

NOTES AND DOCUMENTS

A CIO ORGANIZER IN ALABAMA, 1941

By DANIEL NELSON

Of the many open shop bastions in the South during the 1930s, none posed more formidable challenges to CIO organizers than Gadsden, Alabama — a New South industrial city north-east of Birmingham. Employer hostility to union organization — spearheaded in this case by two of the nation's leading anti-union corporations (Goodyear Tire & Rubber and Republic Steel) — a community commitment to economic growth, close ties between industrialists and city fathers, and the absence of countervailing influences such as state or federal government, created a classic open shop setting.¹ So pervasive was the anti-union atmosphere that executives of the leading firms — Goodyear, Republic, and Dwight Manufacturing, a large textile producer — seldom played direct roles in the confrontations that marked the organizing campaigns of the 1930s.² Loyal workers, led by supervisors and aided by an acquiescent police force, prevented the organization of Gadsden factories before World War II.

Despite these unfavorable circumstances the United Rubber Workers and, to a lesser degree, other CIO unions made repeated efforts to organize Gadsden's industrial workers.³ The URW had a special stake in this activity. Goodyear was by far the lead-

¹ See Lucy R. Mason, *To Win These Rights* (New York, 1950), Chs. 3-4 for similar situations in other Southern communities. Southern employers and labor organizers were well aware of the effectiveness of such a combination. See J. A. Hodges, "The New Deal Labor Policy and the Southern Textile Industry, 1933-41" (unpublished Ph.D. diss., Vanderbilt Univ. 1963), 395-98, 406-07. Also see F. Ray Marshall, *Labor In The South* (Cambridge, 1967), Chs. 9-13. Charles H. Martin has ably surveyed the Gadsden setting during the 1930s in "Labor Violence in a New South Industrial Town: Gadsden, Alabama, 1930-43," (unpublished paper presented to the 1975 meeting of the Southern Historical Association).

² In Akron, by contrast, top Goodyear executives, including President Paul W. Litchfield, played major roles in implementing anti-union strategies.

³ The SWOC and Textile Workers operated in Gadsden in the late 1930s without significant results. After 1941 the SWOC led the CIO effort in Gadsden.

ing manufacturer and employer in the rubber industry; a union-free Goodyear was to the URW what a union-free US Steel or General Motors would have been to the SWOC or UAW in the late 1930s⁴. But the Goodyear management fought the URW with every resource at its disposal, including a policy of “decentralization”—the movement of production from union strongholds, notably Akron, Ohio, the industry center, to more hospitable areas. As a result Gadsden flourished while the Akron plants, and URW Local 2, declined. Goodyear, then, was essential to the success of the URW and the Gadsden plant was essential to the organization of Goodyear, or so it appeared to URW leaders.

The Rubber Workers undertook three organizing efforts in Gadsden between 1933 and World War II. Local workers in 1933, responding to Section 7a of the National Industrial Recovery Act, formed a union (FLU 18372 to 1935; URW Local 12 thereafter). But the company’s refusal to bargain, coupled with selected discharges, soon dampened the enthusiasm of all but a few stubborn and courageous individuals like E.L. Gray and Cecil S. Holmes. In 1936, after Local 2 in Akron won a six week strike against Goodyear and the company President Paul W. Litchfield hinted ominously at additional “decentralization,” the URW launched a second effort. This campaign, more threatening than the grass-roots movement of 1933, elicited a more vigorous response. Mobs assaulted and nearly killed URW President Sherman H. Dalrymple in Gadsden on June 6, 1936, and a group of organizers, including John D. House, Local 2 president, on June 25⁵. Gray, Holmes, and other activists lost their jobs, and rank and file members faced continuous harassment. Despite LaFollette Committee and NLRB investigations, Local 12 had virtually ceased to exist by the summer of 1938. Finally, in 1940,

⁴ See Hugh Allen, *The House of Goodyear* (Akron, 1949), Chs. 9-11.

