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KATHLEEN TAYLOR

~~Interview with Kathy Taylor~~
By Ann Allen
February 1974
Time - 1 hour

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Interview with Kathy Taylor

By Ann Williams

February, 1974

- I. Let's start with how you got the job.
- R. Well, one of my friends was working as a leverman for B&OCT and another was working as a switchman and had just gotten the job. So when I came back to Chicago and was looking for work the two of them said, "Well why don't you go down and apply as a yard clerk?" And I said, "Who, me?" And they said, "Oh yeah, it's just the job you need, you don't have to dress up and you make good money."
- I. Did they want you just to apply or did they know there was a job that was open?
- R. No, well, you see, David knows the guy who does the hiring for the B&O and had gotten Walter his job and gotten Leslie a job. You know, taken them down there and introduced them, recommended them etc. He would have no idea what kind of openings there were for clerks, but he figured that there might be something, maybe that they were hiring. So I went down, took the tests and applied and didn't think I was going to hear anything from the way Mr. Prior talked. Then I got a call the next day to go out for an interview with the terminal manager at the piggy, back ramp. And he sort of said, "Well I'll think about it and you think about it." And then he hired me.
- I. Was any of that because you were a woman? There weren't too many women when you first started to work?
- R. There was one woman who was already working at the piggy back ramp on one of the clerk's jobs. It had been previously all men. She'd gone out there and gotten a job as a stenographer and then bid on one of

the jobs; it was an outside job, too, a yard job. So the ice was sort of broken out at Forest Hill. While I was down there at the hiring office, Mr. Prior called out one yardmaster, and I heard him say, "But we have to hire these people if they have the qualifications." And the fellow said, "Well, does she have a car?" And he said, "No." And he said, "Well, I don't want her," He said that that was the reason he didn't want me out there, not the fact that I was a woman. No, the ice was sort of broken out at Forest Hill, although I think the terminal manager still wondered what on earth possessed a woman to come down and apply for a job as an extra clerk.

I. But it's real good pay? Better than what women would make as a secretary?

R. It is, yeah. And I explained that. As good as I would make as a first year teacher in fact.

I. Oh well, that's very good then. And you don't have to have college?

R. No, the requirements were: there was a minimum eyesight requirement; you, can't be color blind, and you have to meet a certain eye test. Your general physical health's got to be good. There's a real rinky dink kind of intelligence test, you know, can you add two plus two and work fractions and stuff. And there's a typing test. I don't type very well, and didn't. Twenty-five words a minute or something like that, but sufficient enough to indicate that you can type, They've been known to waive that for some of the clerks,

I. So what happened with the union after you got on the job? Did the union approach you or were you sort of automatically a member?

R. Well, I sort of expected that somebody would, especially since I knew that the local chairman was working in the same place. But I guess the union sort of stands back for the first thirty days, or maybe it's sixty even, I'm not sure. But there's a couple months period where you're not in the union and you're sort of on probation. And the union sort of seemed really aloof during that. period until management says O.K. Then they go ahead and give you your application and that. One of the people I was working with, in fact, one of the other women there, took me aside and said, "Well, have you ever worked in a place where there's a union before? You know, it's really different; you're going to like it." She'd worked in other offices, too, as a secretary and knew the kind of thing I was coming from as a clerk.

I. So it was new to her?

R. It had been, yes. And she knew the kind of situation where you have to look busy and you have to make the boss's tea and do everything he asks you. She sort of took me aside and said, "In so many days the local chairman will give you your application. In the meantime if you have any problems you can go to him if you think you're being discriminated against or there's any bullshit or anything."

I. She just did that on her own?

R. Yeah.

I. She wasn't delegated to do that?

R. No, absolutely not. It was just a very friendly kind of a thing to do, because I didn't know anybody and didn't know who the union chairman was or anything about it.

I. Did the company say anything about the union when they hired you?

R. No. I think they kind of take it for granted, There's been a union there for so long. I think maybe they might have said something about there'll be probationary period or something like that. It's sort of a formality unless they decide they really don't want you and they want to get rid of you.

