Interview with Carl Skogland

Minnesota Historical Society

CS: ...by several people to have my biography made up so it could be used by organizations interested in the welfare of the working class. I personally am interested to give this biography because I think due to my experience in the fight for labor over a long period of time that it'd be of some value to workers, the lessons that they can use in the struggles they are going to face in the future and also it will give them an idea to a certain extent how to fight.

First I'm going to give what I would call a brief summary or explanation of the general conditions that existed in the territory where I was born and raised. My ancestry in Sweden possibly dates back for many centuries. It particularly dates back in that little territory in which I was born, where we all were raised, as far back as I know, or as I was able to learn from conversations in my early days. Up to my birth, in the territory where I came into life, the conditions were very primitive. There were no roads, for instance, as we know them today, except for a few walking paths through Tik forest. It was Tik Forest in the territory where I was raised because there were no saw mills and no great demand for the timber or for lumber. The only use that lumber was necessary for was the building of log houses—all the houses were built out of logs in the territory—and for fuel and the fuel lumber was the cheaper kind. Close to my home was a lake and this lake, I think, in the early geologocal time was a river because of the fact that bordering this lake were huge mountains. We were cut off almost like, we say like a knife(?) and get all the traces of erosion by water.

In the early part of my life a sawmill was built in between two lakes where there was a big waterfall. The mill was built in the late part of the 19th century. It was not a very big mill and maybe not a very modern one considered in the light of the mills of today. They were what we called the ram method of sawing logs. Very few people were employed in it, but still it produced a great amount of lumber. Also in the nearby communities a very short distance from my home were big waterfalls and mills were built there. For instance, a big mill was built I would say about two or three miles from home by Nobel, the big dynamite manufacturers. They built a plant producing nitroglycerine and a big power station, that was used for power(?) purposes that extended over several miles of territory around. Particularly a mill was built that was driven by the power of this power station, converting pulpwood to mats which went into a paper factory in another place who produced various types of paper products. Before this time, all the young people in my neighborhood eked out their living by working partly in the woods.
in the wintertime cutting down trees and mostly by helping to till the little pat of land that each had. They also hired out to other bigger big landowners, either by the month or usually by the year. They got so much a year for their labor. So in reality my generation became the break between the old semi-feudal life and the new industrial life.

Now I'm going to give a little description of the house and the facilities we had in the house for our living. Our house was made out of logs, as I said before. It consisted of one fairly large kitchen and one big room and on one side of this big room was a huge fireplace--an open fireplace built out of stone and clay that was produced from the land where I lived. And from one side of this huge fireplace was attached a cast iron arm that was moveable on hinges where you hire a cast iron kettle on and swing either up or on the open wood fire and that was the method of cooking the meal for the family in these cast iron kettles. It also became a place in the evenings where usually there was nothing to do except for tell stories and go to bed early. The fire was built in the evening and father and mother and the kids gathered around this big fireplace and they would tell all kinds of stories about demons of various types after dark. They believed in that firmly that that was true [tape fades out for a moment]...to believe that all of these things were absolutely real and did exist. The result for those kids, me particularly--I am the only one I can speak about--I was so scared to go out at night that I would, well, I just wouldn't go out. When it started to get dark I'd head for the house and I wouldn't want to be out because of fear that I was going to be attacked by some of these demons.

Now you better turn it off.

INTERVIEWER: ...the town where Carl was born is Ronningen, r-o-umlaut-n-n-i-n-g-e-n. This is about three miles from a larger called Bengtfors, b-e-n-g-t-f-o-r-s, which is the site of Nobel's munition factory. The lake referred to is called Svrdlongen, s-v-a-umlaut-r-d-l-o-n-g-e-n which means long sword. The lumber produced at the sawmill and planing mill on this lake was then shipped by canal to Gotthenberg where it was used mostly for export to foreign countries. The sawmill was at a place called Skpafors, s-k-o-small 0 on top-p-a-f-o-r-s. There were no railroads there when Carl was born, he remembers when he was around 9 or 10 years old attending the celebration marking the opening of the first railroad into the territory.

CS: Ronningen is not a town, just one house with a few acres of land around it, that's where I was born.

IN: Was that the name of your house?

CS: Yes.
IN: There were other houses near weren’t there?

CS: Yes, but they were called...

IN: They all had separate names.

CS: That’s right.

IN: Was there any name for the general collection of houses?

CS: Yes, Shwerlongskogand.

IN: Skoglund?

CS: Skogand.

IN: What does Skogand mean?

CS: Skogand is the same as forest. And shwer, that is the same as a sword. That general territory was named because it lay along the lake--lerlong. Shwerlongskogand was the general name given to the territory.

Now I’m going to say a few words about what my father did for a living. First I want to say that his father, that is my grandfather and all of the relations before him, they were more or less what I’d term the feudal serfs. My father was a semi-feudal serf. In the summertime he floated the logs from the woods down Sladelong(?) to the sawmill and in the wintertime he worked sometimes in the woods as a general lumberjack, or he made various types of necessities for our home. He was a tailor, shoemaker, blacksmith, and a carpenter, and made all the furniture for the house. Up to the time that he died he made all the shoes, for instance, for all of us kids. He did blacksmithing, he made all the guns which were known as muzzle-loaders. And he hunted in the wintertime because one, as I stated before, big (unclear), and there were all kinds of wild animals. To specify, we had all kinds of wild turkeys and birds of various types that were very expensive; rabbit, fox, and wolf. From stories that I heard over the big open fireplace, it wasn’t long before I was born that the place was infested with vicious wolves, packs of wolves and the stories were told how so and so was killed and eaten up by them, and bears were also there.

IN: Bears were there while you were alive weren’t they?

CS: No, I’d never seen any, but I heard that the _____ was driven and _____ tore them down. They were plentiful in some northern part of Sweden but because of the attacks so to speak, that were made on them to hunt, they fled farther north. A stray one happened once in a while to come back down.

IN: What about deer or elk?
CS: There were hardly any deer, but all kinds of elk and moose. They were right in my back door when I was born. I saw them practically every week.

IN: Were there any people who made their living just by hunting?