⁵ There are many accounts of these incidents, none better than the participants recollections. See U.S. Senate, *Hearings Before a Subcommittee of the Committee on Education and Labor*, 75th Congress, 1st Session (Washington, 1937), Part 8, 3005-3007 and “In the Matter of Goodyear Tire & Rubber Company of Alabama and United Rubber Workers of America,” NLRB Case X-C-146, National Archives, RG 25 Box 214, Case 149. A summary of this material appears in *NLRB Decisions and Orders*, Volume 21, 325-30, 344-60. For a succinct, dramatic account of Dalrymple’s experiences see Mrs. Dalrymple’s statement in Daniel Nelson, ed., “Labor Organizing in the 1930s,” in D. Kyvig, ed., *F.D.R.’s America* (St. Charles, Mo., 1976), 75-78. George Roberts’ recollections are available in the George Roberts Papers, Archives of Labor History and Urban Affairs, Wayne State University.

after the URW had recovered from the effects of the 1937-38 recession, had won bargaining agreements with other major tire manufacturers, and had obtained assistance from the CIO, the union mounted a third assault on the Gadsden stronghold and an ambitious Goodyear campaign.⁶

To head the latter effort, Dalrymple and Robert J. Davidson, the CIO representative assigned to the Goodyear effort, chose House, a veteran of seven years of Goodyear negotiations in Akron. A transplanted Georgian who had learned in 1936 that regional loyalties meant little to the Gadsden anti-union militants, House lost the Local 2 presidency in November, 1940, because of rank and file disenchantment with the local's failure to obtain a collective bargaining agreement. Undeterred, he immediately joined the URW-CIO campaign and arrived in Gadsden in January, 1941. His reports to Davidson provide an unusual perspective on the Goodyear anti-union effort and on the problems of a CIO organizer in Gadsden on the eve of World War II.⁷

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House to Davidson, January 18, 1941

"I haven't done as well this week as I had hoped I might but still think we made some little progress. We now have five or six members working in the plant . . . and prospects of getting a few more next week. We aren't pushing them to sign up yet but are trying to condition prospective members, trying to build up their morale to the point where we can get them to attend small group meetings. . . . I doubt that you have ever seen a group of native born Americans so beaten, so completely enslaved as most of these seem to be today.

Bob, I hope that just as soon as possible you will see what can be done toward getting some action on the NLRB case here.⁸ I

⁶ At its 1940 convention the URW labeled Goodyear the "number one problem" of the industry and embarked upon a vigorous organizing campaign. The CIO contributed several organizers and the salaries of additional men recruited from the URW. See *Proceedings of Fifth Convention, U.R.W. of America, 1940*, 96-99, 263.

⁷ Unless otherwise noted, the following selections are from the John D. House Papers, University of Akron.

⁸ NLRB Case X-C-146. A detailed account of the evidence and the NLRB decision of March, 1940, appear in *NLRB Decisions and Orders*, Volume 21, 306-449. The 1940-43 NLRB efforts to force compliance can be followed in Goodyear-Gadsden Case File. Selected Regional Case Files. National Archives, RG 25 Box 421, Case X-C-146.

think this plant can be organized but it will take a long time and a lot of hard painstaking endeavor to do it unless we can get *some* help from the Board. . . . I am not afraid of any violence here now. The only thing we have to worry about now is fear itself, and a sort of hopelessness that is awfully hard to dispel.”

Weekly Report, February 1, 1941

“Last Wednesday evening we had invited quite a large number of workers in the plant to come to the Union hall for a conference with Brother Holmes and I. As it happened, Brother Holmes was sick that evening and I came to the hall alone. As I unlocked the door I noticed several men standing near the doorway on the sidewalk but failed to recognize any of them. I had just turned on the lights when two members of the UCWOC Local⁹ came in and told me there were a group of men outside looking for me and wanting to know where the meeting would be held. I went outside again to invite them in but they had moved away from the doorway and were standing in a little group some distance from the building. As I approached them they walked away so I came back to the hall and waited. Soon two of them came into the hall and inquired if we were having a meeting here tonight and when I told them we were and invited them to stay, they said there was quite a group of them down the street and that they would be back soon.

