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Carolina Piedmont Project

Interview

with

CARLEE DRYE

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Badin, North Carolina

By Rosemarie Hester

Transcribed by Jean Houston

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CARLEE DRYE: . . . and came to the dedication of the new union building, would have been '72. But I cannot answer that. Maybe Cary could give you more of that background, because he was actually working right there in the power division. Cary was in the maintenance end of it, rather than in the switchboard operation end.

Rosemarie Hester: What do you think it was like for him, trying to encourage other people to join the union? What can you imagine his experience was like? Did he have a lot of obstacles in his way?

DRYE: Not really. It had to be done on a quiet sort of thing, you know. Really, when you get to thinking about it, you see the connection, because these fellows on there who were power division people, every one had a telephone connection, one with the other. Any time there was a load dispatch, or anything changed, well, they were on the phone constantly. They are today; part of it's done by radio these days rather than telephone, but they still rely primarily on that actual telephone conversation. But evidently there was discussion between them, and then the people who came along later who don't show there or in the presidents or anything else. Somebody between Dean Culver and O. B. Lackey. . . . Dean worked one shift and O. B. another, as a switchboard operator, but Dean didn't come here till sometime after '34. He went to work about the same year I did. There had to be a contact and conversation between them. Maybe at company expense; I don't know. [Chuckle] Who knows? I do not know O. B. Lackey's background. It was few people that really understood O. B. as a person. He was very quiet, but he had a dedication. Of course, there was another story behind O. B. Lackey, and living next door I could understand what happened there. He met a girl in Pittsburgh in negotiations, and that's why his second term was so short. He came down here and quit and packed his suitcase and moved to Pittsburgh. That's the smartest move he ever made.

RH: What did he do up in Pittsburgh?

DRYE: He went to work in the Youngstown plant of United States Steel. He married a girl named Gilmoltz(?) down there, a hell of a nice person. But I would never tell his wife so. She tried to pick me, my. . . . Every time I went in there, they'd either come in and have dinner or breakfast or something, just whatever he was working at the time. But the first time I went into Pittsburgh, I met his wife, and I didn't blame him one bit. And I was a whole lot younger than I am now. I still don't blame him one bit. He never lost contact with his kids. In fact, he and the girl he married supported the kids. But this is another history. A lot of people look down their nose at O. B. today, because you learn something in the years about human nature, but you don't really get down to inner feelings. Because in this kind of a thing you've got to have a hard shell that you pull around you every once in a while, because they just tear you all to pieces. Those are disgruntled people, obviously, and you've got to listen to the complaints and the gripes. It takes a different type of person, really. The only thing I can do is analyze mine, and I run against a brick wall.

RH: [Laughter]

DRYE: Why did I spend the years that I should have been here trying to, with my boys? Why did I give eight years of actually more time away from home, even out of town, than I was actually home? But they've understood since they grew up why I did it.

RH: What were you doing?

DRYE: I worked eight hours a day in the plant and then did the local union work and handled grievances and that sort of thing afterwards. I couldn't handle the grievances during work hours. The actual grievance meetings themselves, I handled during the work hours and off the job. Of

course, I spent about half the time on the actual work and doing my job. But then if you had to get a case ready for arbitration, the other activities you get involved in, meeting with your own people, committeemen or whatever, and that gets involved. That was done after, because we didn't have the money in the early days, even in the fifties, to pay lost time and wages. It's been since about '60 that you could really say that the man could take off and do the necessary, and the union would pay for his lost time.

RH: You said something about going around the state.

DRYE: That was after I resigned in '59. I was active in that end of it. The Steel Workers started in the merger with the A F of L-CIO, and I was the first vice president of the A F of L-CIO and helped bring about the merger. Served on the merger committee and drafted some of the language, implemented some of the language that came down from the A F of L-CIO office in Washington. That took a lot of time away from home. Then I actually travelled in the state, and I've been in every local union in the state except two, in '59 and '60. It's a hell of a big state when you get driving one end to the other. [Chuckle] Meet with one group tonight and another group tomorrow night. It's big. But they was in the political end, along with. . . . One of the other considerations, the reason I came on back into the plant and didn't go out to Texas--I could have gone into a staff job in Texas when one of the plants was being organized there, as an active organizer--I wasn't cut out; I'm cut out more administrator. I just didn't see it, not and pick up the family and move from North Carolina to Texas. The pay wasn't all that great, and it would have been on a temporary basis, and I might have had to pay myself back in North Carolina. I'd had enough travelling. Suitcase living is wonderful if you're single, maybe, but it gets tiresome after a while. So I came on back in this plant and got involved in this other work there.

RH: Tell me about what was involved during your administration in the union.

DRYE: The first big thing that hit me right square in the head was the integration issue. In fact [chuckle], it was one of the most nerve-wracking periods, I guess. I had to have a hard head and a thick hide to put up with it, because I was castigated not only by the rank and file--they were 100 percent membership then and still are--but by management and everybody except my wife, and she was the one person that kind of summed it up for me, conversation all night long. "But if you can't live with yourself, I can't live with you." And that happened on October 28, 1953, when we got the first application from a black for an active crane man, which was a so-called white job. I was in the process then of changing the lines of progression, although for all intents and purposes, under federal law at that point they were null and void anyway. You had to eliminate all that, and it was just restructuring the whole line of progression under your contract and your wage structure. And I went to battle for those boys, and boy, it was a rough time. I had more than one meeting with people in the plant. One time I walked in after they called for a meeting in the pot room department, and there was thirty-eight people, and that was about all that were off. And at fifteen minutes till eight that night, there was one man left and me.

RH: And these were . . .

DRYE: These were whites, every single one of them.

RH: Whites who were encouraging you not to do this.

DRYE: Threatening to pull out and withdraw from the union. And maybe I outlasted them, or maybe I'm too hard-headed to give in to them, but I didn't. Because I still believe that the Steel Workers' philosophy, and it went before 1953 here. . . . And I stuck to my guns. Although the Steel Workers sent a

man down here, and he just lived with Joe Kirk for about seven weeks out there. Because that was just before; if it had blown, why, they'd have set up an administrator. They had the right under the constitution.

RH: So the Steel Workers knew that you were having this problem here, and they sent down a . . .

DRYE: They knew it, and they didn't know whether I was capable of handling it, because I hadn't been president but about a year, and I was learning. I burned a lot of midnight oil in studying and getting an education myself. I didn't have that kind of education, to stand and argue with a lawyer over here across the bargaining table. And I did a lot of studying. I got an education that you couldn't get anywhere else. There's no school and university in this state that you give you the education I got. Of course, I went to school(?) taking extension courses, and then I went to summer institutes about four years in a row.

RH: How did you finally encourage the people in the union not to quit, that it would be all right once blacks were in skilled positions?

DRYE: You know, I've wished many a time I had had a tape recorder going for what I actually told those people. You had to butt heads. "This is what's best for the local union. If you tear yourself, we're going to have to go back and start off again. You are the one it's going to hurt, when the final analysis comes. They're working with you. What's so unfair about them getting the same benefits you're getting?" Under the wage structure, there were comparative-rate jobs, but there was no way you could get into them without going through certain other. . . . The laborer and the lesser skilled jobs, the dirty jobs. It was just selling the people on what we believed in, really. And that old "fair day's work for a fair day's pay" is still pretty good for the Steel Workers. Of course, now, that's changed in the last seven or eight years. You're going to get the people who

believe that the company owes them a living the first day they hire them. That fits in with some other history of my beliefs about what the younger generation might. . . . And I don't agree with it, because I didn't grow up that way. But it was a dedication, and I recall the time I took the oath of obligation for president. And I had two documents in my hand. One was the contract, and the other was the constitution. The constitutions of the Steel Workers since 1946 have had no discrimination because of race, creed, or color, period. And I believed it, and I still do. Of course, I think maybe some things have maybe softened me a little bit in recent years, in the recent past, but I went through some things in '46 that I can't forget.

RH: What were those things?

DRYE: At that time we were making a base of Guam, and I dived in a foxhole on top of a black boy. Him a Marine, and I was non-combat, supposedly. We spent three days in that foxhole, and then you begin to think about your own attitudes about. . . . This goes back in my life to my grandfather, I think, his philosophy about people. He had a great philosophy: if you had anything to say about your neighbor, sweep off your own doorstep before you did. At the time he told me I didn't know what it meant, but this is part of that belief in the fair shake for your fellow man, be he black, white, or in between. And it took that long, from the time I was twelve till I was thirty-two, to really dawn on me what that philosophy total was. And Dad was a whole lot that way, and Mother pretty much emphatically. She wouldn't let you talk about anybody. "If you can't help them, don't say anything or don't do anything." This is the background. I think you find this in every true terminology of trade unionist. Now others get into it for some other reason, power and the prestige. There's no power, and there's no prestige. You're going to be degraded and downgraded and talked about and talked to your

face, and people are going to call you everything in the book, but you've got to accept it. Because he has a hang-up about something, and you've got to get to it, listen him out, and then try to show him where he's wrong, and it's hard to do. And this gets involved.

RH: By the time you resigned in May, 1959, what progress do you think had been made in the union in terms of blacks in skilled positions and in restructuring . . .