CS: Yes, my father did that in many winters that I remember. We hunted fox. Us kids, we would become dogs to chase the fox out to them that had the guns. You know how that is done?

IN: You beat them?

CS: No, the nature of the is that it walks around and the goes around at night, but it sleeps during the day, and you go out after a fresh little snow, for instance, and you see the tracks of the fox, where it goes in. Then you walk the territory all around and when you find no tracks going out, you know that the fox is inside. So then the people with the guns would get strategic places here and there, and us kids then started on one end and acted like a dog, made all kinds of funny noises to scare and chase the...

IN: Didn't you have any hunting dogs?

CS: They were no good for foxes. We had all kinds of hunting dogs. We had three of them and father would train them for other people. For rabbit and bird and so on we used them, but for fox, because the nature of the fox is to run and they go in no straight streak, they go right through the (unclear), and they never come back to the same place. While the rabbit runs in a ring, a dog chases it, if you stay in one place you see the rabbit and you stay there and when the dog chases they come back to that same place.

IN: Who owned these forests?

CS: Well they were owned by big landowners and most of them from my, from mature age they were bought up by the lumber companies. They bought it for a very small price.

IN: And the landowners or the lumber companies didn't object to the farmers hunting there for deer and other things.

CS: Well they had seasons, but they also had restrictions on the company property that was forbidden to hunt but in the the landowners that owned property or forests around as a general rule they couldn't object because they didn't have no to, to watch and to see that it was obeyed.

Now a few words of us kids, of our general lives. We lived out isolated in the woods so to speak, among the mountains. As a natural thing we
became more mountaineers or played in the mountains. In reality we would put clothes on in the morning and be sent out of the house and we would disappear somewhere and no one ever went and looked for us. We had to take care of ourselves, see that we didn’t get hurt and we came back when we got hungry. We would skate because there was a little bit of lake, we would ski, we made all kinds of sleds and rode down the mountain hills and naturally, like all other kids, we climbed trees, jumped off of mountains and that way. There were a few kids in the neighborhood that were close enough so we could play together, but very few. We generally went from one place, our neighbors, to our place and so on and played. Many times we got badly hurt. For instance, at one time, just before Christmas, on Christmas Eve rather, I and my two younger brothers were sent out to try to pick up some wood and we had to go over to the lake. I had skis on and I went through the ice, and I was in the water there for about half an hour before I was rescued. I was, they survive, was in bed for over two weeks afterwards to recuperate.

IN: About how old were you then?

CS: I was about 15 years old. I don’t know if you want to go ________...

IN: Tell me some more about your father and how he made a living.

CS: Well that is as far as I remember. See, he would tell stories of what he had done before but it was more or less incoherent to me and I was naturally not very much interested as a kid to observe it. But the general work he did, like I said before, he floated timber down to the sawmill. Wintertime he hunted and then took a few days off, made shoes or sewed a suit of clothes for us kids or he made a gun for hunting or he made some furniture for the house. For instance, we never had any pottery, that wasn’t known at that time. He made all of the kitchen utensils out of wood, on a improvised wood lathe that he made himself, pump just like sewing machine practically.

IN: Well now, these guns, he sold them to people? He made them on order, is that it?

CS: Well mostly made in the ____ for something else.

IN: Oh he’d actually get paid in ______

CS: Yes, there was hardly any money involved in the transaction, it was exchange, same as making shoes. He went to neighbors or relations and was there for several weeks in the wintertime and made shoes or a suit of clothes for their kids but in exchange for the, get some other neighbor in return for...

IN: And he built houses.
CS: Yes.

IN: He made these big sleds for the logs.

CS: Yes, yes. All the houses, as I said before, were made out of timber, and cut off, cut by axe you know to fit in the corner and off and then put clay and mals(?) in between to make it weather proof. He didn't do much of that but another family in the neighborhood that did that and that was exchanged when that was necessary, they would come and do that work in exchange for his particular type of...

IN: Well, your father was a jack-of-all-trades.

CS: Yes.

IN: Was this customary? Were the other men in the neighborhood skilled in so many different things or was he exceptional?

CS: No, that was usual, but he was exceptional. For instance, in blacksmithing he had a regular blacksmith shop and he did most of that, none of the neighbors had that, but the general tendency of most of them around was skill as a jack-of-all-trades, so to speak.

IN: How had your father learned this, had his father been a blacksmith too?

CS: Yes, my grandfather was alive and I knew him. He died just a few months before my father died. He lived with us and he was of the same type.

IN: Had your father ever been out of this part of Sweden, or did he live there all his life?

CS: No, no, none of my ancestors, I would venture to say, had ever been any further than fifty miles away for centuries. They had been in there...

IN: What about in the army, hadn't they ever been in the army?

CS: None of them were in the army. There wasn't compulsory training at the time they were at the age, that came into being later. They had a regular soldier set-up, I believe, that provided a little army and then you had to serve so many days in the army in order to have the land that was provided by the government.

IN: Your father never bought the land on which his farm was on?

CS: No.
IN: Why?

CS: Well I imagine he never had enough money to buy it.

IN: He just had to pay rent.

CS: Yes.

IN: And, well that's the end of the tape. TAPE ONE, SIDE TWO (1B)

CS: Kids in the family. There were six boys and two girls and I was next to the oldest in the family.

Now I'm going to say a few words about the religion of my family. My father was a member of the Protestant church and so was my mother. I will say they were very, very religious. My father used to read the sermon because of the fact that church was quite a distance away from where we lived. So every Sunday he used to read the sermon to us kids around the table same as if we had been in the church. He watched to be sure that we never moved or made any emotions of any kind. We had to practically hold our eye on him when he was reading otherwise we were reprimanded for not paying any attention.

