

Alma Howe Foley
Narrator

Carl Ross
Interviewer

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CR: ...with Alma Foley at 2733 Girard Avenue South in Minneapolis. The interviewer is Carl Ross, the date is March 29th, 1988. So why don't we begin more or less at the beginning, go back to some of the things we were talking about. Why don't we just start with how you first encountered the radical movement yourself. Sounds like a good place.

AF: It was on a blind date. I was a student at the University working in the summer as, doing housework out in South Minneapolis, I had a friend who called me up one night and asked me if I wanted to go out, that they were going out to a party and somebody had just come in from New York and didn't have anybody to go with and would I join them, so I did. And that was when I met Tom Foley, and it was really funny because we were all just you know talking about this and that and I asked him what he did and he said he was a politician. Well I was kind of a wag in those days and I says well you can't be a politician, everybody knows that politicians smoke cigars and here you're smoking cigarettes. He in all seriousness started to explain to me that it was quite possible for a politician to smoke cigarettes instead of cigars. But, so we, I found him interesting and he found me interesting and he had some books that he had left in Chester, Pennsylvania where he had belonged early on to a radical group of about four other Irish guys and so he was going to call me when he got the books. Well he never did get the books but within a couple of days he called me to tell me that he hadn't gotten the books but he would still like to see me, so and we got together and it was interesting. And then well so then he was, had come in to be Pat Devine's secretary, called the Organization Secretary of the 9th District Communist Workers Party.

CR: And Pat Devine was the district organizer.

AF: Pat Devine was the district organizer. And they had a little headquarters down there and this is when I first became acquainted with secrecy because I was always a very open person about everything you know, and these girlfriends of mine you know would come around and be tight about any questions being asked and all that sort of stuff, so that was a completely new idea to me to hold anything back at all.

CR: So you had come to Minneapolis from out of town and as you were saying a little while ago you grew up in what you call a classless society.

AF: Right. So I mean, so, well it really, it really is strange because I was among the most politically alert people in my graduating class which had 20 members.

CR: Where was that?

AF: At Alden, Minnesota. And I had graduated from high school in 1927. I had come to the cities, done housework for a summer, gone back home and helped my folks on the farm for a while, came back and started at the University at the winter quarter. And I was doing all right, but instead of going home for the summer I got a job again doing general housework and that was out in South Minneapolis.

CR: What year would this have been then?

AF: Well that was, well it was '28 when I met Tom, it was '27 that I graduated from high school, yeah. So, well, they had this little Party headquarters and as I recall it it was 210 South 3rd Street, there was a bookstore and in the front, not too many books, but some, Misleaders of Labor by William Z. Foster, and interestingly and this is a question, this is a thing that is always interesting to me because I've heard it said that the communists for I don't know what the crazy reason is but for some reason are against birth control but it was at this Communist Party bookstore that I first of Margaret Sanger and the whole question of birth control, so that was kind of interesting. It's a real sidelight on it, you know really a side issue, except that it just, well it must have been an issue that they figured had some importance in those days and it has some now. So...well there was this bookstore and interesting people used to come in. The leaders of the Farmer Labor Party would come in and say well when are you coming back to the fold, and so they would, [unclear] I don't know how, there was a give and take between them and really strangely enough one time I was amazed to find my German professor at the University came in to the bookstore, it was the only time I ever saw him there and he didn't recognize me but I recognized him.

CR: So the Communists were secretive you said but at the same time it was very open.

AF: Yeah, that's right.

CR: How do you explain that contradiction?

AF: That they always felt, they always felt that they were being watched and they always felt that there were, that there were, well this is partly with just the girls that I knew who were not communists, but there is, there is another thing, there were two people, oh Tom was once, somehow or other got a guy named Tom Latimer who was once the mayor and also Anderson was once the mayor, well they both of them would come around to the, I don't think, I'm not sure if they ever actually came into the bookstore there, but somehow or other we knew them and I think that they got Latimer defended Tom when he was arrested for picketing the Northwestern Bank Building when they were tearing it down, what they built the Northwestern Bank Building in because the wages were 30 cents an hour and he was picketing it for more and got arrested for it and got, got a five day sentence. But anyhow in the course of all that stuff these people would tell about, about the spies you know that if they wanted to talk to anyone they made sure that they did it out in an open field somewhere, these were guys like this guy Tom Latimer who was Tom's attorney for this and this, I get this real third hand, Tom repeated it to me after Latimer had told it to him. But, but there was a little pamphlet put out called "Spies in Steel", it sold for either five or ten cents but it detailed how the steel companies recruited spies, how they would wait until someone was in some financial difficulty and then come to him and say well it wouldn't be very much you could just do

this real easy and the first thing they knew the guy was deeply in their web. And you know once in a while I'd think well gee whiz the government has sort of taken over that job.

CR: No, you make an interesting point there because "Spies in Steel" must have been the all-time best seller in the left wing in Minnesota and probably contributed to the way they looked at the world also.

AF: Uh-huh.

CR: The research done for that was of course, why I guess it's essentially authentic and much of this was born out by the LaFollette Committee investigations later and so on, but it may have colored their viewpoint. And with some reason, this was when the Palmer Raids and things like that were still remembered. You mentioned that at this time you were meeting people who had been around earlier and that you were picking up some information or some ideas about what had happened before. Can you recall, you said you had talked to Georgen and people like that who already then seemed like old-timers.

AF: Yeah, well there was just that they would talk about this, was it the Bridgewater, was that the name of the place...

CR: Bridgeman.

AF: Bridgeman Convention in which the whole group, who was it, Charles Rutherford and, well anyhow the whole bunch of them had been indicted. I don't know if they ever were tried and served any time or not, I don't think they ever did, I think, I'm just not sure on that.

CR: I don't recall either that anybody did, essentially they captured a lot of documents and arrested a few people. But we'll check that out especially as it [unclear] learn about Minnesota. Georgen was one of the delegates to the first founding convention of the Communist Party.

AF: To the founding convention and that was the one that was raided, or whatever happened to it.

CR: Well the raid took place sometime later, the convention took place without incident in Chicago in 1919. The Bridgeman Raid I think was in '21.

AF: Uh-huh. Yeah, well...

CR: So did you remain in Minneapolis or...

AF: Well, yeah I remained in Minneapolis and I got married to Tom fairly early on, then, I think I met in about July and we got married in about October and then I had been still a student at the U, but I didn't continue with that, I was, cause all I could think about was Tom. And then I had a little stint where they were talking about organizations you know, areas to concentrate in and so forth and so eventually I got a job, for a little while I worked in an overall factory and then I was pregnant and I had Patsy and I guess it was you know all of these times I would always be thinking well these people are saying all this stuff but you know it isn't all that bad and I guess it was when Patsy was born and the Rosa Luxemburg League were the only people that gave us any attention and they came and gave us milk for a month and it was pretty neat and so I began to think well these people

were really human people, pretty neat. Morry Greenberg's mother was secretary of that by the way.

CR: The Rosa Luxemburg Club keeps coming up in all of the literature about Minnesota politics. Do you know more about it than that.

AF: Well it was, it's a group of Jewish women who, that was like the Ladies Aid Society of the radical movement.

CR: Any idea how many members they had?

AF: Oh, I don't know, I just know that I probably knew three or four of them, there was Mrs. Greenberg and Mrs., what was her name, I ran into her...I think it was generally speaking about the size of good size bridge club you know probably 12-15 people.

CR: Well they always, historians always refer to it as a communist front as though they weren't real people.

AF: Well, no, and they weren't, they weren't so far as I know members of the Communist Party. At that time the Party was still to a certain extent, they were just getting away from the idea of language branches affiliated, language organizations affiliated with the Party in which the people I suppose that's where they would get the notion of communist front or, so forth, so they were more like, they were more like the Jewish people had their sort of credit union, self-help and insurance organizations. They were, they had the Labor Lyceum and there was fights between the left wing and the right wing there that would go on forever and ever and the right wing would usually wing because after a while the left wingers had to go home because they had to get up and go to work the next day and then there was only the others left and they passed all the resolutions, that's the way I heard it, I never was you know, but the...

CR: Up to, around '28 in there, the Labor Lyceum still was a Jewish labor center of, with all segments of the Jewish community met.

AF: Yeah.

CR: I think Morry Greenberg's, to whose mother you just referred, went to the kinderschool there for instance.

AF: Yeah, and then later on the Jewish left wing bought a building and organized the Jewish Cultural Center which they then later on sold to a Jewish School and there would, there would be these arguments between them and the Party, the Soupacks and the Locketses were the, and Dave Moses, they were people that were you know working in that and they organized this, and they bought this building and rehabbed it, that was over on I think it was, I think it was on Morgan. The Labor Lyceum was on Logan, 6th Avenue and north of Logan and the Labor Lyceum was or the Jewish Cultural Center then was a little further out and I forget when that was, well I guess that was around '30, not later than '33, '32 I think because...say I'm really wandering all over here aren't I.

CR: Why don't we get back to the, or get on to the subject of the unemployed movement with the beginning of the economic crisis, the Depression of 1929-30, the end of '29, early '30, you were in Minneapolis at the time.

AF: Yeah, I was in Minneapolis, we were living over on, well over on the northside. Tom was working at the Diamond Ironworks because he was a good worker you know, he did have that skill and when Patsy's birth was approaching and so forth and [unclear]_ no way of making, supporting a family on the so-called wages that a Party organizer got, and he managed to get a job.

CR: He was a skilled machinist.

AF: Well he was a lay-out man at that time, he took, he became a machinist afterward. He had gotten his skills as a layout man in Chester, he had worked in the mould loft of some shipyards during the war, practically as a student.

CR: So did you participate in any of the unemployed activities or were you too busy becoming a mother at the time.