DRYE: The other thing that took place was when Emmett Akridge. . . . And this gets involved in some national-level politics. I was vice president at the time Emmett Akridge went on the staff. He went on in '51, but I served. . . . He says he still had the title of president when I was vice president; I was carrying an acting president. He didn't actually resign from the presidency until September of '52, but there was about seventeen months there that I was actually performing the duties of president and vice president. It was a hang-up now. I didn't like it; I think I wished I had a vice president under me to help me. Because God knows I needed help right then. That's why Cary became. . . . He was the brains of the organization. He had one of the sharpest brains I know about. Everything except leadership. He just couldn't push ahead and take obligation. He was too much concerned about what effect it'll have on me. Or you can completely forget what your. . . . Or you can get your brains beat in. But you've got to be ready to come out tomorrow and do it again. But that period, by the time Emmett ran against me in the election of '54 in June, I beat the pants off of him. And this, I think, was the key, because the membership, black and white, wasn't that great differences. If every black man over there voted for me--and I did not get all the black votes--then it could have only been just a little over two to one. But I beat him almost four to one. Call it self-gratification if you want to. This showed me that people had bought

the philosophy, a resignation that this is a fact of life and I've got to learn to live with it. And that was the key to the break point, and from that day to this, well, just . . .

RH: Because you had been campaigning that you needed this restructuring, and that the union had to allow blacks . . .

DRYE: If you understood the constitution of the steel Workers, today it has a clause in it that people on the international payroll, international representatives, cannot run for local union office, period. And that's because I [chuckle] spent my money and went to Pittsburgh, and I took on the whole works up there. It had to come out. And I submitted the constitution change, and it was adopted. So this history went down through the Steel Workers. But I beat the pants off the international rep. He had no business running. Once he went on the international payroll, he was out of it. The only way he could do it was resign his job there and come back in the plant and go to work. The turning point took place in about ninety days. I had meeting after meeting after meeting with the rank and file. Whatever group in any department wanted a meeting, they could see me at four o'clock. Just don't double up two departments. And we had union meeting after union meeting. But I think the turning point took place within a year. It took about that long for people to accept the fact that it was going to take place anyway. They weighed what they stood to lose to keep on fighting, and what they stood to gain by accepting it. Because it had been basic Steel Worker philosophy and gospel, if you want to call it that, for years before.

RH: How did Alcoa buy it? How did they start to change their hiring practices and their promotion practices and their training practices in response to what you decided in the end?

DRYE: From October until December, we restructured every single line of

progression, which is top to bottom, with no reference. . . . The only thing was department seniority, and that's still promotion, except in certain cases it reverts to company seniority. Say, if you find two people with the exact department seniority from promotions within the department. You still have that breakdown between departments. You don't care under the contract, department seniority from one department to the other; it becomes company seniority. But within a department, it's still. . . . From 1954, November 27 or 28, it was top to bottom, black or white; it didn't make any difference. Only if your qualifications failed to operate(?), why. . . . And this company was giving a little test, and that got against the law, and I had to write that out of it, too, the following spring, about four months later. And no more than anybody^{else} can give. You have to give the same to everybody. Of course, they've gotten out of hand, in my opinion now. With some of them, you can't give tests. The hell you can't. What kind of people do you expect to get? Well, that's some of the [chuckle] latest rulings you've gotten out of the Justice Department.

RH: Oh, you mean Affirmative Action.

DRYE: Yes. This is foolish. Which tied industry's hands. I don't agree with a lot of things that come through. They have harmed management; they've harmed people. I don't think a man, if it's very obvious that he's incapable even of probably one-tenth of the ability to perform a job. . . . Go out there and expose him, it's going to wreck him mentally, physically, and everything. But I still think he'd be insisting, and if he wants to cut his own head off and expose himself to that, fine, go ahead. But you can't get involved in testing people out of promotions. But from '54 on, it was wide open. It still is.

RH: And you think now that blacks, since the late fifties, have had . . .

DRYE: Cary thought of that. In June of last year, '79, you had your

first black president of this local union. Now that's a long time. Now why, I do not know. It didn't happen everywhere else.

RH: Why it's taken so long, or why it's happened here?

DRYE: Why it took so long. Not that it happened here; I expected it. But I expected it longer than. . . . I think the blacks themselves recognized that they didn't have a real leader. And this is not, in my own opinion, a real strong leader. He's the strongest that's been on the scene in quite a few years. The one strong man they had in the forties was electrocuted in 1952 or '53. Moving a television aerial, and let it fall on a 2,300-volt line. It electrocuted him and his son. Now he was an intelligent black, and he would have gone somewhere, and within the Steel Workers. He wouldn't have stayed in this local long, because he had that much up here. Plain old common sense. He didn't have all that education, but he had plain old common sense dealing with people, black and white. He was well liked by everybody in the plant. And it was unfortunate. It was just one of those things. But it took that much longer. They recognized, I think. . . . Well, within the trade union movement, there's been a different approach to taking over leadership. Where it's been forceful in other directions, in the union movements they didn't want to rock the boat. In other words, break up a union or split up a union. They eased themselves into it. Restraint, if you want to call it that. And this is my opinion about that. And I've seen it other places, but especially in this local. They had the vote, on the basis of black and white, until about six years ago.

RH: What do you mean, "they had the vote"?

DRYE: The black membership was fifty-six percent six years ago. And that was the hiring practice of Alcoa in the early days. When they were here, there was no way to get rid of them. Only till you hire more black and more white to

bring that figure down. But it's still pretty close to even.

RH: A hiring practice of Alcoa's was not to allow there to be more blacks, or . . .

DRYE: Well, frankly, in the early days of getting people to work in the pot room, you had to shanghai them. Actually there was one man that ran four taxis back and forth to South Carolina, Georgia, wherever he could shanghai, and that's the only terminology you can use. You haul them up here; they work one shift, and they'd be gone. About one out of a dozen. . . . I don't know what the figures would be. I've asked the question, and I always got, "What the hell. You can't ask that." Well, I can ask it. You may not answer it.

RH: I'd ask that question, too. They say the same thing to me. [Laughter]

DRYE: [Laughter] I don't think it was a planned sort of thing from Alcoa's viewpoint, but just a fact of life. People wouldn't work it. It was plain hard labor. Why, a rock pile would have been better, because you could stop and breathe once in a while. But not in that pot room in the early days; there was no such thing. You had to get who you could.

RH: Right.

DRYE: And that's the reason for the statistics.

RH: Yes, I've heard about a sheriff named Kid Heavy. Have you ever heard of him? He was one of those shanghai people, and when the people would get back onto railroad cars and get out to Salisbury, he'd hear about them having got on the train. He'd be standing there with his gun, telling them to get back on the train and go back.

DRYE: It's a unique sort of thing. Those are perhaps the. . . . And I have my own opinion about the merger, and I wouldn't want that to be in a document or anything else, about the merger. I think we've made some

mistakes by. . . . It's my opinion; it's a strong opinion. I was involved in the merger. I was also involved in kicking the Teamsters out of the CIO after the merger. And it amazes me, what was wrong with the thinking, that of all the international unions that have organized in this locality, and nationwide, why has the Teamsters continued to grow in membership and the Steel Workers, for one example, have declined in the total number of members?

RH: Why is that?

DRYE: The rank and file didn't care what Jimmy Hoffa did; he was delivering the goods to them. And if you want to get an argument going, even today, don't say anything detrimental to Jimmy Hoffa. Oh, I had my opinions about Jimmy Hoffa, too, now. He was a rough, tough fighter. He had to be, in the trucking industry. Maybe they're getting a little more mellow these days; I don't know. But I think the union movement overall hurt itself by kicking the Teamsters out. They should have accepted them and left them in the merger--accepted them in the merger--and then clean house. See, we got the cart in front of the horse, frankly, and that's my opinion. But I fail to understand [why] for the ten years after merger and then the expulsion of the Teamsters, they increased their membership and still are doing it.

RH: By 1959, when you had resigned, how had the restructuring of the lines of progression been accepted by Alcoa? How had it been implemented? What changes could you see in that seven-year period of your administration, in terms of the situation for blacks at Alcoa?

DRYE: We had started in '54 a wage-job study which slotted every job, an evaluation system. The CWS manual--the Steel Workers Evaluations Manual--evaluated and factor-weighted every job in the plant. We came up with our own version, which Alcoa insisted on. We wanted the CWS manual. And it cost them, in the final analysis, two cents an hour more in every job in the industry

than the Steel Manual would have given them. They came up with their own manual. It's agreeable with us. It bunched the top jobs and low jobs too close together. But we had every job in the plant evaluated, and this document was agreed to, ready for signature, and somehow or other Alcoa got afraid of this very thing; I'm certain of it. They turned away from that, because it would have put blacks in craft jobs. And then the further order in '64 came down, and they said you were going to put them in it or else. And then Alcoa got busy and implemented an almost identical to the job description, the whole manual setup, that we'd agreed to without signature, in '64. And even at that point it was only token in crafts jobs; they still would not break down the color line. Well, in 1968 the roof fell in, and then the door was open without bar. But it took all those years to ever break it down, really. The Justice Department in 1972 ordered this one-on-one implementation, and the Steel Workers agreed to it. And this didn't create but just a kind of a ripple. There was about one man in the whole mechanical department of eighty, created quite a racket and threatened lawsuits, but he'd have had the Steel Workers and Alcoa to. . . . [Chuckle] And I think he just gave up. And he was already in the apprentice program. And then along with that implementation agreement was a . . .