I waited several minutes then decided to see if I could locate their group and went to a pool room downstairs to get someone I knew to accompany me. While I was in the pool room a group of about fifty purporting to represent the so-called ‘Independent Union’, the Etowah Rubber Workers Organization,¹⁰ entered the hall and one of the UCWOC men came to notify me. So I re-entered the hall and found a group of about fifty men led by a few whom I recognized as leaders of the anti-union forces at Goodyear some of them having been identified as participants in the Tolson Building mob affair in 1936.¹¹

⁹ United Construction Workers Organizing Committee.

¹⁰ The Etowah Rubber Workers Union, formed in 1937 after the Jones & Laughlin decision forced Goodyear to disband its company union, was considered by CIO organizers to be simply another version of the company union. The ERWU conducted the anti-CIO campaign at Goodyear until 1943.

¹¹ The June 25, 1936, attack on House and other URW organizers who went to Gadsden after the Dalrymple beating.

I proceeded to address them in a friendly manner, explaining the purpose of the present drive for membership in all Good-year factories, but was interrupted continually by two or three of the leaders one of whom I recognized as a former Akron Squad¹² man and the other two I recognized as members of the mob in 1936 one named Shaw, the other named Naylor. The Squad man's name is Griffin.

After approximately a half hour of this Mr. Shaw informed me that all the men in the plant were thoroughly satisfied with their 'Independent' union and advised me not to 'mess around'. I tried to impress upon them by my attitude and actions that I was not afraid of them but that I was not looking for a fight and told them I thought we would be able to 'get along' without any trouble and invited them to our meetings. They left in a group apparently a little confused and none too certain of just what was in the air."

(House also described this confrontation in a personal letter to Davidson).

House to Davidson, February 1, 1941

"I wish you could have been with me. . . . I think you would have enjoyed yourself immensely. The leaders of that group reminded me of an old lion who has lost his teeth and can only ruffle up his mane, switch his tail and growl in a very menacing manner but whose bite has long since lost its potency. Of course, I know that even an old lion will hurt you if you just run into him or get him cornered without ample provision having been made to handle him (if you get what I mean).

The effect of last Wednesday's affair seems to be alright for us. At least, it has created more interest in the drive and has got the boys talking more. As soon as the men in the plant begin to realize that their (Company union men) bark is a lot worse than their bite, they will begin to snap out of it."

¹² The "Flying Squadron" was an elite group of production workers selected for their intelligence, versatility, and loyalty to the company. See Allen, *passim*; House was a "squad" man in the 1920s.

Weekly Report, February 8, 1941

"We (Brother C. S. Holmes and I) were able to talk personally with approximately 50 people . . . working in the Goodyear plant but were unable to get any of them to actually sign up. Every one of them, however, expressed their willingness to join or re-instate whenever the rest of them showed that they were ready. . . . The only thing that seems to be holding them back is mortal fear. They seem to be more afraid of bodily harm at the hands of company thugs than they are of losing their jobs. However, they have expressed the fear that the company might make things hard for them on the job.

The primary reason for our decision to proceed with the distribution of handbills at the gates is to prove to those people that they have nothing to fear from the old gang that used to rule the roost here in Gadsden."

(On February 12, House, Holmes, and five others distributed handbills advertising a meeting of the local).

Weekly Report, February 15, 1941

"We were not molested in any way and had no interference from any source until we were about through with our first distribution at the gates. As we were contacting the last few stragglers coming out of the plant, a Mr. Jim Works, head watchman at the Goodyear plant came out and inquired if we had a permit to distribute pamphlets, posing as an officer of the law and when we could show no written permit he ordered us to stop. There being but a few people still in the factory who would be coming out at that time, we left soon after this and are not making an investigation to determine whether or not Mr. Works is actually an officer either under the city or the county administration.

