

**Grace Carlson
Narrator**

**Carl Ross
Interviewer**

**July 7 and 14, 1987
St. Paul, Minnesota**

CR: Okay, this is an interview with Grace Carlson in connection with the project On 20th Century Minnesota Radicalism. The interviewer is Carl Ross, this is on July 9th, 1987.

CR: Well, Grace why don't we begin by having you describe your earliest experiences. I believe you told me you were 80 and should have been born about...

GC: I was born in 1906.

CR: 1906.

GC: November, 1906.

CR: And where was your birthplace?

GC: St. Paul.

CR: Oh, you're a native all your life.

GC: That's right, well, I've lived in other places, but most of my life in St. Paul.

CR: Could you tell me a little bit about your parents.

GC: Well, my father was an Irish American, born in Wisconsin who was a worker all of his life. He worked at Booth Fisheries for a period of time, but most of his life was as a railroad worker. He was a boilermakers assistant and then a boilermaker for the Great Northern Railroad and we thought that was a great kind of a job, you know, we would go down to the shops to visit him and all of this type of thing. He was part of the strike in 1922, the shopman's strike, which was defeated and he had to go back to work which I remember seemed to me to be a very unfortunate kind of a thing, you know, and I'm told? where my so to speak trade union ideas came earlier, but at any rate, he went back to work and my mother used to make me walk down with him out to the Jackson Street shops because they had you know pickets there and she was you know afraid something might happen to him. But I, but I felt that this was wrong and I remember one time going to confession and saying that I have helped defraud the laborer of his wages, well of course the priest was completely confused about what I was talking about but anyway he decided I deserved an absolution you know. I picked up this pro-union and even pro-radical ideas kind of from two

sources. One was from my German uncle who was a, thought of himself as a real radical, thought of himself as a Marxist, although he didn't, he didn't join the Party you know, but he used to subscribe to the Daily Worker and he used to, his work was picking, getting watercress, there was a time when places now like Inver Grove where you have the Inver Grove College, that was a place that he went down and he would rent some of the streams and so forth where watercress was growing and he would pick water cress. I would go with him sometimes and then I would sometimes help bunch the watercress for, before he would sell it to restaurants and grocery stores and all of this type of thing. And on the news sometimes now when I think that I really didn't care for the watercress and now they charge 85 cents for it, or for at lunch? you know and I would like to have it, but at any rate I picked up some of this radicalism and, from him, so that I, when I came into this union struggle, my father had stayed out a long time, and they didn't have the kind of union benefits and so forth that they have now, so we had a pretty difficult time financially and so it was understandable that he went back, but as I said before it seemed to me to be something that was sinful, you know. But and then, that was one source of radicalism. Then I went to St. Vincent's School and we had sisters there who were from Ireland, born in Ireland and came to this country and they were of course very anti-English, very anti-English, I spent most of my schooldays explaining that my name Holmes was one that came from an ancestor who had come from England to Ireland and married an Irish girl and people were Irish ever since you know. But I carried the name of Holmes along with me all those years, of course all those years until I was married. But anyway I, they were, they were hostile to the British of course and I remember during WWI when I was in grade school, oh we used to sing songs like "I Didn't Raise My Boy to be a Soldier" and a lot of other songs that later were determined to be kind of seditious, so we had to, we had to drop them. But I started out on a kind of a anti-government position really very early in life. Then when I was, I was at the University, I graduated from St. Joseph Academies and St. Catherine's College, and then afterwards I went to the University where I got my Masters and PhD and I was awfully busy then with my [unclear] work, so I didn't have a lot of time to devote to radical causes although oh, I used to be part of student strikes and that type of thing.

CR: What year did you go to the University?

GC: I went to the U, I graduated from St. Catherine's in 1929 and then I went to the University in the fall of 1930, and I received my Masters the next summer and then I enrolled in the PhD course and I received my PhD in 1933. What was your discipline?

GC: My major was psychology and there was a minor in educational psychology. And I became extremely interested in science in those days you know and as a matter of fact there was kind of a background for a loss of faith in later years.

CR: Could we back up just a moment here?

GC: Yeah.

CR: I was curious when you mentioned your radical Marxist uncle, was he descended from the Minnesota 48-ers.

GC: No, he had come from Germany when he was, I don't know what you mean now about the 48-ers.

CR: Well, the first Minnesota Marxists arrived shortly after the revolution of 1848 in Germany and they left quite a substantial mark on Minnesota. I was curious if he came from that, through that experience.

GC: That's a possibility. The fact of the matter is, I really don't know how he became a radical, you know. I really don't know that. I know that by the time I was oh ages like 7 and 8 and 9, when he used to have his watercress business and I used to go and I, I was sort of in a way working for him, making little bunches of watercress and that kind of thing and he would talk a lot about, about radicalism and I, I was kind of sympathetic toward this despite the fact that of course the church view was anti-Marxist you know, except these sisters that I had who from Ireland, not the others, but the ones that were from Ireland, they tended to be kind of just anti-government in general, you know. So I developed a kind of, it's an attitude as much as anything. I did a little bit of reading in the Daily Worker that he would wrap around his watercress but it was mostly a kind of an attitude that I developed. My father wasn't, considered himself I suppose as kind of a Democrat and a Farmer-Laborite but he was not politically active or even very politically interested.

CR: By the way you didn't say anything about your mother.

GC: Well, my mother was a, she had relatively little education, but she was awfully interested in reading, however she was an invalid from the time I was quite young and I just thought she had some kind of an unnamed nervous disorder you know, but she really had Parkinson's and she actually died from that when she was only 49 years of age. So, but she had the greatest influence on my life in terms of making me interested in reading, and education and of being a kind of [unclear] woman if you can talk about it at this...

CR: Was she also Irish?

GC: No, she was German, and she was, she was extremely interested in oh, what used to be called kind of new thought. I don't know so much about that, but I know when I was just young, 10, 11 years old, I used to go to the library and get books for her. I guess new thought was kind of like you know what people were talking about today is how your mental attitude can have a great effect upon your physical being you know, and your health. And actually I was completely devoted to my mother and wasn't even very fair to my father in my early years. They used to have a lot of difficulties because they were really very different kinds of personalities, probably shouldn't have married [unclear] you know, but she was somebody who was more interested in reading and fads and trends and all of that sort of thing and he was, well it was lucky for us that he was in making a living so that we could go on to school. It took me a lot of years to be sufficiently appreciative of my father about that much, you know. I think in his later years, he realized that both Dorothy and I were more attached to him than we had been in earlier years. But in addition to my mother's just not being terribly sympathetic to, she had a couple of her German brothers living with us and he was practically supporting them you know and they of course since they weren't working, well one of them was working with this watercress for a while, but he lived there to kind of live off of us really. And then my other uncle, my uncle Henry wasn't, he would be off and oh off and on he got jobs painting, paperhanging, and that kind of business, but they had a lot more time than my father you know and could spend a lot of time with us and play games and all of this sort of thing so that I had an unfairly I had a lot more respect for them I guess than I did for my father, but I came to realize that at a later time in my life and after my sister was married, he lived with them and my

sister's husband worked for the railroad so that he had a kind of a companion who had some respect for him you know, and Dorothy's children, she had four children, were utterly devoted to him so it kind of evened out, you know.

CR: You had three brothers and sisters?

GC: No, I had...

CR: You had one sister.

GC: One sister, yeah, but she had four children and well as a matter of fact, they're still living in Madison, you know. So anyway I started out quite early as a what's the work, I don't want to really use the word radical because I wasn't actually that much of a radical, but kind of as a non-conformist, you know, with these different influences. Then I think I sort of you know prided myself on that as I went along. In a kind of a smart-alecky way, you know, I was different from other people, this sort of thing. So where are we now.

CR: Do you have any recollections of WWI?

GC: Oh, I remember WWI very very well because there were one of my good friends, her name was Helen Lash, her father, I really don't know what, I don't know what he was to tell the truth but there used to be these kind of America First groups, which didn't have that name, but they used to march in front of his house and oh, you know, it was kind of a, he was anti-American, well you know what the tempo of World War I was, anywhere people who even people who were German had to feel that they had to demonstrate their Americanism you know, so I, I had you know, immediate experiences with this, with the impact of this 100% Americanism and I didn't subscribe to it although I didn't do anything about it either in grade school or even in high school beyond the fact that I used to you know attempt to study oh, in sociology and courses like that, to study kind of the sociological left, which I didn't define that way, but you know I just, I liked to think of myself as being an independent thinker, and I wasn't all that much. I liked all the regular high school things that the other girls did but I did feel myself kind of as being different and independent, prided myself on, you know.

CR: Yeah, you're speaking of high school you're talking about the years immediately following the war.

GC: Yeah, high school was, in grade school, the war ended when I was in the 7th grade and I, at that time, I kind of associated myself with the Irish sisters who were glad the world, the war was over but they weren't [unclear] whether England won or not, you know, whether England's allies won, they were just glad that the war was over. I think that as a matter of fact that some of Sister Alberta [unclear] relatives in Ireland were involved in the anti-English activities there, you know, and there were lots during WWI, so anyway, I developed this kind of independent, I wouldn't call it a terribly conscious anti-government position but kind of a independent sort of position, I never saw myself as a great patriot you know.

CR: What St. Paul community did you live in by the way?

GC: Did I live in?

CR: Yeah.

GC: I lived near Grant Street on Lafond and I went to St. Vincent's which was up Lafond Street on Virginia. I didn't really go on to the Rice Street gangs you know. There were such gangs. My father used to be more closely connected with them I guess, he lived out on oh, I can't think of the name of the street, it ran parallel to Rice St. but I just can't think now of the name of the street there, but he and my mother used to meet out on the Rice Street bridge, he used to tell us about that, a good deal. How it could have been a romantic spot I don't know but it seemed that way to them you know at the time, but I, when I was in college I used to be kind of embarrassed by my closeness to Rice Street you know, at that time St. Catherine's was a much more upper class institution than it's...

CR: And Rice Street was very working class, a lot of railway workers.

GC: Low working class, you know, and I can remember one time we went on a kind of a, we went out to see the waterworks and we were on a bus coming back and the bus ran quite close to where I lived, but I, some of the girls were talking about oh isn't this a terrible neighborhood and all that so I rode down to Rice and University and walked back you know because I didn't want to be known as being part of this, I was embarrassed by it. But I was, well I don't know what I was going to say...

CR: So you came out of the University with two degrees, just in time for the Depression.

GC: That's right, I finished, I got my PhD in 1932 which was you know, the bottom of the Depression, so I was lucky that I got a job teaching there, I had been doing some teaching in my last year, but I was lucky that I got a job there, I was teaching how to study, effective study [unclear] and all of that type of thing so I taught there in 1933 and the fall of '33 and '34 and '34 and '35 and then...

CR: This was at St. Catherine's?

GC: This was at the University.

CR: After you taught at the University.