AF: Yeah, well, actually the unemployed activities started after that, Patsy was born about two weeks after the Stock Market crash of '29, two or three weeks, and of course then it was after that, so well I was, I was pretty taken up with being a mother and you know just trying to scratch things around and so, the first that I heard on the, on the unemployed movement I mean was when they had this march and only because they came to our house afterwards when all of their places were under surveillance or something, they were sort of hiding out there. This was, you thought the first demonstration after the, after March 6th.

AF: After March 6th.

CR: Yeah. This was from the Gateway down Hennepin Avenue when this break-in in the meat market occurred.

AF: Yeah, right.

CR: That wasn't a planned part of the strategy, that just happened.

AF: Probably. There was a lot of discussion and so forth at the time that the Trotskyites had done it and I have mixed opinions on all of this, I have vague memories of conversations that lead me to believe that it was intended to demonstrate distributing food and that then after they'd, after it was done they just realized that it was just a really bad thing because it just, it just brought the police down and the people reacted against it you know, at least the newspapers reported it, it certainly wasn't hailed as a thing that was a needed thing to do, it was vandalism and it was pretty well recognized that, but I wouldn't say, I know nothing about any strategy or anything on it and so okay, so at that time the office of the Party and everybody else was in the Kasota Building and Carl Reeve was the by then the district organizer and Beatrice Siskend was org. secretary, she was later deported to Poland. Well...

CR: The upshot of this was that some, some members of the CP were arrested.

AF: I'm not actually sure on that, I know that Powers was there, and this was George Powers, there was a different Powers from who was from St. Paul but I, they were no relation. Morris Powers was a different person altogether than George Powers. Morris Powers was a St. Paul...

CR: Okay, there's probably some confusion about that, okay. There is a Morris and a George Powers and they're separate people.

AF: Yes.

CR: Okay.

AF: Gee, I don't think I'm giving you much of any information here.

CR: Okay, this is something we can check out on [unclear], there was one demonstration as a result of which some half dozen people served time in the county workhouse and there was also this indictment of Carl Reeve and George Powers which I ran across the other day and which is of, occurs somewhere in that time.

AF: Yeah, it had to occur...

CR: Did you have a personal acquaintance with any of the leaders of the, who were developing in this unemployed movement, like Harry Mayville for instance or others?

AF: Well I met Harry, I met Harry later. Harry Mayville was a railroad worker and he probably, Norman Burnick had, was the, early on he was one of the group, he and Bertha were in this early group that used to be at the, gathered around in this bookstore and we'd...

CR: Mayville was.

AF: What?

CR: Mayville was.

AF: No, not Mayville...

CR: But Burnick.

AF: Burnick was, but I've a notion that, I know that they had a group of railroad workers out of which grew some of the other unions that they would set out to organize you know, they were, they would pick on a job to do and they did do them, in many respects they were a courageous and innovative people. Because it was after all out of that group that Local 1313 of the machinists which later became Local 1313 of the UE grew and that was...

CR: 1313 is...

AF: Yeah I think so, they kept their same number when they went over to the UE, it had been a machinists union.

CR: What was the basis of the local, miscellaneous shops, that wasn't the Honeywell...the Moline group.

AF: No, the Moline group was a different group. Well they were, they were more like foundry

workers and stuff like that, they weren't particularly machinists originally. But yeah and it was more small, small shops and it's hard to remember, I remember somehow or other...

CR: You're not referring to 1139 of the UE are you?

AF: I'm referring to 1139, 1313 is something different, 1139 is right.

CR: Okay, yeah. So for a while the, during the period of the efforts to build a Trade Union Unity League there was a metal workers industrial union organized. Was this the, what we're talking about...

AF: You know I'm really not sure, see I wasn't, I was never actually in any of it, I would only hear about it and I'm pretty hazy on it.

CR: Yeah, I don't have any strong data at this point either but the, during that period of the trade union educational [unclear] Trade Union Unity League, some success was registered in Minnesota in organizing the metal workers union which was in the machine tool industry and the packinghouse workers group, I think it was the Packinghouse Workers Industrial Union and with the Miners Industrial Union on the Iron Range. It provided essentially some starting points for later organization.

AF: Yeah.

CR: So early on somewhere here you and Tom and went up to Duluth or should we get on to that yet.

AF: Yeah, well, there was, there was a time, it was after, after you know, well after, after a while the unemployment movement did get bigger you know and there were some, there was some organizing and strikes and...yeah we, then the election campaign came in there. I recall once, Tom was the organizer of the ILD in that first summer after...he took that on, turn off the thing, let's not...[tape clicks]...Bill Foster was running for President and they sent out word that, that they should organize Foster for President clubs. Carl Reeve was still there I think and Tom went out on the road hitchhiking around and...

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TAPE ONE TWO SIDE TWO

CR: Okay.

AF: So I, [unclear] somebody wrote and said well we haven't been, had very much success with this Foster for President Club, we've only got one of them organized, so everybody came down here, did you get one organized, tell us all about, how did you do it, and so Tom was doing that, that was during the summer of '28 and then towards the fall then we went to Duluth, probably I spent a stint on the farm in the meantime.

CR: This is the '28 Presidential election.

AF: Yeah.

CR: Foster was running with Getlow I think.

AF: No, no I don't...no, not the '28, the '32.

CR: The '32, okay.

AF: Cause the '28 I didn't even know about it. This was in '32 and okay, so we went to Duluth. Well in the meantime the Scottsboro incident had happened and there were, this was the first time that I really began to get into anything because up to then you know okay so I knew that in my school you know that there was one Negro in a town away from me and he played on the basketball team and there was a lot of racial, [unclear] wouldn't be an incident of people not associating with him, but he couldn't go to a dance you know because there wouldn't be anybody to dance with him or anything like that so I knew that sort of thing existed and, and but I just had no conception whatsoever of the real oppression of the black people. And so when I heard the Scottsboro thing that just for no other reason except being black you just didn't get any trial at all, I mean it really set things off in me and so that was when I began saying well these people really are doing something and I'd, would work, you know, became interested in doing something on it. And okay so that was the Scottsboro thing and at the time Tom Mooney was still in prison and it was still an issue that the AFL had at least some of them would have some sort of a [unclear] feeling about it that you could appeal to them that they weren't doing their duty if they didn't support Tom Mooney. So Tom, the winter before that that would have been in '31, was the organizer of the International Labor Defense and he was able to work with the people in the AFL and so forth, there was a tour organized for Mother Mooney and I think it was Richard Wright, or Richard Moore who was touring with her and for the first time for anything that we had anything to do with organizing there was this just a absolutely packed meeting at, in the what was then the well it was the AFL headquarters there on East Hennepin and 4th Street. So that was, that was, in the meantime we were having, there were demonstrations in town and by that town Anderson had been elected mayor of Minneapolis and he had said you could live on 5 cents a day and so they had demonstrations in which they had a skeleton with a sign hanging on it 'I lived on 5 cents a day'. So then, yeah then we went to Duluth and Julius Kogan, he was already there as the TUUL organizer when we came up and...

CR: Tom went to Duluth as the Section Organizer for the Communist Party.

AF: Section Organizer of the Party, yeah.

CR: And you became the Local Secretary of the International Labor Defense.

AF: International...yeah right, yeah so they'd so well what do you do, so first I was organizer of the single men's unit of the unemployed. I was the organizer of the single men's unit of the unemployed, I think that was for the Party, but anyhow yeah we would, there would be you know among this mass of people that were living in the missions and so forth, there would be among them a few conscientious, conscious somewhat educated, at least literate, men and so we would call, called a demonstration once at Camel's Hall of course the Finnish Workers Club rendered or controlled Camel's Hall and so the rest of us all could hold meetings there, so I remember we called one meeting of the, that, from this group where we discussed what they wanted so we called a

meeting for them to discuss what they wanted. And to everybody's amazement they did not ask for food, they asked for facilities to keep personally clean and it was enough so that the City Council of Duluth did go down and investigate and you know and it was really funny they'd say oh, these demands are reasonable, you know it must amazed them that anything that the Communists had anything to do with, but then of course then the immediate thing was to try to split off the leadership to isolate, to get the the people away from the communist leadership of it, that would be the strategy of the Council and all those people that were working around there. The other thing that, the other mass movement that was going on at the time and this was part of it, was the Scrip and Barter movement because all these proud people they didn't want to accept any relief but they just figured if there could be some way that they could exchange their labor for somebody else's labor, so they set up a organization, this was sort of original, or probably it may have been going on all over but I know that it existed in Minneapolis and I know it existed in Duluth where they would have these scrip and barter organizations and they would print something. Well the communists just told them that it won't work, which of course it wouldn't, but we didn't have either the skills or whatever to work with them saying well I don't think this will work but I'm still with you to try it, we didn't, we just says it won't work and so we would have discussions saying that it wouldn't. And but we really did have, when, on the times when we used our own heads and without and talked to the people and gave them a chance, we really made some progress and Tom was really good at that. We had West End Unemployed Group and so we met with them and says well what did they need, well they needed some money, their cooking pots were wearing out so that was the kind of organiz...kind of things that we'd put up and we'd ask them to come to the, put it up to the City Council to their representatives, we called meetings and the representatives you know the commissioner or whatever they had there, I don't recall exactly what it was, came and says well gee you know I was really afraid to come here to face you militant people but they did have some dialogue and we were never prepared for that because our ideologues would always tell us well you don't have to worry about that because they're not going to come but they did. So it did show that there was more democracy in our set-up than we were giving them credit for, than we could know anything about. Well, so, so we tried, we did a few other things. I, the farm workers were having their struggles and of course we would, that's where the ILD would come in, that is that we would then work around and get some defense for them and, and I guess Hank Paull would have been there with or without the ILD but...

CR: By the farm movement, you mean the St. Louis County farmers' activities.

AF: I don't know what sort of organizations there were but it would be like...

CR: United Farmers League organized several marches to the County Courthouse in Duluth.

AF: Yeah, yeah, probably. I don't, I just don't remember too much of that.

