use you." I says, "I didn't think you could." So that was that.

Tape 2

R. I used to go back and forth between several shops as I said. This place was making hydraulic shock absorbers for the higher priced cars in those days and they couldn't be serviced on the road if they went bad. They had to be sent back to the factory and we repaired them. There was a special department for repairing. There was about a dozen of us in this department. And the rate of pay at that time was about fifty cents. We used to repair maybe two, three or four instruments a day. If we had bad luck, why there'd be one or two less or maybe one more. I'd say about five or six were good days. So when I went back a second time, it was probably a year or so later, they had changed things. Started putting new systems and new way of making it. Didn't repair them anymore the way we used to but they just replaced parts. In the meantime the fellow that worked next to me on the bench became foreman. So, he hired me and they had my record.

Then I found out they hired me for five cents less than I was getting before. Well that didn't go over so good. They expected twice the amount of work. The fellows that were working there then, instead of four or five or six instruments, they put out twelve. Well, I couldn't see that so I just kept on putting out the old schedule, the old methods, the same number of instruments". for several days. So one day the foreman comes over. He says, "Hank, they're squawking in the office. You're not putting out enough work. You're only putting out so many." I says, "Look Art. When you and I. worked on the bench together," I says, "you remember we only did so many. And now they rehired me for five cents less than I was getting then and they expect me to do twice as much work." I says, "I don't

believe in scabbing on myself." So, he goes up in the office and tells them that and he brings my pay back. That was the end of that, I never went back to work there. So that's the end of that story.

I. Unemployed again.

R. We had unemployed unions or unemployed leagues and the likes. And this friend of mine was a radical minister, fellow by the name of Hand. He had been an old time Socialist during the depression and him and I used to go on picket lines together. He was an all around rebel and revolutionist. He also had subscribed to the Industrial Worker and he had been harassed by the FBI as I was. I had my station near by his church just a block away and we probably met every day pretty near and chatted. He was a friend of Scott Nearing. I never went to his services, you know, I wasn't religious. He never talked religion to me, always economic and social questions. I was with him quite often and we talked about everything of course, he used that religious connection for the purpose of spreading class consciousness and working class philosophy and so on, We used to hold street corner meetings. And him and I used to go down to the relief office and fight for people that were out of work. Twelve dollars was the best they'd do. I had a nice home before that, and the relief woman, I had lost my leg in the meantime, I shot it off at a gas station. I set a trap and I stepped into it myself. Since that I've been hopping around on a wooden leg. So him and I used to go down to the relief office and fight for other people. When I got to the position that I needed relief, I fought my own battles. One day, it was getting in the fall with colder weather and they had promised to send fuel,. They hadn't done it so I went down and I raised hell at the relief office. In fact,

before that they had asked me to take a job in the relief office as a clerk there. But it didn't work out because they found out I was a Wobbly so they got some politician into that job. Anyway, I went down and here is this new guy at the entrance to the office. And pencil and paper and, "Who you wanna see?" 'I told him, "So and So." "What is it about, I'll see him." I says, "You will like hell, I'm going to see him or else!" And I raised a ruckus, so he goes inside. And all these people that are sitting there, they come to me and tell me their troubles rather than fight for themselves. Well, they didn't want me to stir up a hullabaloo there so they got me in there quick. "You go back home and it'll be there before you get there." It was there by the time I got there. I had written a letter to this relief worker and he carried it in his wallet for a couple of years and they were using that for a sample. Well it was just a natural thing for me to fight injustice. No matter where I found it I just kept on fighting it. There's not that much else that I can think of at the moment. I suppose that'll be enough anyway.

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HENRY-J. PFAFF
77 ECKHERT ST.
BUFFALO, N.Y. 14207

June 17, 1974

Dear Ms. Balanoff,

Under seperate cover I'm returning transcript of oral interview, for minor corrections, to make some of the sentences' more intelligible.

Althogh the transcription hardly reflects my speech manerism; I'm inclined to let it go at that. I realize that at the time the interview was taped, I had had no practice of talking into a microphone; which may account for many omissions and cronological discrepancies : Plus the pressure of time at that period.

I'm also enclosing a copy of a written interview, on the same topic,; requested by a Kent State U., history major, for his Masters thesis. I don't think there'll be any conflict if you can use all or any part of it in your project.

He did ask my permission for depositing a copy in the Akron University archives when he gets thru with it. I told him to use it anyway he sees fit.

I'm extending you the same courtesy and if I- can be of additional help, please let me know.

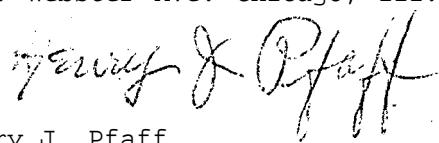
Perhaps, normally there's no relevancy between labor-history and poetry; though there may be exceptions, such as, Verse interpreting historic subject or labor philosophy. At any rate, being a product of Opsinath University, my primary objective is to enhance man's erudition. Thus I acquired the hoby of writing didactic Verses on various aspects. of life here and hereafter, not in the conventional concept of poetry; but in a noncon-forming vein, yet, like the contemporary "Philosophical Anarchists" neither am I Anarchist nor philosopher.

Having traced many of the currently popular isms to their origin, I do not accept handed down interpretations of charlatans. I hold that whatever knowledge any person has, others too can learn under similar circumstances and effort. No man has a monopoly on wisdom, that all knowledge is an accumulation of the past experiences of the human race.

For whatever, it maybe worth, I'm enclosing some samples of my attepts at thought--provoking, from my forty pages, of didactic verses that , I intend to publish someday. I would welcome appraisal, not praise; but unbiased criticism of the verses.

Note : If the added material or part of it is inapplicable for your purpose; it may be forwarded to Fred Thompson c/o IWW 752 W. Webster Ave. Chicago, Ill. 60614

Sincerely,



Henry J. Pfaff

The thought I most acutely dread:
 To be an invalid confined to bed.
 If I should reach that certain stage;
 When one is helpless due to age:
 I hope I'll have, the strength of mind,
 To unburden those I leave behind !

When common sense says hope's in vain;
 What's the point in fighting to remain ?
 Time thus gained, can be of no essence,
 Be it days, weeks or months ahence.
 If there's no hope for recovery ;
 Why have drugs prolong the agony ?

Who shall tell a helpless invalid ?
 He has *no* right to say: *I quit !
 The choice to speed his own departure;
 Is his to make, by law of nature !
 When day is done and the race is over;
 Why goad him on to suffer longer ?

These verses are not intented as poetry;
 But merely as a condensed and more agreeable method of presenting some random thoughts and events, gleaned from memory, out of experiences, thru a long and very hectic life.

Since the purpose of the verses is implicitly didactic - rather than sentimental; they can not be classified as poetry .

Nor shoud they be !

H.J.P.

SHIPWRECK

IMMORTALITY

I'm a man who blind belief denies,
For things unknown have no desires.
Of passing on I have no dread,
For I've conquered fear of death.