We had made plans to continue this distribution to workers on the other shifts on Thursday night but it was raining so hard we gave it up.

We intend to continue our personal contact program and the distribution of handbills and papers at the gates of the factory. The people in the plant are beginning to talk more about the subject of organization and I believe that eventually we will be able to dispel enough of the fear to get them started really organizing inside the factory."

(House, however, underestimated his opponents' determination. On February 16, while working in his office, he was attacked and severely beaten. He made no detailed report of the incident at the time, but has recently described it in memoir).¹³

“. . . a group of five men came in and stood just inside the door at the head of the stairway leading up from the street. One of them detached himself from the group and walked the several steps over to where I was working and facing me across the table on which my typewriter stood and placing both hands on the table asked me if this was where he could sign up for the union. I finished typing the line I had started when he approached and then looked up to him and started to answer him when I received a hard blow on the left side of my head which caused me by reflex action to stand up. I had failed to notice that the other members of the group had sneaked up behind me. They continued beating me with their weapons. One I recognized was a pinch bar and another I say was a piece of insulated electric cable. I tried to mark one of them with a fist but succeeded only in tearing his shirt. When I realized that I was about ready to collapse I lay down on the floor with my legs drawn up to my midriff hoping that one of them might come within the reach of my foot so that I might kick him in the groin. During the few seconds that I waited for such an opportunity one of the group walked around on my right and looking into my bloody face apparently became satisfied that their mission has been accomplished and ran following the others down the stairs. I got to my feet as quickly as I could and ran to the top of the stairway intending to jump onto the last man before he could reach the street level. But, just as I was preparing to leap I saw E.L. Gray entering the door from the street. I stopped and yelled to Gray to catch the s.o.b. But Gray was so shook-up by seeing me all bloodied that he was momentarily immobilized and let the fellow escape. Gray then came bound-

¹³ John D. House, "History of The United Rubber Workers of America" (unpublished manuscript), 53-54. On February 19, Goodyear President Litchfield wired the following message to House at the Gadsden hospital.

"I wish to extend my sincerest sympathy to you . . . Knowing the sincerity of your efforts on behalf of your fellow workers and your desire to settle all differences of opinion by peaceful means, it is particularly regrettable that you should suffer from acts of physical violence which we all deplore . . . I sincerely hope for your speedy recovery and proper punishment for those guilty of the attack upon you."
House Papers.

ing up the stairs and had me lie down on a bench while he had a fellow, in an office just outside the meeting hall, call an ambulance that took me to the Forrest General Hospital I was in such deep shock that [the doctor] waited a considerable time before he started shaving my head and suturing the deep gashes in my scalp which required a total of 86 stitches to close.”

(As in 1936-37, anti-union violence had a devastating effect on the URW effort. House lost a month of work and most of the momentum he had developed since January).

Weekly Report, March 15, 1941

“I am ashamed to turn in a report this week as so little has been accomplished due, principally, to the fact that my Doctor strongly advised me that I should take better care of myself for a while yet.

It is very difficult . . . to secure applications because of the constant threat of physical violence against any who may be found out to be members of the CIO.”

Weekly Report, March 22, 1941

“Again I am compelled to report very little definite progress being made during the past week.

The so-called ‘Independent’ union . . . which is controlled by a handful of company stooges, put on a drive for the collection of dues during the past week with threats of violence against those who refused to pay up. According to reports we got from some of those involved, there were several groups of men in various departments who still refused to pay up and dared the thugs to do their worst.”

(In the following weeks the anti-CIO campaign accelerated. On March 28 House and six others went to the plant to distribute handbills).