I. So when your probation was up he brought you an application?

R. Right. And it was kind of strange too, because he brought me two time slips and he said, "Now, I want you to time slip these jobs." You see, if management does not fill the jobs according to the extra board, or if they don't fill jobs when they're supposed to fill them, if they screw up the technicalities: then the workers can put in a time slip and claim to be paid because of the fact that they broke the rules. If you could have worked a job and you didn't work the job, for example. And so he brought me these two time slips and he said, "I want you to time slip these jobs, because we're going to try and prove a point." And I said, "I don't think it's going to work," because I knew enough about the rules from talking to other people to know when you can time slip and when you can't. It didn't seem to me like I was within the rules. But he sort of seemed to want to demonstrate that the union was going to do this for me. Especially since he was asking me to shell out the initiation fee. I don't remember what it was, but it was going to come out of my pay check with the dues. So, I put the time slips in. I said, "O.K. if it's a test case kind of thing." And I got them back-rejected.

I. Who decided that it's rejected? The management?

R. Yeah. And when it came time to appeal, he said, "Well, why did you put these time slips in?" And I said, "Because you told me to." He had forgotten all about it. But I got the feeling that the whole thing was just sort of to demonstrate.

I. A little sample of union activity.

R. Um Hum. This is what you can do kind of thing.

I. Well did he say anything to you about union meetings or how the union operates?

R. No. Absolutely not. In fact I just happened to find the thing on the bulletin board that said there was going to be a union meeting. And I, never attended one. I've always been working when the meetings were scheduled. They have one meeting and it's always held so it's convenient for the day shift, which is of course usually the largest number of workers. But if you happen to work afternoon shift on the day that the meeting is held, forget, it. There's no meeting for the second trick at all. So I didn't know about the meetings and I still don't. I've never been to one. I've had other people tell me, "Oh, you're not missing anything, it's bullshit." On the other hand I've had other people say, "Oh come on now, it's not quite that bad."

I. But there's no newsletter or information thing?

R. You get a newspaper, an AFT thing for all railway unions. And you get a monthly magazine kind of thing, The Railway Clerk, that comes out. But as far as a local bulletin--no. The only thing I've ever gotten in the mail from the union, from the local people, is my membership card. And I recently got a thing just a couple of days ago asking me to send a contribution for the reelection of congressional candidate

favorable to labor.

I. Did it say who?

R. No. It just said we have to support our friends, the people who have supported legislation that we back, and send a contribution.

I. To the union?

R. They had a committee. Well I threw mine in the wastebasket. I didn't know anything about the meetings and it was a long time before I got a copy of the contract.

I. How did you get a copy of the contract? They gave it to you?

R. Yeah. I said, "Gee, don't we get a constitution or something?" And he said, "Well, they're out of print right now and we're having some more printed." And it was months! But I got that. And then, without warning one day, I guess, I got the copy of the contract in the mail. I said, "Oh, well what do you know?" That was about a year after I'd been working there; But, that was about it. I don't know much about the structure of the union, I imagine I could find out if I asked enough questions, but I think everybody would sort of take the attitude-- what are you nosing around for?

I. What about the protective committeemen? Do you have any contact with them? Do you know what they are? That's comparable to a shop steward, like a grievance--

R. Yeah, I haven't heard that name for them, but we have a person at the ramp that we can get in touch with. When I went out to Rockwell Street yard, there was a person out there who introduced himself to me immediately.

I forget his name now because I wasn't out there long enough. But, you know, like my second day out this guy introduced himself and said, "I'm the local griever here and if you have any problems, let me know." He was really on the ball. But the guy, out at the ramp is kind of a schmuck.

I. He doesn't do much?

R. Well, see, everybody at the ramp knows the local chairman personally because he used to work there, so everybody goes over the grievors head immediately **to** the local chairman. He's more apt to know the answer to your question anyway, whereas the fellow who's sort of our union representative on the job, he would only go to the local chairman. So, you're just cutting out a step by calling the local chairman directly.

I. I remember we talked about how the union was sort of non-existent in these formal kinds of ways, but you said that people really felt much more together because they had a union behind them.

R. Yeah, that's true. The older people, the people who have been around longer than I have, know more about the union. And there are people on the job, knowledgeable clerks, that I can go to if I have a question about the contract or my job or things like that. There really is a feeling of solidarity and you-can't-pull-this-because-we've-got-a-union kind of thing. It usually does not express itself formally; it tends to express itself in a kind of direct on-the-job action, If somebody feels that they're getting a raw deal from management, they will mark off and go home sick, for example. Or stop work and call up the local chairman right on the spot. Places where I worked before this was unthinkable. You either said yes and did it or you said yes and didn't

do it, you know. You wouldn't say, "Oh no I won't do that." Or, "You can't make me do that."