Of the hereafter I have no fear.
The eternal life, to me is clear.
My demise shall not be cause to mourn;
It's just one phase of being born.

No mortal priest need offer prayer;
When he too departs, I'll meet him there.
Priests cannot point me toward the sky,
Of its direction they know less than I!

My body shall, when I expire :
Be transformed by flames of fire.
Thus, the vaporized Oxi-Hydrogen,
Will be reabsorbed by other men .

Perhaps some tiny, restless atomies,
Dispersed by atmospheric breeze;
Will converge on men intelligent:
To encourage those who dare dissent .

hjp

On the sea of utter futility,
Flounders the ship of State.
Its crew on the verge of mutiny,
In the captain has lost its faith.

The anchor broke loose, the rudder's gone.
The compass lost its sense of direction.
Merchant pirates are thrilled to the bone,
In anticipation of rich, booty collection.

The passenger confusion, a hopeless mess;
The ship is at the edge of the brink
The devil raised hell with the S.O.S.
The alternative to sink: Is to think !

The owners must act, to salvage the cargo;
Hang the pirates who covet the treasure:
Then confiscate their hoarded loot pronto,
And use it to give people lives full measure !

hjp

ACADEMIES

What is the prim purpose of college ?
Is it to enhance real knowledge ?
Or do we go back and forth forever more,
to come out again by the same door ?

Do we enter knowing everything-
and leave having unlearned nothing.?
Our conceit has grown enormously;
Now we're ready to guide destiny....:&

We try to cure all human flaws,
by the jungle rule of fang and claws.'
We believe, things must remain this way;
because that's what the wise fools !

They tell us that we must obey;
rules made by men with feet of clay.
We ignore the underlying cause
and never learn of nature's laws.

I'll pledge a four, to your two wager;
that you don't know the first law of nature!
Take up this challenge if you dare,
your prize could be beyond compare!

hjp

Little man you've had a busy day!
You upset the balance of nature,
and messed up the law of evolution.
To hell you're well on your way !

You learned to grow more food in a day,
than your family needs in a week ;
hut, your weekly need determines your pay,
and the surplus piles up in a heap.

When the warehouses fill up to the top,
with the stuff that your wages can't buy;
You're told, "To work and eat you must stop"
" till we dispose of our oversupply. I

So what do you do about your dilemma ?
You resort to your old trusty panacea.
You send your sons fort into a war !
To blow the surplus to hell and gone.

Then to keep you busy at both ends, as yore;
you go back to work and make some more .
But your great solution boomerangs;
-and knocks you into a silly harrangue .

You gave your sons to Moloch in sacrifice,
and unbalanced the ratio of the sexes ;
thus denied your daughters their birthright:
The Chance for natural mate Selection .

Do you think your gripes are justified ?
Because your kids who remained behind
refuse to heed your alleged sage advice:
Just look what you left them to idolize !

I say to warlords: GO TO HELL !
I'd rather rot in a prison cell;
Than to be tricked to go and die,
For your monstrous barefaced lie.

I refuse to maim and kill for hire,
To pluck your chestnuts from the fire.
Don't add your isnsult to my injury -
Nor try to use me for your thivery .

Don't tell me to die for a country ;
Which so long ago you stole from me!
You cheated, lied and robbed me of it.
You grabbed the land and all upon it!

I know well the purpose of your game;
It avails you naught to change its name.
Call it "War-one, " Two or Three :
Your aim is - to rob them -and me !

So if you would pile up. more pelf :
Go fight your rotten wars yourself !
This world will be without a threat;
If the bombs blow you to hell instead.

THE QUESTION MARK ?

Mans very first discovery :
'Is now his most neglected quality.
The dawn of human inquisitiveness,
Was the beginning of man's history.
Until he began to question and guess,
He was merely another animal species.

When for food he relied on instinct alone;
And found he couldn't eat a stone :
He looked it over and pondered why,
Or how { that think resisted his try ?
That instant he crossed the dividing span;
And emerged from primal animal to man .

Since then- he took some million years,.
To climb the upward winding stairs .
Somewhere halfway up, he lost his place;
When some winbag blew dust in his face:
And turned him round back down the ramp,
Where nature once gave him a helping hand.

Thru unknown ages now he's blindly groping,
Since he gave up inquiring for hopeing .
Is he bent on proving Darwin was right ?
Who found that only the fit will survive !
Kill man end his hellward-bound jouhey
This-side the point of No - returning ?

h j p

ART AND POETRY

Poetry: Is the art of weaving ,abstract thoughts, into gossamer cloth; with silken tread, spun from nebulae, into pleasing word patterns.

Poems, are an art of communication; and should have a message to convey! Communication's primal mission: Is to enhance Man's erudition.

Nature is the Artist most sublime, It isn't art to copy her handywork. Art must interpret her designs. Art's purpose is to provoke thought.

That which appeals to just the eye, And does not penetrate the mind, But let's seeds of ideas barren die Is only fit to serve the spirit-blind .

h j p

Kevin Rodwurm
Hist. Dept. Kent State U.
Kent, Ohio.

12/73

Dear Fellow Student:

I prefer this approach to the conventional mode of addressing persons; depending on what I have in common with the addressee: which is usually Fellow worker. Since I'm no longer an active worker; but still a student, though not in the conventional concept; as I droped out of fift-grade in midterm and eventually became an Opsimath student.

So much for my personal introduction.

Fred Thompson informed me about your inquiry concerning 1913 Rubber strike in Akron, Ohio. He asked me to forward any information I may be able to convey to you. I'm afraid that with my own insignificant experience, I won't be able to give you much usable material. The circumstances of my involvement in the event were not conducive to make records in history nor impressive reminiscences, because my native ignorance was still intact and sophistication was then an unknown concept 61 years ago.

At that time I was a 16½ year old imigrant, transplanted from an agricultural environment the age of 15, into teeming mass-production surroundings that characterized all the mushrooming Cities that sprang up with the advent of the Automobile. They needed massive numbers of unskilled labor that the surrounding country-sides coudn't begin to satisfy, so they opened the floodgates of Europe at the turn of this century for cheap labor.

This type af labor was not like the previous imigrants who consisted mostly of craftsmen, who had brought with them experiences in labor-unionism from their old countries, so they were less at the mercy of greedy exploiters than the unskilled workers who had no protction, as the craft unions had no place for them in their structure, they had no place to go.

The exploitation of these unskilled unorganized workers became unbearable. This hope less situation neccesitated the inovation of industrial unionism -The Industrial Workers of the orld", organized on the bassis of integrated industry. Thus the IAW became the shining star of hope to the oppressed masses in their sporadic rebellions against the greedy exploiters.