BEGIN TAPE I SIDE II

DRYE: To me it was a highlight for this area of the country and for the steel workers, too. In 1949 there was a ten-week strike here.

George Holt: Here?

DRYE: Here in this Badin. Unheard of [chuckle] in 1949, strikes of any kind. There just wasn't that many local unions. And you have to remember that even at the peak of labor unions numerically in North Carolina, it was not quite twelve percent. They gave us credit for twelve percent, but the true figure was probably eight percent. This is not for publication--we're not clear, see--but that's about what the numerical numbers were. But after that strike, it established two things, and I always term them as one: pensions and insurance. Now this is the forerunner of your companies industry-wide in the county picking up some type of insurance, and they still have a so-called pension plan. But what I called a comprehensive pension plan. And I'm sitting back here today, and I recall very vividly people, even people in Badin, people that were probably members of the local union --they were in the minority, thank goodness--who could not see all the wages we lost. Whatever wages I lost, I got it all back the first three months and two years ago when I retired, and I'm reaping the benefits of it today. Besides all of the insurance, there's ^{been} my family raised. There is no way to measure the benefit to the people, not only union members but salary people. They're benefiting every time we negotiate. They did in that case.

RH: This ten-week strike in 1949 was just here at Badin, just at this local?

DRYE: It was industry-wide. See, we had been in the Steel Workers for five years. It was Alcoa, and the strikes didn't take place simultaneously as far as beginning, but they ended pretty much. But Alcoa, if my recollection of the true facts at that point, caved in first. And in Alcoa as an industry, this has been one of their good concepts, I think, that they

always have been, since we started negotiating contracts, leaned toward benefits; rather than give you money across the board, taking benefits. And this is a pretty good concept, by the way, in these days of high taxes. [Chuckle] It's a very good thing.

RH: To go back to what you were saying before about why the union was formed in the early days, during the thirties.

DRYE: I think there was two things, and I don't want to put too much credence on the first instance. I carried S. A. Copp's, who was works manager, clubs around the golf course more than one time. Fifty cents, and ten-cent tips. Always a ten-cent tip. Was a lot of money. But that's about five miles of walking, the way he played the game. But somehow the people in Badin, even from 1938 on, and he left here probably in '45 to '48, somewhere along. . . . But the father-son, this big fa[mily?]. . . . Well, he turned. He probably made a mistake when it. . . . But that kind of statement from anybody in management gets around fast.

RH: What did he say?

DRYE: He said Badin was wonderful. It was a big, happy family and didn't need anybody. But he didn't realize there was a lot of unhappy people out there in the plant. He was probably depending on the lower-echelon management.

RH: Why were they unhappy?

DRYE: General working conditions. Low recognition of the true worth of the people. The people in Badin--perhaps it's a localized thing, and perhaps it's not; I don't know, I've never been able to analyze the Tar Heel, the North Carolinian--they're a prideful people, and they take pride in their work. And that, I think, is the key to the fact that this Badin plant is still here, the modern version of 1960, when it started. Because Alcoa recognized that if there was something to be tried out, some new test

equipment, the new techniques, they always came to Badin to test it. It might be taken somewhere else and built. But I think it's pride in work; there's pride in the job well done. This is an old cliché-sort of a thing, but it's a basic fact in the type of people.

RH: Are you saying that S. A. Copp sort of undermined this pride that people had in their work?

DRYE: No, I think he should have recognized it. He didn't recognize it. He'd been here too many years. Perhaps he was getting on up in years. It was probably nearly seven years ago, maybe, when he died. When I was a young boy I thought he was an old man then, but he wasn't really. Because I have it brought home more every day as I get older. I'm no spring chicken either. But that, and I give Alcoa management credit for not having common sense, not having their pulse on the rank-and-file attitude. And Alcoa really built this local union. They made a bad move at a bad time. It was prior to the time that we went into the Steel Workers, trying to get a local union formed. We were recognized, and they were dealing with the old Aluminum Workers International union. There are still some. . . . It's never been really effective. And they rode the steel workers' shirrtails as far as benefits every. . . . Just a little behind. You know, enough to keep them out of the Steel Workers. And frankly I think they, in the past ten years, would have rather had them all in the Steel Workers and negotiate everybody. Three locals of the United Automobile Workers came in, and they keep themselves busy negotiating that way. That's not good philosophy from the national Chamber of Commerce viewpoint. They'd rather pick you off one at a time than try to take you on all together, collectively. And at that point, I recall very vividly the night that it happened. It was in 1939, somewhere in that vicinity. They were trying to

get people to join the union. It was to go out and beat the bushes, and then you have to go out and hand-collect dues. It's hand-to-mouth existence, because we had to go out in the plant and take up a collection to send somebody to negotiate a contract. No real income. And we had a union meeting one night, one of those foot-stomping, organizing sort of a thing, although Dean Culver was by no means a foot-stomper nor a rabble-rouser type. He was very quiet, but he believed in this union with complete dedication. We'd go down that night and meet the eleven o'clock crew going in and coming off. Had a little ten-cent baseball bat with a placard on it, "Join Or Else". Then Alcoa proceeded to lock up. . . . That figure is cloudy, because the record shows it was sixty-nine, but there didn't actually but sixty-three get in the jail. They filled the County Jail up and tried to get them to go home so they could bring the rest of us in. They just picked off the leaders, and just peons didn't make any difference. Well, that was a mistake, because for the next probably thirty days as many people came to the union and joined the union as were members at the time it happened. The people really locked up in the jail, they tried to turn them out on recognition bond. They would have no part of it. They stayed in till next morning, it got time to go to work. They all got turned out. That was the breaking point initially, in my opinion, in Badin. I've said it to management through the years. Because people recognized then just what the management in the Badin plant really basically thought of them. They charged them with trespassing. That's still technical to me, because [chuckle] the Southern Railway's tracks came in here. They never have established in my mind that that was the border-- the plant was within fifty feet of the center of the railroad tracks--that somebody else owned that property. But that was the trigger, in my opinion, that built the. . . . Because the

people who were doubters about what the union could do for them changed at that point. Then in 1940 it was still pretty close. We had the representation election. It wasn't the NLRB then; it was under the Wagner Act, wasn't it? The election was held, and it was only by a majority of eleven votes. So [chuckle] had they played it cool and just let us parade that night, in my opinion, frankly, I believe the union would have died for that period. How many years it would have took to reactivate it, or some things later come along, but it went into a different atmosphere and a different line of thought by the people who lived in Badin at that point. And it wasn't too much time after then--they could go to the record and dig it all out--that the representation election took place. I guess the good Lord has looked after people in this vicinity, especially in Badin, where there's been a kind of a close-knit thing. People in Albemarle resent us because we're making the high wages, and that's understandable--we've accepted that--but they had the same opportunity that people in Badin had.

GH: Why did they resent you in Albemarle?

DRYE: Because we were making. . . . Well, the people that are working in that plant now are probably making three times what you are over in the mills, in the comparative wages. Benefits, why, they don't even know what they are. Oh, they have insurance and some of that sort of thing.

RH: Do they see that that's something that the union has brought to workers at Alcoa, or do they focus that resentment just at Alcoa?

DRYE: It's not particularly at workers, but the fact that the wage structure is so much higher. And this is true of the management in the mills in Albemarle. I know that the so-called executives there can't touch in wages the hire-in rate in this plant two years ago. Their salaries do not come to it, I mean night supervisors and these so-called supervisors.

It's hard to pinpoint, but there is a resentment. That is speaking of in the sixties, and the '65 to '75. Let's face it. The younger generation is coming along here, another generation, who have a different concept.

They're not afraid to take a chance. I've learned that with being with my own kids. My daughter came along, and she'd do things. She'd take off on a 200-mile trip, and her mother would spin like a top, and the boys wouldn't even have attempted it when they were coming up. Just in those years.

There is a different. . . . It's envying rather than resentment. Maybe that's a better word.

Because wages in Badin, compared to anything in the state--not just in Stanly County, but anything in the state--has been right up at the top. It has not been top all the time, but we were right up there nudging them. That's in the railroad unions and everything else, that've been in existence for a hundred years. But that's the one thing. I started to say I guess the good Lord has been lucky to people in Badin, because you had, over-all, some good leadership. The odds are against you, from 1938 to today--I believe that is forty-two years [whistles]--so there's been a lot of leadership.

GH : Leadership in the union or in management?