GC: At the University, yeah, I taught this study methods type of thing, and oh gol I used to have to have interviews with the people and I was supposed to work miracles. For example they would have the football players take How to Study you know, and then I was supposed to interview them and encourage them to study more. Good night, these boys were spending all of their time practicing you know, and they hardly had any time for studying, you certainly couldn't work miracles so it was a kind of a tough job. But in 1935 I got a job with the State Department of Education and that was because a Dr. John Bachwell who had been my thesis advisor at the University became the State Commissioner of Education and he wanted to bring people who were actually prepared academically and were not just political flunkies you know, so I got this job then in 1935 with the State Vocational Rehabilitation Department. Well, I was able to do all the, write scientific things about testing these people for their vocational and intellectual skills but when it came to finding jobs for them it was very very difficult. This was still the Depression and so I, and

this was the time of the 1934 strike, and my sister who had taken a degree in political science was taking degrees in political science became with the leaders of the union, of the Teamsters Union and so I used to go to meetings with her at the SWP headquarters, well it wasn't then the SWP, it was the Workers Party headquarters where they would, well they'd talk about the strike and then they'd talk about political events and so forth and I became, I became very interested in their program and in the people like Jim Stone? and the others you know, they seemed to be so much stronger characters than the politicians that I came to know in the Farmer-Labor Party, I joined the Farmer-Labor Party as an actual matter of fact and belonged to the 10th Ward Club and I used to go there but I wasn't you know terribly impressed with them, they seemed kind of weak minded people which was not entirely fair, but even so compared to the strength you know of the Trotskyists in the Workers Party, so I joined, I joined the well, oh, yeah, the Trotskyists went into the Socialist Party, you remember that, in 19...oh '35 I don't know, something like that so when I joined I was joining the Socialist Party in 1935, no I joined in 1936, yeah, that's right. I joined in 1936 and I belonged to the St. Paul branch which had more of the old round Socialists in it, but I was always more impressed with the Minneapolis branch and everything that they were doing you know. I, let me see, '3..., '36 I joined so that I was in the Socialist Party all of '36 and all of '37 and the, yes, and then in January of 1938...

END TAPE ONE, SIDE ONE

TAPE ONE, SIDE TWO

CR: Okay, let's begin.

GC: Now, so in 1936, I joined the Socialist Party and that was because the Trotskyists were in it. Then the Trotskyists were expelled from the Socialist Party late in 1937, I think it was. The Socialist Workers Party was formed in January of 1938 and I was at that founding convention. And joined the Socialist Workers Party, and was active in the Socialist Workers Party for '38, '39, '40, yeah. In 1940, I quit my job at the State Department of Vocation Rehabilitation and started to work fulltime for the Socialist Workers Party for a period of time I was living off of my oh, the money that I got when I retired you know, but I had, what is it you put money into some kind of...

CR: Well, retirement fund...

GC: Retirement Fund of some kind, so I lived on that for a period of time and then I was a plea organizer, like \$60 a week you know or something like that for a period of time. My husband had joined the Socialist Party also and was active in it and was also part of the Socialist Workers Party but then at one point, at one time he was told by some priest friend that he couldn't be a Catholic and a Socialist at the same time, so we were going in different ways, so then in, what was the year that we, we separated and he went home to live with his parents, I think it was in 1940, but he continued to be the attorney for the Teamsters Union and then he was one of the attorneys in our case you know, when we were charged with advocating the overthrow of the government with force and violence, that was because of the Teamsters, the people from drivers union had left the AF of L to go into the CIO and Togan[?] who was a good friend of Roosevelt was able to get him to start this case against the Trotskyists in the Teamsters Union and then of course to make it appear like a bona fide case that he'd have to also bring in some of the actual Party leaders. I was a Minnesota state organizer so I was brought into it, and of course Canon and Goldblum and all of these people

who were brought into it. My sister was too, but the case against her was dismissed at one stage of it. But I was, I was convicted under the Smith Act in 1941 and then we, we probably appealed the case with the support of the American Civil Liberties Union, Workers Defense League and so forth, but we lost the appeal. So that on December 31st, 1943 I went to the Hennepin County Jail and that was a rotten place to be in anytime but particularly on New Year's Day, you know, and for a few days there I didn't have any literature, anything read except the kind of junky stuff that was around the place you know. But then in a couple of days time my sisters and the others got together some books for me to read so then it wasn't bad, I didn't really mind it that much you know, just sitting around and reading all day long, having meals brought to you, wasn't really such a terribly bad life. But then on oh it was, it was a couple of, I was up there a week or so [unclear] before they made arrangements to take me to Alderson which was the Women's Prison in the country. I think at this stage that they...

CR: Where is it?

GC: What?

CR: Where was, what was the prison?

GC: Alderson, West Virginia.

CR: Yeah, right.

GC: Yeah, I think there's another female prison, I'm not sure, now there are a lot of women in Alderson through the peace movement, through the pacifist movement, and I had been contributing some money to them you know, they now have a house which they run in Alderson for visitors to stay in. At the time when I was there they didn't have anything like that. When my sister came to visit, she stayed with the chief medical officer who had become quite a friend of mine. I was, I was utilized, they didn't have many people who could even read and write you understand, so to have somebody who had a couple of degrees, oh they were just ecstatic over this. So I worked in the clinic, keeping track of appointments and all of this type of thing and then I began to take, to give mental tests. This was something that Dr. Stollan started and I was, I was very willing to take part in it because I used to read some of these records and here they would be giving these girls IQs of you know 60 and 70, that type of thing, which meant that when they went out of the prison these IQs would follow them and would be a great handicap for them and I remember that, I gave what we call objective tests as contrasted to linguistic tests you know and they were much fairer for people like this who had had only just a few years of schooling, I was shocked as little as I expected of some of those Southern states, we'd find, we had girls who couldn't even read and write you know and they had to take, they took courses in reading and this type of thing and I used to, I was put in, they used to call them cottages with a number of girls who had, who were there under the May Act and the May Act had to do with the molls? of the soldiers, they never did anything to the soldiers but they took these young girls who were mostly from Tennessee and North Carolina into prison for sentences for nine months, a year, that type of thing, and I used to give them, used to give them mental tests, a test was devised by somebody in the prison system in Washington and these were much fairer for them. I mean sometimes you'd find that a girl's IQ had changed from the linguistic of maybe 70 up to 95, something like that you know, and this was of course much better. So I was, we were talking about my prison experience now?

CR: Yeah, [unclear]

GC: That's where we're at.

CR: Yeah.

GC: Yeah, so I, you know, I felt myself as being awfully [unclear], I was the only woman in the case so I was all alone down there, these fellows were all together at that Sandstone or some of them at a, at a Connecticut prison, I can't remember the name of that. But at any rate, I, it was quite an education for me in finding out the real, the injustices that exist in this country for people who come from these backgrounds where they haven't had an opportunity to get much of any kind of education at all. One of the strange contradictions that I had while I was in prison was that I got to know a group of the German, the German spies actually that's what they were, in New York, who had somehow been connected with, with Germans who came in and they were supp... into this country from Germany and then their job was to I guess work with the [unclear] and groups like this you know to actually forward their Nazism really and truly, but...

CR: This was wartime now.

GC: Yeah, oh yeah.

CR: After the United States was in the war.

GC: Yeah, I know. And so I got to know some of these people and they were pleasant enough people, we had a music appreciation class and they were the ones who wanted to go to it and I you know went to it too. So I kind of got to know them. I stayed away from politics you know because I would have broken up some friendships pretty fast, although I don't know, when I think back on it I don't know how devoted these people were to Nazism or more just to nationalism. They were kind of like German patriots, you know, that kind of [unclear], loyal to their families and all of this kind of thing. I certainly, I certainly learned a good deal from this mental testing that I did about the inadequacies of our educational system I'll tell you that much. One time they, somebody from the Washington office of the prison system come to, to watch me do testing to see if it was appropriate, to see if I was functioning properly and we had a meeting afterwards with the officers and [unclear] and they used to always call me by my first name, that was a rule there in the prison, that they called people by their first names, but he called me Dr. Carlson all the time which I just thought was such a kind of generous professional thing to do, you know, and they couldn't even answer that, they just kind of, just, turned to look at me and didn't call me Grace at all you know. But anyway this was, this experience in prison just deepened my conviction actually that this was just an unjust system you know, the whole capitalist system. And what it did to people. So when I came out, I was you know, even more convinced of the evils of the capitalist system and after I had finished, I had to finish a few months before I could go out of the city and out of the state and that type of thing, I was on good time I guess that's what you call it. And then I went on a national tour speaking on women in prison and having had a kind of an interesting time with that, sometimes people who have been there come up to talk to me afterwards you know and I would just reinforce their convictions that they had had a bad, bum rap you know.

CR: How long a term did you sit?

GC: It was 16 months, so it was a 16 month term.

CR: You served 16 months.

GC: No, I served 13 months, that's the way that kind of stuff goes, with the good time in there. So I, but I had to, I had to stay out of anything public until the end of the 16 months, but as soon as that was over, I'm repeating myself now, as soon as that was over then I went on this national tour.

CR: Who sponsored this tour?

GC: What?

CR: Who sponsored the tour, under whose auspices did you travel.

GC: You know I'm not sure now if it was the Socialist Workers Party or the Workers Defense League or just what. I'm not completely sure now or whether in different times it was under different auspices. I'm not completely sure about that, but I spoke on very frankly about my continued support of the socialist movement.

CR: What year would this have been now?

GC: This would have been in 19...I got out of prison in January of 1945, so it would have at, in June and on through the summer and part of the fall.

CR: Peace time now.

GC: Huh?

CR: It's already peace time now.

GC: Yeah, yeah.

CR: The war was over.

GC: Yeah, so it was not as hazardous then as it was in an earlier period, you know. But 1945, I went, I think I went to New York as soon as I finished my good time, I went to New York as the New York organizer...

CR: For the Socialist Workers Party.

GC: Yeah, uh huh, and I was there until the next summer I think it was when I, you know, I went on this tour...let's see I went on the tour in '4...I got out in January of '45 yeah, I went on the tour like starting in June of '45 and I was on it until kind of in the fall. I went back to New York for a little while but then it was decided that I would run for United States Senator from Minnesota and so I came back in '46 and did run and got, for those days, a fairly respectable number of votes you know.

CR: That was when Humphrey was still mayor of Minneapolis I think.

GC: Yeah, yeah.

CR: He didn't run in that election.

GC: Huh?

CR: Humphrey did not run for Senate in that election.

GC: No, no, I can't even remember, I think it was this old timer, who'd been there since 1922 or something, I can't think of his name now.

CR: Well, we'll check that.

GC: But, then in 1946, I ran for Senator and then...

CR: You said you got a fairly substantial vote, how many was it?

GC: Well, I think it was like 11,000 or something, at least it was higher than the CP vote was you know which we thought was pretty good you know, and that was, oh I got these figures written down someplace but it was a fairly respectable vote for a minority kind of candidate. Then in 19...let's see what did I do, '46, oh yeah, I ran for Senate and then I think I, I'm just not sure, '47, I think I stayed in Minnesota. In 1948 I ran for Vice President with Farrell Dobson running for President and of course that took me all over the country again you know, and I think on each of these trips, I went to Mexico to visit Natalia Trotsky and stayed you know for a little while, gave a speech to some Mexican workers which had to be translated inch by inch so it was a pretty unsatisfactory kind of a situation. '47 then I think I was in Minneapolis, '48 as I said before I ran for Vice President. '49 and '50 I was still here. '50 I ran for 3rd District Congress I think, yeah I think that was in 1950 and then in 1952 I left the Party and returned to the Catholic Church, that was in June of 1952 and then I, oh I had a hard time getting a job but I was finally, and tried several little things. I was finally given a job in the, in the what do they, in the Pediatrics Department over at St. Mary's Hospital. I was clerk in the Pediatrics Department and then later Gilbert went back together again. I had a difficulty there because his mother wanted him to stay home you know, but we, Father, as a matter of fact she called Father Cowie and told him she thought this was wrong and of course he scolded her about not respecting Catholic marriage and all of this type of thing. So, but in 1955 then, I got a job with the school, that was the School of Nursing at that time, later it became the Junior College and I was working, I taught there until I finally retired in, well, when did I retire, '72, but I used to keep going over there to work with the alumni for years after that you know.

CR: This was the School of Nursing where?

GC: Well, at St. Mary's Hospital in Minneapolis.

CR: At St. Mary's Hospital, right.

GC: It was the School of Nursing at first and then it became an independent junior college later and so I was associated with the foundation of the junior college, I wrote the plans, St. Mary's plan for it. So I was very closely associated. I still am with many of the people over there, although now it has come back under St. Catherine's again, so it's not quite the same as it was. Okay? That takes me...

CR: That gives us a story to fill in.

GC: Yeah.