He also attended [meetings(?)], because we were closer to other faiths, like Baptists, and then he would take all of us kids with him and naturally we had to be the same as he was. They had a system that so-called wandering preachers came around and would hold sermons in the neighbor ______ and when that happened we were also present there and sometimes we were asked to sing religious hymns and so on and so forth. He was a great believer in predestination. That means that every person's life is preordained and for that reason no doctors were necessary because if a person is preordained you will die when you are ordained by a supreme being to do so. By the way, that's another thing, in the early part of my life there were no doctors in the neighborhood. My grandfather was a doctor of some sort according to the old notions. He picked herbs and various things and made medicine out of it and that was the cure for every disease. My grandfather, I remember when he died, he died in the room in the house where I was born. There was a doctor in Bengtfors, as I've said before, and we insisted that they should get a doctor to tend to him and he said "no, no doctor is necessary, if I'm going to die I will die and if God thinks so that I shouldn't he will ordain that I don't," but he died.

IN: How old was he about?

CS: Seventy-two. In my opinion he died from pneumonia 'cause the way I analyze it he was a very strong man, he was out working the day before and he died the next day.

IN: When you say in the neighborhood, what do you mean by that, about how far was that?
CS: Well as far as was known to us. We didn't know of any doctors that came in with the industrialization process, before that there were witch doctors of various types. My grandfather would cut the blood veins and take a cup and brew it up and take out the impure blood. He had a little knife with a spring put on and it snapped and cut ____ and then it would suck, had a horn they put on there to, and that took the blood out and that was a cure.

Maybe I should say a few words about the social life of my parents. They used to arrange parties, particularly on holidays. He invited [people(?)], then he ordered—that is after the railroad come in—a keg of either cognac or whiskey by the liter—it's almost the same as a gallon. Each one decided beforehand, I want two and so and so he wants one, and so when the keg came one man then picked it up and they'd bring it to a neighbor's house and they would start to divide it up. Then there was always something left over and they would be drinking it up and then we had a free for all. It always ended up in a fight because after they got a few drinks under their belt all the griefs that they had against one another, that always came out and they, sometime and pretty bad ignorance to many of them. Same as the organized parties in houses, get a fiddle player or accordion player and they danced and had a few drinks. That happened very, very seldom, like Christmas for instance. It was the only time us kids ever got a bath except in the summertime when we went into the lake. He made a great big wooden tub and boiled water, and filled that tub with that water and all of us kids had to take a bath on Christmas Eve and Sunday. Christmas morning then we all had to go to church. We'd get up about four o'clock in the morning and go to church. When we came back home from church then we all had to go to bed because no one could visit anybody on Christmas Day, we had to stay in our own house.

IN: Why?

CS: That was because of our religion, and it was ordained by God, and second, they had the Christmas that was also a holiday in Sweden and still is today, then you could have parties and you went out and had a good time.

Next is my school. All of us kids went. It was a general rule. I started going to school when I was nine years old and so did all of my other brothers. I didn't say anything about the schooling of my father. Now my grandfather never went to school. He couldn't read or write and all the ancestors before him couldn't. My father could read and write and he had acquired it, I think, by himself without going to school. My mother couldn't write, but she could read, she never went to school. Of course it was a general rule that a woman didn't need schooling because they were ordained to be a wife and take care of the kids and raise kids. So for that reason there was no need for an education.
I went to school for three years, not full years. Our school consisted of two school houses, one a farther distance away and then one 'bout two miles from where I lived. There was one teacher for both of these and so as a result it was divided up. The school period was in the summertime, in the wintertime there was no schooling because it was too cold for kids to get out. So that was the time that____ in the ____ period, in that first school and then in the school where I went.

IN: You mean the first school they'd have it say in the morning and the other school in the afternoon?

CS: Yes. I went to school many times, there was most kids, I haven't _____, we never wore shoes in the summertime and way up in the late fall. They all had to go barefoot, both to school or anywhere. But in the fall when it's cold I came to school wet and uncomfortable, the teachers sometimes had to take my stockings off and had them hanging over the fire, at both the schoolhouses, to dry up so I had dry socks when I went back home after school was over.

I was a poor pupil in the school. Our subject in the school most of the time consisted of studying catechism and Bible history. We had a little arithmetic, mathematics, like the simple adding, multiplying and dividing, and the reader consisted of the history of the kings and the bravado in the various wars that had taken place in the past. I got a terrible disgust or animosity toward the school in my early days because of the class divisions that existed. I generally didn't have very good clothes on and there were kids of other more well-to-do people that were in the same school and they made fun of me because I didn't have good clothes and I didn't have as good a lunch. I had a very simple lunch, for instance, most of the time mashed potatoes between slices of bread. And the catechism and the Bible history contents seemed ____ appear so foreign, it appeared it wasn't anything pertaining to this earth, it was somewhere else outside of the earth, something that wasn't real. All the pictures they made of these old saints and the various Biblical characters, they appeared that they weren't natural. It went so far that I became so disgusted that I took lunch from home one day and I lived in the woods until it was time to go back and I went back home same as if I had been to school. I did that several times. Then the schoolteacher came home to find out what was the matter with me, why I wasn't in school. There was no ____ compulsory at that time. So my father says "we send him to school every day." The teacher says "Well he hasn't been there." Then I was in a terrible, terrible shame. My father took me and then he--he didn't touch me physically at all--but he really bawled me out _____, I will never be anything in this world unless I absorb everything that they teach in that school. And of course I took that, I didn't say anything about it, but I was still disgusted.

I got back lessons. You had to learn the Bible, Bible history and the catechism out of memory, lesson one chapter in the catechism and one
chapter in the Bible history and the teacher asked you to read it, you should read it, if you couldn’t you got that chapter...

IN: You mean read it or recite it?
CS: Recite it. It had to be out of memory.

IN: Yes, so you didn’t read, I mean you’d get up and say it.
CS: Yes, out of memory. I couldn’t read it because I hardly ever read it and so I got that as a back lesson and I got the next one, some did recite it so I got the next chapter for the next day and I couldn’t read either one. Sometimes I never took either the catechism or the Bible history out of my lunch bag. I left it there until morning. Mother cried and said "you’ll never be a man, you’ll never be a man," and neighbors were talking about what a fool I was and I became more arrogant to fight back. I wasn’t one to subject myself to them.

IN: Was this your first year in school?
CS: Well it was all through the school, yes that was not any particular...

IN: I mean when you played hookey.
CS: Yes, that was in the last...

IN: The last year.