DRYE: The attitude towards unions started changing probably in 1944, at the time that this Local 303 was formed, the old aluminum workers. And I've forgotten what that name is. I could probably dig out one of the contracts somewhere. There aren't but two copies of the first aluminum workers' contract that they signed in existence, that I know anything about. I'm rather proud of the steel workers, what they stand for and what they've attempted to do through the years. They haven't really, in my opinion, received enough recognition for the fundamental, down-to-earth issues they've battled for. The welfare of the working man. Even today, you organize a plant into the Steel Workers, the first contract is going to be as near to the basic steel

contract as you can come up with. And that's true of aluminum workers, Alcoa, Reynolds, Kaiser, any of them; it's a basic steel contract which is pretty much standard throughout the industry. Some locals work harder getting there. We didn't get the high standard of living, high wages and benefits in the first contract we signed. [Chuckle] It's laughable, really, to call it a contract, but it was a contract.

RH: Back in the thirties, say from 1934 on, supposedly there was an A F of L union here. Do you have any recollection of that union at all?

DRYE: The Aluminum Workers were A F of L and still are, for our technical terms. That's probably, in my opinion, what's wrong with construction trades. Hm, I'm getting into some touchy ground now. [Chuckle] Because they form crafts rather than the industrial-type union. And this is one of the considerations, and perhaps the big consideration. . . . In 1936, when the SWOC, the Steel Workers International Organizing Committee, the beginning of the southern drive, although it didn't go national until 1946, I guess it was. They wanted to split the people in the plant into crafts, each craft in one. Now you were setting up about a dozen locals, is what the final effect would be, and then your pot room people in one union and your tire(?) people in another union. Well, in effect you were wrecking the organization that was existing. At that time I was attending the union meetings fairly regular to that point, and that was one of the considerations in affiliating with the Steel Workers. And it wasn't easy to sell the membership. Although then [chuckle] at one point--it never did materialize that you might have had one or two meetings in the early days, '36, '37, '38, with the black on one side of town and the whites on the other. Have two union meetings. I have never been able to quite analyze that, but it didn't sit with the white or the black. They were in one union at that point, and

even that far back there was a movement of black and white together, because they worked on the same jobs in the plant. Although [chuckle] how you got there was a very devious route for blacks, even up until 1953. The lines of progression spelled it out, and that got against the law and among things. But even that far back, beyond that, it didn't jell with the leadership. So this is all of the considerations of people.(?) And I cannot, even though I've dealt with them direct over ten years. . . . It was longer than that, because until I left the plant I met a meeting the day before. I wasn't in the executive board; I was just a rank-and-file with another job to do. But this was a consideration for going into the Steel workers.

RH: Because this was a way . . .

DRYE: Because they'd take everybody, craft and everybody else. Although when it comes to representative negotiations, you do get separation take place; there's no question about that. You have to. You can't talk about a laborer in a plant and a craft in the same terminology. There's no way you can do it.

RH: Say, then, from the time in '44 when you went over to Steel Workers, is that right?

DRYE: Yes. June the fifth is when the charter says. I just found out something myself when I got to reviewing this this morning. I didn't know that O.E. Lackey was the president two different times. I'll let you have that.

RH: Oh, great. Thank you.

DRYE: That's readily available. I've got a file in my files.

RH: I'm just trying to figure out what period it would have been where the blacks had meetings on their side, and the whites had on their side.

DRYE: That was in the organizing effort. It would have had to have been in late '36 or early '37. Then after the company actually recognized

a small nu. . . . We weren't in the majority of the people. The union membership would pay dues erratically. You couldn't call it, in the terminology we use today, Local 303. There was a so-called officer without any formal election. And I can't at this point tell you what the date was. The A F of L sent Nick Zanovich in here. He stayed, probably, three or four months. He just died last year.

RH: Who was he?

DRYE: He's from out of Pittsburgh, New Kensington. He came up in the New Kensington plant, which is now defunct. Has been for ten years, about. It outgrew itself.

RH: Was he an organizer?

DRYE: He was an organizer in the early days. He was the president of the Aluminum Workers International union at the time the unions were being formed. He spent a lot of time here in Badin. I knew Nick in the international office. He was absorbed into the Pittsburgh office of the Steel Workers. Still had the service unions from the top level to the other eleven; there were twelve levels at that time. Then later he went into Washington as the director of organization in the A F of L-CIO. He was in that position when he died. He was still in organization. He was an organizer; there's no question about it.

RH: During all those years, were there pretty much organizers here most of the time?

DRYE: Not from the time the election was held and it was affiliated with the Steel Workers in 1944. I don't know how much you understand about the steel workers' representation. It's a chain of command. You had an international representative who was out of the Pittsburgh office-- or he might not have been out, but he was paid by the Pittsburgh office of the Steel Workers--

who serviced and handled grievances from the fourth step on through arbitration. It was the option of the president. First- and second-step grievances, whatever the nature was under the contract, were handled by the president at the second step and the third step. At the fourth step, then the international stepped in and helped. But that's the extent of the organizing. All the other organizing after that point was done by the membership themselves, by people who were presidents and the executive board, the plant committeemen and this sort of thing. After the merger, we termed it, when we went into the Steel Workers, and it went right on pretty soon into the international office (they went international). . . . I would say till the election in 1940, there was no active organizer in the Badin locality. It started in 1940, really.

RH: That organizers came in.

DRYE: You might say they left. And even at that point, there was never that many here, and it was about the extent of it. On this list--and this is an amazing thing to me; I got to analyzing it a while ago, and this is the one place that you'd seem to be that it wouldn't be as strong as others--except for two people on this list who were out of the. . . . This is the charter of affiliation, where I left these names, only eight people who were charter members of this Local 303. There was John Carrick and John Fultz. There was three, really. Lonnie Baswell and John Carrick were in the pot room department. John Fultz was a fireman out of the mechanical department. And the others were in the power division. So the nucleus of the original organizing effort started back there with O. B. Lackey and McCroskey, Dean Culver.

RH: And O. B. Lackey worked where?

DRYE: In the power division. That was in the generation at the powerhouses,

and then. . . .

RH: L. A. Stiller?

DRYE: And Shankle was in the rotor station. It was still in the power division. One was down on the river, and the other was in the plant location itself, within the plant gates.

RH: And who was John Carrick?

DRYE: John Carrick was in the pot room. And Lonnie Baswell was in the pot room.

RH: John Fultz?

DRYE: John Fultz was in the mechanical. I never quite figured that one. I knew John well.

RH: And then there's Fincher?

DRYE: [Lela] Fincher was the office secretary. She married Dean Culver. She was a member of the local at that time, and I had been excluded, because the Steel Workers' constitution excludes people who do not work within the mill itself. "Or a jurisdiction thereof," or some terminology or language of that thing.

RH: But she married Dean Culver.

DRYE: That's when he was president of the local. They married after he left the presidency. I know of another history tied to that fellow, too, but it gets into the UTW and TWA, which gets into the history and the attitude of people in this part of the country, and the split in the textile union in 1950.

RH: Where does O. B. Lackey come into. . . .

DRYE: O. B. Lackey was the first president of A F of L, the Aluminum Workers. And Dean went on the payroll of the TWUA, the Textile Workers' Union.

RH: So he was pretty much the spearhead, then, of the original union

of A F of L.

DRYE: I would say, from that nucleus of about a handful of people, that was the spearhead.

RH: How do you think he developed these union sentiments, out in this isolated community?

DRYE: You have to analyze individuals. Where did I develop mine, except in the background of my mother and father's nature of wanting to help your fellow man. That has to be in everybody that. . . . Because I'm a firm believer, and I've been convinced of this many a time, the membership will cull out those who do not have the dedication towards helping your fellow man. You do not put in the hours necessary without having a dedication about it. The pay is not there. Of course, now you get all kinds of attitudes about the pay of the union people. It cost me money in the twelve years I was involved actually actively. I know it cost me money when I went on the state payroll and travelled the state. Fifteen months, and I found out I could not afford the job.

RH: So it's a matter of O. B. Lackey, then, feeling that the union was going to help his fellow man.

DRYE: Yes, I think that's right. And Dean Culver probably had the stronger feeling.

RH: By improving the working conditions in the plant?

DRYE: Yes, and I fail. . . . Because those fellows in the power division had a different type job from the actual labor viewpoint. They were in a control room or something of that nature. Every single one of them were switchboard operators.

RH: Where would he have learned about unions, O. B. Lackey?

DRYE: That would take a history from the point that he came to work here sometime before the early thirties. And I have never took the time. I have wondered . . .

BEGIN TAPE II SIDE I

DRYE: . . . the conditions are in the plant. But at the same time, we have a pride in the job that Alcoa has done, not only just in Badin but Alcoa nationwide. Alcoa set back until the government tried to break it up right after the War, when they gave Reynolds all the DPC plants. And they broke up the aluminum monopoly. But it got Alcoa off their rear, and they had to get into research. This is the best thing that ever happened to Alcoa and. . . .

To actually face it, although Reynolds got competition. Alcoa started a hell of a research program. There's no question about it. The things they've gotten into, and still are. There are some things in the science and technology today that Alcoa developed. Maybe the space program wouldn't have been what it was had it not been for the Research Testing Laboratory right out of Pittsburgh in New Kensington. [Chuckle] But the nature of the people is too way out for me to try to, to the layman, or even dealing with people here. There was that pride, and there was a lot of self-policing. If you got out of line about what you was doing in the plant--black or white, I'm speaking of just people--there was a certain man(?) went by there, "You've got to straighten up, do a little better than this." Or maybe it was concern for the fellow man. The dedication to each other was already here, and maybe it's all part of the same package. It's complicated, too complicated for me. Me and my daughter have talked about it many a day. And she went to school four years to study this sort of thing. [Chuckle] This gets way off the beat(?).