CR: But without having a framework we wouldn't have a structure for this, so I think you've done very well on that respect. It suggests many questions to me. Going back quite a ways here, you identified your first beginnings with the radical political activity with the formation of the Socialist Workers Party. You said you went to a convention, was that a state convention or a national?

GC: No, that was a national convention, that was held in Chicago in January of 1938, '38 yeah, that's the founding convention. So you had already been active for...

GC: So I what?

CR: You had already been active long enough to deserve being sent to the convention.

GC: Oh, yeah, oh sure, although I went under, I ran into some...

CR: This was in the Socialist Party in St. Paul.

GC: Yes, yeah, although I ran the risk of having trouble with my job because in the State of, employment you weren't supposed to be active in politics which was pretty muddy because all of these guys were behind the scenes active in politics and all of the...well you know what that was like, yeah.

CR: Well you were saying that there was a great deal of difference between the Socialist Party and the activities in Minneapolis. What kind of difference do you mean, could you describe the St. Paul organization?

GC: Well, the St. Paul organization was made up pretty much of old timers who had been in the Party for many many years and most of them were, were just kind of talking socialists, I mean they didn't go round to unions, in some cases it wasn't possible, they didn't have the kind of jobs that permitted them. Although when the Trotskyists came in we forced some of these people into unions you know, because we said you simply couldn't possibly be a responsible radical and not be part of the trade union movement.

CR: Yeah, well, there was a long tradition already of socialist leadership in St. Paul in the trade unions going way back to the early 20's. Had those people disappeared from the scene like Mahoney for instance?

GC: Oh, Mahoney, he became the mayor of St. Paul and he lost all interest in socialism, although I think on kind of special occasions he'd 'I have always considered myself...' you know that kind of stuff. But who are the other people. Cause none of them were around then.

CR: I don't personally know who they were.

GC: The people that we knew who came through, there were relatively few, Carl Pemble was one, and he was, he was a chemist and not in a position to join a union really. And I can hardly

remember the other names. They were not real trade union minded people, in some cases they weren't able to be, but in other cases they just didn't care, they just really didn't care you know, I mean socialism for them was much more a talking type of a thing and passing out oh, a few pieces of literature and the socialist...

CR: The Socialist Call or...

GC: No, it was then The Appeal I think, maybe it was the Call, I'm not sure, I'm just not completely sure at that time, there were a lot of ups and downs there in the Socialist Party you know...

CR: This also was before Mulford Sibley's time.

GC: Well, I knew Mulford Sibley through my sister who was a graduate student in political science you know, and knew him quite well and I...

END TAPE ONE, SIDE TWO

TAPE TWO, SIDE ONE

CR: Okay, sure.

GC: Okay, my sister was a student of Mulford Sibley's and she knew his wife and I knew his sister-in-law who was employed at St. Mary's, I can't think now just exactly what department she was employed in, but I knew her, now do I have this mixed up...was she ever employed there or did she just come to know...we had a kind of a group that would kind of meet and talk and that may be all it amounted to you know. Sibley's wife I think had a job at Macalester if I'm not mistaken, yeah I'm pretty sure that she did.

CR: Well, Sibley was for many years the kind of Minnesota representative on the National Committee of the Socialist Party or was this largely after that time?

GC: I think this was after that time. He was, he wasn't, I'm not sure now whether he was identified as a socialist official, or not, you know, I remember one time we had him speak at some kind of a club that we had of students who fancied themselves as sort of liberal and radical you know. We had him speak over there and he used to speak, he used to speak in many places. He was violently attacked by this Council member, remember that, or you don't remember maybe. But there was a Council member who was very hostile to radicals and particularly saw Sibley as an example of somebody who was undermining the morale and intelligence and everything else of Minnesota students you know.

CR: Yeah, that was the St. Paul City Council.

GC: Yeah, I just can't exactly remember his name now, but at any rate Sibley was, he was more active as I think back on it, with student groups than with any union or any of this type of thing. I may be doing him an injustice but that's the way I remembered, that his activity was...

CR: So there was a very small St. Paul group.

GC: Oh, very small.

GC: Disconnected from the labor movement.

GC: Yeah, very small. And you know as I said before they were kind of social socialists you know who used to like to have parties and picnics and that type of thing.

CR: Let me ask you this question which you may not have any real knowledge of personally. The formation of the Communist Party in 1919 period to the early 20's, I thought was based to a very substantial degree on St. Paul support. There was apparently quite a large group, I really don't know for sure. Do you think this kind of wiped out the Socialist Party in St. Paul.

GC: Well, that could be, that could be. It could easily be that a number of the left wing socialists went over to the CP, you know, that's quite possible. I'm not sure, I know that people that I knew like Vince Dunn and people like this, they came from the IWW. They hadn't, and then they went into the Socialist Party when the Trotskyists went in you know, but they hadn't been active in the Socialist Party before.

CR: Well, the impression you had then of the Minneapolis Socialist Workers Party, is it, or the Workers Party...

GC: Yeah.

CR: In this case the combined the Socialist Workers Party, this was a stronger and larger more active group.

GC: It was much larger and it was much more based on trade unionists and it was just a much more interesting group. I know that we used to resent going to the St. Paul meetings when we had these old time socialists there because it just wasn't interesting you know, and sometimes we'd go over to Minneapolis to their meetings, not only their branch meetings but even their educational meetings and trade union meetings and all of this type of thing. It was a much more lively and interesting group and a group that was interested in propaganda and in increasing membership.

CR: Now, this was about four or five years after the Truckers Strike...

GC: Yeah, '3...

GC: Had the Socialist Workers Party been able to increase its membership or develop a substantial membership support in that period?

GC: From the Truck Drivers, from the strike? Well, if we included quite a few people, cause a lot of these were people that didn't really have a truly basic interest in Marxism, their interest was what the Marxists could so to speak do for them in the trade union movement and for example in the Minneapolis branch, a lot of the people who came in from the union would go to the trade union kind of a caucus meeting which was held like every month, something like that, they would go to that and wouldn't go to the branch meetings.

CR: This was a general city wide caucus membership.

GC: Yeah, it was a citywide membership and as I remembered we used to be so mad at that that these people who had and many of them you know got jobs as organizers with the, with the 574 and 544 and they confined their support just to this trade union kind of [unclear]_.

CR: What about in other industries or other unions?

GC: The Trotskyists?

CR: Outside of the drivers.

GC: Well, the, there was some from the...I think there was part of the UE, the main part was CP you know, as you know, but I think there were a few places where Trotskyists had jobs and they played a certain kind of a role.

CR: This is getting into the late 30's now.

GC: Yeah, after the, long after the strike and after the consolidation you know.

CR: Was that Local 1130.

GC: Yeah, Helen, Helen Schere was one of the members of the Party. She's somebody who became a socialist when she was a student in oh what is that left-wing school down in Nebraska or...

CR: Was that Communist? Communist College?

GC: No, no that was down in Arkansas. This was in, she took a kind of a course that sent her to these different places and one of the places was this in, gosh I can't think whether it was Nebraska or, well, it doesn't make too much difference. But at any rate she became, she came back and became and began working at well...one of the plants that was organized by the...

CR: UE.

GC: UE...but apparently she came, this must have been one that the CP didn't have very much control, cause she became quite prominent there, and so she brought in you know some people and there were, there were people from the railroad unions, quite a few. From the Brotherhood of...the BLE and also from the firemen's. And they formed, they at least tried to form and it went, fall to pieces, they tried to form another railroad union, what did they call that. That had a headquarters downtown Minneapolis, it had to have all the crafts in it you know, all the crafts as well as the engineers and so forth. But that later folded up. And there were some oh, there were Trotskyists in some other different unions like the UAW, Art Hopkins was in that, and you know they were spread around in the different unions, but the concentration of course was in the drivers you know. But the general idea was that people were supposed to get jobs in places where they could try to unionize the people, that was the general idea, and I remember the fights we used to have with some of the young guys who'd come from New York and they wanted to come out here to be advisors, you know, and teachers, whereas the other people wanted them just to go out and be workers someplace and join a union, you know and a lot of them fell by the wayside, they didn't want to be workers really.

CR: [unclear] what is your feeling, if you have any sense at all of this, of the role of the Trotskyites in the organization of the CIO in Minnesota, or the organization of AF of L unions for that matter in that period from '35 to '40.

GC: About the role of the Trotskyists?

CR: Yes, how successful do you feel they were in developing the organizing movement of the time.

GC: Well, they weren't terribly successful but that was a lot the fault of the CIO. I mean they were dealing with [unclear] Lewis and I don't think that he was the greatest trade union leader in the world you know, and I think that they just got kind of shunted out sort of. And weren't able to be very effective at all and they, in the, in those later years of the 30's, they worked awfully hard at trying to get into some of the plants and all the rest of it, but they weren't successful. They're big area was in [unclear] the Teamsters.

CR: Yeah, so the Teamsters Local 574, was a force in the labor movement and made substantial contributions to this...

GC: Well, they did in the sense that sometimes people were working someplace and trying to unionize and the drivers would refuse to deliver there, you know, stuff like that. So they really tried very hard to help with organization.

CR: So kind of an auxiliary supporting role rather than inside of the new unions that were developing.

GC: Yeah, and I think that you could say that the Trotskyists and what they did for the drivers union represented a very important force in unionizing Minnesota, especially unionizing Minneapolis and St. Paul to some extent.

CR: The membership of the Socialist Workers Party was confined almost entirely to Minneapolis-St. Paul.

GC: Yes, there was a branch in Austin for a period where they had people from the packing house union, but that, that kind of folded up because one of the leaders there, Joe, I think his name was Joe Almond, he developed tuberculosis or something and became, he was quite ill and I guess died [unclear]. Now I see in the Militant that there's a branch in Austin again, so whether that means that they are getting into the, into Local P-9 again, I really don't know, I don't know. I just kind of assumed that they must, feel that they have some contacts there, obviously if they could have a branch you know, they must have some contacts in P-9 because what other unions would there be for them...

CR: No, that's it.

GC: ...in Austin.

CR: Looking back on all this, what would be your feelings about the position that the Socialist Workers Party and the Trotskyites had in relation to the Farmer Labor Party in that period?

GC: Well, the, they, they had a kind of a, kind of a mixed up position in a way, I mean in one, in one sense...

CR: They advocated a pure labor party and they were not happy with a farmer labor party.

GC: Yeah, yeah, well, and in one sense while they were in general for the Farmer Labor Party, a good deal of the time was spent in criticizing it, you know and in criticizing some of the activities, well and I don't think, I don't think that the Party had people in the, well, I know they didn't have people in the...

CR: In the Farmer Labor Clubs...Farmer Labor organization...

GC: ...ward clubs, ward clubs, that's what I was trying to say. As, because of union membership they of course took part in some of these things you know and the unions exerted a certain kind of an influence in the Farmer Labor Party but there was those, there was always this feeling that it was kind of a second or third rate activity you know.

CR: It appears that the Communists who actively worked with and in the Farmer Labor Party had a political edge...

GC: Oh, very definitely.

CR: ...in this respect.

GC: Yeah, definitely, now in the 3rd period, you know, 3rd period, the Communists were very hostile to the Farmer Labor Party...

CR: Until '32 or '33.

GC: And then they moved [unclear] you know and then the situation was different and they played a very big role in an awful lot of the activities and were able to get a lot of people into employment. For example I know that in the education department, they got a job for Shields, that's James Shields.

CR: James Shields, right.

GC: And he was, his brother Art Shields you know, and he was of course a very active CPer and I think that the general idea was that they vote to do a lot of oh placing of people, as a matter of fact, I was one of the people who alerted John Raquela to the fact that the CP was coming in you know, and so he was after that more cautious about accepting recommendations from Shields, you know. You knew that didn't you?

CR: I wasn't here at that time.

GC: Oh, you weren't.