- I. Is there a lot of tension between the bosses or supervisors and the workers?
- R. Not really. It depends. Situations arise that cause tension. Things like when someone is being asked to do what seems to them to be more than their share of the work. Of course management is thinking in terms of getting the work done, and getting it done the fastest way possible, and the workers are thinking in terms of their own selves. You know, you can't dump all of this on me, You got to do it some other way. So that will cause tension. We're on first name terms with our bosses and there's pretty much friendship there. An occasional bantering, and the usual kind of talk behind the boss's back.

- I. What I was trying to get at was to what extent people saw it as two kind of classes. Because when you talk about unions and contracts, it sounds so clear, the bosses do this and the workers do that.
- R. That depends on the workers. There are some workers there that are very class conscious and very union conscious and there are others who sort of don't give a damn, unless it concerns them immediately. They don't see it in terms of a larger thing. They aren't thinking in terms of the bosses are trying to get us, the workers, to do this. They're thinking of--Don's picking on me today kind of thing. How people relate to it dependson the individual perspective. I'd say about a half or a third of the people there are fairly union conscious.

- I. This feeling of solidarity, that the union is behind them, do they

identify themselves as the union or do they think of it as a separate kind of thing? I say this because some one else I was talking to was talking about the better conditions they had won for a local and they had called a lot of strikes and things. And he said, we got a lot of cooperation from people on this because they knew that we had their best interests at heart. This was a union man talking about the union members. Is that the way it is or do people feel more positive than that?

- R. I don't know. Well, let me give you a couple of examples.' The women where I work had some complaints about the rest room. We have a real small bathroom with one john and no place to lie down if you feel ill, and that's the entire thing you know. Whereas the guys have a locker room with a table where they can eat lunch, lockers where they can store their stuff, plus the john with several facilities. So one of the women wrote a letter to the local chairman and circulated it for everybody to sign,, complaining about this and saying, "Will you go to management and approach them on this?" And privately they said to me, "Well, if they don't do something soon we're going to go up there and take over the men's locker room." But in that case that was a specific problem in which it seemed to be an advantage to go directly to the local chairman and have the union handle it. Whereas, on the job situations that arise, you know, every day kind of. a thing-- say the case where management was trying to get one clerk to do what he considered an unfair amount of work, and so he refused to do it and marked off sick and went home. So they turned to the next guy and they told him that he was now put on this job and he should do it, so he marked off sick and went home. It became quite clear to management that anybody they put on that job was going to mark off sick and go home,

People were sticking together in that sense. And on that case it was a question of the workers on the job dealing with the situation, knowing that they were backed up by the union.

I. That they weren't going to get fired?

R. Right. There was this mechanism behind them, but the action and the initiative was right on the job. And maybe if the local chairman had been there he would have wound up just mediating it and saying, "Well now, look, don't be unreasonable," to both sides. So I mean it works both ways.

I. You talked before about people on the job who are contract experts and who sort of act, I guess, in place of a union representative, Yeah, I'm not saying that the union representative doesn't know anything, but I'm saying that there are several people who have been around for awhile and who have made themselves familiar with the contract and the rules. Like the one fellow I'm thinking of particularly who works on the second trick. The grievor works on first trick and so on second trick, when I was first starting to work there, this fellow was sort of taking my education in hand and telling me, "Don't worry about that. Don't go any faster than this. Don't worry about the fact that all these people are lined up here. Just work at a comfortable pace. And, don't let them hassle you." In the same sense he can quote rules out of the contract. If I had a question and I couldn't find the answer in my contract or I had some question about it, I'd probably go to him. He is a knowledgeable person and his knowledge, which has, been built up over a period of years, has proved reliable in the past.