CS: Yes, of course the liberation came when my father died. I was then in the third grade. I went through the grades as per the set-up so I was never held back in the same grade two terms for instance. Father died, then I was taken out of school and that was very agreeable to the authorities that I be taken out of school and then to work.

I think you better close it off here. [tape clicks]

IN: Were these schools free?
CS: Yes and there was one teacher.

IN: One teacher for all subjects?
CS: That’s right.

IN: And for all three years?
CS: No not necessarily, sometimes a woman teacher, sometimes a man teacher.
IN: You mean different years.

CS: Yes, different years. But one year was the same one.

IN: Were all the students in one room?

CS: That's right.

IN: So you had different grades in the same room.

CS: That's right.

IN: And tell me something about your teachers, how do you remember them?

CS: Well they had the authority to beat the kids up if they felt it necessary. For instance once—that also is one addition why I hated school—ink had been spilled in the reader and I happen to get two sitting in the same bench together, two boys. So we happened to get that reader and the teacher charged that we had spilled that ink in that reader and we denied it. We were made to hold our hands up on this desk we had and the teacher beat us with a stick, beat it and kept on beating us until one girl stepped up and said that we were not guilty because that same ink spot was in the book in the other school, they used the same in the other school so then he quit.

IN: Did you like any of your teachers?

CS: I had a woman teacher in the first grade, very sympathetic and I really liked that teacher but outside of that I hated all of them.

IN: Now when your father used to read the sermon on Sunday and you had to sit and pay attention, did you understand it, did you ever become interested?

CS: No, just a formality.

IN: The stories about demons they told, what were they about, witches and ghosts?

CS: Well a little man with long whiskers that was sitting in the foundation of the barn, sometimes they took a horse and they lifted the horse up on the second floor up in the hayloft and they found it there in the morning. I never saw it, but this is the story. Sometimes they hung onto a wheel when they came up the road and a horse couldn't hardly pull the wagon because the wheel was sliding because he held it and a woman witch who generally operated around streams, they'd sit along the stream and they could sing the most beautiful songs and play the most beautiful musical instruments.
IN: That's the lorelei legend.

CS: Yes.

IN: Well didn't this belief in ghosts and witches conflict with their religion?

CS: Apparently not, because they were absolutely sincere. My grandfather before he went out hunting, he had these muzzle-loaders and he loaded it from the barrel you know. He had to make a certain blow in the end of the barrel, if he didn't do that there was a danger. And my father did the same and sometimes they went out and they shot at a bird and the bird seemingly fell but they never found it. But they said there was something peculiar about that, there was something and a laugh spread out in the woods over the whole thing see.

IN: Was your family considered poor? Were they poor people compared to their neighbors?

CS: I wouldn't say it when my father was alive. Our family was about equal with all the rest in the neighborhood because they were all poor. But when my father died then we became the poorest of the poor.

IN: But when you went to school and your father was still alive your clothes weren't as good and your lunches weren't as good.

CS: Yes. You see, this school consisted of kids from the city, the industrial city...

IN: Bengstfors.

CS: Bengstfors. Some were merchants' daughters or sons and pretty wealthy comparatively. Their kids went to the same school, that's what I'm referring to, and they always occupied the front benches in the school.

IN: They were the favorites of the teacher, right.

CS: And they were the favorites of the teacher so they were the ones that made for instance ____ by some that showed very attractive girls for instance and they _____ themselves. The whole atmosphere around the school was based upon if I could step up when the teacher asked me and I read whatever chapter he wanted in the catechism or Bible history then all of these people they would be all ____ but because I couldn't then I was dumb.

IN: What was your father's full name?

CS: Johannes Anderson.
IN: Johannes Anderson Skoglund.

CS: No. Skoglund is a name that was given to me by the paper company I worked for. There were too many Johnsons, Andersons, and so on, and various other Swansons so the company asked that we change our name. We were not the only one and since I was born in the woods I had the name with me, that's the way it was told, so I was given the name Skoglund.

IN: What does it mean?

CS: Wood gully or woodland.

IN: Did you resent having to change your name?

CS: No, I didn't care. All of us brothers, we changed except one of my sisters she didn't because she wasn't staying at home. All the rest changed.

IN: You all changed it to Skoglund.

CS: Yes.

IN: What was your mother's name?

CS: Ida Gustafson.

IN: And of course it became Ida Anderson.

CS: No, she retained her own maiden name.

IN: After she was married?

CS: Yes.

IN: That was commonly...

CS: Yes, it was common.

IN: I asked you if the schools were free, were they compulsory, did you have to go?

CS: Compulsory, yes.

IN: If your father hadn't died when you were in the third grade, how far would you have gone in the school do you think? How many grades?

CS: Well you went until you were fifteen years old, be confirmed, see that was the system, whatever grades you could go through up to that time.
IN: So you quit when you were around twelve or thirteen.

CS: Yes.

IN: Did you father ever have any ideas on politics, did he ever talk about politics, or your grandfather?

CS: My grandfather was very, very orthodox, he thought the devil himself had come into being when he saw the first bicycle. I saw the first bicycle and he was the same as me when I was a kid, he thought the devil himself, he didn't know any such thing could be done.

IN: Did they ever talk about politics?

CS: Well there were no newspapers. We had no news, they had the law, the law was their own, there was no ______ except what they had made.

IN: Did they have any idea of nationalism, were they very patriotic about Sweden? Or about the king?

CS: No, no, well about the king they were but otherwise they weren't because they had no newspapers, that came later. They had only one piece of literature and that was the Church Reader. That was the only piece of literature in the house.

IN: Now you say your father went to Baptist meetings and also when itinerant preachers came by he used to go hear them. The Baptists and the Methodists, these were religious movements that were democratic, that is they went to the common people more than the state religion did which was run by the upper classes, was your father or your family aware of this?

CS: Well he went there because he was with mother, he was a great believer, but he believed more in the Protestant church because that was more liberal and allowed him to live a more different, it allowed him to drink...

IN: Which?

CS: The Protestant church. Baptist that was...

IN: By Protestant you mean Lutheran?

CS: Yes, the Lutheran.

IN: Yes, the Baptists were against drinking and dancing.