CR: I knew Jim Shields later. I left Minnesota in early '37 and I didn't return 'til '46.

GC: Oh, well, you were gone for a lot of this.

CR: So I was out in very interesting years.

GC: Yeah, yeah.

CR: But really one of the intriguing problems of the history of the period is this question of the role that the left wing played in both the trade union movement, the CIO, AF of L for that matter and the Farmer Labor Party and the relative strengths and activities of the Communists and the Trotskyites and the [unclear] of the policies they followed.

GC: Yeah.

CR: I think that both organizations and both movements were pushing for industrial union organization.

GC: [unclear], yeah.

CR: Both were supporting essentially basically forms in the workplace, but the differences were very marked in relation to their attitudes towards the political activities of the trade unions and the Farmer Labor Party.

GC: Yeah, I know that.

CR: It might not have been that much difference, there wasn't that difference before 1934 I would say when the, which was the period in which the Communist Party made a rapid switch toward collaborating with the Farmer Labor movement and in a sense it paid off, I would say in terms of their abilities to organize workers and in terms of their political influence.

GC: Yeah, I think it did too, I think, I think in this respect the SWP was not sufficiently awake, not sufficiently awake to what [unclear] could be accomplished by left wingers within these different movements you know, and within especially within the Farmer Labor Party. I'm sure that they weren't and I, I can recall that we you know, who were just the [unclear] people, used to look kind of with a jaundiced eye on some of the unionists who were getting too involved with the Farmer Labor party and this kind of business which was a narrow attitude.

CR: Yeah, so the SWP actually resisted their own labor people being active in the Farmer Labor Party.

GC: Yeah, they really did to some extent. I don't know if it ever was, you know like a stated sort of a thing, 'don't get to be too active', but pretty much you had more respect for those who were coming to the Party activities and taking part in these things you know, that kind of thing, true Party worker, we'd call them.

CR: You say that you became the state organizers for the Socialist Workers Party in around 1940?

GC: Yeah, let's see, 194...well, I retired, I resigned from my job in 1940 and that, and then I went on to become a, an organizer in the Party. There was a lot of trouble for poor Rockwell, he was the

Superintendent for Education and he had been my advisor and was a friend and all of this, and there was a lot of publicity in the paper. I still have these clipping around someplace about how I had you know left my job to work for the Socialist Workers Party. And then they began to investigate him as a matter of fact as to why I had been employed for such a long time. And there were all these hearings. He was finally fired, Rockwell, from his job as Commissioner and got a job, I guess at New York University, I've forgotten exactly what it was now, you know, but yeah, there was a great deal of enormous? about Stalinists and Trotskyists in the, in this state you know.

CR: Right.

GC: Yeah.

CR: What, what was the membership of the Socialist Workers Party in 1940 say?

GC: Well, on the books I suppose we'd, well the Twin Cities now, on the books I suppose that there were as many as oh 200, 250, 300, but in actuality it was down closer to 75 maybe, you know if you're talking about people who came to meetings.

CR: Yeah, I'm familiar with the problem.

GC: Yeah, oh yeah.

CR: And largely in the Twin Cities, mostly Minneapolis in fact.

GC: Uh huh.

CR: Maybe I should back up here a little bit, one of the interesting influences in the labor movement throughout this period from the mid-30's up into the '40s was the Labor Education set-up.

GC: The what?

CR: Labor Education.

GC: Oh, Workers Education.

CR: Workers Education, this was a WPA program in its origins.

GC: Yeah.

CR: I think that there had been some Communists and some Trotskyists active in it...

GC: A lot of them got jobs [unclear]_

CR: Was Willie Creo one of the teachers, instructors?

GC: Warren Creo was a Party member as you know.

CR: Right.

GC: He was, he, I don't think he ever taught for the WPA, no I'm quite sure he didn't. He had some kind of a job with some sort of a hearing aid company of some sort. He was quite interested in that sort of thing. But he, no, he wasn't a teacher there. But Max Goldman was a teacher...

CR: Who?

GC: Max Goldman, and well, my sister was a teacher.

CR: That Dorothy.

GC: Yeah.

CR: Was she married then, Dorothy Schultz?

GC: Yeah, yeah, uh huh, well there's some of the others who were teaching, I can't remember all their names now, but quite a few were actually teachers in this WP you know. What'd they call it, the W...Workers, WE.

CR: It was the Workers Education Program.

GC: Program, WP, something like that, yeah.

CR: What kind of an impact do you think this had on the Minneapolis-St. Paul...

GC: I think it had a big impact, I think that some of the trade unionists who took these courses for really like for their own advancement, public speaking, different things of this kind. I think that they did pick up some skills and some ideas that were out beyond this little narrow craft union thing, you know, which was a real affliction in St. Paul were the craft unionists were pretty much in control. But I think that a number of these leaders almost despite themselves learned more both technically and generally than they perhaps even realized. I think Workers Education had a solitary effect on the labor movement in the Twin Cities, I really think it did.

CR: Yeah, I would agree with that.

GC: Yeah.

CR: I think Johnny Jacobson was the...

GC: Oh yes.

CR: ...was very very actively prominent. I don't know who the director was, I forget.

GC: Oh, Johnny was, I liked Johnny so much and we stayed friends just, despite the fact that I knew that he had gone over the CP you know, but he and mostly I didn't have many friends in the CP you know, but he and, we stayed friends and I stayed friends with his family, he had some awfully cute little kids and all this. And he was always having financial problems of one kind or another. What finally happened to Johnny?

CR: Well, he became the political action director for the state CIO as you know and as such was very active in the Democratic Farmer Labor Party until '48 and I...

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TAPE TWO, SIDE TWO

CR: [unclear]

GC: Was that for that cooperative...

CR: No...

GC: ...not Lidman...

CR: No, this is not the, that's Mutual, Mutual Life, no this was a private agency run by a guy named Blont, Johnny was a very successful insurance salesman.

GC: Is that so?

CR: He had a lot of friends in the labor movement. He also did tax returns in the, at the CIO Hall...

GC: Oh yeah...

CR: ...and made a living this way, that was a probably a little bit earlier. As a matter of fact, he died while still in the insurance business.

GC: Oh, is that so, I wonder what happened to his, yeah, I guess his kids were probably not involved in the Party, I'm not sure...

CR: I don't know of any connections.

GC: No, I don't think so.

CR: His wife was and remained active in the Teachers Union but I also lost touch with what she may have been doing up to date. We should probably seek her out and talk to her at this point, and see what she has to say.

GC: Sure, cause she did have an awful lot of contacts? all the way around you know, both, just, the Farmer Labor and the CP, SWP, they had lots of contacts.

CR: Then Humphrey came into the Workers Education Program, didn't he?

GC: Who?

CR: Hubert Humphrey?

GC: Into Workers Education?

CR: Did he?

GC: Not, not to my knowledge. He worked for, I don't know...

CR: Let me check that out, I have an impression he did.

GC: He may have, I didn't know much of what he did before he became mayor of Minneapolis you know, he, he wanted to be above the CP, SWP struggle as far as I could make out you know.

CR: Yeah, he must have talked to the Trotskyites.

GC: Oh yeah, oh sure, yeah, and with some of the trade unions, sure he did, of course he did, but I don't think he ever associated himself with any.

CR: No, I think he was careful not to become involved with the left. He was willing to accept a degree of their support but that was about it, along as it advanced his own career.

GC: Yeah, that's right, I know that. He was, he was, I'm trying to think of a word, I don't want to call him an opportunist cause I really think he always was on the side of the workers more or less, you know, more or less, but he was very interested in his own career, very interested in his own career, and I think as time went on as he was becoming more interested in a national role, he might have become less friendly to the radicals you know.

CR: Well, by 1950 he had accepted what's become known as the pro-war[?] liberal approach, that colored everything he did from that point on.

GC: Yeah, hm hum.

CR: I was going to ask you your impressions of the Benson administration.

GC: Benson?

CR: Were you here? I think you were here through that period.

GC: Oh, yes, I would say so. I think it was Benson who fired Rockwell if I'm not mistaken.

CR: Hmm?

GC: Yeah, well, I think Benson was somebody who was sincerely interested in working for the benefit you know of the workers and farmers. I think he was sincerely interested in it, but I think that he got a lot of advice that he couldn't and a lot of this I think came from the CP, that he couldn't handle. I don't think he was awfully smart guy, I speak as a psychologist, IQ-wise you know, and I think that he got himself into some kind of difficult positions because he wasn't able to untangle all of the different movements and the people connected with all of the...what did you think of him? Did you know him?

CR: I didn't know him then, and I didn't get to know him much ever as a matter of fact, but I, and I wasn't here during the latter part of his, the last year and the reelection campaign, that was the last

year of his term in office. No, I thought and I still believe that Benson was a man of singularly strong principle...

GC: I would say the same thing.

CR: And he...

GC: Yeah, I would say the same thing.

CR: He, I think in a sense got lost in the kind of political life that politicians need to lead. He didn't know how to compromise and he was unable to deal with situations that arose in his administration. I think in retrospect that he got, he did get boxed in, kind of left positions of left issues...

GC: And I think that he let some people around him, and I don't mean just the CP, but a guy like Vince Day, did you know Vince Day?

CR: No, did you?

GC: Yeah, I did know him, and he was I think he was the kind of a guy who played different sides, you know. He once called me over to see him, this was in the middle of a lot of the troubles that Rockwell was having and oh, he got off some stuff like now you and I are Irish and we know politics and Rockwell doesn't, you know, and we have to save him from himself or I don't know, a lot of this kind of thing. He was oh I liked him just because I like Irishmen you know and I like Irish politicians and I didn't even mind the fact that he was kind of double [unclear] in some respect, you know I kind of appreciated the fact that in that kind of a job it was pretty hard to be 100% outspoken honest kind of a liberal, you know. But I think that, that Vince Day created problems for Benson. I can't remember now whether, how long did he stay on with Benson?

CR: I don't know.

GC: Yeah, see he had been on with Olson.

CR: Yeah, he was the closest Olson associate and I would suppose got along very well with Olson's political flexibility which was much greater than Benson's, that's for sure.

GC: That's right.

CR: I didn't know, I wasn't really aware that Day played a substantial part in the Benson administration.

GC: That...

CR: That Vince Day was really influence...influential in the Benson administration.

GC: Well, I think he was, I really don't know too much about this you know, because I wasn't you know a confidant of his exactly although he liked to think that he could work through me with Rockwell you know, this kind of business. But I think that Vince Day had played a, certainly an

extremely important role in the Olson administration, almost the Chief Executive. And I think he had some influence on Benson up until the time that his advice would, would conflict with Benson's sense of rectitude, you know, and he was a very upright kind of a guy, I think, Benson, and I think that Day just seemed a little too kind of sneaky for him. Which he probably was. Now, I, was it Benson who appointed Day as a judge, maybe it was, you know, it could easily be, a judge in Minneapolis.

CR: I don't know.

GC: Yeah, yeah, I think it was.

CR: The period in which Benson was governor was certainly a difficult one and it took a good deal of political skill...

GC: Yeah.

CR: Olson had that kind of skills and survived some very tough situations. Benson was way out front on labor activities, he was subject to criticism for his forthright support to labor...

GC: Yeah, yeah.

CR: ...in some significant strikes, not least of them the Timberworkers, if I recall correctly.

GC: He what?

CR: The Timberworkers Strike.

GC: Oh, oh, yeah.

CR: So he was vulnerable, and the Republicans, Stassen took advantage of his, of the situation. Were you here during the '38 campaign?

GC: Yes, indeed.

CR: What did you think of that campaign and Stassen?

GC: Well, I thought that Stassen was absolutely no good, I never was for him despite the fact that there were a number of trade union people who were for him you know, but I didn't think so.

CR: Before or after his election? You mean he had labor support in the election?