RH: One thing that's occurred to me is that in some ways the presence of the union here, which would keep the situation for workers very much under control and very beneficial for workers, in some ways helped Alcoa to be a better company, to be looked upon not with as much resentment as an industry which treated its workers less well would receive. So in some ways the union has helped the image of Alcoa.

DRYE: It has. I'm convinced of that. It's part of the same ball of wax; it has to be. This is true. . . . I've been in other locations. I spent considerable time down at Alcoa, Tennessee. And all they've got down there is what I call them Tennessee mountaineers, and that's a hardy group of people. They'll just as soon fight you as to look at you, except when you get in good with those people they'll do anything in the world for you. And they'll walk out and hit the brick before you. . . . [Chuckle] You just don't sneeze at one of them, because he's not going to. . . . Have a whole part of a plant out, or a whole plant.

RH: So you don't think there's the same specialness in Maryville that there is here in Badin.

DRYE: Not when it comes to Alcoa employees. Somewhere back through here I think we've all missed a chain of influence that Alcoa has had on its employees since the early days in the thirties, that you try to fit that to the general concept of the way the national picture looks in the treatment of people and the welfare of people. It doesn't deviate so far from the national, but it's a little ahead. [Chuckle] There are people right now within the Steel Workers who say we're living in a welfare state. To a certain degree, we are. But I don't think it's all welfare; if it ever gets to that point, I don't know. But I have failed somewhere along the way to be able to analyze the true Alcoa employee, or Steel Workers union member.

RH: There are some people who are saying that this special feeling and this high morale of Alcoa workers is kind of changing because of. . . . McAlister, for example, has been quoted as saying men are not as important as production, and it's production before safety, and that this has signified a real change in the morale at the plant. This seems to be a new development. How do you feel about that?

DRYE: Frankly, in my own, and I talked to the man probably a dozen times before I retired, but my outside impression. . . . I'm trying to convince myself that there hasn't been a change in Alcoa's management attitude. Rather, I think it's in the personality of McAlister. I think, frankly, the man is putting up a front which he doesn't believe in his dealings in the civic organizations and this sort of thing, in fact, the Board of Trustees. And you see him at all these things without seeing anything. . . . This is my measure, probably as much as anybody, and I've heard it since I retired: "Hell, you never see him out there in the plant." And this is a mistake, with anybody here. I know you cannot know every individual that comes through that plant, everyone you walk by, but you ought to make an effort, have somebody within that department that can call them off to you on the side. There's ways to accomplish it, and you call this personnel relations, I guess. But I do not believe. . . . And perhaps, before this set of negotiations is over with, I can tell you whether there's been a change in Alcoa's top management. The management policies are set in Pittsburgh and are supposed to be implemented in each plant location, and it's the same in every location. This has been going on for thirty years. Call it a master plan; maybe that's what it is. But I think it's the person, the man who is the works manager, rather than Alcoa's policy. I hope I'm right, because I've got news for them if I am not right, and Alcoa itself is in trouble. Because

I'm convinced if it comes to it--and Alcoa learned this lesson hard--that the Badin will still strike if the president of that local says, "We're going on strike May 1." Because that's what we did in 1956. I'm positive; I was right in the middle of it. I was sitting in New York when they left us sitting there from two o'clock in the afternoon until six that night, and they were supposed to come back for the official signing. Lo and behold, four hours later we find out they're all back in Pittsburgh. Well, that wasn't a lockout, but it was a technical interpretation because we had all agreed to a strike procedure, only one guard sitting in the gate down in the guardhouse. That's all that's ever been here, and people ride up.(?) Hell, they thought it was on strike when the plant shut down. There was no picket line out there. And this is unheard of. But if this is the attitude or the change in policy from Alcoa, Alcoa's in trouble. They'll have a strike on their hands over that issue.

GH: You sort of tend to feel like he's not just reflecting any change in policies in Pittsburgh, but it just has to be the way he is.

DRYE: Maybe I'm wishfully thinking, and I have nothing concrete to go on, but I'm convinced; I hear too many people who make their statement about it: "Oh, the s.o.b.(?)" It's his approach to people. And when you find that kind of attitude by the working man, or even management people, towards him, then you better look out because by golly, there's something going on that shouldn't be.

RH: Do people also hold him to some extent responsible for the withdrawal of Alcoa from its civic role in this town in a lot of ways?

DRYE: They haven't gotten around to that yet.

RH: You think that's next?

DRYE: I think that's next. Now the true colors are. . . . [Chuckle]

In my opinion, I think McAlister's got at the maximum two years at this plant

location, if somebody at the Pittsburgh level is on their toes. He came in here to do a job, in my opinion, and he's just about accomplished it. And he's built resentment in this town by going up here and tearing down these vacant buildings. I mean there's still a deep attachment for the old folks, and there's a certain sentimental value. But what the hell, if they're falling in and it's an eyesore. I try to take a middle road about that when they're blaming McAlister for it. Well, that's about all he's accomplished while he's been here. He's about bought everything downtown, and sooner or later there won't be anything but the union hall and the telephone building and our new credit union building, if we ever get around to building it. There was a meeting; I was supposed to go to, and they cancelled it on us. One boy had to go out of town or somebody was sick or something, I don't know what it was. I'm not going to say what we're going to build and then have all the people in the plant cussing me again. It's going to be the committee. I'm ready to take the. . . . [Chuckle] I've been through it twice already, so I know what to expect. But I think it's in the man who is the works manager, rather than a change of operation policy.

RH: But do you think he was dispatched from Pittsburgh to get all the buildings knocked down here in Badin and to eliminate the town buildings?

DRYE: Yes. Now let me tell you a story about Alcoa's operation. The plans that Alcoa is making today, what they're doing today is for implementation ten years from now. Because I saw the set of blueprints for this plant, that was built and put in operation in 1960, in 1954. The whole thing.

RH: You mean they're trying to expand Alcoa, and they're going to take over this property?

DRYE: That is my thinking, because, you see, if you look at the plant and what's surrounding it, there's not much other way to go except to the north,

and the plant road was relocated because of that expansion. You talk about a roller mill in here where you roll out the sheet, it takes more than that space, and the downtown will be some kind of extrusion. Alcoa, in my opinion, is coming to a finished product on the primary aluminum production site. Where aluminum is made, that's where the product's going to be finished, and you're going to ship the finished product. I heard that thirty years ago.

RH: So you think their next plan is extrusion in that downtown area.

DRYE: Yes. So that the land is not available. You couldn't say that Alcoa has kept other industry out. You can't come in and build a plant, just some little fly-by-night outfit. I don't want that kind in here, and I don't think the people do. And there's not an industry could move in. They've pretty much controlled, because they owned everything for miles up and down the river, lumber and everything else. When they started in '57, they started to divest themselves of forestry and that sort of thing.

RH: What does this mean for the people in the town? The people came here because, as you were talking about before, Alcoa recruited them. And they set up this town so that people would stay here. And now their hiring policy is such that they don't just hire from people in Eadin anymore. And McAlister just about told me himself that they were trying to kind of divest themselves of this company-town image and trying to cut their ties with the community. What do you think this all means for the people in this town who have this special feeling about Alcoa?

DRYE: I think Alcoa, for the financial gain, there's going to be a cost that's going to be expensive. They approached me in 1956 or '57 about disposing of the water and sewers, which was just not being implemented. And I bucked it. And I still buck it. I think it was the wrong thing. Alcoa established this town; they hired people and brought them in here; and this is one of the

services that you supplied as part of the wages. Now you can nail that one any way you want to, and we'll argue about it, but I still say Alcoa is obligated to maintain this water system. It's one of the fringe benefits, if you please. But it started in other plants, and probably Badin is the last one that still had this. . . . And there's a resentment when they keep the water treatment plant in operation to supply their own plant. And this is bad relations with your employees. And you keep adding those little things on the people, and you build back the resentment you had back there years ago. What it takes to clear the air in the future, I wouldn't go that far. But now they're shoving off the responsibility of their old dilapidated water system on the county, and it's going to come back to the people who they have--let's put it bluntly--discarded. No mistake, we earn good pensions, and we're well taken care of. But we had to fight hard for it. And you'd have to say, "Well, they're no different from any other plant. They wouldn't have been as good if we hadn't had the union here battling for it, and beginning to strike(?) for it." They just didn't hand it to us. We would threaten to strike and all this through the years, and we've actually pulled the strikes. There was one in '56 for ten days. I can't, not really, accept this. I think actually this was a decision that was made on the top level in the Pittsburgh office, to divest themselves of. . . . In other words, they're just an aluminum production business. That's what they tried to tell me in '57. I said, "You may be, but this is part of the cost of producing that same damn aluminum. As long as I'm president of this local, you're going to keep it, too. You may do it, but it'd be over my battle, and I'll take it as much as our treasury ^(treasurer?) will let me go, and my executive board will let me spend."