CS: Yes, and so they had a little more free life see. One thing about me when I went to these meetings, I didn't think so bad about it, but I was very interested in playing cards. We made our own decks out of
paper and I wanted to play. We played for buttons and I did great but that was prohibited, so I wouldn't give that up for anything. They couldn't convince me of their goodness or their religion except I would be allowed to do that. And I told Dad many times when we went home from meetings, my opinion about it and of course he bawled me out and said I was wrong. My father could hardly speak, he was one of these very quiet fellows but he was good at writing, he could write, a very able writer.

IN: What sort of things did he write, letters you mean?

CS: Letters, letters.

IN: To whom would he write letters.

CS: His brother. His brother went to one of the big industrial centers in Sweden. He become wealthy and he become superintendent of a big lumber company because...

END TAPE ONE, SIDE TWO (1B) THIS TRANSCRIPT BEGINS WITH TAPE TWO SIDE ONE (2A) FOLLOWED BY TAPE ONE SIDE TWO (1B)

CS: October 1st, 1908, I went to Business College and for six months I paid my own way out of my savings intending to take up office work. In the school I studied bookkeeping, typing, shorthand, mathematics and Swedish grammar and studied the German language and also a little bit of history. When I was through with the school I decided to go back to the paper factory where I worked before, instead of taking up office work as I had planned. Coming back to the factory I was ordered to the office of the superintendent of the company and notified that I was rehired as a temporary employee without any status whatsoever. I worked then from the spring of 1909 to the fall of 1910. Then I was reduced from a skilled job to a common laborer. So I quit and I tried to get employment in several other factories around the neighborhood and after they found my name I was told that they had no employment for me. The reason for the company taking this action, in my opinion, was that we started schools, classes in Swedish grammar for instance, mathematics and I generally advocated we should build up a library for the workers to read and also proceeded to help to organize the workers and show them—in the general sense to the extent I knew how—what life is. I had not thought about leaving Sweden, or migrating, I had intended to stay there but because of this situation I had very little choice, so I decided to migrate.

Now there's another reason why the company discriminated against me I maybe should mention. I was going with the daughter of the foreman of the factory and they were absolutely opposed to me courting their daughter. I want to say that I liked the girl and I'm sure that the girl liked me and due to this very reason also the foreman did everything for the purpose of getting me out of there. To demonstrate, when I left Sweden, I left on the boat from Gutenberg. On the day I
left this girl was there and pinned flowers on me and asked me to come back as soon as I possibly could and also to write. I told her then after what had happened that I didn't think it was of any value for me to write. So I called it more or less quit and told her also that she would want to pick up another boy or man that she could find. I never wrote to her again or saw her.

Turn it off there, will you. [tape pauses]

...left Sweden on a boat from the seaport of Gutenberg and arrived in England. I crossed England to Liverpool and there took another boat to Boston, Massachusetts. I landed in Boston, Massachusetts on May 8th, 1911 and from Boston I went on a train to Minneapolis, Minnesota. The first work I performed in this country like all immigrants had to, I was hired by a cement contractor. I was assigned to dig holes in the ground for foundations and also to mix concrete mortars. They had concrete mixers and so on and so forth for work what generally was classified as foundation work in the building trades. I worked at that for two summers as this work was seasonal. I only was employed during the summertime and sometimes in the winter but the conditions in the wintertime to work in that trade were very, very unpleasant so I quit and went into the lumber camps in northern Minnesota in 1913. I worked there for six months and then I was injured. I had my right foot crushed and I lay then in the hospital from January 29th, 1914 for nine months. When I came out I had to walk on crutches and my foot was not healed up, there was an open sore in the foot. So coming back to Minneapolis from the woods I had to go to Minnesota University Hospitals and diagnose what was the matter, why it didn't heal up. I lay in that hospital for two weeks and then they put plaster of Paris on my foot and part of my leg and the diagnosis was that I had tuberculosis in the bone. I was then ordered to go to a dispensary that the University Hospital had and be treated walking on crutches. I went there two or three times and the foot didn't heal up so I looked around for some other way of finding a cure. I was very much disturbed as can be well realized. I had all kinds of imaginations that I was going to have my leg cut off above the ankle, then cut off somewhere else and then cut off somewhere else because that was the general custom with that disease. I had seen it happens to others who had it. So I actually at that time had carried in my mind to commit suicide and sit actually on the Minnesota River bank to jump in and drown myself. But for some reason or another I looked to and I decided that I was going to try out some other ways. I found a doctor who gave a certain capsular(?) treatment and guaranteed that I would be cured. I stayed in his hospital for three weeks and the foot healed up. But I couldn't work, I lived in a boarding house, and naturally when a person doesn't work you sleep during the daytime. Sometimes you are so restless that most of the night you can't sleep. That was very hard on me so I decided I was going to do like all other workers, take a lunch with me and leave in the morning at 8 o'clock to be at the public libraries when they opened. And I would go there, take the lunch with me and stay at
the library all day and eat my lunch and then I'd go home at night and I'd be all tired out so I could rest. And that's what I did then for two three months. Close off.

[tape pauses] ...about a block from the boarding house where I lived was a public park where all kinds of Swedes, immigrants, gathered and there I had an opportunity to voice my opinions and start a discussion. We started discussions of various types particularly on socialism and other related questions. I stayed in that park practically all the time I had to spare for one whole summer and that park became more or less like a debating ground for various types of views.

Then I went to work in the fall of 1914. I went to work as a fireman at night in the greenhouse. I received thirty dollars a month pay and a room in the greenhouse to sleep and I had to pay my own board out of that money. I worked in that greenhouse then from that winter up til 1915. In the fall of 1915 and during the summer of 1915 I worked as a florist potting and raising flowers and making up flower beds for people that bought the flowers at the greenhouse. In the fall I was laid off and then I became a janitor in the flat building and I was there most of the winter of 1915. One day it so happened that one of the women living in that flat building lost a gold watch and I was supposed to be the only one having the key for the apartment and I was charged with stealing that watch. I was absolutely innocent, I never stole anything and they had the police on me and everything but they finally gave up. I was fired from the job as a result of it. Later I found out that this woman had mislaid the watch and she found it somewhere in her drawers, among the clothes. She had mislaid it somewhere and found it. Then I became janitor in two other flat buildings and I stayed there for four or five months. In 1916, after I left there I started to work on the railroad and I worked on the railroad then from that time up til 1922. When I started I was more or less an inspector for the Pullman Company, checking all of the interior of the Pullmans, in material, and so on and so forth. Then when the first war broke out...