GC: You know I shouldn't be talking about this so freely because I'm not that sure, but I just have a feeling that there were some of the people who supported him, some of the unions that supported him under cover, kind of, during the election and then came out with more open support afterwards. Although I belonged to the State Employees Union and we didn't support him that's for sure, and correctly so, because gosh he was firing people right and left, right after he was elected. I was one of the people who actually resigned you know. Most of the people were being fired, people who were even friends of mine and there were all kinds of public attacks on people. For example one of

the vocational rehabilitation counselors was Gene Karsteder and they made a great big to-do about the fact that his name Eugene Debs Karsteder. He came from one of those old socialist families in Indiana I think you know and so there was really an awful lot, there were an awful lot of people who were fired after Stassen got in. I, I think I was able to keep my job because I had a good reputation with the National Rehabilitation, see, Vocational Rehabilitation was not just this statewide activity, it was a national activity also. And the people who used to come from there to review our work, were impressed by the fact that you had some PhD's working for them, you know, because in an awful lot of states it was just a job that was given as a political sort of a job you know. But Rockwell was interested in having educationally qualified people, so...so I was able to keep my job but there was an awful lot of publicity. Someplace, and I guess it's down in my basement locker, I have and sometime if you're that interested I'll let you have a look at them and give them to you, scrapbooks of this period, and all of the, oh charges against Rockwell and me. There was one picture of me, says, I went down to the hearings, they had hearings for Rockwell you know, and finally he was fire. But they had these hearings and in one I was pictured as the Trotskyists centerpiece of the case you know. So anyway, there, these were a lot of exciting days, and difficult days. And I was a personal friend of Rockwell and Mrs. Rockwell, so there were a lot of problems.

CR: Did the Socialist Workers Party, what did the Socialist Workers Party do in the 1938 campaign? Did they support Benson for reelection?

GC: Yeah, supported Benson for reelection and ran Vincent Dunn for Secretary of State, just so that we would have a campaign to run, but supported Benson. It was kind of painful for some of the people, but the trade union people were insistent.

CR: That's about as far as the Socialist Workers Party ever got towards supporting a Farmer-Labor candidate.

GC: Yeah, that's right, I know that, although no, there was, you know, pretty strong support for Olson. Well, no there wasn't, it wasn't strong support, it was more a kind of a admiration for the guy you know. He was, he was a clever guy.

CR: Yeah, his tactics in the Teamsters Strike seemed logical to the Socialist Workers Party, the Trotskyist leadership, especially afterward.

GC: Yeah, I know, and he was you know he was an awfully clever, clever kind of guy, I remember some kind of a group that Dorothy and I belonged to that would invite in speakers. He one time, this was just a group of oh, mostly students you know, and he came and gave a talk there at the old Frederick Hotel, and my gosh you know you don't get the governor of the state to come to an awful lot of these little two bit sort of meetings but he was really interested in young people. He would have made a great national figure I think if he had lived.

CR: He was a dynamic enough personality for that, and a smart enough politician.

GC: Yeah, of course there's another fact, is he could have gotten himself into an awful lot of trouble too with the war coming on, and oil business, I don't know, I don't know what he would have done, whether...

CR: Were you on campus in 1934, I think when he came down to speak to the student peace strike?

GC: Yes, indeed. On the steps of the Union, on the steps of the Auditorium because I don't think they would have [unclear]_ as a speaker, I'd forgotten what this was, it seems to me I was part of this group, and I can't remember the name of this group that we had which was made up mostly of political science students but anyway, I don't think that University was going to allow the speaker, something like this, and he came and he talked on the steps of the auditorium. Oh, then there was a crowd, all over the place you know.

CR: Well, this was sponsored by a student peace strike committee and I think the American Student Union was probably the prime mover of it.

GC: Well, maybe they were, I don't remember just...

CR: There was a large group of liberals on campus however.

GC: Oh, yes.

CR: Did you know any of those people?

GC: Well, I knew a lot of them you see I used to, I was teaching there and I, when I used to go over to Lippincott's class, do you know Benjamin Lippincott? He was, he was a kind of a left-wing sort of a professor, my sister knew him quite well, and I used to go to his class just to get a kind of a political education, you know and so there's where I met a lot of these people who were left wingers both of the CP and SWP crowd, you know.

CR: Did you get any impression of a liberal crowd on campus then? I forget some of the...

GC: What?

CR: I forget some of the names of the liberals there but they become [unclear]...

GC: Levinger, Levinger.

CR: Levinger for one.

GC: Lee Levinger, Jane Levinger, and gee, I just can't remember these other names and these were people I knew fairly well too, through Lippincott and these...I can't think of the names of the others now, but this was you know a very liberal time on the campus, very liberal period of time. People who had been kind of radicalized by the Teamsters strikes and by the other strikes and, by the work of the political left, you know, this type of thing. Yeah. Where, this is a whole separate question, where does Berman come from, what school does he come from?

CR: Berman studied I think at New York University, and he got his degree at Columbia and he came here I think he had been for a while a, on a special grant to teach in India and then...

GC: Teaching...

CR: In India...

GC: India, oh.

CR: Right, I think he came on the University faculty about 1960.

GC: Oh, that long ago.

CR: Right.

GC: Oh, I didn't know that.

CR: Yeah, in the early 60's. I think he had his, I don't know if he did any graduate work here or if he already had his degree.

GC: Oh, I don't know at all.

CR: Yeah, he comes from a Jewish labor socialist family, quite typical background in New York.

GC: Yeah, he seemed more like a New Yorker than a Californian [unclear]...

CR: Oh yes.

GC: Huh?

CR: Oh he taught for a while by the way at Berkeley.

GC: Is that so?

CR: Yeah, he was there around '68 as a matter of fact.

GC: Oh is that so, well, I'm more...

CR: I'm not sure if he was there as a visiting professor or what...

GC: Oh yeah, uh-huh, I'm more partial to New York than California. It isn't that there aren't some sensible people in California. It's just that I don't know any.

CR: Well, it seems to me we've spent quite a bit of time talking about the 1930's...

GC: Okay, and in the evening paper's here and I'll find out what Ollie North is doing. Do you know what kills me is that there's a program that's on in the afternoon right before the news someplace and they ask people's views of something, this is on at 4:30. And they ask people's views and yesterday all kinds of people were supportive of Ollie North, it just, it drives you nuts you know, they're kind of impressed with his nice face and the fact that he's anti-communist you know, this sort of thing, and the fact that he's a lawyer doesn't seem to bother them at all, you know.

CR: Well, he's accepted for a patriot.

GC: Yeah, yeah, and we still have an awful lot of that disillusionment hasn't set in with Reagan as much as I think it's going to a little later, but so far people will disagree with his policy but think he's a very nice guy. Hard to figure that one out. Through with this now?

CR: No, the recorder is still on here.

GC: It's still on?

CR: Shall we shut it off?

GC: Yeah, sure.

CR: Okay.

END TAPE TWO, SIDE TWO

TAPE THREE, SIDE ONE

CR: This is the second interview with Grace Carlson on July 14, 1987...

GC: 14th, this is Bastille Day.

CR: ...the interviewer is Carl Ross. Okay, Grace, you were telling me that you got so much [unclear] with a couple of Finnish American women and I was interested in that story if you would tell it.

GC: Well, Gil and I separated in 1937 because he left the Party, he had advised that he should leave the Party, he was still an active Catholic and I wasn't a practicing Catholic those days, so we grew apart, and but I still had rented this big house out on Keston and so two girls from the Socialist Workers Party chapter in St. Paul came in to live with me. This was Hilda and Viola Humala. They were, they both worked here, Hilda was a social worker, Viola was an office worker. And they came from Esko's Corner. Esko's Corner?

CR: Yeah, near Cloquet.

GC: Yeah, uh huh, and we got along quite well except that some of their customs were a little hard on my nerves such as when they would take a bath they would have the steam so strong that the whole house you know would be full, full of the drops of water from the steam and that was one, and it's you know it's not a major problem, it's just a little difference that we had. And then another thing is they would make coffee that was so weak that it was just like a pale, it was sort of a pale tan. By the way do you make strong or weak coffee or was that just an idiosyncrasy on their part.

CR: Well the Finns today have learned to drink stronger coffee, I make coffee which is like espresso, but I know the habit, they used to drink a lot of it and it was always very weak and it was always on the back of the stove.

GC: Yeah, and it was lousy, it was just terrible so I got to making my coffee by myself. We each would have separate coffee you know, when we would, when we would have lunch together. But

they were, they were very good and very staunch Party members. I don't know became of them afterwards. I moved to another place after a bit and they, I really just, I don't know just exactly what became of them and then of course you know, there were a lot of changes that were occurring in the Party with the war and all of this.

CR: You don't know why they joined?

GC: Yeah, I think that, I think, I don't know if her name was Helga or Hulda now, what would it have been Hulda?

CR: Hilda would be more common.

GC: Hilda, maybe that was what it was, well anyways, she was a social worker in the Ramsey County Child Welfare Division and Mrs. John Rockwell was the supervisor there and I was a friend of Mrs. Rockwell because Dr. Rockwell had been my advisor for my doctoral thesis and so we, we got to know each other through oh different things that we engaged in at the Rockwells to help with, like different defense organizations and problems that we had, oh yeah and one time we were out picketing at Montgomery Ward's and I don't know if there were Party members who worked at Montgomery Ward's, I think there was somebody who worked there at the time and so we all went out there to picket and Hilda was taken to the police station which was kind of a, kind of ironic because she was really sort of a mild kind of a person, I was the one they should have picked up you know, or my sister Dorothy, but they picked her up and she had, you know, a little difficulty out of this because she was employed by Ramsey County, employed by the county and here she had been picked up. And I think that Gilbert and some of the people from Workers Defense League took up her case and I, she maybe had a big fine, I'm not just sure what it was but she didn't have to go to, have to go to jail, that would have been ironic in the extreme you know. But, they were, they were, they considered themselves to have been kind of radical even before they came into the Party. Partly that was that Esko's Corners influence on them I guess you know.

CR: Yeah, there was a strong left wing movement in Cloquet around the cooperative and also a local Communist Party Young Communist League branch there. There might have been in the early '30s, mid '30s that is, probably also a Cooperative Youth League and the Cooperative Youth League was quite a radical organization.

GC: Oh, uh huh, well, I don't know if they belonged to any of these when they were up there but when they came down there and especially with Mrs. Rockwell's influence they were quite ready to become members of the Socialist Workers Party.

CR: Did you have a sign on that house?

GC: What?

CR: Did you have a sign on the house when you speak of the steam bath?

GC: I had to sun every couple of days because they would, when they would take a bath they would just run the steam so high you know that...

CR: [Unclear] just in the tub or the shower.

GC: Yeah, the shower but open the door and it would be wet all over the whole doggone place, but they used to talk about the sauna that they had up in Esko's Corners, they really enjoyed that you know.

CR: Well, I should really go back to some of the things you talked about last week, fill in a little bit more. I wonder if, for one thing, we can way back to the period of the Workers Party, whether that recollection you have, did you pick up on, about the activities and especially the leadership, who were some of the important personalities in the Workers Party, were the Dunn Brothers already members?

GC: Yes, but it really was only Vincent Dunn who was a real active kind of a member, Miles and Grant, I don't know if they had, maybe they had membership cards but they were not members who attended meetings, Party meetings. They would attend trade union caucuses you know which the trade unions would have and talk over strategy and all that type of thing, but they, and I think they contributed to the Party to a certain extent you know. But...

CR: This was true all along in later years also.

GC: Yeah, yeah, but they were not the kind of members that Vince Dunn was, he was, you know, he was really a Party leader and had been of course from the earliest days. Well as an actual matter of fact he was a member of the IWW when he was young and when he was working in the camps of northern Minnesota and Wisconsin, you know, lumber camps and then, then he joined the Communist Party and I'm not just sure who was his mentor there, I'm not so sure, but he pretty soon became the mentor for most of the other...