Weekly Report, March 29, 1941

“We arrived at the plant gates in two cars at approximately 2:10 PM and began at once to distribute handbills to those entering the factory to work second shift. We continued this until

approximately 2:45 PM when a large group from inside the plant came out in a body and drove us away. Most of them were dressed in their work clothes and some of them were as black as negroes from working in lampblack. Our group was able to identify 9 or 10 of them by name. We were able to 'retreat' as the English put it, without severe casualty—one of our men had to be given medical attention on account of having been hit on the jaw with a fist or two which resulted in painful lacerations and contusions. . . . One other man, Brother Holmes, received a smart blow on the left temple which resulted in slight discoloration of his left eye.

It appears that the fear of possible conviction and punishment for such actions does not act as a deterrent against the commission of such acts by the Goodyear thug bunch and unless some sort of restraining order can be placed against the company and the individuals involved which will prevent the recurrence of such activity, we will just have to take whatever measures may become necessary to protect ourselves from serious injury."

(On April 6, House and Holmes went to Washington to confer with NLRB officials regarding the enforcement of the Board's decisions against Goodyear).

Weekly Report, April 11, 1941

"We received a wire from one of the men here while we were yet in Washington informing us that the Company Union gang had stopped men at the gates on Monday morning and forced them to either pay up their company union dues or stay out of the plant so we decided to return to Gadsden as soon as possible.

Since our return here we have conducted a pretty thorough investigation and have found that actually only one man was prevented from going to work but that several men had been threatened. We immediately got in touch with the man who had been kept out and found that already the company officials had sent for him to return to work and had promised him protection but in spite of these promises he was afraid to go back to work until we had convinced him that he was not the only man who had refused to pay their company union dues as he had been informed. We learned the next day that he had arranged to go back to work.

The effect of this escapade seems to be all in our favor. Some few of the men whom we have succeeded in getting signed up are now actively working inside the factory and today we learned that they have quite a number of men ready to line up with us.

We have also been informed that the Personnel Director, Mr. Craigmile, has told the leaders of the Company Union that the company will no longer recognize them as representatives of the workers and have advised them to join the A.F. of L. The situation is very critical from all indications, and we can anticipate almost anything happening at any time now."

Weekly Report, April 19, 1941

"I attempted . . . [a radio] broadcast last Wednesday but was stymied by the refusal of the manager of the local radio station to sell me time over his station.

In the conversation which followed he 'explained' to me that he was afraid of what might happen to me and perhaps to his property at the station but refused to give me any specific reason for his having such fears, except to say that he had been contacted by 'the other side' in regard to the previous talks I had put over his station. At the close of this conversation which lasted more than an hour, I told him I would not accept his refusal as final and leaving a copy of my speech with him I asked that he read it and told him that I would see him again during the week. . . ."

Weekly Report, April 26, 1941

"I think we should be raising plenty of racket in Washington and keep it going until something is done. Local authorities seem unable to cope with the situation effectively. . . . The leading [anti-CIO activists] think that when the plant becomes organized they will not be allowed to work there and during the last week some of them have so expressed themselves and have said that they are going to stop it some way. Everything we get of this nature will of course, be brought to the attention of the Sheriff and the Grand Jury but it is admitted by the Foreman of the Grand Jury that 'politics' has entered the case and while he and several others on the Grand Jury are anxious to clean up the mess, it is possible, if not probable, that they may be outflanked."

Weekly Report, May 3, 1941

"Monday and Tuesday of this past week I had to spend the greater part at the court house waiting (under subpoena) to be called before the Grand Jury in regard to the beating I received February 18. Several witnesses were called but no action was taken by the Jury because of insufficient evidence to support any indictment. A couple of the company union boys appeared before the Grand Jury trying to get a bill returned against us on a 'gun totting' charge but the Grand Jury in it's published report stated that they had investigated these charges and believed them to be untrue.

The company 'thug bunch' are still making threats and attempted to get the co-operation of one foreman in enticing some of the union men out into an alley between the plant buildings one day last week. It was reported to us that the foreman told them that he was not going to get mixed up in that sort of thing *any more. . . .*"

Weekly Report, May 10, 1941

"It is heartbreakingly slow and tedious work trying to tear down the fear of these people which has become so deep-seated that they are afraid to even mention the word union to their next door neighbor or to the fellow working right beside him. . . ."