IN: You mean the upholstery? What material?

CS: No, I checked blankets.

IN: Oh, the equipment.

CS: Yes, the equipment that the Pullman cars contain. I made a regular check of that once a month and then I had to supply the Pullman with the various things that were needed for the running of the cars. I worked at that for about a year at very small pay. I think it was seventeen cents an hour, if I'm not mistaken, and I became a mechanic for the Pullman Company. It happened that I became a mechanic just a little bit before the United States declared war on Germany in the First World War. As we all know the government took over the roads including the Pullman Company and they raised the wages. I received then eighty-five dollars
a month and I worked any hours the company wanted me to work. You had to sign the yellow-dog contract, that means you had to promise that as long as you are employed by the company, Pullman Company, you are not going to engage in organizing unions or any activity that is detrimental to the company. You had to sign that in order to receive employment. When the United States government took over the railroads they recognized the unions and promoted the organizing of all workers on the railroad because it was necessary in order to avoid any trouble during the war. So we organized the Pullman Company at that time into unions and of course, I became very active in it and became one of the officers of it. That union remained up until 1922.

In 1920 the company started the national campaign to install the company union in their industry. They had a constitution written up by the central office in Chicago and six vice president of the company were the national leaders. Then they had it divided into a [soong?] composed of I think six or seven states. That means that it was as many states as bout seven or eight [soongs?]. On these [soong] committees that the company had four against three picked by the company to sit on this [soong] committee, the national committee selected the [soong] committee but it was obligatory to pick three employees and four employers on that committee. Then we had an election on a local committee and that was composed of three company men and three workers. An election was held and I ran for office of that committee by instruction of my union that I should run for the purpose of busting it up and we received all the votes except one of the workers, so I was part of the committee.

When the superintendent of the company called the first meeting of the committee we gave a resolution stating the reason for it [?] and that we resign because we are opposed to the company union. We pointed out the make-up of it and what it means and that we don't want to serve in this capacity. The superintendent got mad. He was infuriated, he fumed, and he called up all the foremen in the various yards, took them in, and told me to stay in his office. This meeting was held during working hours.

IN: Were the other two committee men with you?

CS: They told them to go to work.

IN: They were also instructed to run by the union.

CS: Yes. So they resigned with me, but I was told to stay and when they got all the foremen in--I had to sit in his office on a radiator, he didn't even furnish a chair to sit on--he read the riot act. He showed these foremen how I looked when I came and asked back for a job, how meek I was and I would promise I was going to be a good company man and I was going to give them good employment and here he is, look at what he's doing. I had no choice in the matter, I had to take it at the
time, but he didn't dare to fire me. So finally when it was through, I asked him, "Is that all you have to say, can I go back to work now?" He says "yes, you go back to work but keep your mouth shut. I could fire you" but he knew better that he couldn't because he would have trouble on the whole system of the Pullman Company.

Then in 1922 when the shopman's strike...

IN: What was the name of this particular union you belonged to?

CS: Brotherhood of Railroad Car Men.

IN: Was that AFoFL or independent?

CS: We were affiliated to the American Federation of Labor. We had an illegal strike in 1919. The railroad companies--that is after the war ended and the roads were turned back to the companies--proceeded immediately to cut wages. In the so-called illegal strike of all their six shop crafts, the organization went on strike, they all went on strike against the officialdoms of the international unions, about half a million workers were on strike on a national basis. That lasted for about sixteen days and then President Woodrow Wilson ordered or recommended that they all go back to work and there'd be no cut in wages and that everybody be returned without discrimination. I was then slated to be given the skids but due to this instruction they couldn't, so I returned to work. And in 1922...

IN: Did the companies accept Wilson's settlement?

CS: Yes, well it was an order.

IN: Oh, was the government still running the railroads then?

CS: No, no.

IN: But the war powers permitted Wilson to do it.

CS: Yes. The companies again planned and in 1922 the they wanted to cut wages so a legal strike was called on July 1st, 1922. In 1919, when the illegal strike took place, the conditions were very favorable for the workers to not only prevent a cut in wages but to get a raise in wages. But in 1922, the condition had worsened or become such that it was almost certain of a defeat if six shop crafts and all the rest of the railroad sections were working, were on strike, they would defeat the shopman. But the strike took place anyway and I was then on strike for seven, eight, nine months and it was lost. I was never able to return to work. I was chairman of the Great Western Pullman, Burlington and the Northwestern Shopman at the time and I, Western entered into agreement recognizing the union again and that everyone should return to their jobs according to vacancies that
But the company proceeded not to comply with that fact, so most of the men went back to work. An electrician named Oscar Koover and a boilermaker, they didn't want to take them back because they were too strong union and talking union too much, but they were the oldest and they were ones that returned so I, with a committee from the union, went down with the company and tied the company up again, pulled everybody off the job until such time that these two men went back to work. That lasted for two days and they went back to work but in the process I was out, I was done, I never got back. Turn it off.

[tape pause]

...When I lost my job because of this shopman's strike of 1922, I also lost my trade. I was a mechanic for the Pullman Company and that trade was only applicable on the railroad. After that I was out of work for approximately a year. Then the first job I had I went into the harvest field one fall and stayed there until later in that same year. Then I started to operate a gasoline station, and that lasted for about a year, year and a half, up til 1928 when I went to work in the coal yard as a truck driver. I worked as a coal driver from 1928 to 1934 when I became organizer for 574 which later become 544. I remained as organizer up until about 1938 when I was elected president of 544 and I held that job until 1940 when I was removed by order of the district court in Minneapolis because I wasn't a citizen. Then when the break came, we affiliated to the CIO because Tolbin threatened to put a receiver over the union which we opposed and for that reason we joined the CIO. Then the international union with Tolbin at the head of it sent in all kinds of goons who were sent on the street to beat us up and we had hardly any support to speak of. The Communist Party or the Stalinists, they had control of the CIO and...