CR: He had an older brother by the name of Bill Dunn who was and remained a member of the CP.

GC: Of the CP, and they, they had nothing to do with each other at all.

CR: Even at that time.

GC: Yeah, it was very surprising to me when I first came around and I heard about this because I had never understood that Party loyalties could overcome family loyalties, I learned differently in later years, but at the time it seemed like a very strange thing to me. As a matter of fact I don't think that Bill Dunn came to his mother's funeral, it seems to me that that was, that he didn't come and that seems to me also to be peculiarly shocking you know. But, but I came to understand how very deep Party loyalties and Party hostilities could become. But Vince Dunn was the really the active, he was an active political trade union leader and the way I came to know him and them was really through my sister. See, my field was psychology, I took a PhD in Psychology and Educational Psychology. My sister had a Masters degree in Political Science and in Economics and she was in a student group over at the, well she was a graduate student, she had graduated from St. Catherine's and then went over there into political science and economics and they had this student oh group, political action kind of a group, I can't think of the name of it now and they came to know some of the Trotskyist leaders and would go to some of their meetings. They used to have Forum, I think it was called, the Socialist Forum and then after I got my PhD and was, I was just teaching which wasn't as strenuous a life as writing my thesis and all the rest of it, then I used to go to some of these Sunday Forums and Gilbert would come along with me too and we became active in a kind of a

defense group that they had and Gilbert was picked up to be the lawyer who helped out with some of the cases you know, oh, one was at Munsingwear, there was a strike over there and some of the people were arrested and Gilbert represented them and he also represented Hulga Humula in her case so he got a lot of this unpaid business you know when he was new and beginning lawyer. What else?

CR: Well, the Workers Party then merged with the Socialist Party.

GC: Yeah, right...they merged...

CR: Do you recall anything about the basis of that merger, why did the Workers Party group go into this?

GC: Into the Socialist Party?

CR: Yeah.

GC: Oh, well, that was a tactic, I'm reading about it now as an actual matter of fact in this book that I have about New York intellectuals. That was a tactic that was I think recommended by Trotsky himself, that the, that they would go in and would, if they didn't stay that they would come out with a number of recruits and that's what actually happened. They went in in 19...in January of 1938, or that at least was the founding convention, it was in Chicago it seems to me, I went down to it. I had joined, I had joined the...no, it was earlier than that, no, it was in 1936 that the Trotskyists went into...

CR: In '36, right.

GC: '36, they went into the Socialist Party.

CR: They were in for just about a year and left in '37.

GC: Yeah, up until, a year and a half about. I went into the Socialist Party then in 1936, yeah, and then in 1938, the SP expelled the Trotskyists in someplace in 1937, I don't know what the exact name of the reason for the expulsion was, but it you know, it wasn't difficult to figure out. This was just too big a dose for Norman Thomas and the others to take you know.

CR: Well, there was a tremendous gap in the general ideological political position they occupied.

GC: Oh, yeah.

CR: ...and I don't see Norman Thomas [unclear] he was compatible with Trotskyist [unclear]

GC: No, no, although we supported Norman Thomas in 1936 when he ran for President. I remember he was out here and we had a big gathering for him you know, and all of this type of thing, but then the Trotskyists were expelled and had expected to be and then formed, that's right, and formed the Socialist Workers Party in January, '38, and that was the founding convention then there was in Chicago and I went down to that also. And my sister and the fellow that she married later, his name was Schultz, who had been very active in both the Workers Party and in the, and

with the Truck Drivers Strike, although he himself was an electrician and belonged to 160 and was very active there.

CR: I was going to ask if any of the leading socialists in the Minneapolis labor unions were any longer connected with the socialist activities at this time. I'm having in mind for instance Boerback and what's his name, Lass...

GC: Who?

CR: Hmm.

[Tape clicks]

GC: ...have anything to do with the SP socialists. They, well they didn't want to have anything to do with the Trotskyists. Now in St. Paul on the other hand there were a group of Socialist Party people who, who worked with the Trotskyists and the Trotsky-minded people you know, and St. Paul which was the branch to which we belonged, had quite a few of the old line socialists like Carl Pimble who was a chemist and invented some kind of a pill that you could use to catch fish, I'm not too clear about this, but at any rate he actually had a little business of his own and then there was somebody who was Beltman, Beltman?, I think he was tied in with the trucking company, he was a boss you know, I'm not too absolutely clear about that, but anyway in St. Paul we had some of these old line Socialists but that wasn't true in Minneapolis and we used to think in the St. Paul branch that, you know, that real action was going on in Minneapolis so we would practically always attend two meetings a week, you know, both the St. Paul branch meeting and go over to the Minneapolis branch.

CR: Yeah, the group I was trying to think of the names of was Boyback and Latz.

GC: Latz?

CR: Latz, L-A-T-Z.

GC: Oh, Latz, Ruben Latz, he was from the Laundry Workers Union.

CR: Laundry Workers, right, and Finkelstine from the [unclear] of GWU, all of them had been socialists.

GC: Yeah, but either they were no longer socialists or they just dropped away when the Trotskyists came in, I knew them through various trade union activities and I was a, well, I was a delegate to the St. Paul Trades and Labor Assembly for many years from the State Employees Union and then I would go to the state labor meetings, you know, up in Duluth and Hibbing.

CR: State Federation of Labor.

GC: State Federation, that's what I'm trying to think of. So I knew a lot of these people but, you know the names that you're mentioning, but they in Minneapolis, they didn't stay with the Party when the Trotskyists came in.

CR: There was also Sandra Jennis who later was very active in the CIO.

GC: Yeah.

CR: But your impression, they had left before the merger, but they didn't leave on account of the merger did they?

GC: You mean the merger of the S...

CR: The SP and the Trotskyites.

GC: No, they left earlier than that. At least to my knowledge they did. I, I don't, I'm sure that they left earlier and that they didn't because of the merger, I think you know as a matter of fact that the SP in Minneapolis was a pretty loose kind of a organization where people you know had memberships, but it's more like a membership in a fraternal organization like the Oddfellows or something like that. But in St. Paul we had a number left of those SPers and had good relationships with them although we were a little different kind of people from their sort of coffee klatch type of socialists you know.

CR: So, it wasn't very long after this when you were I think the state leader, of the Socialist Workers Party from 1940 or thereabouts.

GC: Well, around in 1936 and then I think it was in 19, I don't know what year it was, maybe 1940...

CR: I think it was last week you had left your job in 1940...

GC: I left my job and then I became the state organizer of the Socialist Party, the Socialist Workers Party, yeah.

CR: And it wasn't very long after that when the leadership of the Socialist Workers Party was indicted under the Smith Act and I was wondering if you had more to say about that, what...

GC: Well, this was, we always felt, as a matter of fact we were sure, that this was something that Hogan worked out along with Franklin Roosevelt, the, that was the time when the union went over to the CIO, you know, with Denny Lewis, not...Denny Lewis was in charge of I don't know department they called it, but he was the one they used to deal with and they, the 544, 574 went over to the CIO and became 544 then, yeah 574 became 544 and then at that time Denny Togan who was a good friend of Roosevelt, he got them to start this case against the Trotskyists. He was chiefly interested in the trade union leaders, but in order to round out the case he had to indict some of the just Party leaders you know, so they put Cannon and Goldman and Felix Marrow and a couple if other national people and then me here and my sister who was the St. Paul organizer of this, and then the case was dismissed against her. Then she went on tour for us after that, but it was primarily a union motivated case, but they had to give it a big political oration when they brought it into court, obviously you know. There were 29 people who were indicted and then Grant Dunn committed suicide, what his motivation was I don't think anybody was ever clear, I think it was, I don't think it was because of the case, although there was a lot that was said about that. I think it was a lot of personal problems that he had with his wife and so forth. So then there were 28 people

who were brought up on trial and then 10 of these were acquitted, I guess that's the technical term. And of these 10, my sister was one of these ten, and there also were some other union men against whom they really didn't have any kind of cases, so that left us with 18 and it was 18 who were finally sent to prison. I ended up being the only woman in the 18. There had been two other women in the 29 but cases against them, and Dorothy was one of those, were dismissed or they were acquitted or something of the kind, but I was, I was finally somebody who was sent to the federal prison. And since I was the only woman I was sent all alone down to Alderson, West Virginia which was at that time the only federal women's prison in the country. I think there are a couple of others now but I don't know where they are. But I still get pleas from a group who are trying to form a kind of a center in Alderson, West Virginia. See, there are a lot of Catholic War Protesters and pacifists down there now at Alderson and they have set up a oh a kind of a house where people can stay and I'm always getting pleas from them for money to help out with the house and so forth. Do you want me to tell now about when I was in prison.

CR: No, I think we covered that pretty well last week.

GC: Oh, okay, okay.

CR: I was just wondering if there were things about the trial and the activities there that we should be talking about. This was the first case tried under the Smith Act when the Communists were indicted under the Smith Act a little bit later, they had a great deal of difficulty deciding whether the defense was a civil liberties defense or whether they were going to defend Marxism-Leninism.

GC: Oh, uh huh.

CR: What was the attitude of the Socialist Workers Party towards the issues of the trial?

GC: Well, it was really quite a political defense. You see, Albert Goldman who was one of the defendants, was also one of the attorneys in the trial and he did a very effective job I think of presenting the Party views as being legitimate views you know, and there was, there was a great deal of talk about the question of advocating the forcible overthrow of the government and Goldman, Goldman's argument was...

END TAPE THREE, SIDE ONE

TAPE THREE, SIDE TWO

GC: ...the time came for the revolutionary take-over to use very simple terms, that the bosses, capitalists would use force and violence against the working masses and that force and violence would occur, and that we predicted it would occur but didn't advocate it, that was the, that was the defense which was not accepted you know, but it was a good defense. We're still, we're still on the trial here?

CR: Well, if you want to add anything else.

GC: Well, I don't know, I remember the defense attorney from Washington, that the government's attorney from Washington was named Schweinhaut, Schweinhaut and he, he was pretty ill at ease and pretty embarrassed by the speeches of the local prosecuting attorney, I can't think of what his

name was now, Anderson it seems to me but I'm not sure, but I remember his office used to be down on the second floor and that's where the ladies rest room was and so we would many times go down on the elevator together and just this guy, this attorney, the government attorney, was a really dumb kind of guy you know, and he would make a fool of himself and Schweinhaut was really embarrassed by being associated with him you know. So I remember one time we went down and I said to him 'well, what do you do with a government that has attorneys like this' you know, uh-huh, he acknowledged that I was probably right about this, you had to overthrow it you know. But the in the trial it was decided by our people that there would be just a limited number of defendants who would be put on the stand, Cannon was the chief one and he gave quite a defense of Marxist principles. These were later put into a pamphlet, 'Socialism on Trial' or 'Marxism on Trial' something like that. And then Vince Dunn was another one because he represented the intellect of the Trotskyists in the trade union movement and I was also put on the stand because Goldman said the jurors would just be outraged if they didn't hear a woman report you know. So and I guess a couple of others were put on the stand but the, we were given sentences of, sentences were dismissed against ten different people at different stages, my sister was one of those as I said a couple of times before, but I was one who received the full 18 months, it was 18 months, yeah. Some got 13 months, but mine was 18 months as were those of Cannon and Vince Dunn and Felix Marrow and these people you know.

CR: In a way I guess you got off lightly, the sentences given to Communist Party ranged from three to five years.

GC: Yeah, that's right, I, I think that it was really you know known that this was a trade union case and was not really a political case, but now that, the CP people came in what year?

CR: Right around the period immediately following, if I'm not mistaken right around '43, '44.

GC: Yeah, see, that was when the United States was at war.

CR: It was getting closer to and into the war times.

GC: Yeah, well so that was a little different, ours was completely pre-war, as a matter of fact this was in the summer of '40 and, Pearl Harbor was when, in the fall or December, wasn't it December of 1940...