To illustrate the conditions of those days: Two days after I arrived on these shores, My uncle took me job hunting, I got hired in a fish-hook factory making lead-sinkers, at 7c pr hr. 10hhr, day, 6 day wk. After a couple weeks I found out that two of my school chums Who had precedet me here by two months were gitteng twice as much at a mirror factory, so I quit and went to work at the mirror factory at 12c and soon 14c, but within two months I quit again, I don't remember the reason, perhaps I was overly sensitive and never could take scolding and repelled against authority all my life. One manifastation of this trait in my makup: I stayed with my father's nephew who was my guardian, every time I quit a job, I got a thorough dressing down, that I'll never find another job and that I'm going to end up as a loafer. They had the idea that the first job should be a Lifetime proposition, so the next morning he made me go with him to the Firestone plant and talked to his foreman to give me a job, he put me to work with Nick as his helper, carting raw rubser from the stock-room to the mills and calenders.

Here I lasted two days and had my first lesson in psychology that I never forgot. All day he kept reminding me that I a green kid am getting 18¢ pr.hr. and he a married man with two children was getting only a half cent more. I soon realized that he wasn't getting too little; but I was getting too much.. The clincher came on the second day, when he parked the cart too close to the stack on my side so that I couldn't work and just stood around, one of the men nearby remarked "thats a good helphyou've got" in a language they thought i don't understand, when he replied "he don't know any better" On the way out I went to the foreman about another job, he told me in perfect German "you can see for yourself there are no jobs in this dep't for kids,they're all six-footers. The reson I put you with your Uncle I figured he could carry you along with him". I went home packed up my things and walked out of his house,never to talk to him again.

That year I had 14 various jobs looking for something better. That individualistic method was our only way of redress, the mass-production workers had no union, nor awareness of its need.

At the beginning of 1913, I worked at the Diamond Tire plant adjacent to Goodrich, latter merged. One Saturday morning I glanced out the window and saw a great mass of people in the thousands milling in front down Main street. All the workers in the dep't flocked to the windows, when this green kid pi et-up in broken English what are they doing down there? lets go out and help them! I didn't know what great sin I committed that everybody looked down on me as if I had murdered my father? I had never heard the word strike or seen a policeman in action. At noon we were told to go out the side gate and come back the same monday; but the strikers had anticipated the ruse and had the plant surrounded and marched past as we came out, So that we got swept up in the stream rolling past.

The march originated at the Firestone plant, one contingent marched Fast to the Goodyear plant, the other North past Diamond and Diamond and Goodrich and then converged at Howard and Market into a huge Hall where we paid our innitiation fee Of 50c. There was no time to fill out membership cards so we were given a bit of red ribbon and a pin to stick on our lapels,

The drygoods merchants did a landoffice business in red ribbon as the young generation made up in enthusiasm what we lacked in knowledge and bought red ribbon by the yard to drape around our hats.

In the corners of the Hall were speaches in the various languages, as I understood 3 languages equally bad I made the rounds, Haywoods English was out of my reach, Rothfishers Hungarian and the German speaker's words were just as Greek to me, not just most of us; but the native peasants were no better equipt, they merely spoke a different language. Evidently, the founders of the IWW wre aware of this problem as the three stars in their Label indicate the need for "Education Organization Emancipation".

Obviously, it would be presumptuous of me to try to give a comprehensive account Of activitics that I wasn't nor could've been intimately in contact with, nor could the,more mature workers, unless they had been active in The IWW previously and had some basic understanding of IWW principles. Few of the local people had that kind of experience no doubt some learned while the strike lasted. Personally I learned little from it outside of the feel of a police bat accrost my back, when on the picket line I saw a men from my dep't come out thru the gate and I grabbet his lapel trying to tall; to him, didn't know why; but wham! That wan about the extent of my experience. Being young and innature,plus the fact that I was never ahead of the current paycheck and had no means fox sustenance over an extendet period so after the second week of the strike I had to pull up stake and go to Milwaukee where my mother lived, when I returned two months later, the strike was all-forgotten and considered lost.

Though no strike is ever realy lost; but that it was lost before it started i.e. unorganized. From practical experience and later deductions I've learned that a strike that starts unorganised, invaroably ends that way. Most of the sporadic massive strikes of that time were spontanious, not started by the IWW. After they got out on the streets they ware helpless and in need of aid they turned to the IWW to try to rectify the bungled job, but the IWW usually got the blame for the lost strike. eventough the mere presence of the IWW threah caused conditions to improve in every instance. The Akron strike was no accception, it too ended the way it started and to prevent a repetition, the companies subsequently istalled controled compnay unions or made a deal with captive business unions. These facts have been ignored or unnoticed by the historians, perhaps the job of historians is to record events as they happened and how/ rather than wsy? It took me a decade to find the answer to a couple why's only after I bungled another Rubber strike just before I got back into the IWW, in 1919, when thru lack of experience I pulled an unorganized strike of two Rubber Plants, of which, strike there is no record and only two of us alive who ramember Carl Keller. is the other, he was one of the organizers the came to our rescue. Before I go into details of that event, it may help understand the first if clear up the second Why? Why and how the IWW managed to be Johnny on the spot within hours wherever trouble broke out ?

After the turn of the century, the mere progressive elements of the immigrant collo-lein the industrial Cities had their various language groups of Socialist party and SLP branches. After 1908 when DeLeon was ousted from the IWW, formed his own Industrial union setup from these groups the WIIU called IWW, many of those language groups actuclly became the nuclei of the IWW in the larger Cities when men like Charles Rothfilshier an eloquent Hungarian organizer and other language speakers induced many of these group

cont

to summarily switch to the IWW, like the Buffalo Hungarian SLP group became Local #5 of the IWW, in 1912 and conducted a strike of the American Radiator plant. many of that original group remained lifelong members of the IWW. I buried the last two 3 and 1 year ago.

Similar groups existed in most other industrial Cities; but being predominantly recent immigrants, few spoke the language proficiently so they kept isolated from the main stream of social activity and their language clubs served primarily as social contacts among their own people, depending on their special interests. Some had more or less socialistic inclinations and would draw similarly inclined people to their ranks. They also served the cause in their own way, they were not organizers; but as workers in industry, they were at the scene of developing trouble and would notify IWW Headquarters, within hours Wobbly speakers would start flocking in from all directions. A typical instance was the New Brunswick N.J. Rubber strike for which I was directly responsible and the extenuating circumstances have been covered.

In the following six year interim I didn't hibernate like most of my contemporaries did. Never a conformist; but always inquisitive, I learned many things by trial and error. Thus in the summer of '13 I learned what riding the rods and side-door pullmans is like, was nabbed and given 15 days on the rock-pile, then got stranded in a Mining camp, learned first-hand what hell is like. A month later found myself marching at the head of a column of rebelling miners; no-not that I was that good; but merely because speaking three and a $\frac{1}{2}$ languages I could converse with most of them so they made me interpret their grievances to the management. We were told to go back to work and we'll get all the cars we want; we did get all and more, for two days they piled them on top of us so we couldn't take care of them so they had an excuse and things went back to the old SNAFU. There was no union then, though the AFL Miners federation was about 20 years old, it hadn't penetrated the Hills of W. Virginia. I started out owing the Company 117 dollars for equipment and was earning 47 $\frac{1}{2}$ one day and 95 $\frac{1}{2}$ the next alternately, in two months there never saw money. The company owned the store the houses the sheriff and its money (script). After I bought work shoes on week work pants the next and work shirt the following, there was nothing left to deduct from my board and lodging, the longer I stayed the more I owed, yet, I was fortunate, bring alone I was able to escape in the darkness of night; but those families with kids were doomed.