- I. What about things like union educational programs, political programs? Do they seem to have many of those or do you get any invitations to them or any news about them?
- R. I've gotten the newspaper and the magazine, which occasionally have political things relating to the clerks. They'll say we should all write to our congressman and ask him to back House Representatives resolution number such and such, and this is why. This is what it will mean in terms of our jobs. And this is the person who is heading the committee that this resolution is currently stuck in. But as far as social things, or meetings and stuff, I've gotten invitations to parties, and they were usually fancy dress affairs, where we were asked to shell out \$10.00 for dinner and show up in formal attire. Or, you know, then the invitations to the meetings, which are usually put on the bulletin board, we don't get individual ones.
- I. What were the parties like, honoring some particular person?
- R. Well, they had a party when they initiated officers, and it was like initiation with drinks and dinner afterwards. They tried to have a Christmas party. I don't think it got off the ground. Because I don't think that many clerks, that I know anyway, are interested in getting all dressed up and going downtown and eating dinner with a bunch of people they don't know. It's not a local job situation based social thing, it's the whole area. And I haven't gone to any of these things, because I don't care to get dressed up and shell out \$10 either.
- I. Do other people go?
- R. Well there are a handful of people, three or four maybe, who attend the meetings regularly. One of the women who works out there is

recording secretary or something, so if I really want to know what went on in the union meeting, I ask one of them. And usually I get nothing much.

I. They're probably the ones who go to the parties?

R. Yeah, maybe. Although I don't know, if they do I haven't heard anything about it. No, I've never heard anybody come back and say, "Oh, wow, you missed a really good party! This and that happened." If anything, they seemed to be cynical. But then cynicism, there's a lot of that about everything today. All of the structures. And while the union is on the job and vital, it is a bureaucracy, too, and people realize that. So people make jokes about the union just like they make jokes about management and they make jokes about the government,

I. But they do feel like the union is on their side? Basically?

R. That depends.

I. Really?

R. Yeah, like alright, when I first started working there, about the second day out you know one woman had told me about how great it was to have a union. And another woman worker started telling me about how they raised the dues without consulting anybody when they had gotten the new contract. They just automatically had it, when they signed the contract, raised the dues on the check-off. And she said, "Well, I complained to the local chairman, and I said, "Why didn't you tell us or ask us," and he said, "Well, what were you going to do about it?"

- I. Don't the members vote on the contract?
- R. I'm not quite sure how that works out now. I had a questionnaire asking what I thought were the priorities in the next contract. See, I haven't been there long enough. This was a recent communication. What priorities do you have? And there was room for you, to add things if they weren't shown. They dealt with pension, wage increases, standard of living increases, or cost of living increases rather, dental care and insurance. They had a six hour day proposal and a four day week, thirty-two hours, or four day week, eight hours a day proposal. They had space for you to indicate other things. But I haven't actually been there long enough to know how the contract's worked out. I don't know what it is, every three years. I'd have to look at the date in the last contract. But I do know that it seemed like this woman who had been there didn't know what all was coming off in this contract. If it was formally balloted and voted on, she was not aware that they were raising her dues and she was browned off. And she said, "Well what do they need the money for anyway, so they can throw more parties downtown!" So there was this little bit of bitterness.
- I. Is that just this one person or are there more people who feel like she does?
- R. I've heard cynical remarks. People feel that the union is a good thing but I think most of the strength of union is the on the job strength of people cooperating and the strength of knowing that you have The Union as a club. As far as relating to the structure of the union or how the decision making is going in the union, I don't think that people really do feel that we are the union.

I. Maybe you should just talk a little bit about the job itself. What do you do?

R. Well, I started out as an extra clerk. The first three weeks I was there I filled a vacant job while a woman was on vacation. Then I was trained for two or three days on just about all the jobs out there. The most important ones, mainly, the ones that are most apt to fall vacant and have to be filled. Then I was on call and they would call me out to fill a job for anybody who was sick or on vacation or off. And that meant then I was going out at all hours. I might be working inside, typing or filing, checking in bills for the truck drivers, since I worked the piggyback ramp. Or I might be working outside, checking trains in when they came in. Then as time went on I bid on jobs as they came open.

I. What does that mean? You just say that you want it?

R. Yeah, well everything in the railroads is based on seniority. And this again is largely the doing of the union. The young clerks sometimes grumble about this but the longer you're there, the better the job you can get. You bid on a job and if no one with more seniority bids on it, you get it. So each time a job comes open, they put it up for bid and they award it to the person with the most seniority who's qualified for that job. Management sometimes reserves the right to say who's qualified and who isn't. And I'm not sure if that can be contested. But I've known cases where they've said you can't bid on this job because you're not a good enough typist or whatever. so I bid on a job and got a permanent billing job. I was billing outbound trains, typing up a bill with the contents and destination and consignee of outbound trailers. Then I got bumped off of that job by somebody

with more seniority.