CR: Yeah, yeah.

GC: Yeah, well in that, yeah, now I can remember. We were, we were charged or sentenced, sentenced is what I mean, we were sentenced on the day after Pearl Harbor, which might have been worse if they had had more plan for it, but you know they didn't and so we received relatively minor kinds of sentences.

CR: Yeah, actually the Communist trials were in '49 to '52, '53.

GC: That late?

CR: Right, yeah.

GC: Oh, I didn't know that.

CR: Yeah, it went into the 50's.

GC: Course that was...

CR: That was in the beginning of the...

GC: Cold War...

CR: After the war period, yeah, right.

GC: Well, we...

CR: I was thinking '51-3 and saying '4...

GC: Well, we were relatively lucky in this respect to receive such rather short sentences you know. My sentence I said to you before was a great education. I mean not for a politician but for a you know, for a student of human social sciences. I mean to see these people who came in this stage of American civilization who couldn't read or write, you know. Girls from Tennessee and North Carolina and they were just, they were there for violating the [unclear] which had to do with the morals of the soldiers, not only the soldiers but they took in these little kids you know, some of them were only 14, 15, 16 years old and they were sent to federal prison and I got to know them quite well because I used to do this mental testing down there you know. So I, but I learned a lot in prison, I don't know that I would have chosen to go, but I really did learn a lot.

CR: Yeah, it's a broadening experience to put it that way. I considered it very educational to be in the federal penitentiary. You change your ideas also considerably about criminal behavior.

GC: Yeah, um hum...

CR: I found that among the more decent people in the prison were those who were convicted of violent crimes like murder because they were personal individual acts, and they're not the result of amoral socialist behav...social behavior like even drug smuggling and things of that kind. At the bottom of the scale of values in my prison were the young thugs, the young burglars who conducted petty violent crimes. Right down there were the [unclear] who recruited Mexican illegals but on the whole the guys who were in on my line of bust and things were essentially average kind of misfortunate people.

GC: Yeah, well, I learned an awful lot of fact about what I had been talking about theoretically, about the injustices that apply to people in the, in these underprivileged areas you know. I was shocked to find some of these girls, well I talked about this so many times, who just, just had no decent kind of homes or anything of the sort. We had one mother and daughter who were there in the, in this building that I was in and they were both there for the May Act and being prostitutes, but gosh you know they needed the money you know, that's really a fact. That's long before you had all of the arrangements for aid to teenagers and all of this kind of business. Yeah, I learned a great deal. And I was privileged to have know this medical officer for whom I used to work. And I not only was doing the mental testing but I was working there in the clinical offices doing really kind of

stenographic work, I even learned to do a little typing on the job you know I had to type. Well, anyhow I used to read the case histories of people coming in and could find out you know what the real awful conditions were of the lives of some of these people. And I remember that this one woman who was there with her daughter, when, just before she was going to leave she was in taking baths, you had to sign up to take baths and all that kind of business you know and she was saying I'm certainly going to miss this hot water when I get out you know. And you could just imagine what life was like for her in Rockingham North Carolina or wherever it was. We also had a, somebody who was there as, was one of these guys I don't know if you remember that there were some of, oh you wouldn't remember it was too long ago, but there were some Germans spies who came ashore in New York someplace.

CR: Yeah, I remember.

GC: Yeah, well, anyway there were some girls, women who helped them and they were there and they were very nice and there was somebody else who also was connected with this and she, she was very pretentious kind of a person. Her name was really Grace but she used to kind of pronounce it Gr-ah-ss or something like that. She'd sign the laundry list G-R-A-and then put a little mark above it just on the laundry list you know, to indicate that she was, I think she was French, I'm not so sure what she was but anyway she was kind of a pain in the neck but the real, the real German women who had helped they were really very nice, they used to help in the kitchen, they'd always give me extra coffee, we were good friends you know.

CR: It wasn't long after this experience that you ran for President, Vice President with Farrell Dobbs on the 1948 Socialist Workers Party ticket.

GC: Yeah, I came out of prison in January of '45 and then there were a few months that I had to stay under the jurisdiction of the Minneapolis deputy, or whatever, but then in the summer of '45 I went on a tour, speaking on women in prison you know. But then '46 I ran for I think it was 3rd District Congressman or something, but in '48 I ran for Vice President with Farrell Dobs. I was always running for office someplace, mayor of St. Paul.

CR: Well, you went and toured the whole country on this camp...

GC: Yeah.

CR: What did you talk about?

GC: Women and prison? [unclear]

CR: On the campaign trail.

GC: When I talked, when I was campaigning?

CR: Yeah, in the 1948 election.

GC: This women and prison wasn't a campaign trip.

CR: Right, right.

GC: When I was out in 1948, well, you know, I gave a regular Marxist speech, what's wrong with the country, and that we had to...it was the same kind of thing I used to talk about before I was sent to prison, but this time nothing was done about it, and I, Farrell and I, we got fairly good number of votes as I can remember it. We were pleased with it anyway. And that was in '48, then in 1951 or '50 I'm not sure, my father died and that was a very, that represented a very traumatic situation for me because it wasn't that I thought his death was so tragic, he was you know old and he'd been sick and I don't think even minded dying, but then the whole philosophical question came up. Well, who would make up to him for everything that he had missed in his life, you know. All the problems that he'd had and I certainly had been one of them, and that's when I went back to the church, that was in '52.

CR: It was these problems and these questions...

GC: It wasn't anything political.

CR: It led you to, back to the church essentially was the question.

GC: The religious and philosophical, it wasn't political at all and I resented terribly when anybody tried to make it that. As a matter of fact, somebody from the, that was the time when Elizabeth Bentley, is that the name Bentley? A couple of people who had left the Communist Party and had returned to religion, I don't know if it was the Catholic Church or not and they were going around giving speeches and all of this type of thing and they got, somebody got in touch with me and they wanted me to do the same thing, but I refused absolutely, and never, I never did, never worked with the Justice Department or the Immigration Department. That was, they also wanted me to report on whether people like John Jenasko were Party members because they were ready to deport him because there were problems with his citizenship but I would, I never testified. I would testify, I would tell them if somebody were not a member you know, if I could help in relieving this person. I mean there were people who were you know what we used to call sympathizers, but people from the FBI and these thought maybe they were members and so if I had a chance to clear their names I would do that, clear their names legally you know I would do that. But I never testified ever in this whole thing.

CR: I was curious that you associated yourself with the Catholic Workers movement or...

GC: Well, I knew these people...

CR: You knew Dorothy Day?

GC: I knew Dorothy Day, she came out here one time and had a meeting with me and with some of the people at the Newman Club, I used to go to the Newman Club a good deal and do some work around there. But I wasn't really very taken with them, they seemed to me to be a little sappy and that's not a very kind phrase to use, but do you know what I mean, they were all for forming some kind of a world community of some sort you know, and this community would I guess be run on kind of socialist grounds but I was...I was much more interested in the city workers struggles you know, and I didn't have, I really didn't have a great interest in what they were doing.

CR: You sound as though you basically remained philosophically a Marxist in your views.

GC: That's exactly it, I did remain a Marxist in my own mind and I still see myself as a Marxist, you know, I think that the goal is a little further off than I used to think it was, but I still see myself as a Marxist. Later after I left the Party, then in the church there was a bigger movement toward a kind of a, oh a Christian socialism, you know, Dorothy Day and some of these people, and so it was then a little easier to talk about socialism and all and that type of thing, but you know when I was leaving, it was the McCarthy period and a lot of the Catholics that I met made me sick to my stomach. I remember one time my cousin who was a teacher and her husband who had been the, been in the war and had lost a leg and was kind of a patriotic veterans group person, they invited me out to their house and they had a lot of friends, Catholic and not around, and I couldn't take much of any part in the conversation, I just sat there thinking to myself, what am I doing with these people you know, I mean they were just people who were just not anywheres near my thinking. And another problem I had is you know my sister stayed in the Party, she didn't leave when I did, and had nothing to do with me for two or three years. And then she and Henry were I guess expelled or dropped out in one of the big factional kind of struggles you know that were carried on, and then after that we would get together and then I, I could visit with her children who were just really small at the time and I was very taken with them. But I got, I had a tough time when I first left the Party because I had no friends anyplace except the few that I had around Newman Club and some of them were okay, but they were not, they were not students of any kind, to my way of thinking you know. I was lucky that this priest that I had to know, Father Cowie, who was a Newman Club chaplain that he didn't feel that it was necessary for me to testify in, against Party people and the FBI people put a lot of pressure on him too to try to get him to put this pressure on me, but he wouldn't do that and that was a very, I thought a great deal of him for that you know.

CR: Well, I was going to ask if after all this time and after having been outside of the Socialist Workers Party so long, do you have any retrospective ideas about those years?

GC: Well, I think that the, I think that here in Minnesota the Trotskyists played a very valuable role in the trade union movement in, and not just in the Teamsters but in other places as well. I don't think that was equally true in other parts of the country. Though there were some places where they had little bases in certain trade unions, but by and large, they tended to want to dominate, I mean they weren't willing just to be union members and take part in the ordinary activities of the union. They wanted to demonstrate their superiority and they were superior as far as education was concerned, class consciousness but they weren't superior insofar as the knowledge of the everyday problems of workers lives, you know, they didn't really understand that and particularly I think that they were very many of the Trotskyists were very wrong in dealing with the, with the wives of the workers. They wanted to bring them along into the Party or else simply to drop them, you know, and to encourage the men to, oh neglect is a strong work, but to pay more attention to their union and party activities than to their homes and they were wrong in that it seems to me, that it was necessary to appreciate the fact that a worker had a rounded life, his life wasn't only in the work and in the movement and in the Party. There was his home and there was his children and there was just an awful lot of problems like that I think that were created for some of workers, there were families that split over it, and maybe some of it was inevitable, all of it, I don't think. So it was, there were a lot of, it was difficult in a lot of ways, it was difficult for me in some respects in dealing with these women who rather resented me, not that they thought I had any connection with any of their men, but it was the men admired what I was doing you know more than what the wives were doing, so that had its own difficulty and awkwardness. So I think, I think that the Party

leadership could have, would have been much wiser if they had supported the men in their non-union and non-working and non-Party life as well as in the Party life. Now we used to try to have oh parties for the children you know, we would have oh, we'd have Christmas parties and sometimes we'd have picnics and we'd get the children presents and this stuff, we would try to but it never was enough you know. But you know what these problems are they're the same in all radical movements I think, you know.

CR: Maybe you could say in all political movements, I'm not sure...

GC: Yeah, yeah, yeah, I think that's probably true.

CR: The Socialist Workers Party was oh, I guess successful...

END TAPE THREE, SIDE TWO

TAPE FOUR, SIDE ONE

CR: To what would you attribute the greater success of the Communists than the problem the Trotskyites? Do you have any thoughts on that subject?

GC: Well, no I hadn't exactly thought about it, but after the New York intellectual I could see that there was especially in New York a very conscious effort on the part of the Communist Party to bring families into a lot of these different organizations. We started some here but we weren't as successful. I, if I'm thinking you know about myself and my own role, I just about abandoned all connections with any but Party people. Now my sister was a member of the Party so that that was easy although there was a period when I left the Party and she just broke off with me, so she just was carrying on this thing kind of intransigence you know so to speak. I, I think that in order to have been functioning Trotskyists you had to not only overcome one difficulty which was being different from the average American you know and the CP people did that, but you had to overcome then another step of being different from the whole CP and the other radical movements as well you know, I mean I could remember when I was a, oh I was a teacher at the U at that time I guess and I used to go to Lippincott's classes and I got to know some of these young radicals who were Trotskyists in the main. Oh, I lost my train of thought here what was I talking about?

CR: About the difference between, the peculiar position of the Trotskyists.