After getting back to Akron at the beginning of winter and already well advanced 1913-14 depression that only ended after the European war got into full swing and pulled us out of it. I often wondered how those Miners fared those nine months? If and how they survived?

How we in Akron and perhaps every other congested City survived during that massive unemployment, without any type of social welfare or relief, would make a very interesting social novel; but that's neither relevant nor pertinent to the subject.

Reverting to the subject of Rubber strikes: Never a conformist, I was always rebellious; but not a conscious rebel, so when in 1917 this country drafted for world war 1, I instinctively refused to conform, subsequently found myself snagged inside the India Rubber works for the duration four years after the Akron strike. Within a year I was promoted to a white-collar salaried job in supervision; but constantly fought management on behalf of the workers. Held the trust and respect of the workers throughout the plant, could never tolerate wrongs, several times packed up and started to walk out in a huff and got intercepted with an agreement that they make things right.

After the Armistice I insisted on going back to work on the bench and piece work. They didn't want to hear of it; but I went anyway. Then they put me to building up a night shift. As I still had contacts in the main office I was aware of all the maneuvers contemplated. One night during a management banquet I was informed that a raw deal that I had predicted was in the making. All the workers in the dept. flocked to my bench to hear the report. They were all riled up and when I asked them what they're going to do about it? They said what can we do? I told them there's only one thing you can do; that is to organize and fight." "We don't know how" I told them I don't know how neither; but if all of you sign your names on this sheet of paper I'll try to find out for you. Then for three weeks I made little money as I was busy roaming the plant all nights collecting names; but no money: THE BIG MISTAKE!

I collected hundreds of names; but not a nickel of money, so they weren't financially committed, since we had no union it never entered my mind to collect money, that I had no right to, what an opportunity lost, because I didn't know enough to organize a union on a solid foot-
continued

tin, inside the plant first, which can never be done on the outside, because unorganized x street crowds are but mobs without cohesion, only organized effort can produce results.

If my inexperience had been the exception instead of the rule, I wouldn't have been pushed to the fore and things might have turned out differently. Thus, trying to fulfill my promise, I sought advice from professional labor leaders. As I lived next door to the local AFL business agent, I talked to him and he tried to talk me out of it and told me "you can't organize those hunkies". I didn't know then that unskilled worker meant Hunkie, though I had belonged to the Bartenders union several months a couple years earlier; but never attended a meeting and was totally ignorant of its methods and structure to understand his attitude. Next I contacted the local representative of the S.L.P., as I had read one of their papers once and remembered they were supposed to have a industrial union and decided that's what we need. He promised to get me an organizer for the following Sunday from New York City.

On the strength of that promise I arranged a general meeting for that day, about fifty showed up. I had to open the meeting and asked for the nomination of a chairman, wishing beyond hope that somebody would rescue me from my excruciating agony of floundering helplessness. I had never attended a meeting of any-kind nor ever spoken to more than three people at the same time; but I was doomed and had to muddle through because everyone else was just as bad off, so to get out from under I called on the SLPite to present his man from N.Y. The ^{cr} crusher came when he informed me that he couldn't get an organizer. He couldn't give us any help as he wasn't anymore of a speaker than I was, dilemma ? A nightmare !

Before I narrate the subsequent developments, a little known fact must be interjected and remembered: -The IWW had nothing whatever to do with the rise of this situation, nor in other spontaneously erupting struggles. Invariably, the IWW was only appealed to after the situations had developed. That was true of Rubber, Textile, Steel and many others, contrary to the widespread misconception that the IWW had lost the strike: the fact is, it was lost when it was started and the IWW prevented it from becoming a total disaster, as will be evident in subsequent developments.

In the afore described inextricable snare, I struggled for a way out and asked the group what they want to do? Has anyone something he can tell us? Then a visitor from the Hungarian group told us that we have a young man here who is a Hobbly and speaks English Sam Weiner, he was just released from the stockade where he was held for refusing to wear a uniform or shoulder a gun. I invited him to explain his union to us, I couldn't get him to speak; but he handed me an IWW paper, the first time I ever saw its preamble and read it off the meeting then asked them what they think of it? The general consensus was; that we want the union that gives us the most strike benefit. How ironic; before they even a nickel they were looking for strike pay, they were not even out yet. After they were told that unions don't promise strike pay, they decided we'll take the IWW, without asking whether the IWW wants them. They really thought they were doing the union a favor letting it do their job for them, yet none would've remained members regardless of the outcome.

Still unorganized, they proceeded to elect a grievance committee to draw up the demands and a 3 member delegation to present them to the management Monday morning. Of the men only 2 had copies, one of them my brother-in-law didn't report for work, the other waited outside the gate till 9 o'clock when the Superintendent arrived and handed it to him, he looked it over and said I've nothing to do with this, take it to the main office; but the guards barred his entrance. The third man who was inside had no copy, no one knew how to go about things. Inside everybody stood around waiting for things to happen, nobody could work because I had all the boiler room workers signed up and they let the fires go out and no steam in a rubber shop means, no production. Finally the management realized what happened and ran all thru the plant, telling everybody they're closing up for three weeks and those who throw away their union card can come back then. Of course they spread the lie that I was getting 50% of the take, that's why I did it, had they said 100% they'd been right, for that's what I got, 100% of nothing. Yet, what I've learned since, about human behaviour, I think it quite possible that some may've believed the lie, even though he didn't pay; but maybe everyone else did?

Now the strike and lockout were on and the IWW organizers started arriving from N.Y. and Chicago. The next day the Michelin Tire workers walked out to join us, that's the first time

continued

that any money changed hands. We lined up a lot of members during the strike; but after three weeks they started drifting back and that was the interest in organization. I was the only one left, locked out and blacklisted which turned out to be a blessing in disguise, for me it was the point of no return. I had but one way to go; forward.

When it was all over and the seakers were leaving, Carl Keller and George Speed advanced me a weeks pay and instructed me to open two local Halls, one in S. River and one in New & Brunswick, which I did; but it was a mistake, like hitching the cart before the horse, without members a hull is of little use. I tried to keep both places open; but for some reason no one ever entered the S.River hall, which to an experienced organizer would have been obvious; but me, it took 45 years to find out the cause and effect of several things that I had no knowledge of at the time, since I didn't consider myself in an official capacity. Though I helped the organizers filling out applications for membership and other chores I was asked to do; but I knew nothing about procedures and records, or that the membership record had been stolen from the, the hall, that I had no way to notify the members of meetings.