CR: The ILD did not function so much then at that time as a defense organizations for political prisoners or anything like that or on political issues.

AF: Well, what, what we did was mostly bail out the guys that got, that got arrested in demonstrations and somehow or other got a lawyer to volunteer to defend...

CR: There were arrests in Duluth, we're talking about Duluth, there were arrests.

AF: I don't, I'm, there weren't an awful lot of arrests, but there would be peculiar kind of cases that we would get into where I remember one in which a young woman was going to be sent to some sort of a mental hospital and the whole deal was that it was a way that the county commissioners were trying to get the relief load off from their back and on to somebody else's back and so we would, I recall Hank Paull defending her right not to be institutionalized.

CR: So these were the kind of things that the American Civil Liberties Union has been doing in its activities these recent years.

AF: Yeah...see at that time there was no American Civil Liberties Union in Minnesota and yeah they sort of took up and they were a bit more respectable than we were and had a little broader base I guess.

CR: So you knew Irene Paull and Hank Paull.

AF: Yeah, yeah, well, Hank was already the lawyer for the radical causes there and that was, and that so I came into it and got introduced to him. At that time Etta Levine was the one who was the promising poet and radical and Irene just had the reputation of being very moody and you couldn't expect anything from her.

CR: Who was the...

AF: Etta. Etta was the one, she...

CR: Etta who?

AF: That was Irene's younger sister.

CR: Okay.

AF: And she became ill while we were there, she was schizophrenic.

CR: Ella Levine.

AF: Etta.

CR: Ella.

AF: No. T. Etta.

CR: Etta. Levine.

AF: Etta Levine, yeah. And one of Irene's essays in that little book that was published which I don't recall any of them now and I gave it to Rachel but of the, of her columns in the Timber Workers Union, was a sort of a farewell to Etta when she died, who, to a little sister who died without living. So originally Irene and I was just, we were two women and I had already let my sister, let Patsy go to stay with my sister and I had intended to bring her back and when I went out there just found that it was, she'd already established a relationship with that family and for good or

bad I decided not to make a fight on it and to leave her there. And so Irene had this, had just had a baby and I came and we just related as women first and then and I was trying to organize stuff on the Scottsboro case you know, the stuff that was coming out nationally from the office of the ILD and that was our main deal at the time and I just recall this now because in one of the letters that Irene sent to me that I had just reproduced and sent over to Meridel for their book on Irene she mentioned how I got her into the movement through the Scottsboro case when I came in and asked her if she would be on the committee on it and we did a lot of, oh we, I don't know, just looking for issues and finding them and doing what we could on them. We wrote the Scottsboro play, that was a big fun deal, and...don't know what relevance it has. The time it seemed terribly important what we were doing and I guess it was.

CR: Did you feel in Duluth that you were maintaining a tradition, was what you were doing seemed to be linked up with the earlier labor struggles and the IWW movement and so on.

AF: Well I began learning about those things at that time, that stuff I didn't particularly feel that I was, that we were maintaining that because we were the vanguard of the working class, and of course they...

CR: You were, I assume you were meeting a lot of people who had been Wobblies, were you?

AF: Not a lot. And...

CR: The IWW did not seem to be a presence in Duluth at that time, was it?

AF: Well, it wasn't any big presence, it was about as much as the presence as the Communist Party is in Minnesota at this time. It was sort of a has-been organization, they still published the Industrial Worker and you'd once in a while run across somebody with a copy of it...

CR: It was kind of like on the fringe.

AF: Yeah. Kind of on the fringe of being forgotten. They were, there were people there, for instance, the guy who was the custodian of the Camel's Hall, Ole his name was, he was about so high, he used to remember, now he remembered a strike on the Iron Range in which Elizabeth Gurley Flynn had been there. I had never heard of Elizabeth Gurley Flynn at this time and she was still in the IWW, she joined the Party oh along in that era, in that time in the '30s I believe and Ole used to, I felt great about it, used to say that I was like Elizabeth Gurley Flynn so, so there was that tradition of remembering that iron, that strike of the miners I think it was, up on the Range...

CR: 1916.

AF: Probably.

CR: Yeah.

AF: But there wasn't all that much, I mean we had, as far as we were concerned there was the Finnish Workers Club and the Jewish IWO. [unclear]_ and some sort of a farm movement around and I don't know, I don't specifically recall that any of them that we were in were actually preventing foreclosures but I do know that that was, that there was that movement, the penny

auctions and so forth, but I don't recall of any that we were ever in and see the farm movement, the farm organization that I grew up with was the Farm Bureau.

CR: Quite different.

AF: Quite different, but largely because we allowed it to be I mean it was representative of the farmers, I don't know, I know my dad belonged to it, I don't think he ever went to any meetings of it, [unclear] certainly the leadership and their outlook was different but I'm not sure that we ever, that we ever went in and put up a fight for leadership in there, or a fight for the principles in there, I think we more tended to withdraw and form our own organizations.

CR: Well I think you would probably find that there were farmers like that who appeared to be in the late 1920s quite conservative who organized the Farm Holiday movement and other activities in the '30s when they had to, when they were about to be dispossessed.

AF: Yeah.

CR: The subsistence farming region's quite different, in the best of times there things were bad...

AF: Well that's...

CR: ...and farming was in itself an occupation very closely akin to working in the woods and working in the mines, it hardly or barely supported people [unclear]....

AF: And it sort of, it was sort of marginal, you worked in the mines and you worked, I mean you had your farm, like my folks, well we had two incomes too, my dad was a mail carrier so we had an income but...

CR: So there was actually a very small rather weak left movement in Duluth...

AF: Uh-huh...yeah, very small. In fact I think we simply depended on the Finnish Workers Club and the Jewish IWO that was, that was about the size of it.

CR: Just a point of curiosity, did you ever get to the Finnish Opera?

AF: The Finnish Opera.

CR: Finnish Opera House, the headquarters for the Finnish IWW?

AF: No, no, never even heard of it.

CR: Or the Finnish American Athletic Club.

AF: Uh-uh.

CR: The Finnish American Athletic Club was the real center of Finnish activities in Duluth, insofar as there was a center, led by people who've been in the IWW and probably still were, far more viable as an organization than the Finnish Workers Club was. Very noteworthy for the fact that

they produced all of the basketball champions for [unclear].

AF: Oh really.

CR: Yeah.

AF: Well we were, we were pretty isolated, pretty much didn't know how to do anything too, and in the end I mean we did things, I mean we held meetings, we did things and you know worked hard on them and so forth. In the end when people, oh yeah we organized a bookstore, we had a little bookstore, not many people came into it, and then when and we would you know put on plays that Irene would write, we'd never got any really big crowds to them, but sometimes that would be sort of a breakthrough into some other organizations.

CR: Most of that you said was in entertainments at the Camel's Hall, probably sponsored by the Finns.

AF: Yeah, yeah, they had a party or something every Friday or Saturday night, once a week and it would be a cultural thing and they'd put on a play and then they'd have a dance afterwards and, and then I was feeling that Tom was just breaking down as a person under that stuff, it just wasn't his line of work and when a few shops began opening up, anyhow I just went in to the Party office, for some reason I got down to Minneapolis and I went in and I asked them if they would release from that so that he could come to Minneapolis and look for a job which they did, cause he was wonderful inside of a shop, not too great at speech making and that sort of thing.

CR: You were probably in Duluth laying the groundwork for the success of the timberworkers union for instance.

AF: Well maybe we were laying the groundwork for it.

CR: But it wasn't all visible at the time then, no I think there's a connection there. Many of the, or at least some of the people who came out of that left wing movement, youth movement and the Finnish movement and unemployed were, did wind up in the timberworkers union particularly.

AF: Yeah, yeah, well okay, so then I came down, I spent the summer on the farm and Tom came to Minneapolis and looked for a job and he got a job and when the, at the Brose Boilerworks and then he got into the Machinist Union from the, I think from the Brose Boilerworks.

CR: Now this is about what year, when you're back in Minneapolis?

AF: I think it was '35.

CR: '35.

AF: Uh-huh.

CR: So you were up in Duluth until about '33 and then...

AF: Yeah from, we came down to Minneapolis I think it was in the spring of '35 and I spent the

summer at my dad's farm and Tom came down there for a while and rested and then went up and got a job and then after a while they, I came up then in the fall and about that time somebody said I'd had a long enough vacation and I'd better take over and organize the ILD in Minneapolis. So then I did that. Okay, this was a little bit more interesting. Also we, Nat Ross was by then, by this time there was a new stuff was going on in the Party organization, we were trying to break out of that isolationist stuff, Browder was the General Secretary, Nat Ross was the Minnesota organizer, Harry Smith was here, he's a real pill.

CR: Harry Smith was the organizational secretary at the time.

AF: Yeah, I think so. A real pill, I'm still mad at him. I'm still mad at myself for letting him get away with the crap he did. Well so anyhow they were, they were being broad. And well there were some funny things and now it does be[unclear], okay so then there were still Unemployment Council demonstrations, there were still people being arrested and so forth and so that was largely the sort of thing that I did. You know I'm a very thrifty, I should have been a Finn, I'm that thrifty you know and of all the people the minute [unclear] I established myself a savings account, I don't know how, but one way or another, I had enough money in my savings account so that I could loan it to the ILD for bail for these guys and these Party people just didn't know how you did that, I should buy a car if I had that much money. And at that time then the Party had a bookstore, it was also down in that general idea...area, oh I got to tell you a really funny thing that happened though, the Unemployment Council had this building I think...