RH: So you don't see this as a paternalistic attitude that Alcoa has in

the water and the sewage system, that those days of paternalism are really over.

DRYE: They're gone. They're over and done, as far as Alcoa's attitude is concerned. But I see a little bit of weakening of that shield or attitude, because now they're opening up a development. Originally there was houses back over across behind, if you know where the VFW hut is. That section back there, the land is being offered for sale, along the old railroad tracks back to the brick dump. They're going to sell off more lots, because Alcoa's employees. . . . God knows, I wouldn't even attempt to say what the bulk of it is, for people who are commuting. And that's going to be a problem for Alcoa to deal with one of these days, too.

RH: In what way?

DRYE: The expense of commuting. When you travel all the way from down in Morgan. . . . And there's six colored people down there, and they've stayed on the shift; they've traded and cussed and quit and everything else and all stayed so they could ride in the same vehicle, God knows, for thirty-eight years that I know of. And they're still driving. But now one of these days. . . . And people who live in Salisbury and Albemarle and all for fifteen^(fifty?) miles, it's going to be a tremendous cost. And that's why property in Badin is so damned high. This house doubled in price, in value, in two years.

RH: Because workers at Alcoa want to move from the outside areas into town?

DRYE: They're looking for their own welfare, too. Those people are thinking for themselves. This is all part of this divesting, see. Actually, they started divesting themselves of real estate and houses in '57. That is nothing new; it just drag without anybody really forcing the issue.

They come in here and started putting the pressure, buying all these empty store buildings downtown.

RH: You mentioned S. A. Copp before. Was it much of a struggle for S. A. Copp and Holmes, who came in after him as works manager, to remove this paternalist feeling about the people in town? Did they have to really be educated about this, or did they just die out, and that's how it stopped?

DRYE: [Laughter] You're more perceptive than I realized. J. B. Holmes came in here, and from the first day he was one of the boys. He hadn't been here three days till a plant employee who was a switchboard operator checked a lock at him in a poker game. And he had a fit, but he accomplished his purpose. What he did, when that guy checked that lock at him. . . . Where he came from, you just don't check a lock. You've got everybody on the board locked, and he had the winning hand, and that's what you call checking a lock. And that was the third day he'd been here. Now how he got an invite to that poker game, I'll never figure out. And I played golf with the man back in those days.

RH: So he had learned the mistakes of S. A. Copp.

DRYE: He had learned them. And he was sent here. . . . See, this is what's happened. That's what I'm saying, a twenty-year plan, at least ten years in advance. If they have a certain job to do, Alcoa has the employees, they can reach and pick, and here's the man for the job. And there's some smart people sitting up there in that ivory tower, we call it, that's been in the thing more than one day. When you go up on the top floor, and the thirty-foot tinted window panes, and see the whole city of Pittsburgh, it is an ivory tower. There's something in it today. And the first Holmes that came in here was to destroy this paternalistic attitude, and he did a pretty good job of it. In later years, if he was sober enough to get out there.

He left(?) family; his wife had problems, and it got into the picture. But he stayed here till he retired.

GH: Do you see the possibility sometime in the future of the people in the community of Eadin organizing and incorporating the place, forming a . . .

DRYE: Well, you know, if Alcoa had been smart, that was my counter-proposal: Now if you want to divest yourself of this thing, we'll guarantee you we'll incorporate it, and this is the union spokesman speaking. It hadn't been too long before then that we moved in on the precinct level down there. We got the board together, and we had about thirty-eight of us, I believe, went into the Democratic precinct meeting. Well, they'd been going along, two or three of the. . . . Jack Lanning and Ralph, who lived next door; they lived next to me at that time on Little Kirk Place. There'd be about two or three of them go in there, and they'd elect officers, and they weren't doing nothing. Alcoa controlled the politics, and we got tired of it. We moved in there, and we cleaned house. I can still see that night. The ones that were there, there was two left, and they went out the doors front and back, began to telephone. By the time they got back, we done had all the officers. And we kept it for two years. And we taught the people in the Alcoa management and our own people a lesson, and we got it across to them: you go out and you get active, and you go out and you vote. And this locality, this precinct, is still one of the highest percentage voting, and it started back at that point. It's been God knows how many years ago. And we threatened them at that point, and had they been smart, they would have gone all the way at that point. We would have incorporated the town. We were determined to do it, because we went back and talked it over in board meetings. Carried it back to the board and carried it to the membership at the next

membership meeting.

GH: Do you think that would be a good thing right now?

DRYE: At that point; now it's not.

GH: Now you don't think so?

DRYE: No, because you're asking the people to incorporate into a hell of an expense. There's no way you could ever sell. . . . I would not, in all honesty, expect them to. . . . Well, we're going to have to have two and a half million, and those figures were compiled three years ago, what it would cost to replace this sewer system. Two and a half million. God knows, it'd be ten million now, to replace the sewer system. And there's not many years that the people in the county are going to have to pick up Alcoa's burden, and this I resent, and I think other people in the county are beginning to show resentment. I would be resentful of it. Alcoa's kept it all these [years]; now it's wore out, and they want us to build a new one, you see. And this is going to create an image of Alcoa that's not good, and this is why I don't think this is what Alcoa wants in the top level. It has to be one big attitude change in the top level management of it.

RH: So do you think they'll get smart back in Pittsburgh and see that maybe McAlister is getting Alcoa into trouble down here, and they'll pull him out?

DRYE: I think he's got two years at the most. I think he has two years, and he's going to be fired.

RH: That's been the rumor about town, that McAlister was down here for two years, and once he finished his job he was going to go back. I'd never heard anybody explain to me what they thought that job was to do, really.

DRYE: He's had me from the word go, in the first meeting we had. He called all the so-called executives and officers. And I wasn't even an officer;

I was just a committeeman in the mechanical department. That's all the obligation I wanted. Of course, they rammed(?) this wage-job study implementing the apprentice program through, and seeing. . . . Because I started in 1954 with it, and I was probably more familiar with the actual workings of an apprentice program than anybody else in the locality. And maybe I had a little something over a few of them in the Pittsburgh office. This is the Steel Workers I'm talking about. And management and the union both got together, and they kind of pushed me into it. I wanted to get out of it. And [chuckle] my God, I have never officially resigned; I've just retired. I didn't get out of it. And see, old Paddy Ross, he's sitting around, and he's telling us what to do and what not to do. I think I did the job that they pushed me into, but I wanted to get out of it. And this is the extent, that he got us all together, and this was his program. I could have punched it full of holes then if I'd been sitting across the bargaining table with him. I've always been idiot enough to take on the biggest one. That's the one it's easiest to punch the holes in. "The bigger they are, the harder they fall", and that's still a true saying. I've never been afraid to take on the big one. Because he's going to trick himself sooner or later, because he doesn't believe in what he's trying to say as much as I believe in what I'm saying. And I've had a philosophy all those years that if you think it's wrong, there's something in that contract to cover you. And that's pretty damn much true. My arbitration record shows that. I've beat some pretty smart lawyers from Alcoa. I was a burr and was till the last day I worked; I intended to be. You don't mistreat people, and you don't treat people that they're blagh [word of disgust]. Not around me; it goes against my better grain.

GH : As Davy Crockett said, "Know your rights and go ahead(?)."

[Laughter]

DRYE: I think the very fact that Alcoa did divest themselves. . . . I never like to get into church politics, but I have to agree, I cannot rebut the statement, and this is Rev. Hunter. My opinion was, Alcoa found them a patsy.

RH: How?

DRYE: You know, they both came to Badin about the same time. I'm not a Presbyterian; I'm not a Baptist; I'm a member of the Methodist Church, which is a carry-over from the Lutheran, which I was going when I was thirteen years old. But how he stays in this church, I fail to see, with the resentment of the people against him. He's done a good job selling the people in his church. The woman next door came one night. I said, "You're a good neighbor of mine, and I will not get into an argument with you. I am opposed to it. I will sign no petition because I do not, and my opinion from '57 has not changed, and I prefer that we just drop it."

RH: Oh, Rev. Hunter's trying to get people to incorporate, is that it?

DRYE: I wouldn't be surprised.

GH: So the point is, the company wouldn't mind at all if. . . .

DRYE: Not now, no. This would accomplish what they're after, in my opinion.

RH: You know how I think they respond to that. They say, "Well, people have become accustomed to Alcoa taking care of them, and they don't take care of themselves now, and I will do for the people what they will do for themselves. I'll meet them halfway." I've heard McAlister say that to me, that that's the policy that he professes.

DRYE: I think you're right. That's my sentiment.

RH: The thing is, though, that that sounds like a real smooth statement, but what's beyond that is that they have plans for the future where they want to cut their ties.

DRYE: Because they do not want this added expenditure. They saw it coming almost twenty-five years ago, '57. And I think, frankly, at that point, had Alcoa's top management attitude about . . .