(On May 20 R. C. Quattlebaum, a URW member working in the plant, was discharged for insubordination and House faced another crisis).

House to Davidson, May 23, 1941

". . . I called Mr. A. C. Michaels, Plant Superintendent, Thursday, yesterday, afternoon and requested that he meet with us to discuss this case. He first suggested that we meet Mr. Craigmile, . . . but then reconsidered and suggested that I call him again the following day (today). I called him again this morning and was told that he would not meet with our committee but that he would be glad to talk with Quattlebaum himself. In discussing this case with Quattlebaum today, I learned that he was undecided whether or not he should fight for his rights inas-

much as he and his wife were operating a cleaning and pressing business and are afraid that if he should make a fuss over his discharge they will lose business because the workers will be afraid to patronize him. However, I believe that we convinced him that he would be likely to lose this business or patronage regardless of what attitude he may take unless we succeed in putting him back on the payroll and in organizing the plant.

He also gave us a more detailed account of what transpired between him and his immediate superiors at the time he was discharged. He told us that his Foreman, a Mr. Harmon, became very abusive when he was bawling him out for not coming to work the previous day (Sunday, May 18) and that he (Quattlebaum) defended himself very frankly. Apparently both he and his foreman lost their temper and said things to each other that should not have been said."

Weekly Report, May 24, 1941

"It is very difficult as yet to determine the effect of Quattlebaum's discharge on the other members or prospective members but I am afraid it will be disastrous unless we can succeed in getting him back on the payroll. I was informed today that another of our members had been threatened by the Company union bunch. He told me that a group of them had come into his department to run him out of the factory but that his foreman had told them to leave him alone; that he—the foreman—would take care of him. He also informed us that this had scared most of those who had expressed themselves as favoring the union. I ran into a situation yesterday where a man who is a former member of the local here was so afraid to talk with us that he ordered us off his property."

Weekly Report, June 7, 1941

"In regard to the case of Brother Quattlebaum . . . we were finally able to get him to go in and see the Plant Superintendent, Mr. Michaels. He was told that his case would be left up to the decision of his foreman and the labor department. A few days later, he went in to talk with these men who told him that they thought he should go back to work but not now. When he could get no satisfaction out of them in regard to just when they would

put him back to work he called Mr. Michaels again, at my suggestion, and demanded that he be put back to work immediately. Michaels refused to 'interfere' and told him it was left entirely in the hands of the foreman.

When this was reported to me, I immediately called Michaels and after several tries, I finally got him on the telephone and requested a meeting with him which he refused. I then asked him to put Quattlebaum back to work immediately. He refused to do this remarking that he couldn't see that it was any of my business.

The following day a committee of three of our men inside the plant tried to get a meeting with Michaels but failed."

House to Davidson, June 10, 1941

"Yesterday afternoon, Brother Holmes and I and one of our key men in the plant, Brother John F. Stephens, drove out of the highway a few miles and called on a truck tire builder by name of Bob Griffin. . . .

After leaving his place we stopped just across the road at a country store to get a cold drink. In this store were two men from the factory who have long been identified with the anti-union forces at Goodyear: T. L. Bottoms and 'Speedy' Brock. Stephens talked with Bottoms several minutes while we were in the place.

This morning soon after he went to work, Stephens and his buddy were called to the office of the department foreman about their failure to have worked a heat of tires that came off just a few minutes before quitting time yesterday. . . . Very little was said, however about the subject of the heat of tires they failed to pull. Most of their conversation was concerning Stephens and two other members of the URWA doing so much talking with each other during working hours.

A few minutes after they went back to work a gang of some 25 or 30 men from various departments of the plant . . . came to where Brother Stephens was working and asked him if it were true that he had gone with Holmes and I to see Griffin. He admitted that he had. They then accused him of having told Griffin that a certain group of four or five men in Griffin's department already had joined the CIO. This he denied. They then told him to get going, cursing him and calling him all sorts of vile names and threatening to beat him up.