END TAPE ONE SIDE TWO

TAPE TWO, SIDE ONE

AF: So they, so they had their offices there and I came in and they told me that I could have an office there so they said I could have this room and they gave it to me and so I set up an office there and one day I came in and there was a big husky guy sitting there with his feet up on the desk and I says well what are you doing here and he says what are you doing here. I said well I'm secretary of the ILD and this is my office and he says well I own the building how about paying some rent, but we got along fine I mean he, just told him, you know I mean we got along fine, talked a while and I agreed to pay him some rent and...well, but, so we would bail out people and get lawyers. I don't even remember who we had for lawyers then but this, it was at this time somebody came and told me that there was a guy who had been arrested and was held by the Immigration Service, well this was Charles Rowalt and so, politically by this time the Party was making overtures to the Farmer Labor Party and, and yeah this was up on another election campaign was coming up and this was a really, a really strange thing and I guess we must have had some effect in Duluth because there was a guy in the Democratic Party who approached me, I never really have told anybody about this, who approached me once and offered me a job to go on the, on their speaking tour telling why I as a communist was going to vote Democrat. Well of course I wasn't as a communist going to vote Democrat so I simply turned that job down and didn't do it, but it does, it is interesting that, and the reason that I ever remember it was because later on when the communists were in an undercover way supporting Humphrey and he was not acknowledging their support but was accepting it, and so we, I remember being at a meeting where somebody asked well what were they doing and they said well if he accepted their support but didn't want to acknowledge it, and I says well boy oh boy is this progress, but way back here I had an offer to come out and say as a communist what I was

going to do. So, well, that's, that's one of those funny things. Well anyhow so Charlie Rowalt was arrested and held for deportation and this was before, before, I think it was before the, there was a Committee for the Protection of Foreign Born but I'm not sure. Anyhow I went down and I saw him and I got him out, I'm not sure if on bail or on his own recognizance or if, and I began looking around for an attorney and I knew about, that Arthur LeSueur had handled deportation cases in the '20s so, and I had at some time in the past before I went to Duluth I had met Meridel and had met Arthur LeSueur so I knew about them and I went to his office and I asked him if he would take the case and he told me he would take the case but not, he wouldn't have anything to do with the ILD, and he says and not because it's a communist organization. So I never did follow up on that, I just, it was just okay, you take the case, I says you're going to have to let us do something or you're not going to get any money or any publicity or anything but I just, kind of let it go. And Meridel told me afterwards how Art came home and was just boasting about how he handled this thing. But he was pleased to take the case and he says besides that Charlie had clean shirt, so then, so then in order to gain some support we put on a dinner and I got little Rosy Pogen who had been a kid that grew up on the southside of Minneapolis and had been in all these places like the Pillsbury Settlement House and so forth and she got us the use of the Pillsbury Settlement House and we put on a dinner for Charlie Rowalt right after we got him out and it was, it was really, it was amazing because Charlie was such a literate person and you know they just didn't expect that from a guy from arrested on skid row and he talked about Goethe and German poets and so forth and just, just really surprised them. Well so then that was my first, that was not my first deal with the, with the Immigration Service, you see how I forget what I did in Duluth. In Duluth we had the Ketonin case.

CR: Should we find out a little more about Charlie Rowalt right here before you leave it, we'll come back to it I know it, but who was Charlie Rowalt?

AF: Yeah, well Charlie Rowalt was a German, he had come to this country in the late teens you know before 19, I think before 1920, and had, well he'd gotten in the, in the, he had been working, he was the, in Minneapolis he had been a hotel and restaurant worker and one thing, one of the things, when I first went to see him he told me, gee how did this go. Okay, he told me that he knew one of the, one of the relief workers, that he was, he was active in the Unemployment Council and would be on committees going to get relief for, he would be the Unemployment Council representative who would go with a person like their lawyer or something to plead their case and so he told me that he knew one of these relief workers and it happened to be that she was a friend of mine so I went to see her and she went down and testified for him that he was the kind of person that citizens ought to be even if he wasn't a citizen you know, so this was really, really had helped him a lot. And that was how he, well so that's what he was and he had also was working in the bookstore as a volunteer and that's where they, I guess that's where they arrested him, I'm not sure how, I'm not sure how that first arrest took place.

CR: I remember him as a kind of a Daily Worker agent who went around selling the paper daily and delivering it...

AF: He would do that. He did that too, he did that too. And he later on had a little farm out in, that would be another time after another few years and I had moved out to Spring Lake Park, he was out in that area with raising gardens and peddling his produce and so forth, he was one of these guys that just managed to keep himself alive and respectable and...

CR: Okay, now...

AF: Now what?

CR: Okay, let's leave this for the moment then, it reminded you of something that happened in Duluth.

AF: Oh, we did have some deportation cases there too which the ILD handled and that was the Paul Katonin, a member of the Finnish Workers Club and he had gone to New York to visit someone over, over the winter holidays and somehow on, somehow I don't know if he, I don't know what happened to him but he ended up in Bellevue Hospital, I don't, which is a mental hospital I guess and from there they were going to deport him solely on the basis that he was a member of the Finnish Workers Club, practically on that. Well we, we did what we could in Duluth on that and then they put him on a train and they were going to, going to deport him but Carol King then got out a writ of habeas corpus and took him off the boat and so the case was won, but what happened to Paul Katonin after that I don't know, but that case was won and then we had another one, Joe Rosich.

CR: What was the name?

AF: Joe Rosich, r-o-s-i-c-h. And he was living in one of these Hoovervilles on the, which the unemployed set up and you know got their papers, got whatever they could together and made little tar paper shacks and whatever and they every so often the police would come and clean up the area, that is they would demolish these people's homes that they had established and arrest them for whatever and so they arrested Joe and asked him if he was a communist and of course he was very proud to say that he was a communist and so they held him for deportation and he was, they were really rotten to him, they held him in jail for months. I used to go to see him and then after a while he says it doesn't do any good to come to see me anymore. So they brought him in for a hearing and they brought him into the jail, into his hearings in handcuffs and he was from Yugoslavia and he didn't want to go back and they didn't want him to go back and I don't know, eventually they released him on his own recognizance and I don't know whatever happened to him, but that was...

CR: Was there an attorney handling that case in Duluth?

AF: Hank handled it, Hank Paull.

CR: Okay so, back to Minneapolis. So actually these events, the Rowalt case kind of propelled you into more activities in line with the...

AF: Well it was just, it was simply something that we, that we did, it was part of the ILD work at that time and then oh, the ILD was doing a lot of things and then we would be, and I felt that it was a viable organization, we didn't have an awful lot of members [unclear] but we could do things, we'd, at one time I, I wrote, see I was in, the Party had asked me to take over and do this stuff and then they were trying to be broader, they were sabotaging the organizations that we did have. So I wrote a letter to the National Committee of the Communist Party and I told them that I didn't see any sense of my staying in this thing because you couldn't do anything with the ILD as long as the Party was treating us that way, is this new to you, maybe it isn't. So, then Eric Burt come down and

explained to me how there were ways that you could do these things, you were supposed to send them a copy of any complaint you had against them, well anyhow so then we had a sort of a conference on what we were doing, well it was getting close to the time for the 20th anniversary of the time that Tom Mooney had been imprisoned, so I decided and got the Party's tacit cooperation to put on a Free Tom Mooney Picnic on the anniversary of this out at Como Park. And well the Party helped and had Benson, I guess Hathaway was, I don't recall who the speakers were, but I know that Benson appeared at it and it was a big opportunity for Benson to appear and it was a tremendous, it was a tremendous picnic.

CR: Was Benson governor then?

AF: No, that was when he was running for governor...

CR: That was before.

AF: It was when he was running for governor.

CR: In the summer of '36.

AF: That's right, and so I worked all that time on that and the other thing that we was doing, was this was also the time that the Spanish Civil War was going on and we were raising money and, but again Nat Ross says no we should have somebody broader than the ILD doing this, you know, well we were able to do it so they used, instead of using the energy that we had with an organization already set up well they sat down to organize some kind of a broader organization and eventually I suppose they did as much or more or less, but I was not very happy with them. And so then, well that was in the summer of '36 and then there was the Angela Hernden case was going on at that time and mostly what I would do would be organize meetings and places for these people to speak and stuff like that.

CR: Were you getting any support in the black community for instance for Angela Hernden?

AF: Yeah, I, well Angela Hernden had already won his case, I think, he was on a, he was on some sort of speaking tour and I recall I met with the, I suppose the Federation of Negro Women's Clubs and really had a really really nice talk with them and they, had good relations with them. Not that we did very much of anything afterwards, but we certainly made inroads into knowing each other.

CR: There was no general civil rights activity going on then in terms of black equality.

AF: No, we were, no, that actually didn't start until the soldiers began coming back from the Second World War, I think that's when they began having these sit-ins and stuff like that, that was... Okay, so...

CR: Let me ask you about the general political climate in the state and your impressions about that in relation to communist policy, you know Olson had been governor in Minnesota now since 1930.

AF: Yeah, and then, and he appointed Benson to the Senate when I think it was Shawl died in office and Benson then was going to resign and run for governor and Olson was going to run for Senate but instead Olson died. Well okay by this time, yeah, by this time the Farmer Labor Party

was really popular, I remember Tom saying that if the people, if the companies hadn't voluntarily shut down on Olson's funeral that there would have been a general strike of people just saying they would not work on that day because that was very very, well he was really popular with the working people and then, there had been some big big strikes and some violent strikes, hadn't necessarily been big strikes, but violent violent activities against them, this was after the general drivers strike, but there was a foundry workers strike, was it Northstar Foundry, Summit...

CR: That's, I think you're referring to the Ornamental Iron...

AF: Ornamental Ironworks.

CR: Iron workers strike, yeah.

AF: Ornamental Ironworkers strike, yeah, well by this time, this was Local 1313, that was their local and there had been the Strutwear strike, there'd been a lot of labor struggles going on in which Olson had pretty well come out, shut the Strutwear down to keep the scabs out instead of to let them in and...so, what was it you wanted to know, my feeling about the, okay so, so...

CR: What was your impression of Olson? It took the Communist Party [unclear] on 1934 to decide that they could give him some limited support.