BEGIN TAPE II SIDE II

DRYE: . . . gets on your property taxes. It's beginning to squeeze me, as well as everybody else. And you've got the county water system instead of having the forerunner. Then you've got it coming trailing along behind(?), which is kind of a [laughter] disowned child, the water system. It could have been implemented, and you could have kept it repaired. Then the costs wouldn't

be near as great as they are now. For the past fifteen years, there's been nothing didn't have to be fixed to satisfy the government, to keep from shutting it down. In fact, if it wasn't Alcoa, with all the strings that they can pull, this sewer system would have been shut down ten years ago. And the water system, all I can say about what I've got from the mains in my house. It's new copper piping. It was done before I moved here. It took a few nasty statements and pushing just at the right place. You learn a few tricks dealing with management through the years. You don't just go, "You're going to do this"; you go around behind, and you do a little undercover work. I'm still not opposed to Badin being incorporated, if somebody would show me who is going to pay for the sewer system. The water system is not in all that bad a shape. It's not all that much expense to make one tap. In fact, I don't know today if we're on the county's water system. We're paying county

right into the county courthouse like everybody else, but where the water's coming from I don't know, because Alcoa's feeding part of it, too, I understand. This is only hearsay. But this is part of the thing that McAlister came here to do. And I think tearing down all the buildings was just to get rid of the. . . . Of course, they ought to have been off the tax books years ago. Vacant property has got a different evaluation from buildings, whatever the repair status is or lack of repair. And this is the one thing he hasn't accomplished yet.

RH: To tear down the buildings. Well, I think that is very interesting.

DRYE: And I tell you, in all fairness to the man, within two years he's going to accomplish it, either through Hunter. . . . He's misguided, he's . . .

RH: That's going to be because the people who own them are going to die in the next two years. That's why. It's a test of wills. [Laughter]

DRYE: He only scratched the surface of knowing the people in Badin and the real history behind the formation of the local union. It had a hell of an amount [to do] with what Badin is today. The people in the Alcoa plant.

RH: I think those buildings are very symbolic to me, because it is like the people's attempt to hold on to something that was here. They have meaning because people want. . . . Even if they're crumbling and falling down. You know, Vera Mason keeps those things in her store; she doesn't want to take them out. And the three sisters who own that pharmacy have got that marble top on it, and they've got that little sign for the ice cream cones still up there. They want to keep something there that is what Badin used to be.

DRYE: But you know, I understand that they've weakened and they've sold. Just in the past week. You're right, but there's a general reluctance in us all, and that's one of the things I learned: don't change the status quo. If

you change it, do it a little bit at a time, that I don't recognize; just don't go in there and weeee, like an earthquake's come through, or a tornado has wiped it clear. You don't handle people that way, not just Badin people but I think that's true anywhere. Don't change the status quo. We get too, when you get older, they call it set in your ways, but it's still in the younger generation. Don't change things too much, because we as individuals, human beings, can't accept too much change at one time; we can't absorb it. It's too big for us to cope with. That's the way I look at it. [Chuckle] And it's going to be interesting. I hope I'm around to see the conclusion. And I'll probably wish to heck I was out of here and back in the boondocks somewhere. One thing I'm glad of, that I moved out of that apartment before I retired, because they'd have had me in Morganton or somewhere else in a padded cell. I'd have been climbing the walls, and here I have plenty to do. I've been the busiest the last two years I've ever been in my life, and that's being honest about it. I quit [chuckle] work to play golf, and the first year I was retired I played one Wednesday afternoon. One. And it hasn't gotten any better. I'm not going to be sitting in the house. My wife accused me the first two years of being on a clock; I'd clock in and clock out, this sort of thing. But I'm doing what I want to do. And I'm still staying involved with the credit union, because I'm recognized there, and, well, I think it's selfish, because I'm looking at what I accumulated, too, and what I can do to help people. And the credit union is for people who can't. . . . It's not true--it was seven or eight years ago--that's it's for people who can't get loans somewhere else. But by golly, we're beating the banks these days, and the banks are screaming, too. We parlayed \$20,000; ^{but still,} the local union put up the first \$20,000 and started a treasury and paid shares. And last month, a million and almost \$300,000 in assets in almost ten years. So there is some people putting some money in, and

we're making capitalists out of a few of them. And they were bad credit risks at one point. This gives you a little bit of satisfaction. It's just like doing a little bit here. I sit back and watch and talk about my own pension-- I've got it laying in there on my desk--and Social Security. Actually, I'm going to take the time one day and go to the phone book, and I'm going to look up how many widows there are in this town. You can go up and down the streets, and by golly, you might find one couple, but they're on up in years. You're getting now in the past three years some young couples who are buying and moving back in. That's changing, but these are widows who are living on some part of Alcoa pension, plus Social Security. And by some standards, some of them are fairly well off. You've got nothing but a little Social Security check coming in, they're damn well off. This all goes back to some of the history of the local union. It's a little personal satisfaction you get out of it, I'll say. All I did was just stay at home and borrowed \$300 on insurance to make it through the strike, and I got it paid back. I didn't miss it, and we had some people didn't want to go back to work, raised hell because they had to go back to work when the strike was settled. It is a unique town, and if you ever find out the answer . . .

RH: [Laughter]

DRYE: . . . I would certainly like to be clued in as to what made this town. It was the people that made this local union. And there were management people that were behind us over 100 percent. And that's all you can be, but there was no way they could say it publicly.

GH: It was part of local management behind you?

DRYE: They were behind it, because they recognized. . . . There was a little bit of selfish thing. "If they get something, we're going to get something." It's true.

pushed them. This is something that Alcoa has done, and it's beginning to show, too, in hiring engineers and this sort of thing. They try to hire new ones at a salary less than what they've been hiring previous years. And by golly, they've gotten to the point now, they don't barely touch the labor rate at job grade I and II. And you can't get top-grade engineers that way. If you get them, they won't stay here. If they're good caliber and got the moxie, why, bang, they go somewhere else in a year or two. You don't have too many good ones(?), and I think this is all part of the same.

RH: Let me just try this theory out on you and see how you think of it. What impresses me is how much Alcoa seems a part of the natural setting, an institution almost as permanent as the river there. Of course, the river is the reason why Alcoa came, and so they sit side by side, again, another image to me that is very meaningful. That both of these institutions are things that almost determine the people's psyches, the organic relationship of what governs this area, the two of those things together. And the river was there first, and the industry came because of the river, and then the people came to both of those places that were both there. Most of the people who came had some attachment, and the industry did not disturb their land. They could maintain an attachment to land. As you say, you have a garden, and you fight your beetles in your garden, and you try to get your planting when it doesn't rain. But nonetheless, you've still been involved with working in this heavy industrial development, and both of these things kind of govern your existence, an attachment to land, also an attachment to this industry. And it's been a good industry which has given people good wages with benefits, has accepted the presence of a union, has worked along with it in a way that's benefitted both them and the workers. So it's been kind of a. . . .

DRYE: A joint effort.

RH: A joint effort and a group of forces that came together in one place to make people in control of their lives, have enough money to live the kind of lives that they'd like to have, while at the same time not disturbing their atmosphere, their environment, and not disturbing their ties to their land and their ability to be able to garden and to go fishing, to go swimming, to go hunting, perhaps, in the mountains. It's accommodated both, perhaps, the rural traditions in which they grew up and also the need to be in the present-day moneyed economy. And the union, of course, is one of the significant features in that, but it's also that Alcoa has become sort of a permanent part of people's psyches here. It's almost as natural as the river.

DRYE: Yes, it is. I have tried in my own mind to analyze that relationship through the years, and I think perhaps when I interrupted and said it's a joint effort. . . . And this probably goes back to management, perhaps not plant manager level but higher than that. But somewhere in the top management leadership in Alcoa there's been this concept of good, faithful employees being compensated. And if I had to say it bluntly, one thing that the union can be proud of is that we nudged them along a little faster than they probably would come. There has been--and this has to be true--a wonderful relationship between plant management in Badin and the local union officers. I think the good Lord has acted to send their managers, and the good Lord has let the rank and file elect the person for the time. I can take that list and almost spell that out. There was a time when the hard-nosed person came along, needed in that area. Maybe the good Lord waved a stick, and the people said, "Well, we'd better get. . . ." And then there was a time when a pacifist attitude, "Just take it easy for a while." And he came along after I did. But the summary, I think, is we were both headed the same direction, as far as the employees of Alcoa. We used different tactics.