Unless we can bring some sort of pressure to bear on this damned company and take the pressure off the workers here it appears that we may have a much longer struggle to organize them, if ever, than when we at first contemplated. . . . ”

House to Davidson, June 12, 1941

“We learned yesterday afternoon that another of our members had left the plant during his shift and drove out to see him. He told us that he had quit his job because he was G---D----- tired of being treated like a nigger after twelve years of service with the company. He is the same fellow who was kept out of the factory by the company union gang last April but returned to work after taking a two weeks vacation. His name is J. P. Freeman.

He told us that they—the company union gang—had been telling him that he would not last long; that they were going to send him back to his plow and had kept teasing him about letting Lockridge, one of the thugs on second shift, bump him off his job. This was done, obviously, in an effort to get Freeman sore so that he would either quit or start a fight and give the gang an excuse to beat him up.

We are having a secret meeting of as many as will come who are members of the union in the department involved, tonight. We will try to get them organized to stick together if and when another attempt is made to gang up on any of them. . . . ”

Weekly Report, June 14, 1941

“Last Wednesday, June 11, the company thug bunch ganged up on one of our members on second shift while he was working and tried to run him out of the plant by threatening him. However, he wasn’t so easily scared. He stood up to them and refused to leave until quitting time. Then when he went to get into his automobile which was parked in the company parking lot across the road from the plant, he was set upon by a group of ten or twelve men some of whom he recognized. They drug [sic] him from his car and started to beat him up but he surprised them by knocking two of them down and getting away. He has worked every day so far this week but I have learned that he has continuously been subject to the rankest sort of abuse and terrific pressure at the hands of this bunch of company union men while

no apparent effort has been made by management to do anything about it.”

By late June House had apparently exhausted every avenue available to him in Gadsden. Despite successful URW organizing campaigns at three other Goodyear plants, including the Akron complex, the Gadsden management remained implacable and the anti-union workers as influential as ever. In mid-July Davidson concluded, sadly, that “to continue pouring money into that situation seems to be just like pouring it down a sewer,” and ordered House to Jackson, Michigan, where an effort to organize a Goodyear plant was nearly completed.¹⁴

Thus the third major effort of the Rubber Workers in Gadsden failed. The combination of company intimidation and community hostility seemed as effective on the eve of Pearl Harbor as it had been in 1933. In fact, however, the Gadsden situation was changing. Years of URW complaints and NLRB actions against Goodyear eventually bore fruit; in 1942 a federal appeals court upheld the 1940 NLRB judgment ordering the reinstatement of many discharged workers and an end to anti-URW activities in Gadsden. More important, World War II altered local thinking about the prerequisites for economic growth. By 1943 cooperation with the Federal government and its policies, including its labor policies, had become essential for obtaining new business and jobs in Gadsden. The URW easily won a representation election in 1943 and faced no serious challenges thereafter, though a formal contract was not signed until 1946.¹⁵ CIO campaigns also organized the Republic and Dwight plants during the war period. Ironically, by 1950 Gadsden had become a “solidly union town in the most anti-union section of the nation.”¹⁶ Of course neither Dalrymple, Davidson, nor House could foresee these developments in early 1941. To them Gadsden represented a formidable challenge, one that would demand, as did most CIO efforts in Alabama, money, patience, and an organizer of unusual fortitude and durability.

¹⁴ Robert J. Davidson to House, July 16, 1941, House Papers.

¹⁵ CIO organizer Carey Haigler, assigned to Gadsden in 1942, recalled: “Reluctantly I journeyed to Gadsden with the feeling that it could possibly be my last earthly undertaking, for Gadsden was considered to be a tough anti-CIO town.” He found, however, that Gadsden had changed. Mason, 142-43.

¹⁶ Martin, “Labor Violence in a New South Industrial Town,” 17.