Thus, when I was told that the S.River group wanted to hold a meeting Sunday morning and went to open the hall, no one showed up, except the sheriff of S.R. He came in, looked around and wanted to know who is running this place? I sensed his hostile attitude and told him there's the charter on the wall. He started lecturing me; aren't you ashamed, a young fellow like you, belonging to an organization like this? I asked, what's the matter with this organization? "What's the matter with it? everything!" I can't see a thing wrong with it! He, "let me tell you IWWs, stay the hell out of S.River or you'll get what's coming to you, A week latter he spotted me on a trolley car of which I was the motorman under an assumed name, the next day when I reported for work, my pay was waiting, I was fired.

The New Brunswick hall developed its own peculiar problem with the Hungarian Wobblies, a half dozen or so in number. They wanted to continue in their old ways and conduct the meetings in their own language, I had to fight them very inch of the way, that this isn't a Hungarian propaganda organization; but an Industrial union of diverse members, so the meetings must be conducted in the common language the all can understand. They resented as a newcomer who threatened their very little world and priority of leadership. I was under the constant tutelage of two old time 110 cats, who stayed on after the strike and kept coaching me in wobbly tradition, I learned fast from them Joe Levin and Jack Kroon.

Thus, during our squabbles, I stumbled on to an attempt to shanghai the Hungarian branches and their paper "Felszabadulas" (Emancipation) to the Communist Party. N.B. group, in order prove me wrong they contacted the editor and the Sec'y, Newman & Bartel whose office was in IWW H.Q. Newman told them they're right, that the IWW is not an Industrial union, because the employers do not recognize it. After I resorted this to Haywood, Newman & Bartel were thrown out of H.Q. bodily; but they had already turned the subscription list over to the communists, so we dispatched Louis Bartha on a National speaking tour and he nipped their selout in the bud.

About this time trouble broke out at the Michelin tire plant as an aftermath of the strike. Two workers got into a fight, one was calling the other a Pollack and he called the other a scab, in the hassel, the Pollie knifed the scab, so he was remanded to jail. After we saw it in the paper, three of us went to S.River to see what we could do for the member in jail. When we located his family, we learned that he is in the county jail in N.B., by the time we found him and talked to him it was after midnight. On the way home we decided that I go to N.Y.C. early next morning and consult Roger Baldwin at the Civil Liberties U. Walking past the hall, we decided to stop in for a few minutes to talk over our plans, when we reached the first landing, we found the Socialist Party H.Q. door smashed in, the furniture smashed to splinters, we figured it was vandalism by the local scum, so we went up to the next floor where our hall was, to see what they had done there, it wasn't broken into, since we only rented that after the strike, they didn't know about our hall. They thought we were still meeting in the Socialist hall.

Next morning I arrived in N.Y.C early before the offices opened, so I decided to stop in at the local IWW office, as I reached the office I met the Secretary with the key in his hand to open the door; but no door to open, all the papers, books, desks, typewriters piano in splinters on a heap. The Secretary went to the corner to get a morning paper, there it was in giant headlines "NATIONWIDE PALMER RAIDS OF I.W.W OFFICES & MASS ARRESTS OF ITS MEMBERS ALL THRU THE COUNTRY."

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Later that morning I called on Roger Baldwin about the stabbing case. After I explained the details, he advised me that it'll be better if we stay out of the case. Since it's not a civil-liberties issue, it can't be defended from that angle. In view of the current hysteria we'd do him more harm than good, as it's merely a common brawl, he has a better chance to get off with a light sentence or fine; but if they can link him up with the organization they'll crucify him.

When I returned back home that evening, I learned that several of our members had been caught in the draft and taken from their homes to jail and interrogated. One young man, Perry Kaiser a shoe store clerk, whose boss Sam Goldstein was a sympathizer and supporter of the IWW. Another, Nick Gray, who had inventive inclinations and was working on a new type of window sash. When the raiders searched his home, they confiscated his plans and drawings. The local papers had a field day transforming them into drawings of bombs.

Some time later on I figured out how I came to misout on the party since they probably had had me on their list; but as I had moved a few weeks before, they didn't know my new address. My first impression that the local hoodlums did the wrecking wasn't too far off; except that the head of the local scum proved to be the biggest hoodlum Att. Gen. Palmer, head of the Dept. of Justice?

Having been blacklisted, I couldn't get a job and with a wife and a 10 month old baby girl, who by the way was probably the youngest striker ever to participate in strike meetings, as my wife had to go to work trying to keep us eating there was no one to leave the baby with, so I had to take her along with me.

Subsequently I decided to go to N.Y. City and after some individual battles with three different bosses. Then two years later during the recession in 1921/22 migrated to Buffalo temporarily; we've been stuck here ever since. Had many encounters with exploiters; like at Dunlop Tire and Rubber that I helped start into production and then created a one-man riot, shortly after that they got a Union-such as it is. From 26 to 49 operated Gas stations, the worst kind of slavery ever devised by robber barons. Having to fight not only the Oil-trust; but also the petty thieves, breakin and stickup artists, in desperation I set up a shotgun trap and consequently shot my own leg off in 32. From 38 to 49, I organized the Buffalo and Suburban Station operators three times over and over. On one occasion I stopped an eleven month price war single handed overnight by having my nearby competitor drive me to every gas station throughout the City and I told each one - Tomorrow morning the price goes up 5¢! That ended the long price war and the Oil-Co. representatives were running wild trying to find out what had happened; nobody knew. During the "Blue Eagle" days it was against the law for business men to join a union; but these were merely trade associations. By the time things got straightened out I went broke and out of business, perhaps luckily, as I went to work for somebody else and built up enough credits to get my social security checks such as they are.

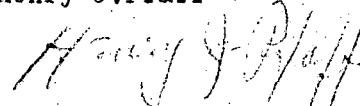
Dear Friend :

I realize that these narrations aren't what you need for your thesis; but if I've made any points that you can use in whatever form; you're welcome to do so.

If it's of no use to you; please do not destroy as it has been a hard job for me to compile, I would appreciate it if you returned it to me rather than throw it away, as I might be able to use it in my memoirs, though if you find use for it; I've made copies.

With my best wishes for your project,

Yours for a better world Henry J. Pfaff



Dear Mr. Rosswurm : In response to your request for additional information on working conditions and living conditions prevailing in Akron during the first two decades of this century. Perhaps, to get a clearer picture we should delve into , the how why and when, after all that's what history is about. Things that happened yesterday and recalled today, become tomorrow's history, of course, written history is of little use except to learn from its abuse.

So, to revert briefly to yesterday, which is no problem because of some peculiar incidents in my life, I've been able to remember a number of things from the time I was three years old. Oh I'm not trying to create the impression that I was an infant prodigy. There's a very logical explanation for the phenomenon, as there is for the fact that I liked poppy-seed cake all my life. Other things considered; I was probably a spoiled brat even in the cradle, which became a family legend : When I became uncontrollable I was given a stiff dose of poppy juice and for two days remained comatose. Of course I don't remember that incident; but the next incident became indelibly impressed on my mind.

I was about three when my mother had to spank me and locked me out into the hallway, my screaming disturbed the occupants of the apartment across the hall, when suddenly, from the opposite door came a monster in a long night shirt, long beard and long fingernails who rushed at me and plowed his fingernails over my face. This may sound like infantile hallucination; but if I dared credit myself with that kind of vivid imagination I might have become a fiction writer instead of a lifelong wage slave. No, every word of it is authentic.