AF: Well I didn't know anything about Olson, all I knew, all I did was follow the Communist Party line which was the workers were way ahead of us on it.

CR: That you, say that again.

AF: I said the workers were way ahead of us.

CR: Oh, okay. Yeah.

AF: Yeah, a lot of times we, our theory kept us from, that was handed down from on top, kept us from using our good common sense. I remember, Tom said once that he was just amazed at the things that he used to ask people to do that were working in shops. Let me see, what were we talking about, we were...

CR: About Olson and that period.

AF: Well, I didn't know much about Olson, I just knew you know that well certainly that was the party that was winning and I knew that the Republicans were really against him and were really working against him and I know that among people that were not particularly radical they were thinking of Olson as the coming leader you know, might run for president and that sort of stuff I would hear from, later on from other people that weren't radicals at all. No, I just don't know much about Olson, but then when it came to this big fight over, over Benson and that guy that had been the Lieutenant Governor that wanted to be Governor.

CR: Hjalmar Peterson.

AF: Hjalmar Peterson, I just thought it was terrible, you know I thought iw as just stupid because I

figured well here, Benson would be a shoo-in to be elected again for...

CR: In '38.

AF: To the Senate, and he would have had six years to have gained some political skills, he was pretty, he was pretty inexperienced in political skills. He probably had a lot of other stuff but, so I thought that that fight, I just hated it, I would have said well let Hjalmar Peterson have the darn thing and be in the Senate, that's a bigger job anyhow, so why he wanted to fight so to get the governor, so then they had to look for somebody to have run for his place and then they picked a real loser Lundeen, and so we just, so it was just a loss all the way around. No, I, I know that the people that participated in the fight still think you know and of course I don't know anything about Hjalmar Peterson, what the things were against him that people get really hot about but, in '36 anybody running would have been elected and in '38 well, they'd had time to do the organizing against him, you know you didn't have Olson's charisma there anymore.

CR: You think that Benson was defeated in '38 because of the split with Hjalmar Peterson.

AF: Well, not only because of the split with Hjalmar Peterson, but I just thought whoever from the Farmer Labor Party would have gotten in would have had the, the Republicans were waiting for Olson to go so that they would have a weaker person that they could attack and while in some ways Benson was a strong person, a very strong person, probably strong, stronger than, ideologically than Olson, but he didn't have an awful lot of tact, he didn't have a lot of political savvy, he could have been in the Senate and he could have had six years to have picked up some and whoever would have been elected governor would have been defeated in '38 because, and well, because they were laying for him and there was the opportunity and it's just stupid. And it just tore the left apart as they like to be torn apart.

CR: Yeah, I think there's something to what you're saying that anyone could be elected in '36 and anybody would have trouble in '38. In some respects it seems to me that the tactics followed by the left from '36-38 made them and the Benson administration vulnerable.

AF: Yeah, they come in like to the winners belong the spoils sort of things you know and they were doing things that sure I'm sure the Republicans did them too but they were doing things that would just lead to a build-up of unexpressed resentment until they...

CR: Can you illustrate that?

AF: Yeah, I had somebody come in for some sort of a speech, for doing something, I don't even remember who it was now but they just, well here's some goodies for you, we can get money from you by asking all the state employees to kick in on this. Well it was something that the state employees didn't know anything about but they were just being sort of taxed because this is something that the governor would support and so you do it and that sort of thing just, that sort of thing is, it might get you some immediate money but it is not good organizing.

CR: Any specific issues on which this was done?

AF: Well it was one of the, it was a left, it was somebody that I had coming in as a speaker and I

don't remember who it was, as an, from the ILD, or I mean...I don't, you know I'm sorry that I don't remember it, I don't remember the specifics of it, but at the time I thought this is, I'd rather go out and raise my money different ways than that. You know to get an involuntary voluntary contributions is no way to do, I don't know what the issues were there.

END TAPE TWO SIDE ONE

TAPE TWO SIDE TWO

CR: You were saying that you thought up to about 1934 the communists were lagging behind the workers, it doesn't seem as though they were running too far ahead of them in '36 [unclear]...

AF: I think that, I think we had a self-imposed isolation, I think when I would go to conferences and so forth they were afraid of the people. They, I mean I would go to things and we'd have a fraction meeting in which they would decide in advance who was going to be nominated and elected at a convention that was in the first place was so strictly left-wing and that kind of mechanical control was just real bad, it doesn't convince anybody. So, so why did I stay with them so long? Well I was out of them a lot of the time you know, I was out of it a lot of the time too, I, after the ILD stuff there, I was out of the Party and I didn't, so, so one time Bob Kelly just reorganized me into it and I was in it, but it's always been an iffy thing. And still I say that a lot of things that they did were real good and couldn't have been done by anybody else but it's...

CR: Well what was the reason for, what do you, why do you feel this happened?

AF: What hap...

CR: What was in, what was the thinking of the communist movement that would lead them to this kind of thing.

AF: Democratic centralism, too much center and not enough democrat. Yeah I recall once we had been having one of these open discussion deals, been going on for a long time and I remember Bob saying well now we've had these, all these discussions, we've got to some good conclusions and now the deal will be to get down to the units and I says, I didn't know how and I says well I didn't say it because I have the reputation of being very outspoken but they don't know how many things I don't say and, but I thought well why not start at the beginning, why not start at the lower end and, with raising your issues and deciding what you want to do, that was just, I think that we never had really confidence in just ordinary workers, I really don't think so.

CR: There was also the built-in theoretical notion that the communists are the vanguard in this [unclear]

AF: Oh yeah we are the Vanguard of the working class, well you do have to have somebody that's willing to be on the cutting edge. And...did you want to talk about the Committee for Protection of Foreign Born?

CR: Well, yes. But to examine the role of communists in the 1930's and '40s you have to get into some of these things and try to figure out...

AF: Well there were two things of course. The one thing was that it was impossible, there was also this terrific red-baiting going on of, and certainly the United States government is just, and the most to lose maybe are as bad on the other side as the communists were on their side. You couldn't, you can't, at least you couldn't for a long time say communist without that sort of a mask coming down like that like it was, like it's a code word you know for that will set a schizophrenic off you know. Well and people were just schizophrenic on the subject you know you say communist and all of sudden they don't talk, they don't think they just, just a sort of a hysteria takes place and it works on both sides. And you get so used to it and I don't know, when I was doing this stuff for the Committee for Protection of Foreign Born, I guess that's, the kids just went through hell, stuff that I didn't actually realize in school.

CR: Let's get on to that [unclear]

AF: Well, I would say that while I knew things that I had to be careful and this and that, but it was not until this winter when Tom was writing up some stuff and showed it to me that I realized, and this was the first time that I really got mad, you know. That when he was 9 years old the FBI came, he described them as the man with the hat, his, the principal of the school called him in to the office and this man with the hat questioned him about his folks and, and invited him to inform about them. And this, now I knew that they had been around to the neighbors because the neighbors kids had spilled it you know, had said oh I can fix you, all I have to do is go down and tell the FBI what you're doing, you know, the kids, the neighbor kids had said that. But that they had actually come into the school and taken a nine year old kid and asked him that kind of stuff, I was, that was the first time that I really got mad because they stuff, you know I mean okay I handled the Charlie Rowalt case and I had feelings about it and all but it was a job, I did it, and to a certain extent it was a game, I wanted to win and I surely wanted to win for Charlie, but it was seeing what you can do you know and so forth, it, but that stuff, I [unclear] and I know that the kids have suffered from it and I knew in a way that they were but it has really had a terrible effect on them. How did Carol find it, did Carol have a lot of trouble?

CR: I don't really know how much, I had not heard of any instances at that time. I was not here at the height of the McCarthy period and I know that Marge had a great deal of difficulty in the shop and, where she worked and so on, but about Carol I don't know, she has never said anything about it.

AF: Well it couldn't have been, you see the thing was that we were in a small community and I was very much in the forefront, I mean I was the person in the whole Minneapolis area that was visible.

CR: You're talking now of the '50s.

AF: During the '50s, yeah, and that was when I was doing the Committee for Protection of Foreign Born, that's when I opened the office and all that stuff.

CR: And Tom is just now, your son Tom...

AF: Yeah.

CR: ...has just now kind of told you about this.

AF: Yeah, yeah, he was, he was writing something and I guess that it, in the, he was I guess trying to figure out where he was coming from and so forth and he had written it and showed it to me.

CR: So the Committee for Protection of Foreign Born really was way out in front in, as a visible aspect of the left when the Communist Party [unclear] leaders were not in [unclear]

AF: The Communist Party, they closed the bookstore and everything and as a matter of, and I was doing the Committee for Protection of Foreign Born you know just from my Anoka County address, or 2290 County Road J address you know, and Abner said Alma you've got to open an office, he says people feel isolated they've got to have a place where they can see somebody, and so...

CR: So you went down to Lumber Exchange and rented an office.

AF: Well first we went to East Hennepin, our first office was on East Hennepin and we were there for a couple of years and we got by, and, yeah, and then it was, yeah it was the only place, the only thing that was visible, the only, well we had, the Civil Rights Congress to a certain extent. You know we would put on the bazaars and so forth down at the IOGT Hall, and then found out that the reason the IOGT, this nice janitor had, he told me about it, that he'd been reporting on to us, because after a while the IOGT got tired of their people being spied on, and wouldn't rent to us anymore so I went to them and asked them why and they says well Mrs. Foley if you don't know, you ought to know, that there, every time we would have an event there well everybody's car number that was, everybody's license number would be checked and they would be questioned and they were just getting sick of it so then, so then in the talk on, on this then this guy just told me well sure he'd been, the guy asked him to report on the list and they reported on us and on a couple of other organizations that were meeting there. It was, nothing even that seemed very bad to him, some nice guy asked him to do it and he did it. Did I ever show you the article that I wrote on "Life of the Left in the McCarthy Era"?

CR: No.