I. That was just a straight indoor office job?

R. Yeah, right. It was just almost all strictly typing. Then you stripped the bills down, carbon copies, tied them up and gave the copies to whoever they're going to. Well I got bumped off of that job, because they abolished a job over at Rockwell Street yard. That meant that, if they abolish a job, the person whose job is abolished has to bump somebody with less seniority than he has.

I. So he just goes and picks someone?

R. Yeah, whatever job sounds attractive to him. Of somebody who has less seniority. So he came over and he bumped me. And I didn't have more seniority than anybody, so I waited and pretty soon a job came open at Rockwell again and I went over there.

I. But that means, when that happens, you're just out of work?

R. No, when that happens, if you can't bump somebody, then you go back to your home base, like mine is Forest Hill. And you stay on the extra board there to be on call. Now I haven't known of a case where this hasn't happened. Everybody I know that's got bumped off a job; the railroad doesn't fire you; You just have to bid on each job as it comes open and in the meantime you're on call. Usually there's enough work for the clerks on call that you can get five days a week anyway.

I. Doesn't it create havoc sometimes? When people starting bumping people off jobs?

R. Well, yeah. We had one guy come back from the army and took his old

job back again and the bumping went all down the line so five or six people got bumped. And this went in succession you know. The person with the least seniority got bumped onto the extra board. And then when a job comes open, it starts all over again.

I. But people generally think it's a good system?

R. Again, the most grumbling is amongst the people with the least seniority. Because you get tired of being on call. And the person with the least seniority has to stay if a job can't be filled. Management can say, "You're going to fill the job." And unless you really have a good excuse, you know, like I've got a doctor's appointment, then they make you stay. And that gets to be a real drag. The person with the least seniority always gets the dirty end of the stick. So whereas I'm not too happy about that, somebody with fifteen or twenty years in is. Those are the people, too, who are more apt to have the union positions. But the job I'm doing now, I work a swing shift. I work one day, two afternoons and two nights. And during the day and the two afternoons I work at the counter, which means I have to check in bills for the truck driver and check out bills when they're going out. During the two nights I both do that and then check the inbound trains, which means

taking the truck and going out
in the yard and driving up and down the pads and writing down the
numbers of the flat cars and the trailers.

side 2 I. Why don't we talk about the people on the job. Let's start with age.

Are there many old-timers, people who have been there for a long time?

R. A few. Now let's see. one guy's retired since I started working there.

There's four or five people who are getting up towards retirement age. Will be retiring, say, in the next five to ten years. I'm not sure. Some of those guys, it's hard to tell how old they are. But there's a few real old timers who have been with the railroad for a long time. One guy in particular likes to bend my ear and tell me about how hard it was when he was starting out and how easy we clerks who are starting out now have it.

I. Because the work is easier?

R. Because, for one thing, the concepts of the jobs are a lot easier.

Because the economy is better; that seems incredible to us. But labor conditions in general are better. You know, the kind of thing where they would have to come down to work and nobody had all these telephones, so you came down and you sat in a room and you waited for your name to be called, and if it wasn't called you went home, And if it was called, then you worked. They had a lot more tasks put on them. A clerk might not only have to take a check of the train but he might have to help physically unload it or go and close the doors on the cars and there was a lot more physical work involved. They hadn't so much defined it in terms of--this is car department work, this is clerk work, this is switchmen's work.

I. Does he say things are better because of the union or just because life has gotten better in general?

R. Yeah, I think so. No, he doesn't really say things have gotten better because of the union as such.

I. Does he talk about the union much?

R. No. I don't think I've everheard him mention it. I mean I think that's part of the reason, for sure.

I. You mean it's part of the real reason but not part of his consciousness?

R. No, I don't think it is because he doesn't say, "You should be really grateful because of the struggle we had to go through and the things we won." It's not that kind of a thing at all. It's just, "Well, in the old days we had to do this and we had to do that."