GC: Oh yeah, yeah, I know, and so you know when I was first, they were first starting to talk to me about radicalism, my gosh they were talking anti-Stalinism you know, I mean here I was just barely out of the Farmer-Labor Party which I had belonged to for quite a while and here I met these Trotskyists, I can hardly remember their names anymore, but anyway they would start haranguing me about what was wrong with the CP and I, I remember one time, it was some kind of a march on the capitol, you know kind of like a hunger march or something like that, and I went to it and the Trotskyists, none of them came, and they came told me that I just didn't know what I was doing, that this was led by the CP you know. Well, at that stage it just seemed to me it was a good thing to participate in this hunger march, we're at least calling attention to the problems of hunger and poverty you know, but I think that was one of the things that was wrong with the Trotskyists. They became terribly polemically minded you know, in, like polemics counted more than the ideas in a

sense you know. I mean they were not, it wasn't just winning you over to socialism but it was winning you over to their branch of socialism you see. Well, I got to, when I finally was won over and became part of the whole movement I think I became that way myself as far as that goes. One of the hazards of being in these small time groups, as a matter of fact the same kind of thing happens with different, in different churches when they come into conflict you know, different currents in the churches, the current that is closest to them becomes the greatest enemy, and they're more involved with the polemics than they are with the broad principle and I think I developed some of that probably myself, you know. I became you know fairly early a kind of a spokesman for the Party and a candidate for office, many offices, as an actual matter of fact. That, in the election campaign, on the platform you weren't making the issue anti-Stalinism.

GC: No, no, no there I was preaching for socialism you know, for socialism in our time, socialism in this country.

CR: I think you make a valid point about the obsession of the Trotskyist movement with Stalin.

GC: Yeah, yeah, I know.

CR: I think there were some Communists who were obsessed with Stalin in the opposite sense, but I don't think it was characteristic of the Communist Party or the movement, this position always had to be fixed always in relation to Stalin or some abstract notion of that kind.

GC: I think...

CR: There seems to be however also seem to me to be other issues that are represented by what you were saying about the attitude toward this march on the capitol.

GC: Yeah.

CR: There are at least two of these popular tremendously significant events and actually did appear to unite the whole radical movement and something beyond that for that matter exclusive of the Trotskyists.

GC: Yeah, I think that was a big mistake on the part of the Trotskyists, and it wasn't even as bad in Minnesota where they had, they played such an important role in the trade union movement and so therefore they had to support the Farmer Labor Party and you know so forth, but you know in other parts of the country, especially in New York, there the [unclear] were just fierce and families were separated. Well look at the Bill Dunn and Vince Dunn and these you know, there was such a great hostility that they couldn't even retain any kind...

CR: Well, you have to look at that the other way around. Bill Dunn was a member of the Communist Party which said you shouldn't associate with a Trotskyite under any condition whatsoever even if he was a brother.

GC: Both sides, both sides I know, yeah.

CR: But I always thought that the Communist movement while it maintained that attitude towards the Trotskyists, nevertheless got over that kind of a moral view of the world and by and large was

dealing with real social issues and real social problems.

GC: Yeah, uh-huh, well, it's one of the problems that has to have an effect upon a small movement like the Trotskyists were and still are really, you know. That they, their, although they're speaking of world socialism, and believe in world socialism, they can be easily sidetracked into gearing their chief forces against one of these other working class enemies so to speak you know, [unclear]_...

CR: What I understand there's about 6 or 7 factions or groups or organizations now among the...

GC: SWP?

CR: ...among the Trotskyists in the Twin Cities.

GC: Is that so, there could be, I really don't know.

CR: It can't be a very large group of people.

GC: No, no, I think there's a lot of, there's a lot of factionism nationally also. I tried to talk to them at the SWP, I don't know what the occasion was, whether I wanted a subscription or just what it was but you know, I wasn't treated in a very friendly way at all you know, which was nutty when you can sell subscriptions you should sell them to anybody that you can you know. When I was in New York and they this [unclear] had this reception you know for me there...

CR: That's in recent years?

GC: This year.

CR: This year, okay.

GC: Yeah, just a couple of months ago, and so [unclear] had this kind of a oh afternoon little gathering, coffee gathering at the New York Public Library and somebody from the Socialist Workers Party came to it that was really not, he was really not very friendly to me. You know he was a nut, I mean if I had been placed in that same circumstance and had met somebody you know like this who could have been a help financially and otherwise, I would have gone and thrown my arms around her you know and all this. Well, I thought this guy was, I don't know, maybe he was just a kind of a clumsy guy, I really don't know, but I wasn't impressed with him at all, I'll tell you that much, and I have a friend who used, whom I used to know, Miriam Braverman, whom I used to know in the Socialist Workers Party in New York, and she's not in it anymore, but she has a lot of friends from around the radical movement. And when I was in New York we went down to the, around Greenwich Village and we went down to Rocko's which was an Italian restaurant that we used to hang around a lot if we had any money. And there were, there was somebody from the Socialist Workers Party there but he wasn't even very friendly and that shouldn't have been because I left the Party, because that was quite a few years ago you know, and I didn't leave to join any hostile organization, and I wasn't showing up on the lecture lecturing against the Socialist Workers Party or any of this kind of stuff, so I think they're just kind of, I think that they've gotten polemics into their bloodstream and they have a hard time approaching a somewhat complex problem which is how do you deal with a former SWP leader who left for religious reasons but never became an enemy you know but has taken a subscription and all that, don't know how to deal with it you know.

Now, George, do you know George Novak?

CR: No.

GC: Well, he, well, I suppose he still is a Party member, he...

CR: Who is this?

GC: George Novak. He was the editor of the 4th International and...

CR: Okay.

GC: Yeah, and has written a number of books and pamphlets and all that type of stuff. Now, he was there and he was very very friendly to me, very nice and I was awfully appreciative of that you know. Although the young people who hadn't been Party people, they were extremely nice, but I just thought this was kind of inept and kind of clumsy of this SWP person, that he couldn't handle it with more grace you know, welcoming me to New York, that kind of stuff, that's what I would have done if I'd have been in his position you know. But I don't, I don't really have anything to do with them here. I suppose if they came and visited me and asked me for money I'd give them money, you know. But they don't seem to want to, they don't seem to want to regard me as any kind of a sympathizer even.

CR: Well, if many years have gone by, it's not necessarily a new generation though there are some I assume. Well it seems to me that in a way the oh 1950 maybe marked kind of an end of the era of the old radicalism.

GC: Yeah, uh huh...

CR: I see it as having been to a very large extent the radicalism of the immigrant generation and the second generation. And once they achieved their, once this generation, the immigrants and their children, achieved labor organization and citizenship in American, they lose much of the original radical incentive and...

GC: Yeah, I think...

CR: Radicalism itself, Marxist theory for that matter needs to find some kind of a new approach to this modern world. It's different, it's very different.

GC: Yeah, that's really true. People don't, they don't think anymore in terms of you know getting ahead. They feel that they are ahead you know, they want to do better in that kind of [unclear]_ but there isn't the feeling of being part of the downtrodden masses, this type of thing. They don't do that.

CR: Well, the whole nature of the American working class has changed. The industrial working class we used to think of, as we used to think of it really no longer exists. Well, I don't think either the old Communist Party or the Socialist Workers Party have kept up with this. I'm not sure that they, if they have the capacity or capability to understand or to reflect the contemporary realities and to give voice what you might call radical aspirations, change, radically transform the society,

whether we should call it socialism or not, I'm not positive but it's not a bad word to describe it. So if people are still tied up with those old movements and those old ideas, they're going to have problems adjusting to today.

GC: Yeah, I think that's true. I...

CR: The world however is changing. You know one thing that is changing, how much and to what degree, is the Soviet Union. I don't know where it's going to wind up but it seems to me that Gorbachev has started something rather radical and drastic which is certainly aimed to move as far away from Stalinism as possible.

GC: Yeah, it's really quite impression, this glasnost [unclear]...

CR: Glasnost, right, now for old anti-Stalinist like you...

GC: Yeah...

CR: ...how does this sound today?

GC: Well, see, I think this is marvelous, and it seems to me, now I get the Militant and I think, and I haven't seen anything there that, where they should be applauding Gorbachev you know, it seems to me they should be and saying that this new openness and all of this type of thing is the sort of the thing that should bring friends to the Soviet Union from workers of the world, you know, this type of thing. See I belonged to the group in the SWP that always considered the Soviet Union a workers state. You know, there were factions there that refused to give them that kind of credit. I still did, and I think Cannon did up until the time of his death also, but there were factions within that wouldn't call it a workers state, that was a cause of a lot of the factional trouble. And there are an awful lot, by the way, I'm digressing here. Harry Debor came over to see me, just friendly visit, you know who Harry Debor is?

CR: Yeah.

GC: Yeah, well he has been, I guess he's been expelled from the SWP, he's outside in some other kind of faction, they've split into different factions too which is a sad business you know. And Harry was, Harry was a kind of an intellectualized worker you know, he did a lot of reading of Marxist literature and all the rest of it and he's somebody that should be treasured you know, and I don't know what the problems are and I'm not going to involve myself in it but I don't think they're using any, any real sense or good judgment. They're just apparently just mired in the swamp of all of these factional disputes you know, and if that's where you are, you're not going to be out there gaining recruits from among the fresh workers you know, cause you just aren't talking their language at all.

CR: Well, it seems to we've covered a lot of ground.

GC: Yeah, I think so too.

CR: I'm very interested in your remarks about the Soviet Union. According to New York Times reports some of, some published in the Minneapolis Tribune too, the apparent difference between

Gorbachev and Khrushchev changes are that, well Khrushchev was certainly trying to wipe out Stalinism, was trying to transform the country, he was stopping short of the basic kind of structural changes that Gorbachev now appears to be proposing, which kind of set the country off on a radically new course of both political and economic...so we may see some interesting changes there.

GC: Yeah.

CR: Obviously of course for any socialist or Marxist, questions of what kind of attitude to take toward that, are rather significant.

GC: Yeah, there'll be a lot of questions, but it seems to me now that the, I might even write a letter to the Militant sometime and say that. You know they've got this reader's column, and say that it would seem to me that they would, that they should applaud what Gorbachev is doing, but I think that they would follow it by three pages of vituperation about me being a fallen away, ah, all that kind of business. But, but if they want to recruit new people and that's what their new program contends, they want to reach out to new workers and all the rest of it, then they have to abandon some of this stale kind of anti-Soviet Union, anti-Stalinism cause that's, the average new worker today is certainly not going to be interested in that. Although there was a piece in the paper about the fact that you know, this whole thing about Ollie North, that some grade school children, one of the teachers was, did you know, was that in the paper today, was talking about something about the Soviet Union and the whole class and it was only like the 2nd or 3rd grade, they all jeered, the teacher I think was trying to you know get in a little bit of [unclear]_ into this whole thing, get the children you know, that the people in Russia were human beings and all the rest of it. So I don't know, kids pick up this anti-Russian stuff awfully early, they hear it from their parents and watch it on TV, this kind of business. Well, I don't know if I would write, would write the letter, but I think these, I think the local Trotskyists are, they're very narrow and very strange. I remember when I was the Minnesota state organizer and we were having a big meeting, we would always send invitations to the meeting to all of the mailing list, all the people who took the Militant because we just sort of assumed that they had a certain kind of interest in Trotskyist answers, but these people don't. And so I guess I'll just go along in my own way, and I'm going to move you know to Madison, I don't know if they have any, I don't have, do they have the CP in Madison?

CR: Oh, yes, I imagine. I don't know any more about the CP today than you know about Socialist Workers Party.

GC: Yeah, yeah, I suppose so.

CR: But there are a lot of people in Madison who are interested in working class history and that is more likely the kind of thing that you might interest yourself in.

GC: Yeah, there was this fellow and I wish I could remember his name, the first one who came here to interview me and he was, I suppose I had it written down someplace...

END INTERVIEW