AF: Well, I wrote that up, I've got a copy of it, I'll get it out for you.

CR: Yeah, would you please.

AF: Yeah. And what had happened someone had, well I was working in this neighborhood stuff and I was working over at the Bridge for Runaway Youth and Ruth Hammond did this article you know, somebody knowing, you know wanted her to do an article on the stuff that I was doing in the neighborhood, so I says well sure come ahead, you'll [unclear] interview me and so she came to interview me and we sat down and in about the fourth or fifth sentence she said well she says on the file that we've got on you at the Star Tribune, it mentions the Committee for Protection of Foreign Born, and so I thought oh ye gods what goes on so here we go again. So I thought well you either just talk about or you tell her to get out and I just decided to talk about it, so I just said well oh where more have they got files on me. But, so then I talked about it, so then she did this big article about me in the Saturday edition of the paper you know and so that was kind of nice. It was, she, actually she asked me you know if people in the neighborhood knew I had been a communist, and I says well some do, if they're astute enough to know and ask I say yes and if they don't I don't raise

the question. So she raised it, she put it in the paper you know and started out this, that I once unwittingly got a whole bunch of people visited by the Immigration Service by giving their names as people that wanted to go to visit [unclear] and so that, that was kind of an interesting thing and it was kind of fun for a while, I was sort of a village celebrity. And a lot of people then came out and told to me that well that they had known Charlie Rowalt and that he used to come around selling papers to their father in his fruit stand and stuff like that. So, oh, so and then afterwards you know then I didn't know how this would go over down at Bridge for Runaway Youth. I get down there and there's a copy of the paper, they said this is our Alma.

CR: Where was this?

AF: Over at the Bridge for Runaway Youth, I was doing volunteer counseling with the kids there, and so then afterwards as a result of that someone that was running a alternate school asked me if I would give them a history class on it and so then I wrote this up of my experiences there and it was pretty good and I had a couple of copies xeroxed, a few copies xeroxed and have it, so I've still got a copy of it. And it was, kind of comes back to you, so I told a lot of stuff which is probably a little bit more compact, you're getting a lot of extraneous nothin's here. So the Committee for Protection of Foreign Born. Well, was it a communist front organization? To this extent, Martin Mackey came to me, came to the Civil Rights Congress and suggested that the Party had been considering the Civil Rights Congress and thought we should go off in three directions and that somebody should handle the defense of the communist leaders and somebody should work on black issues, you know civil rights for Negroes, and somebody should do the foreign born cases of which we had about three or four going on at the time.

CR: This is now about, this is after the war.

AF: This is after the war, this is the beginning of the McCarthy era.

CR: '45-46, '45...

AF: Oh, it was later than that.

CR: Okay.

AF: Probably '48, '48 or '49. By that time I had gotten back into the, into the Civil Rights Congress, and there again this is funny how Irene and I go back and forth recruiting each other back and forth. I recruited her in the first place and then I dropped out of things and then Irene came in here and she was, she was heading up the Civil Rights Congress and she came and asked me if I would help her with that so then somehow you get started and then you're immediately right into it and this was first thing that we did then was Islanda Good Robeson was going to come here to speak, they, somebody was trying to organize a meeting for her, a tour, and they couldn't get anybody to do it so they said well would the Civil Rights Congress do it and, on what basis should Civil Rights Congress sponsor her and, good question if she's refused, if she's refused a speaking, a right to speak then it's certainly a good thing for the Civil Rights Congress to do, so we did that and that was the first, so then I helped organize that and that came to be a really big deal because, because we were going to hold it at the Phyllis Wheatley House and the, what do you call it, the community club, community, oh the fundraisers...

CR: Okay, the Community Chest.

AF: Yeah, Community Chest it was called at that time, it's called something different now. The Community Chest put pressure on them to deny us the hall so then there was the question of getting a hall, so we finally got one and because of all this denial and all the publicity and then we did get it and we had a tremendous meeting at the CIO hall but then as a result of that then the CIO people wouldn't rent to us because they didn't want to go through that again. So the whole question of just, of the right to speak because you were denied a place to speak was quite an issue there for a while. So, but anyhow to get back to the Civil Rights Congress, and going off in three directions, nobody wanted to take the foreign born because it just didn't appeal to them so it was left so I said well okay I'd do it. By that time I was working with Irene in the Civil Rights Congress. And so then I, and at the time I think that the thought was that this should all be handled through the Civil Rights Congress, but we got in touch, the American Committee got in touch somehow and I began working with Abner Greene and did do the Committee for Protection Born and for a while we just had the committees, sort of a co-ordinating committee and then after a while I, and then there were these raids right after McCarthy, right after Walter McCaren Act went into effect, then they did these raids and arrested Pete Warhol and got his case all going again and Knut Hakonin and by this time now this had to be '52 by that time and I had been doing it, I had been doing something because I had been to the conference in New York, but I was working at the time, I think I was working for More Business Forms, and went there over the weekend and came back and then they were holding Knut Hakonin in practically in solitary confinement there. So we begun raising some fuss about that and, and then there was the Bernick case and then there was at one time the decision that everybody should just run, save their lives you know, this was sort of an hysteric...hysterical thing too. Some guys went to Poland and Norman decided that he would go to Israel, he had decided, he was just sick and tired of not being a citizen of anyplace and so he had made his decision on that when, and had applied and gotten acceptance into Israel as a refugee from America and then, and then the Rowalt case began kicking up again too. They began as he says arresting him all over again. So anyhow we held a conference and we decided to make it the Minnesota Committee for Protection of Foreign Born and we had a couple of another cases up in Duluth and, but the main...

CR: The Roast case in St. Paul.

AF: Oh yeah, yeah, the Roast case then came up, they arrested him and so then we got Tania in, I hadn't known her before. And, that was never much of a case, I mean I think he was, I don't know what, I don't recall even what the decision on it was but I think he was in, essentially free without bond but having to report every so often, but they would keep, they would keep after Charlie and would arrest him and hold him jail and so we'd have quite a case on. Oh yeah, and then there was the Hathaway case, [unclear] Hathaway and that was a fairly big one, I mean that got a lot of publicity and so forth and then we would have public meetings about it and so those would be the things that these would be the visible things that were, that were going on, whereas there wasn't anybody else that was having an office, that was having a place.

CR: It seems to me that these cases represented very, they were very important to some extent, Minnesota emerged as a focal point for defense.

AF: Well it was a strange thing, we, it is a strange thing but maybe because we didn't have so many

cases that we couldn't pay attention to them, and because we didn't have any organization, I know Stanley Novak said to me that he admired the way that we went out and got, and approached outside organizations, I says well I haven't got anything, that's the only place I can go, there's nothing here, so I had to go to the AF of L and we did, you know, I mean we did, we began making some inroads into them and we sure began being surveilled. The surveillance was really strange, the stuff you know, like you said I went down and rented a place in the Lumber Exchange, I rented it for a year, I had a lease and then when the lease expired we just went ahead for a long while just on a month to month basis, all of sudden they come up with they wanted a lease again. So I signed my name to a lease and took it for another year, didn't think anything particular of it. When they had me before the Un-American, I'm not even sure what committee it was, if it was the McAren Walter Committee or what committee it was that they subpoenaed me to appear before but anyhow they were investigating the American Committee for Protection of Foreign Born and I said I had talked to Abner about it and I says well look it, I'm not paid for this, so I'm a housewife, I'm you know, if they ask me my occupation I'll say I'm a housewife and he says well sure go ahead if you want to. So that's what I did, I went there and they kept asking me my occupation and I said I was a housewife and I wouldn't say anything else because after all your occupation is what you make your living at and I wasn't, and so they go on and on and on and they keep asking me. So after a while they says well it's obvious we're not going to get anywhere with this means, so we will get the same information by other ways. So then they began pulling out things for me to identify and I couldn't identify any of them. There was one of me at a, where my name was at the bottom of a picture that had been taken at the, at a meeting of the Committee in Chicago and I says well I couldn't recognize anybody at it, I couldn't. I could recognize my name written at the bottom but I couldn't have recognized my face on that because it was such a lousy picture. And then another one of, I ran for School Board on the Communist ticket in Duluth and I'd forgotten about that, so I, I didn't have, I just refused to recognize it, but another one that they pulled out was my name on this lease that I had signed for the Lumber Exchange, so you see the machinations that they went through to get this stuff you know. For instance once we held some sort of a something at a, some sort of a conference I'm not sure, but anyhow I went to go back to our office in the Lumber Exchange and all of a sudden, it had never happened before, had to sign in and out of the building. This was at about the same time and then of course, then they began, would send people to me with the most outlandishly cheap offers of prices on printing and I said well gee I don't know how you guys can afford to print for that price and they'd come in with really transparent stuff but then Ray Writee told me that they asked him why he, why the co-op...

END TAPE TWO, SIDE TWO

TAPE THREE, SIDE ONE

CR: This is the second interview with Alma Foley, the date is April 4, 1988. The interviewer is Carl Ross.

AF: They had to prevent Carolyn Stormie from winning just because we don't support Trotskyites I guess.

CR: Just like that.

AF: Well there was always this idea that they were, would being super leftists, would become

rightists or something like that and there was just no support of them, and it was you know just plain stupid. They actually had a better position on defending the rights of the Communists, they would always come in with all kinds of attacks on what they were doing but would quite correctly say that they, that their rights were indivisible, that you protected civil rights. And this was, this was a question on which the Party was very vulnerable, they were stupid on the question. By stupid I mean...

CR: That went so far that when the Communists were indicted under the Smith Act themselves they didn't understand that it should be made a civil rights defense, they wanted to make it a defense of the doctrine of Marxism-Leninism, except in California where they persisted in doing it as a civil rights issue and won.

AF: Is that right.

CR: Yeah there was big disagreements between the Communist Party center in California and especially [unclear] Bill Foster who was the public leader of the Party at that, much of that time and the people in California. So you had been thinking of some other questions that you thought we should cover, why don't you tell me what, you made some notes on this?