END TAPE ONE, SIDE ONE (1A)TAPE TWO, SIDE TWO (2B)

When we broke with the Teamsters International we were defeated because the state administration, the city administration and the federal government together with the local American Federation of Labor officialdom and also of the CIO, were against us. The only friends we had were the rank and file of the union and we considered it futile to fight with that force. It was for that reason that we ordered all of our sympathizers to go back into the American Federation of Labor or the Teamsters Union rather than we being charged with losing their jobs and being persecuted because of the fight.

After that I went West, not because I wanted to but my wife wanted to go West, so I went. The first stop was Las Vegas where I worked on the housing project for about two months. From there I went to Los Angeles and raised chickens and rabbits for about four or five months, and then I returned to Minneapolis. When I returned to Minneapolis in the fall of 1942, the first place I started to work was the wash machine or the supply company, Inger Supply Company. I worked there until the fall of
the year and then because of the inability of the company to receive any appliances of various types to sell, they closed up. Then I went into the wash machine repair business with someone. We were also selling old wash machines and whatever new ones we could get. I did that up till Christmas of 1943 when I was ordered to go to prison to serve the sentence that was imposed on me in 1941. Better close off.

[tape clicks]

...When I had worked for Inger Supply Company in the fall of 1942, of which I was a head, fifteen goons were sent to the place to try to remove me off the job with violence. In fact, they stated to my employer that they were going to starve me to death. I wasn't going to be able to work anywhere. When I went to California I was married, and my wife wanted to go West because then I was out of work and consequently didn't earn any money. Her intention was to divorce me from the movement of which I had been active the major part of my life and it didn't become apparent to me until I was out in California. There I built the rabbitry and had a chicken ranch. It became apparent we had to break and I came back to Minneapolis. See...

IN: Carl, wasn't one of the conditions of your release from prison that you not go back to the Twin Cities?

CS: No.

IN: No?

CS: No. I was...

IN: You could go anywhere you wanted?

CS: Yes, I was only held in the prison for the immigration authorities to pick me up as I came out. But they had orders to release me two to three days before my time expired there. When I came back to Minneapolis in the fall of 1942 with hardly any money, everything I had my wife got and I never contested it, and then I went to work, as I said before, for this supply company.

IN: Well tell...

CS: I called up the business agent of the Teamsters Council and told him that I wanted these goons to lay off of me and the reason why I hadn't taken any action before was because I didn't want to put a black eye on the labor movement. I told him if they didn't, then I was going to take necessary action to see to it that they were not going to interfere with me. I had affidavits drawn up and signed by the employer and I had a lawyer secured for the purpose of taking their action up in court. I met one of the officials of one of the ones who participated in the attempt to remove me off the job with physical force on one
occasion, and I asked him if that was correct, that he had made a statement that they were going to starve me to death. And he said "yes, that's what we are going to do." So I said "if that comes to the question I was going to have ______ know that I'm going to starve to death, many of you people will have to hunt for your homes because I'm not going to die peacefully."

IN: Did they know that you worked with a gun at your workbench?

CS: No, no.

IN: Did your employer have any political sympathy?

CS: Yes. He was a former union official of the auto mechanics union, and we had worked with him before, he was the foreman for the place. Then in 1944, all of 1944, I was in prison, and coming back from prison I went to work again in my little business, repairing wash machines and selling wash machines and also installing new stokers. I was at that up until the middle of 1946 when we sold out the business, we couldn't get anything to sell and it was impossible to continue, we didn't earn enough to make a living. Then immediately, when we had sold this out and I was out of work, I was run over by an automobile and laid up in the hospital for about sixteen days. I had seven ribs broken on the right side and a shoulder blade fracture and a skull fracture. Then I was unable to work for close to a year. I went to work for Hennepin County Highway Department repairing roads out on the highway. I worked there for a little over a year, but political pressure was brought to bear so the commissioner who was a friend of mine had to lay me off, so I became unemployed.

IN: Who brought the political pressure?

CS: Both the FBI and because I wasn't a citizen, I had served a prison sentence, and I was a subversive and so on and so forth and also the union. My younger sister who was taken away after my father's death... 

IN: What was her name?

CS: Andrena, Andrian, Andriane [he pronounces it three ways]. She was taken away from home to a relative after my father's death and this relative was a preacher. Consequently, my sister became very religious, arch-religious, fanatically religious, became in such a way that that's all she was thinking about. She was only about fourteen years old. When she came home visiting that was all she wanted to do. Her and my mother used to sit together and sing religious songs continuously to such an extent that I became very much irritated. I told them that I wanted to live a different life than that and if they wanted to sing why didn't they go somewhere where they didn't interfere with anybody. I started to discuss with her her fanatical belief. As a result she went upstairs and refused to come down. My mother was crying and she wanted
me to go up and admit I was mistaken and beg her to come down. I told her she could sit up there until she dies as far as I was concerned, I wouldn't go up there. I never did, and she went away from home at that time without saying good-bye. I didn't see her until I left for this country. When I decided to leave my mother asked me to go and visit my sister and see her and say good-bye. I told her no, she would have to come and see me, and she finally did come to the station when I left and said good-bye. I didn't hear from her up till approximately 1948, then I received a message through some friends that visited in Sweden. She had then moved from this place where she was when I left to Gutenberg and married in Gutenberg. To my surprise she was then a member of the Communist Party, and sent a message to me to write her, she was very anxious to know where I was and so on and so forth.

IN: About her adopting this kid.

CS: I found out they had got a boy, a German boy, one that had fled Germany together with his dad when Hitler took power in Germany. The boy's father decided to go back to Germany and left the boy in my sister's and her husband's care. One day they received a letter from him, from Germany, that he was to die the next morning and asked my sister to be nice. He thanked her for what she had done for the boy, hoped that the boy would grow up and appreciate what my sister had done for him, and said good luck and that is the last word we heard from him.

IN: Where did you read this?

CS: I got this from friends I had, it was written up in the trade union paper issued in Gutenberg.

IN: How much younger was she than you?