Though it may seem incredible from our vantage point; but 3/4 century ago , there were no institutions for the mentally deranged, at least not in the rural communities, every family took care of their own. The woman that lived across the hall from us had a lunatic son, in early thirties, he was never allowed outside; but occasionally managed to sneak out into the yard and the neighboring kids would tease him with "Paul, Paul, hop hop" and he'd hop around on one foot the other. I don't remember seeing him or his mother before that; but saw them often afterwards. From then on I remember many subsequent experiences that would be too lengthy to narrate here, however interesting some of them might be.

The afore presented account has no direct relevance to the subject matter and is used merely to dispel the suspicion that I need to resort to hearsay, though if we were writing a historical novel, it would blend in with the question of migration and immigration from the Reformation period to the present century as part of my heritage.

I was born in Hungary March 12/96, of unassimilated German stock, the mother language remained german for many generations, only near the end of the 19th century did it become mandatory for parochial schools to teach the National language too . The official Hungarian religion was Catholic . During the Reformation many of the surrounding national refugees drifted into Hungary the then new frontier, they were given land-grants and formed their own national religious communities. The German protestants had their own parochial schools in German language. In mixed communities, they had their separate schools, no protestant would go to a Catholic school or visa-versa. Each congregation had their own school, church and church-yard. The school-master was teacher during the week and preacher on Sunday plus his own organist.

Our school consisted of two rooms, 1-2-3 grades in one room, 4-5-6 in the other, so we were in the same 3 grades for 3 years learning the same things three times all through which I managed to learn the Alphabet and to barely scrawl my name. In the meantime I learned many things from life, during the summer recess I was hired out at 11, to a cattle herder as a cowboy minus horse. Farm hand at 12, & 13, harvest hand at 14, in the winter months weavers helper to my father after school.

In 1911, after I finished school at 15, it was time to set my life's course, either to learn a trade and become an itinerant craftsman, or become an itinerant laborer, as it was neither was a promising choice. To understand the situation we must know the prevailing environment of that era. To allay the risk of seeming to be a self-aggrandizing egotist, I must point out the underlying forces at work, that the situations described are not unique to an individual; but are applicable generally to the aggregate. The following observation isn't generally, if at all realized. The agricultural economics throughout Europe kept deteriorating with time, as there is just so much land and the population kept increasing, with each generation the size of inheritance dwindled and the number of landless farmers grew ever larger. The same thing happened in the skills, as the Village craftsmen were Winter craftsmen and Summer farmers, Everything was custom made, there was only room for one of each trade in the Village.

A typical example : My maternal Grandfather was a Guild-Master craftsman in his Village, an exclusively German speaking Protestant community of approximately 4-5 hundred houses. He was the wagon maker, his one son the cabinet maker, another son the cooper & carpenter, the third the Village blacksmith, one daughter was married to the Village tailor, so there was no prospect left for the other daughter, she married an itinerant handyman, jack of all trades from another Village and they became my parents! Thus, my grandfather's family had a monopoly on the crafts in the community, no outsider had a chance to intrude. The father's trade invariably passed on to the son, those who had no sons would take on apprentices just for their bare keep for four years as cheap all around labor. After the apprenticeship they'd graduate as Journeyman and had to look for a master who could pay them wages, or start out on their own which was practically impossible, so they drifted to the Cities where they found work more or less the year round in the larger shops. As production for the open market developed and the larger shops, with the development of machines became industrialized, the craftsman became machine hands. Simultaneously, the same process went on among the farming population. As the number of impoverished farmers increased, the mechanization of agriculture, diminished the requirement for farm labor. That was the driving force for the massive migration in search for bread, up til the outbreak of world war one in 1914, when emigration from Europe came to a virtual halt.

In June of 1911 I arrived on these shores, as my father's younger brother and their sister's son lived in Akron, they were my sponsors so I came to them. Although my mother lived in Milwaukee since 1906, since the family had split up we had no communication. I was under the guardianship of my cousin and as I indicated earlier I severed my ties with him six months later after the incident at Firestone and walked out of his house and relationship.

Around this period I found it comparatively easy to find jobs, considering the fact that I quit 14 jobs in the first year that I worked, never lost more than one or two days between jobs, that may also verify the answer to the question whether men switched jobs often between the different plants? The answer is affirmative and attested to by the fact that the larger plants had huge employment offices that were constantly packed, not seated; but standing in lines all thru the day five days a week, as fast as they went thru, others replaced them, perhaps several hundred passed thru each day.

The average workday was still 10 hrs, though the Rubber shop worked a $\frac{1}{2}$ day Saturdays. The wages are always relative though never sufficient, the hourly rate for adults was around 18-19 c. A loaf of bread cost 5c, a doz. bananas depending on size and age 5 to 10c. The nickel or half dime was then the most used medium of exchange. The two cent copper about equaled the size and value of our present quarter and the dimes purchasing power compared with todays dollar, favored the dime.

As to safety measures, it would be hard to determine, considering the developing stage of mechanization and the fact that the mass of workers were not safety conscious. The record was probably no better nor worse than other mass-production industries' and as mechanization advanced, no doubt safety precautions improved accordingly, though it wasn't an uncommon occurrence to see to see a man minus a limb, hand arm or leg, two of my friends lost one a leg the other an arm. I myself had a narrow escape from the maws of a flesh eating monster. One of my first 14 jobs was at the Philadelphia Rubber reclaiming plants, my first night job, operating a straining machine that resembled a huge meat grinder magnified a 100-fold. I had to feed hot slabs of milled rubber into the top (like a butcher grinds meat) at the front end thru a cast iron head with hundreds of pinholes, the pure rubber would be pushed out as thin threads and the impurities would remain inside, the head required occasional removal and cleaning. Even now, 63 years later I shudder when I think about it. One night, while feeding the monster I became drowsy, then I felt a tug yanked my hand back, luckily I had a large loose glove on and my hand slipped out of it; but the glove caught the other end in threads, it would have torn my arm right out of its socket, there was no way to stop the machine, as all machines were driven from a central power shaft and by the time that could be stopped there'd been nothing left. I quit right then and there before I became the third victim among my friends. Later I learned that they installed individual motors on those machines, with emergency buttons on top of them.

Concerning the composition of the Akron population at the turn of the century: Like the Boer City of Milwaukee, it was largely German speaking, German wasn't the dominant; but a close second language, most business and public servants spoke German. As was generally the situation around this era, the massive influx was predominantly from the agricultural regions of Europe, few of whom intended permanent stay, though few ever made it back to their homes, most got stranded here by the war; but few ever became totally assimilated into the main stream of their new environ. most never outgrew their provincialism nor mastered the native language even through a half century or more. One of my earliest observations have born out this fact: In the fall of 1912, two of my former school chums from our Village, enrolled into night school at the Main's Thornton High. They talked me into going with them. When they introduced me, the young woman teacher gave me a Prism to read then she asked me "how long have you been in this country?" 15 months. "Do they teach English where you came from?" no, "where did you learn to read like that?" I just picked it up by myself. Then the second evening she gave me a second, the third evening a third graderto read, by then I decided they can't teach me nothing here and dropped out, though I did learn more from that teacher than she or I realized.