AF: Well, I, just a minute...

CR: Are these your notes here?

AF: No, I hope you're not using up tape on this while I'm just sitting here thinking... [tape clicks] Professor Smith and she was...

CR: Louise Pettybone Smith.

AF: Professor Louise Pettybone Smith. Anyhow there was a time when the Committee for Protection of Foreign Born itself came under attack. They were having to, being subpoenaed and listed as, on the Attorney General's list of subversive organizations. Professor Smith was going to make a tour and I arranged the meeting, she was speaking in defense of the Committee. So I, we were having her speak in Minneapolis on a Sunday evening and I conceived the idea of how to organize this meeting, and I took as the point of advertising it what happens to the right to a free, to a trial when the organization that is defending you comes under attack. And so in order, at this time nobody but nobody was having any, any public meetings at all that got anything outside of the very closest supporters to it. I made a list of the people that I thought, of the groups that I thought might be interested in the subject from that point of view and I classified them and I wrote specific letters to each of those groups and took the telephone book and took their addresses out and mailed it to them.

CR: Remember some of the groups?

AF: Attorneys, churches, they were, women's groups, League of Women Voters, that sort of groups...

CR: Fellowship of Reconciliation?

AF: Not specifically them, they probably weren't in the book, I knew about the Fellowship of Reconciliation and I had worked with them to some extent, but you know these I just wrote letters in which, to the attorneys I put it in legally you know and that, so then this I got the feeling that we were getting support for the meeting, that we would have a pretty good meeting and at the same time there was some sort of a, of a meeting going on of left wingers that were holding some sort of a conference, I don't recall who it was but it just happened at that particular time Robert Thompson was attacked in jail and very nearly killed by someone who, by a Trotskyite I guess, someone who was being held for deportation...

CR: I think the implication was there was some Yugoslav right-winger or fascist, I don't recall for sure...

AF: Yeah, anyhow, I could see some connection, well anyhow, I was, anyhow I knew that I was going to be asked to somehow connect it and make a point of it at our, at our meeting and I was trying to figure a way to do it and I was pretty uptight and tense too because I'd been working real hard for the meeting... And someone had said, I think it was Rhoda Dizard had said well if they didn't raise this question at the meeting it would be just terrible, so I knew it was going to come up, and sure enough it did. The next day Rose Tillotson called me and wanted to speak on it and she had been underground for a long while and anyhow I acquiesced and said that I would give her some time on the meeting, at the meeting. Well anyhow it was a terrific meeting. People came in carrying the letters that I had mailed out and looking for this place, it was just a brand new thing for them to come into it, and we had a nice meeting of, Pete Warhol's daughter presented Professor Smith with a bouquet for what she had done for the families of the foreign born and she gave a very nice talk, and then I let Rose speak and she gave a talk too, I mean she couldn't just make it defense of the, the right to defense, she had to bring in all of what a good guy Thompson was and all, and so this made well some criticism naturally of why had I allowed her to do it, I mean there was a lot of discussion. Hathaway said you know well it was fine that we sent the resolution, which we did, a lot of people signed the resolution to the commissioner of prisons holding them responsible for the safety of people who were in their custody, and but I just felt that well that I had really let myself be used and had let the Committee be used and have always wondered you know how I should have handled the situation and then lately just, I just thought of it, well gee whiz these people heard something that they'd never, a lot of them heard something that they'd never heard anything about before, maybe it wasn't all that bad, I don't know. So that was all, but I guess what I, the main point, the first point I wanted to make was that we could get people out and could get them interested if we got out of our little rut and projected ourselves into the way that they would be thinking and that this terror could be broken a little. And as a matter of fact that happened a bit before in the Hathaway case. Have we brought in the Hathaway case before?

CR: No. That's Vera Hathaway.

AF: Vera Hathaway. Well, it happened, the Committee was functioning, we had an office and all that sort of thing down on East Hennepin, and I was going down to it every day and doing you know routine stuff, keeping an office open and really wondering, I was, I remember saying to myself what, who do I think I'm defending, I couldn't defend myself, to say nothing of...am I just right in coming down here and leaving the kids at home alone and spending this time down here and is there really sense of it, nothing is going on. And then all of a sudden Vera Hathaway gets arrested for deportation. And so then we were in the midst of it again. She got somebody to put up

bail for her, or Clarence arranged somebody to put up bail for her, and so then, so then we got a new member on the Committee, then Clarence was on the Committee for Protection of Foreign Born and we had the...

CR: Did you get labor support then?

AF: Labor support for Vera Hathaway?

CR: For Vera, yeah.

AF: We didn't get labor support for Vera Hathaway, but we got a lot of public support and interest. What we did, we were, see Clarence said well, he says well this is silly you know we can't say that Vera didn't know anything about this, this was the support that the thing that we were using in most of the cases, that these were people that were just sort of caught up and had been sort of on the fringes of things. And so in a discussion I said well it's one thing to know something and it's something different to prove it, and Clarence took this up and he says yeah, so he wrote a leaflet in which he didn't, you know did not deny any membership, didn't actually say it, what he said was that little did she know that her work for unemployed people and trade union democracy or something like that would lead to this and we distributed this leaflet all over. And, so then when her hearing came up they brought in their whole bunch of stool pigeons and so forth who evidently Clarence and Vera did recognize them and they were glaring at them and making them feel uncomfortable as they were giving testimony and all kinds of stuff, I have covered a little of this in the paper that I have given to you on Life of the Left. But Hathaway was news, and he also knew how to hit the headlines and you know maneuver things so that something important happened just at the time that the reporters would be leaving to get their stories in so it was, the Hathaway was headline news for quite a while and we had some good size meetings about it in which, well essentially they were saying that Vera Hathaway was going to Moscow to attend the Lenin School and they had people placing her on a certain boat and discussing that with Clarence, he said well how do you think this is going over and I said well the people believe that, this story, it sounds pretty convincing to them, so then at a public meeting that we were having, reporting on what was going on at this hearing, Clarence got up and said well this is a lie and I know it's a lie because Vera was with me on a different boat going to Moscow to go to the Lenin School, so then there were other repercussions of that...

CR: At this meeting that you held at this time did you actually have a pretty good representation of church people and lawyer attorneys and so on, it was a non-Left meeting.

AF: At the meeting at which Clarence said this?

CR: No, the one you'd Louise Pettybone Smith.

AF: Yes, there were, it was a non-Left meeting, it was filled with people that I had never seen before nor since, also well for instance a Negro clergyman from St. Paul came, Densel Carty, and no we got, yeah the religious people came and curious people came, it was a big overflowing meeting of people that I had never seen before.

CR: Like about how many?

AF: I'd say a couple hundred.

CR: A couple hundred people.

AF: We held it, we held it at the Andrews Hotel in their big central meeting place where we would have that deal where we would, in order to get a room we would have to get it through their catering service and so they would serve some ice cream and cake somewhere in the middle of the meeting and so it was a good sized room and it was really packed, it was a good full meeting, it was a big meeting, it was a terrific breakthrough.

CR: Yeah, I quite agree with you, yeah, for that time.

AF: Uh-huh. And we had Professor Smith, I arranged that she spoke to some students on campus, that was a small group, but just generally speaking it was a good tour. Well there's another thing that we can go into and this is a thing that was that Charlie mentioned in his, in his story that we, [unclear] he talked about, he was in jail and they held a great meeting for him, that's the way he reported it and essentially that is what happened, I wished I had my notes on this, I'd got it a little straighter. We were having, Abner Green was on tour, it was shortly after Carol King's death and we were going to have a meeting for Abner to speak and we would commemorate Carol King and I'd arranged a meeting at the CIO Hall and at, just about this time Charlie Rowalt was arrested, it was a second arrest and they placed bail at \$4,000 for him, he was held in a jail in St. Paul. I was, I'd, this was before we had an office and I was still working from my house out on County Road J in rural Ramsey County, and I came into town and I used Jack Lieberman's pawn shop as my sort of headquarters, Jack knew Charlie from the Unemployed Council days and we went in there and we called everybody that we could think of to try to raise some bail, money for bail, and we simply couldn't do it. People were, even if they had money they, there were two things, but the biggest one was the fear of being connected because unless you know, just people that Charlie had known back when he was peddling Daily Workers or speaking for the Unemployment Council and so forth, these people you know they would just tell me well they were sorry they didn't have any money but it would come through clear that they were really afraid to have their names connected with it and very rightly so. And we were, and we just being very careful not to give out any names at all, which sometimes hampered us in being able to do anything, but anyhow then the hearing for Charlie's, we're asking for reduction of bail I think and didn't get it, and that was held maybe just a day or so before this meeting that we had scheduled at the CIO Hall and we lost it, but we put out a good demonstration, we got, it was a habeas corpus and so we got Charlie at least out of jail enough to come in there and sit in the court while the hearing on the habeas corpus was held, and had done you know, I went in and I said, I went over and I put my arms around him and then it was like follow the leader, all the other women who had come down to the hearing all came and did the same thing, so it had a good show of support to the judge at least, but we did not get a reduction of bail so that night we held this meeting and it was the sort of thing, we went through with the thing, but oh in the mean time Abner didn't come because something happened that he had to go back immediately to New York, he had to interrupt his tour and go back and so Helen Warhol either went out and met him at the airport or she was actually working at the airport and met with him there and it was at that time that he told her that we should open an office. And so he was not at the meeting, but we went ahead and held the meeting anyhow and it was a memorial for Carol King and so we had Irene Paull told about what defense lawyers faced and Irene got quite emotional and broke down and cried and then we, we had everybody sitting around that table because we were

always serving something and I guess it might have been Bill of Rights Day, I had the tables all decorated with copies of the Bill of Rights and flags and stuff like that, it was very colorful little meeting and then at, toward the end of it we got up and appealed for loans to raise the \$4,000 and got them, people, to an extent I had some of them pledged ahead of time, but people pledged to me personally their Series E Bonds and I used them either for security or something, anyhow I used their Series E Bonds to put up Charlie's bail and that's where he got the thing that they had, that somebody came to him and said well here Charlie it was in the paper, there was a big meeting for you and they raised \$4,000, you must have a lot of friends. And so of course with these poor people's Series E Bonds tied up into \$4,000 was one of the reasons that we, but not the main, not the only reason that when, when they put Charlie on supervisory parole that we sued to get the money back and we did win that suit and that was interesting too because we went, gee I wonder how much of this stuff should I bring in. Well it was interesting, Abner was trying to get anybody, any committee to sue to get their bonds back because that was, that apparently, this is, seem to be one of the tactics of the government was to try to dry up all the funds that the left-wing had available you know and so to tie up money in bail bonds and immigration bail bonds are the worst because they just never end, and you never get your money back, it was even hard to get a bail bonding committee to write an immigration bond for that reason.