The people wanted to do for themselves, and this is an independent streak, I think, and therefore they reached out and took in the union as something that can speak for the group, and it's been good for Alcoa. They'll tell you that. They would rather deal with one person than 700-something, because it's a channel into. . . . Of course, there's always one who's going to upset things for management and the union, too. We've had our faults, and we've had our faulty people. I can't say that Alcoa has had that philosophy all these years. The employees had to make Alcoa what it is today. But the Badin plant stands apart from any other location. I could tell you some horror stories about what we've battled in our own meetings before we meet management to talk it over. There's been some screwballs up there, but then you had the average, the overall group with level heads. "Now look, this is not the right thing for the people, and this is not what we're going to do." We've had to almost tie and gag and bind people on our side of the table. And there's times in meetings that I've been with Alcoa management, in grievance meetings and just discussion of problems in the plant, that you couldn't tell who was on what side of the table. And this is unique within itself. The nature of bargaining started changing in the early fifties, very soon after I entered office. They were down to earth, fact for fact, not pounding on the table and this sort of thing. It changed. And in the period before then, that's the only way you got through: beat on the table. And that's not the way to get attention. And if Badin is unique, that's the people. It's not the people who represented them. I didn't have any part of it; I had the people behind me, the majority of the people, in everything I attempted, and I think that's been true overall. That's why I say we were headed the same direction. We used different tactics, went a different route, to get there, to accomplish it. I think that's why probably somewhere you have to knit that effort together, the

joint management-labor relations sort of thing. But I do know that somewhere at Alcoa [in] that human relations thing, that there's been some heads chopped pretty hard here in this plant, because of things that I attempted to do and some things that I attempted to get straightened out here, and I know they were straightened out, because these people were out of line. They were creating a problem down here on the plant level, within the department. And

< in every case, they didn't fit the policy. Now where that started, I don't know. I could not put my finger on it. But this interrelation thing started changing in the early fifties, and the level-headed discussion. Not right, and you'd better have some reasons. Now you show Alcoa what is right, and more times than not they go along with it. It might take a little longer sometimes.

GH: Would you say that the company or management wasn't exactly aggressive in its approach to improving the conditions of workers, but that they were responsive?

DRYE: They've been responsive all through the years.

GH: Which is really different from a lot of other companies.

DRYE: And the '56 strike. Now it wasn't true in 1949, the ten-week job. That was a bellwether, no question about that. It was taking place everywhere, not just in Badin, but every industry had within a two-year period the same battle. In '56 there was the attitude to avert a strike, on the local level. But top management had a different attitude. And here the personnel department at the Pittsburgh level who packed up and went home. Maybe Spike Turner didn't know that was going on; this is a decision they made by themselves. We'll never know what happened the next day. But there's been that underlying attitude of what's best for the people. And that's in their negotiations and their relations out of the plant and

the attitude of the workers in getting the job done, and in satisfied employees. If you satisfy fifty percent and one, you're in good shape. [Chuckle] That's true of about everything. I never try to satisfy any more than fifty percent and one. Be sure you've got that one, because they might have a vote. And I think that through the years, in my time of recognizing and learning and getting an education myself after I got out of school, at times you get resentful, but then you had to go back and settle it the next day. Get up and walk out of the conference; I did that one time. Because the best thing I ever did(?) was the personnel director. I didn't go in there to start cussing and raising hell. I had a problem, and it was their problem. and I got up and walked out. "When you get ready to talk sense, I'll come back."

RH: You know, another thing McAlister said to me that time when I talked to him, he said that again, "People in Badin come to me and they say, 'Well, why don't you hire my son?' 'Why don't you hire my grandson?' 'I've got this niece here who needs a job.'" And he says he doesn't like to do that because that's still the paternal, family system. And he wants to get away from that, because this isn't a company town, and Alcoa doesn't go along those paternal ways. Is that another way in which you think it's a kind of a front for cutting the ties with this town and divesting itself of responsibility?

DRYE: It's a front, because that kind of a paternal attitude, that concept, has been out of date for at least twenty years, as far as it applied to Badin, to my knowledge. Maybe the managements in the Badin plant used it as a hedge to divert employees away. They diverted it through the local union. It might have been that they wanted less confusion, less people to have to deal with, and this going through. I think, in my opinion, he should be less concerned, or anybody in the plant, about any attitude such as that. That's way down

below his level. And he's nitpicking and wasting his time for the real job he's doing when he gets involved in that level. There again, I could say some things about management. They've had a middle-of-the-roader in the period here of the last ten years. It should have been a forceful person. Take it by the horns, and let's go with the union on this thing. It's unfortunate that death had to bring it about, but that's what happened. And I think the man wasn't ready for the job he had to do. I had to do the same thing, and the Justice Department said, "You implement this or else." You don't sit on it for three years till you drop dead, and then somebody else has to take it over, because it's impossible to undo the damage that's already done. Rather than take the time to implement it. This is, I say, a weak management person, and we've had a couple of weak union people, too. But the membership will. . . . We've got a little better whack at it, you know. We can always vote in the next election three years from now and vote him out. You know, that's the way. . . . [Chuckle] Ours works better than theirs does, though, in that respect. I wouldn't want to attempt to put a real serious analyzation on McAlister, because there's too many "iffy's." And his tactics, his methods of going and accomplishing whatever he's come down. . . . And I'm not 100 percent sold on what he was sent here to do. The only thing that shows is selling off the property. That could have been done without him being here. The order comes out, and you get the right person, pick a person over at the property department. But there again, he's doing [chuckle] his lawyer's job, in my opinion. That's just putting it as frankly as I know how to say it. This is my opinion. That's one thing I didn't allow in the rank and file there. If you had something that was management level, the second-step level, you didn't go in over there and talk to the personnel director; you had to do it through me. It was null and

void, anything you said or agreed to or was told you; the hell with it. That wasn't done through this local union. It takes a while to channel it, but people learned in a hurry.

GH: Does it have anything to do with who made up the ranks of management? Where do they come from? Were they part of the community?

DRYE: No works manager that's ever been here came out of the local plant. Every one channeled out of the Pittsburgh office. I can understand it, but I can see perhaps. . . . This is probably as sad as ^{/(probably says?)} what I said about a ten-year plan, a ten-year program. Every single man who's on the way up goes into the Pittsburgh office, and he spends a minimum of a year, and more times than not two years, in the Pittsburgh office before he's sent out as a works manager. Why, if he's got the ability? Are you indoctrinating?

RH: [Laughter]

DRYE: Huh? This is a good question.

RH: Yes, they sure are.

DRYE: Are you indoctrinating him? If you agree that yes, you are, now what direction are you indoctrinating? Which direction did it take: to implement the policy that's been in existence for thirty years, or to change it? Did it take that long to spell it out to him? Can he read writing, as the saying goes? But in every single case, the management person goes through that Pittsburgh office. Perhaps this is it: maybe they don't trust their own judgment. Well. . . . [Laughter]

RH: Maybe it's because they really want to impress on that person, "You're spending two years here getting ready for what your next job is, and you damn better well do what we" . . .

GH: But I think it's fairly subtle. I mean it's a socialization process, to some extent.

RH: Well-1-1-1 . . .

DRYE: To pick a man up out of a plant, like the Badin plant. And it's happened. There was one man that went there and he stayed there two years, and they sent him out to Wanatchee(?), and he wasn't there ninety days till he was back in the Pittsburgh office. The next thing they'd put him back in here and canned him; that's what it amounted to. He had a title, but he didn't have but about three years to go to retirement, so he walked around the plant and saw nothing. And somebody didn't recognize the man's ability, or they. . . . [Laughter] He had a lot on the ball from the standpoint of an engineer or a management person. He had a hell of a lot on the ball, he was a smart man, but somewhere they broke that man from the time he left Badin until he got back. But this is just one isolated instance.

RH: Thinking back to what you were saying about your policies and restructuring the lines of [progression], and the integration problems you had to deal with during the fifties, it reminds me of the--I guess it was settled out of court--charges that Clyde Cook brought against Alcoa for the back wages that were paid to people who had been discriminated against. What kind of an effect did that have?

DRYE: None. Clyde Cook mentioned. . . . I'm mentioned in that suit, and I wasn't even a union member myself at that point. I could not have been a union officer; I wasn't even a union member at this point.

RH: You mean he claimed that you were a union officer?

DRYE: I checked the record myself. The president asked me to go , because I knew more about what that old record was than anybody else. And Clyde Cook was never a union member.

RH: He was never a union member?

DRYE: Not according to the card records, and this was supplied by the management.

just personal charges that he. . . . A class action, I guess. I mean after he brought . . .

DRYE: That was a class action, is the right word.

RH: After he brought charges, then other people joined in the suit, and he's got that list of 200 . . .

DRYE: And you know, I do not to this day know what the disposition of that case was? I think Alcoa paid him off just to keep from going any further with it, and I think this was by agreement.

RH: Out of court, yes.

DRYE: I can't prove it, but it seemed to me that that's where it should have gone. I could have gotten involved, but there was no point, and I had nothing to submit either way, against him. But I could have said what our records showed. Had the judge subpoenaed them, we'd have had to take them, but otherwise, unh-uh. We don't let them look at our records any more than we let. . . . Now some records are public knowledge, such as the recording secretary's. There's nothing secret about that. But that's as far as it goes. How we implemented those actions is something else; that's internal work. But I have the opinion that Clyde was an opportunist at that point. I'm saying it frankly. He was used by other people to make this action.

RH: He was used by other people?

DRYE: Yes. That's my feeling.

RH: Why, because his . . .

DRYE: He did not have a case. He was not a union member. He never applied. Now whatever Floyd Gulp might have told him as department head in the construction department. . . . But what Clyde says he's telling-- he's still alive, and he didn't subpoena him or even mention him--that he was promised a brickmason's job. There's nothing in the record that the job was

posted or anywhere back at that point that he made application for a brickmason job. And promises by management people . . .

[End of interview]