I never forgot her first admonition: "To learn to speak American; one must think American" This advice was invaluable because I adopted it. Other statement she made appealed to me and tried to live by them; but time proved them obsolete, or invalidated them. She explained the difference between the American and European systems, that in Europe they have compulsory military service and the tax-collectors go around confiscating the pillows from under peoples heads: that can never happen here!" Well, history has contradicted her. Eventually we emulated Europe in all her bad features, compulsory military service, compulsory Taxes, the tax-collector don't even bother to come around, he gets it before we even get paid. To top it all off, lately we adopted another 75 year old European feature: that of eating off all things-- Horse-meat! So, it happened here too! as it does elsewhere. Oh yes, even State - Lottery !

My allusion to the provincialism and stagnation that generation. The sad facts of those observations were confirmed. When after a 20 year absence I revisited Akron and my friends heard that I was in town, many came to visit our hosts house. Here was a packed house and I had so much to tell them, yet no way to tell it so that they could understand. I started to converse in German; but soon realized that they didn't understand half of what I said, because I spoke literal German and had forgotten their provincial dialect, so I switched to Hungarian which at one time we all spoke equally bad; but by extensive reading I had fairly mastered it so now there was a 20 year gap, then I turned to English, with no better results. They understood one-another in any of the three languages in commonplace conversation, but their vocabularies were so limited that half of my words were Greek to them. About four years ago I paid Akron another visit, there weren't many of my generation left, those that were still around had never come out of the past and were still back there where I left them 55 years ago.

In relation to the workers' general attitude after the strike: there were no indications of resentment against the elements responsible for breaking the strike, in fact few had any inkling of what happened or why; if anything, most people may have been inclined to blame the Union for their own folly. They certainly all had ample cause to rebel against the conditions; but we were ill prepared to wage an extended strike, without organization and resources, as I have indicated earlier. As to who then the foreign born were more radical than the natives? can be dismissed with the statement that neither element was radical: only that the foreigners were hungrier, because they were taken more advantage of so that they had more cause to protest. It is a fact, that the participants in the strike were predominantly young; because the nature of the industry required required an overall lower age limit, the tendency toward speedup and piecework automatically held down the age limit without a conscious effort in that direction.

The claim that about 70% of Rubber workers were native American; may be accepted as close, considering that many first generations born of immigrant parents, were no longer foreigners.

The fact that many workers left town during the strike; is most likely authenticated by the records of the company employment offices, as they had to replace each worker that didn't come back after the strike. Though the reason for their leaving will not be found in the company records. From personal experience I assume many left for the same economic reason that I left, many of them never to return. Only last Sept. I met two oldtimers in Chicago, one 92 Years old who never returned, another 80 who went to W.V., and lived there ever since. I and another fellow went to Milwaukee, I know he never returned, I returned temporarily but never ~~manxuasxtxxkoxxxruhmcxaspxxxmxxan~~ reconciled to the idea of sacrificing a whole lifetime to a mind-sapping rubber-monster.

In Milwaukee I found a job a few days after I got there at Schlitz Brewery, if I had been the passive type I might still be there, it was the best job ever. At 17, I wasn't allowed to drink; but working on a capping machine, the full bottles of cold beer paraded in front of me all day long like wooden soldiers, whenever I got thirsty I grabbed one of them, ducked under the machine and killed him. I never did locate the water fountain. Why I quit that job I'll never know, anyway I gave up the good job and went to work for Pabst on a bottle washing machine, where I couldn't get near any beer. Then the trip to W. Virginia coal mines for a couple months and back to Akron in the late Fall of 1913.

When I got back to Akron the Fall of '13, the recession was already in full bloom, most people were out of work and jobs impossible to find everyone broke, yet we had a unique way to survive during the 9 months depression, until the start of the European war ended the depression. In those days, most immigrants were single males under 21, some older ones who came over just temporarily to earn enough money to off some debts or buy a couple acres of land and go back to their homes. Some who brought their families over, operated boarding houses to supplement their income. These boarding houses were run on a co-operative basis. Outside of the kitchen every, every room was a bedroom, with 3-4 or more beds in each, two to a bed, flop-house style. In many cases 20 or more boarders in a house.

The Grocer, butcher, baker, Brewry would deliver the supplies weekly and get paid ~~immediately~~ Sunday morning three or four boarders would sit down and add up the total cost and prorate the amount, plus \$3 each to the woman for rent, cooking and washing, and the following week she'd pay off each merchant when he delivered next weeks supplies.

That was the regular way of life among the immigrant populations, there were many of these houses in the different language colonies East of Mainstreet, bounded by E. Exchange & South sto. West of Main street was more exclusively single family homes.

When we arrived, I and my traveling companion from W.V. we stepped in one of these boarding houses and were taken in on the strength that I owned a large Steamer trunk, which was a badge of respectability, even though it contained little clothing, a couple shirts, a suit and winter overcoat, which admitted me in spite of no job or money. Subsequently I learned that the woman whom I never knew or saw was my cousin, our mothers were sisters. Of all the men in this house, only two young fellows worked part time and a couple older men worked 2-3 days a week digging ditches. Thus, that they did take in additional nonpaying guests, proved that nobody understood the nature and seriousness of the depression, everybody thought work would pickup in a few weeks. The merchants too were caught in the snare.

As people got laid off and couldn't pay their share the first few weeks, the merchants didn't get paid for past deliveries; but they couldn't stop deliveries for fear of losing what they had already coming, so they continued making deliveries weekly. The only thing we couldn't get was fuel, for by the time cold weather set in, the coal dealer had learned the lesson from other merchants and refused credit. We had enough to eat and drink. If the house got too cold, we'd go down into the basement and drink the beer and burn the wooden cases in the furnace bottles and all, by the time spring came around the ashpit was a solid mass of molten glass.

In the spring '14, my cousin and her husband found a buyer for the business and stock ie. the boarders, not the house, that was rented. They got a couple hundred dollars out of the deal which they used to skip town and the bills they owed to the merchants, as they were responsible for it, they left us owing nobody anything. The new family had a few hundred dollars saved up, so they were able to carry on for a few months and as the war got into swing in Europe, work opened up and we got jobs and paid them up.