CR: You mean a professional bonding...

AF: Professional bonding companies, I did go, I did go to one of them, and I don't know if, I don't recall what the deal was, but I know they wanted, they wanted a little extra because they had done the work on it and the secretary suggested that they, that I should pay a little extra on the top of them, and I says well yeah if that's the cost that's fine but I have to have a receipt for it because I had to account for all of my money. And she got really very flustered and said well of course her boss wouldn't be asking me to anything illegal, that was funny, I was, this was just my naiveté, I just did keep track money. Now where was I when I interrupted that...

CR: Did you have any other notes then?

AF: No, that's all. Oh, we were talking about getting the bail back, so Abner was trying to persuade any committee to sue for getting our bail back and we did it and when we went into court on that the government was really flustered when we put up the arguments and they asked for time cause and they said we've always done it this way and this just upsets our apple cart. So we sort of enjoyed upsetting their apple cart.

CR: Who was your attorney in this?

AF: Ken Yenkle. Oh, he and Doug Hall were such, naw I won't go into that, I don't think we want that in the records do we, fights between attorneys...naw I think we could skip it. But Ken Yenkle did do it and we won the case and the Immigration Service appealed to the Circuit Court but they did not go beyond the Circuit Court and when, when the, it just happened we were holding another meeting down at IOGT Hall and it just almost coincided with it that we were holding a conference about something and they were holding the conference in New York at the same time when we got the word from the Circuit Court of Appeals that we had been upheld and so this was, this was just real big news and they were very happy, I wired the information to Abner in time for their meeting in New York and in the same time we were holding a meeting for the Committee for Protection of

Foreign Born at the IOGT Hall and they gave us all the protection in the world, they had the Fire Department around there guarding the place for us and it really upset a lot of people here, they taught their kids you know to respect for the Fire Department and I was so busy I didn't even particularly notice it, but this was the things that contributed to the IOGT people saying they didn't want us meeting in their hall anymore. And of course that was not the only, that was one of the few places that we could meet in for a long while and there was, during this period there was always...

END TAPE THREE, SIDE ONE

TAPE THREE, SIDE TWO

CR: So why don't you recall some of your experiences with the Democratic Farmer Labor Party and the Wallace movement in 1948. You were just now talking about the fact that Tom had convened the DFL caucus out there and that you had become involved in this.

AF: Well in '44 or something, I mean, on the previous election campaign...

CR: '44 was the Roosevelt campaign, '46 of course was the [unclear] election, yes.

AF: Well I think it was, I think it was in the '46 that Vienna Johnson was running for something on the Democratic ticket but not getting much support from the, not getting much support from the regular Democrats in it, I forget what she was running for, but I did put on a meeting at the school house, I don't know whether I should say that I put it on, but I was in it in some way, it, which Vienna came and spoke and so to that extent before that, I mean we had been doing that, then when it came to the '48 and there was this announcement had practically been made that Wallace would run as a Democrat in Minnesota and they thought they could win, get his endorsement in Minnesota, but he was going to run as a 3rd Party candidate everywhere else and...

CR: Was that after the first convention where the Progressive Party had been convened or still before that, do you recall?

AF: Well Glen Taylor was already the running mate, so they must have, they must have done something, yeah I think, I think the Progressive Party was already, had something, well I had good friends that were certainly not communists who were very enthusiastic supporters of Wallace who were for the Progressive Party, but then they just became more and more isolated. The, the I don't know that it was, it was just a thing, we, it just didn't make it. And I, I do recall that I was working at, I was at Podany's at the time working in the bindery and something came up, I just remember the foreman saying, well we like Alma even if she is crazy on the Wallace question, you know, it was just that sort of thing, I was outspokenly for Wallace, but the campaign started big and just progressively dwindled.

CR: In Spring Lake Park, you said by the time the caucuses were held [unclear]

AF: There was a guy who was the labor spokesman, I forget his name right now, Fritz, his name was Fritz, that was his last name and he was just a real loudmouthed labor supporter, and he then came and organized the takeover of the Democratic caucus and certainly rounded defeated any move for endorsement of Wallace. I wasn't there but it was, I understand that there were a lot of

people were to it.

CR: Was it your impression that in 1947 Wallace was quite widely supported?

AF: Yeah.

CR: And what you were saying that that support seemed to dwindle as you progressed into the campaign.

AF: Well yes it did, I mean, the thing is that it just gave, it just gave the quote Democrats, the Truman supporters in it, it gave them a hook on which to hang their support for Truman, you know, it just let Wallace be the whipping boy and it got so that, it just got to be Progressive got to be a bad word in the whole language. You know we'd go to meetings, you know they'd say stuff like well this is the singing party, this is, you know and then they'd try to sing me songs and none of them could sing and you know, it wasn't, they'd try to be, organized spontaneity never works, it's got to be spontaneous to be any good and you just can't make a campaign that isn't. Yeah, turn it off, we haven't got anything more to say on this.

[tape clicks]

CR: Well I just asked you about the activities and the policy of the Communist Party in the whole Cold War period starting with the Korean War and into the McCarthy period and you were about to comment on this. You were saying you don't know if there had been any other alternative than the way the Communist Party responded to this.

AF: Yeah, well yeah, because my experience was that, that there was a terrific anti-red feeling, anti-communist, anti-Russian or whatever feeling had already been generated so that I recall making a statement at a public meeting that the, well out in Spring Lake Park now whether it was a, what the occasion of the meeting was I don't remember but in talking about this, that I just raised the question that North Koreans hadn't been given a chance to present their opinions or their position and I was just absolutely boycotted you know I mean it just, you know it just, as a lukewarm a thing as that, I just drew the wrath of the whole damn community down on me. A little later on when the, well when the war was going on there, I was working at Brown Bigelow at the time and there was some minor victory for the, I think that the Chinese stopped the American or South Korean forces at, or whoever was doing it at the border and wouldn't let them invade, does China border...anyhow it was something that the Chinese did that put a stop on it and one of the women at you know, just a group that more or less ate together, we didn't even particularly know each other, said well isn't it terrible what's, this particular thing going on in...and nobody responded and then finally one girl says dead silence, just noting that nobody was responding to this actual you know saying it was terrible, that we met a defeat there. And so the, the thing was from the beginning where there had been you know sure follow the leader, if Truman says to do it we do it, to the time of probably a few months later when the, when the war was going badly you know and things were sort of at a stalemate and American lives were being lost and nobody could see the reason for it and of course I was in with two different groups, one, the first one had been the neighborhood, but this was in a working class group and there was much, much sort of black humor about the, about the war and not particularly supporting the American stand at all there. But as far as what the Party position was I didn't even particularly know, I suppose that I thought whatever it

was was right.

CR: So nobody talked to you or with you about the policy of the Communist Party leadership going underground and generally paring down the membership of the Party to those who they thought could be trusted and all those other things that were done. Were you aware that this kind of thing was going on, I suppose...

AF: Well, yeah, I was briefed on it, I was told on it, yeah, we called a meeting of the people and asked them if they wanted to register and stay in it and well at that time the group that I was with were veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade and they said well we've been at it this long, no point of, to stop now. Yeah, I knew about that, you mean the sort of siege hysteria that the Party went into.

CR: Yeah, partly that, yeah.

AF: Well, I don't know, it's hard to say what you think of. Well, just on general on this subject, I do have some pretty firm thoughts on the whole policy of the Party always trying to get somebody else to do the things, to be the face and they would be the brains behind it and pull the levers and be the smart guys that were making things work, you know using people, and I really thought it was dead wrong and as a matter of fact, when I went in, when I agreed to take over the Committee for Protection of Foreign Born, that was the condition that I put up. I said if I'm going to do the work I want the protection of people knowing that I'm doing it. If I'm going to, you know, because I'd, I had just seen this as disastrous policy, we never, we never built up and got credit for the good work we did because we were always getting somebody else to be the front man for it and I don't know where that idea came that that was the way to work but I know that's what we were always doing and told to do and it just never worked, people see through this and they just feel insulted by it.

CR: You think that somewhere along the way the idea...

AF: Somewhere along the way...

CR: ...the idea of a Party committed to socialism that could be legal, open, public, with public membership was a viable proposition?

AF: Yeah.

CR: It had ceased to be very viable apparently in the McCarthy period but that's another question.

AF: Well part of the reason that it ceased to be viable was because nobody ever knew that we were the guys that did those things that they approved of having done.

CR: So the...

AF: I recall when there was, I recall talking with Lee Bergstrom, that was Bob Bergstrom's wife at the time when the UE and the IUE were fighting you know, and her telling about things that the Party members in the UE did or lead that, and she said well gee if it could just be known that these people were doing it, you'd have some support for it, but you just didn't. But it's you know it's, at the time it's, it's hard to do. Are we on record now or not?

CR: Yeah.

AF: Oh dear, well turn it off, we're not saying anything.

END INTERVIEW

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