CS: She was nine years younger than me.

IN: What about your other brothers and sisters?

CS: Well, you mean politically?

IN: What happened to them in life?

CS: Well, I had three brothers come over here. The youngest one, he stayed here for five years and he went back. He hasn't been here since. The other two brothers, one of them or two of them, they went to the West Coast and worked in the lumber industry. One who is twin to this younger sister I was just talking about, he became organizer for the IWW in the lumber camps.

IN: What was his name?

CS: Richard. And he also was a member of the National or the Executive Board of the IWW. He and I had a terrific disagreement, I disagreed
with him in his policy and political views, and that also broke up our relations as brothers, so I haven't heard from him since.

IN: What was the disagreement specifically about?

CS: Well he was arrested and charged with violation of the anti-syndicalism law in Washington state. The policy of the IWW was no defense, just go to jail and fill the jails and starve the capitalism so to speak and hire no lawyer, they could never get no justice. So I wrote him and told him he was wrong, that he should fight the case and get legal advice and get legal help and put up a fight to prove that he was innocent, he hadn't committed any crime. That's the reason why he disagreed with me, and of course we had a general disagreement. He didn't believe that political action was of any value, the working class can never gain anything by engaging in politics because it's so corrupt that leaders when they are elected, they become corrupt and instead of representing labor they become representative of the capitalist class.

IN: Did he reply to your letter?

CS: Yes, he replied and I also had personal conversations with him.

IN: What did he say in his reply?

CS: Well he said I was ____ what do you mean, should I betray the other ones--there were several others arrested at the same time on the same charge--and try to get out and leave them to take the punishment, I'll be a traitor if I do.

IN: Okay, now your other brothers.

CS: My oldest brother, he's two years older than me. He was the first of us brothers to become acquainted with socialism. In fact he became a speaker and gave speeches on socialism, and they ordered literature to study it. We were more than brothers really, we were together for every event to speak of ______ I followed him and we were together for several years in whatever activity he was in, I was with and took part.

IN: He stayed in Sweden.

CS: Yes, he stayed in Sweden.

IN: What did he do for a living?

CS: He was working in the paper factory where I was working for many years. We had an uncle up in the northern part of Sweden that was superintendent for a lumber company so he went up there and became more or less his right hand. He then went to school and studied forestry and he concentrated on the profession of lumber and the lumber industry, particularly forestry, preservation of forests and so on. He became
employed in that industry and at a fairly good position, supplied with a big house for himself and the family with servants that kept up the place. Consequently, his views became more and more conservative. The last I heard from him, he still remained a social democrat.

IN: What was his name?

CS: Gustav.

IN: Gustav. Now those are the brother who returned to Sweden, Gustav, and Richard. Are there any others?

CS: No, Gustav has never been here.

IN: No. There were four boys in your family?

CS: Six.

IN: Oh, what happened to the other two?

CS: One works in the paper mill and, like I said, there is Gustav. Those are the two, there were four of us here.

IN: Oh yes.

CS: See, and one went back, so that's three as far as I know including me here now. And three left in Sweden.

IN: And one girl.

CS: Two girls. I had two sisters. The other, she was just a working girl, that's all, married and had children and she died quite a few years ago from the information I have.

IN: What was her name?

CS: Mary.

IN: And how long did your mother live?

CS: She died in 1924, she was sixty-four years old, she died from pneumonia.

IN: Had all the children married and left the house? Or did they continue to live with her?

CS: No, all the children were married that were home in Sweden, they were married and so she was more or less by herself. I sent home three hundred dollars about five or six months before she died for her keep and she hadn't spent more than just a fraction of that when she died. But she was pretty well taken care of.
When I was 21 years old I was drafted in the army like all other young man of that same age. I served in 1905, 180 days the first year and 1906, 30 days and 1907, another 30 days. I think as far as the condition of the army was concerned the discipline and the general make-up of the army were patterned after the old German army, the Kaiser Wilhelm army. In other words, the discipline was very strict. If a soldier didn't salute a corporal for instance, and that was taken up and reported, they were then subject to punishment. Naturally they went to every young soldier starting the first day after he was at the camp. They read the first paragraph of a little booklet which instructed that the duty of all soldiers must be that they obey all the commands of the officers of the army and of course ending up with what punishment any soldier would receive if they violated any of the rules or violated that particular paragraph in the army.

1905 was the year when Norway separated from Sweden. Sweden's king was also the king of Norway up to that time. Norway had its own legislative assembly called the Lamptog. A big campaign had been going on in Norway for a long time among the upper strata of the population, and also dragged in most of the workers also on the campaign for liberation from Sweden. I think in July of 1905, this Lamptog declared their own independence and then decided that they would have no more to do with the king of Sweden. Big preparation was made then for the struggle that was coming later, armies were moved up to the Norwegian boundary line for whatever reason, for a war which was very imminent at the time. I should say something about the general attitude as I observed it among the general population and particularly among the workers in Sweden at that time. Demonstrations was held in the big cities throughout the country led by the social democrats in opposition to a war. That reached into the smaller communities through the country and big campaigns, both with leaflets, with speakers and also with regular demonstrations, were used for the protest and this same attitude was also very prevalent in the army. The army was permeated one hundred percent practically, as far as the common soldiers were concerned, in opposition to it. We were talking among ourselves what we would do and what the situation would be in case a war was declared. The war, or the question, was not settled until I had served my 180 days in 1905. Then they called in the next year and we were then placed on the Norwegian boundary line. One time I had my oldest brother there and preparation, they cut down the posts and made up entanglements, made concrete foundations for big cannons in the vicinity of the fortifications that they now had built up, that time. A peaceful settlement was made in the fall after I left the army. Next year the soldiers that were called in, they had to serve I think 16 days over their time.

IN: Is this the first year you were in or the second year?
CS: The second year.

IN: 1906.

CS: Yes, 1906. So in 1906, because we had served in 1905, 16 days over their time, big protest took place in the army to demand that they be credited with the 16 days of time. END TAPE TWO, SIDE TWO [END OF SEQUENCE OF THIS INTERVIEW: TAPES 2A, 1B, 1A, 2B] s