11 A couple of tragic incidents may justify a digression to illustrate the overall characteristics of that generation of immigrants, who were predominantly teen-age 15-20. the legal age for entry without parents was 16, I had to add a year to my age at this end, at the other end, those close to Military age were not permitted to emigrate, though some found ways to escape. Thus having been on their own earlier, the immigrant youths were more mature than the same aged native you the. There were of course variations among the former too. There were those unperturbable, the sedate, who take things as they are and never look for change, they invariably remain the conservative. Then there are the restless, inquisitive, the seekers for better, though they often find WCCSE, they consider that any change would be an improvement and Invariably are branded radicals. Perhaps I belonged in the latter category, having been a most recalcitrant pupil. In school, became an avid reader after I got on my own. Reading became my main hobby. And was perhaps the only one in the colony who had a number of books of my own. I would crucify a man that destroyed a book. One day I noticed a nature man tear a page out of one of my 5c pamphlets to wipe his razor while he was shaving.1 let out such a tirade against his stupidity that I shamed him into quitting the boarding house, even though he was one of the very few paying guests.

About this time the economic situation was so hopeless that I decided to join up in the U.S.Army. After I filled out my application, I was told I need a declaration of intention paper, which costs a dollar which I didn't have, so I decided to auction off some of my books in the house among the boarders. One of the young fellows whom I grew up with, always wanted the book I had picked up in Milwaukee the previous summer, it cost me 3.50 which was a lot of money for a book in those days; but I had seen reference to it somewhere and when I saw it in a. bookstore it was banned and sealed with black wax. I was intrigued and bought "The sixt- and seventh books of Moses" It was filled with black art and superstitions, so crude that even the religious institutions banned it, few people today ever heard of it.

The young fellow bought this book, I sold a couple of others and realized about three dollars, that evening we went into a barroom to celebrate my future, as I was the only one with money, the celebration was soon ended and so was my army career, not the sequence. As John Heitzenroder started to read the book, he soon started to have nightmares and hallucinations about finding hidden treasures. Though he was two years older and husky, he looked up to me, because I had been around and had some hoboeing experience, he kept pestering me to go on the road with him he had some money saved and worked for the City street sprinkling dept.1 refused to consider it; but he was determined to try. One evening two detective6 came to the house to take us to the Morgue to identify his remains, Evidently he's been loitering around the freight yard and two railroad cops chased him, as one caught up and rasled with him, he shot the cop in the side and ran on along the trestle over Howard street when the other cop shot him in the head and he plummeted down on the Howard st. pavement.

For a time 1 felt a certain compunction for having sold him the book. Though I had read the book thoroughly myself, it had no effect on me perhaps because I wasn't reared in an overly devout environ and was less superstitious, who knows?

By now work opened up, I got a job at Goodrear in the tire curing dept as cor assembler. It was hot and wet work and required rubber boots and apron. To begin with, I had to borrow three dollars to buy a pair of shoes to walk back and forth to work, the entire length of Exchange st. approx. eight miles a day. The very first day someone stole my new shoes before I was assigned a locker. Two days later I spotted them on a fellow and reported it to dept. manager who opened his locker with a master key, but I could not make positive identification because the soles were covered with hobnails, it was a guy from my own team of four. So for weeks I had to walk back and forth in rubber boots. Incidentally, the same thing happened to me that previous Fall. After we got settled at the boarding house group of us decided to go down town, my traveling friend was shivering, he had on a summer suit, I had a heavy suit so I told him to wear my overcoat, that's the last I saw of him and my' overcoat. It was a cold winter all the way around.

12 I worked at Goodyear for two years when I was about to get married and had a quarrel with the bride to-be, so I packed up and went to N.Y.C. to a chauffeur school for 8 weeks, then came back with a Chauffeur license and broke. Perhaps this was a fortunate turning point in my life that I broke away from that mind destroying environment before I would've become a victim of it like most did.

My subsequent experiences, led me to the conclusion; that the longer people live in that Rubber impregnated atmosphere, the more their minds become rubber-insulated, to a point where no new thought can penetrate that rubber wall. This conclusion can easily be verified by simply observing a group of retirees, or senior workers in conversation from the sidelines. Its distressing how ill-or uninformed (of things that should be common knowledge. (they are*)) Invariably they talk about their shop, what their boss said and what they said to the boss.

I must apologize for ignoring the chronological rules; but sometimes things come to mind out of context; but need to be told to complete the picture.

After I came back from N.Y. City with my Chauffeur Licens, I got a job driving a Jitney up and down Main Street. I had to pick up the car that the night man had abandoned on Main with a flat tire. After I fixed it and got going I couldn't stop for passengers, the brakes wouldn't hold, so I drove on to the end of the line to get the feel of things. On the way back picked up 3 passengers. Two got off half way, the other wanted to go to the end. I had my mind made up already to take the car back to the garage, I had to pass a Streetcar barn just then a car came out of the barn; but I couldn't stop. I didn't hit the Streetcar; but I pushed a parked Ford over the sidewalk. Not only did my jitney have no brakes it didn't backup either. I drove onto a side street to take the car in, it was a dirt road and bumpy so I decided to go back to Main st., when I approached Main there was a slight slope and I couldn't stop so I rolled into the side of a passing delivery wagon, that stopped my car.

Two days later, rather than explain to an irate boss, I went to Dayton, where I stayed that winter working at Dayton malleable Steel. Went back to Akron and became a bakers apprentice for a month, then bartender at the Elks Caffe at Main & Exchange, then Bartender at John Moewe's Bar & Bowling alleys on Grant st. After the draft registration had an argument with the boss, threw down the keys and walked out on him. His porter and shortorder cook walked out with me and the next day we were on our way to New Brunswick N.J.

I took another fling at Rubber-necking in Buffalo, N.Y. The Dunlop Plant had been built in the war but didn't operate until 24, I was one of the first hired to start production. The foreman wanted to make me his assistant, as I had that kind of experience before, I refused. After we got things going smoothly, they started timeing the jobs for piece rate, when they got ready, the foreman showed me the proposed rates and I told him I wouldn't work for those rates, he said try it you'll make money at it; but I quit and went back to my seasonal job. Later I went back and got on the midnight shift. The foreman on that shift was a regular Mule Skinner, shouting all night long, his shouting used to get under my skin, I told the crew I wish he shouts at me once. One night the Vice-President came in visiting around 2 A.M. They were standing behind me talking, the crew at the other end of the conveyor had some problem, I was holding the control line to start the conveyor when they're ready, At the same moment I pulled the line, he shouted - common-what the hell are you waiting for? I yanked the conveyor to a stop, took my big leather gloves and threw them at his feet shouting - goddam you lousy slave driving S.O.B. I've got too much selfrespect to put up with anything like this! Then the V.P. cut in- common get the hell out of here", goddam you, give me a pass and I will get the hell out of here! Followed him to the front office, ranting all the way. All stood still taking it all in. Customarily, anyone absent on paynight, picked up his pay Sat. morning. When I went to get mine, they said come back Monday. I started another riot. The security force carried me out to the sidewalk, Then they came out again and put me off the sidewalk into the street. During a recession a few years later, I stopped by to see what's what? There was a big signout, "Positively No Help Wanted!" After they heard I worked in every rubber shop in Akron and what I could do, " You're just the man we need!" did you ever work here? Yes. He looked in the files and turned around and said "No! We can't use you!" I Didn't think you could!

About 25 years later I managed one of their Retail Tire Stores on a commission basis.

They have had a Union, such as it is since shortly after my rebellion. HJP