I. The snowstorms were bigger?

R. Yeah, well, he's one of those too. And I had to walk sixteen miles to school.

I. Are there old timers around who do talk about the union or about the problems of organizing and the struggle?

R. Among the clerks, where I work I haven't heard any of that from anybody. There's a few younger people who will go into it a little bit but not the history of it. Now I think you hear more of that kind of thing from switchmen and conductors, and I don't come in contact with that many train crew men at Forest Hill. We'll have like one conductor come in on the yard engine. But when I was over at Rockwell, there was a lot more of that because it's a switching yard, a lot of train crews in and out. If I'd stayed over there longer, I think I would have heard more of that kind of thing. Because the old timers there have been involved in a lot of the struggles. I think there's more of a consciousness, amongst them because they are doing physical work, whereas there are some second generation people where I work. And I imagine if I were to talk to their parents, and hear their side of

of it, there might be more of that. A lot of the people who are clerks, their fathers were on the road crews. Or they were doing hard manual labor and becoming a clerk was a step up status wise. And I think there is sort of this white collar mentality amongst the clerks that puts the kibosh on some of the militancy that you might hear amongst some of the people who work with their hands.

- I. Is there status associated with being a second or third generation railroad person? Are people into that?
- R. Well, David could tell you something more about that. There is, , David maintains, and I agree with him this is true, a sort of fraternity amongst people who work for the railroad. And fraternity is the right word because it's largely a male thing. David says I'm the only woman he knows who's into it. And that's true of the women I know at Forest Hill with one exception. I should introduce her to David. But there is sort of a sense, and it's more amongst I think the levermen and the switchmen and the conductors, where you meet anybody else who's worked on the railroad. And it's, you know, "Oh, you worked on that line." Pretty soon you're swapping train wreck stories. And amongst the people who are second and third generation railroad people. You see it in the Chessie News, which is our railroad's management paper. Of course management likes to encourage this being proud of the fact that Grandfather also worked for B&O kind of thing. But there is this spirit of, yes, my grandfather worked here and my father worked here. And people will boast, I don't mean vainly, but they'll talk with pride about the places where they've worked and the kinds of jobs they've done. This isn't true amongst all the clerks. I mean to some of them it's just a job, and there

are people who come down and they could be going down to their office in the loop for all they care. It's a good paying job. And these people seem to drift into the paper shuffling jobs in the back of the office where you work from 8 to 4. Then there are the hard core fanatics at the other end of the office where I am. And these are the people who are willing to work weird hours to be involved with the physical process of billing the train or of taking a physical check of the train. They want that contact with the railroads.

I. And those are mostly men? There aren't many women with that attitude?.

R. Yes and no. I mean most of the people in the office are men, but most of the back office people are men too. Now this is funny, because they refer to us as the back office. But there's one, woman there who's second generation railroad and she was the first woman at Forest Hill to take an outside job. She would know what I'm talking about. But there is sort of a feeling of pride in the work, you know, even amongst the gumshoes. One of the B&O guards goes home and plays with his model railway set, you know. And trains are neat. There is a feeling like that. David waxes completely lyrical on the subject.

I Do people talk much about the economic situation right now, about Amtrack, about the future of railroads?

R. Yes and no. I mean there's a lot of talk about that in the paper, you know. Asking the federal government to step in and provide financing has been one of the things that the union has been pushing for. Basically, of course, where I am it's sort of different. For one thing, the Chessie system is making money, unlike many railroads, and unlike most eastern oriented railroads. I mean Chicago is the western most

point. Penn Central, for example, is completely broke. Most of the New England area railroads are bankrupt, whereas we're actually making money. Then I'm working at the piggy back ramp, with the piggy back service in containerized freight, and that's one of the most vital parts of the, railroad and I think the people there know it. There's less of a feeling that this is going out of date. There is a lot of talk about the economic situation, but it's usually more along the lines of, "I can't afford to put meat on the table every night." You know, the kind of general bitching that's going on about the state of affairs in the country as a whole.

- I. Do people look to the union to provide for them in case they're phased out, in cases like automation? Or do you know?
- R. I couldn't speak for everybody. Well, like we got into a conversation a few weeks back and we started talking about the economic state of the country and I was talking to several people and they were saying we've got to do something. We've got to change things. We've got to make a revolution is what they were talking about, although not in the sense of barricades and fire bombs. I mean they were talking about a major change is going to have to come to the country. And the terrible state the economics are in and talking about where can we, how can we do anything? . Where do we begin, you know. We don't have any power at the ballot box really. I said, "Well yeah, our power, it seems to me, is here on the job, you know, at the point of production." And people said, "Yeah, but the union's just another bureaucracy just like the government. We haven't got any power there either.". And that seems to me to be the attitude of most young workers. Now I don't know, I haven't talked to many of the older workers about this. Most

of the people I work with are young, and about half of them are black. And they have no illusions about the economic system. I can't see that they have any reverence for the union.

I. They don't look to the union? When they say that there has to be a change, they don't look to the union as being the vehicle for that change at all?

R. I don't think so, no.

I. Maybe even an obstacle?

R. Yeah, I would say. Well, I don't think anybody expects to be laid off. If it was a kind of a situation, where we were all facing imminent lay-off then I think people would look more to the union for either retraining, or they would expect the union to get separation pay from the company. Those kind of tangible things. But as far as the un-tangible, long range solutions, I think peoples reaction to "Do you look to the union? is "Oh Shit!"

I. What about the young black workers? Do you have much of a feeling that they might identify more with things like the struggles of the civil rights movement as a model as opposed to the labor movement? If you know what I mean.

R. Yeah, yeah.

I. I mean they have two alternatives before them as workers and blacks.

R. Yeah, well, the person who's most vocal on this, of the young black people I work with, very definitely is of socialistic inclination.

He will talk both of the struggles of the blacks and the struggles of the working class. And relates the two.

I. Does he talk about this at work?

R. Oh, yeah.

I. What do other people say?

R. Well it depends.

I.. Is he like a **kook**?

R. He's a little bit off the wall for other reasons. It's not the fact that he's a "crazy radical," although he is very militant and I think he sometimes turns off, the other blacks by being super-militant. But as far as economic ideas, I don't think people think he's off the wall at all. In fact I think most of the young black workers have no use at all for the capitalist system; And I mean they will say it in those terms, you know. They say capitalism is no good.

I. And they say that? What about the older people, how do they react?

R. I don't think they think of it in those terms exactly. When they talk about what's wrong, they'll talk about things like, oh, these damn politicians are all dishonest. And they look at it in a more traditional sense of, you can't trust any of these crooks. On the other hand they don't really have an ideology for change, I've heard people say, "Quite frankly, it doesn't matter if you vote for the Democrats or the Repuclicans, you're still going to get screwed." Stuff like that. But as far as identifying with socialism or identifying with a radical movement, they don't. They are afraid largely

of the blacks, They are afraid of the hippies.

I. Are they afraid of the young, radical workers on the job with them?

Or shocked by them?

R. No, I don't think so. Well yeah; I don't think they really relate to it. They accept it. I think that some of them are a bit, intimidated by black militancy, especially some of the older white men. They kind of don't know how to deal with that. But they avoid it by working on different shifts, or not palling around with the young blacks.

I. Do the shifts segregate themselves in some way?

R. To a certain extent, because the people who have got the most seniority are mostly on the day shift and they're white men. Whereas, you know, the younger people have less seniority and tend to be blacks and freaks to a certain extent. There's a good rapport between young black and young white workers, where I work anyway.

I. And the union is sort of just standing aside from all this?

R. Well, like I say, it's hard to define it. The union is a presence on the job, in the sense that the union gives people the courage to be militant. And the fact that we are formally organized into this union, the fact that it's there, gives people the strength to act together. Whereas, in a different situation, on a different job that wasn't organized, the main problem would be getting people to co-operate, And getting to trust each other. Here, the union is there so the trust is to a certain extent there. People seem freer to act out because that's an established fact. There is the union. And if you choose

to fight management, you know you're not going to get the sack individually. There will be people who will take your part. So in that sense the union is a presence on the job. As far as the union as a presence in society, or people feeling that the union is going to help make a better world, I don't think, really they do. It's an ambiguous thing. Like people bitch about bureaucracy and they bitch about where are all these union dues going. Most of the workers seem to think that as long as a decent contract gets turned out, and as long as we get a raise every so often they don't bother too much about the union. So, it's a vital presence on the job but generally, as far as relating to the structure of the union, or the concept of what a union could be, or ought to be, I don't think people do, don't think they really bother their heads much about it.