

Museum of History and Industry
Historical Society of Seattle and King County

Transcript

Robert Shaw and Chester Kingsbury - taped interview
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This is an interview with Robert Shaw and Chester Kingsbury on April 18, 1985. The interviewer is Lorraine McConaghy for the Museum of History and Industry.

Q. When does your fight against the war begin? What year?

Rev. Shaw Of course, the peace movement, under Frederick Libby, goes way back to 1925, when I was in Tacoma. As a layman, I organized the Tacoma Council for World Friendship there, which was largely inspired by his activities. Have you heard of him?

Q. No, I have not.

Rev. Shaw Well, he was head of the National Council for the Prevention of War, a Quaker, and a very effective and forceful speaker. He was a one man peace force.

Mr. Kingsbury Quiet but very effective.

Rev. Shaw He used to travel around the country most of the year, speaking in various parts of the country. And, of course, among them was Tacoma. I remember one time, at one of the meetings we arranged in 1925, there was a debate between him and the general out at Fort Lewis, south of Tacoma. That was quite an interesting conversation.

 Of course, at that time, the burden of his efforts was to cut back on defense spending. That goes back to the Naval Conference of 1922, but that was the first real effort that was made with some ships actually being mothballed.

 But to pick it up from 1925 and 1926, the efforts of the peace movement were to cut back on defense spending which even then seemed horrendous and that was his effort. And as things heated up in Europe, the peace movement enlarged its scope to make sure that we stayed out of the war, after the start of it in 1939.

Mr. Kingsbury The Keep America Out of War Congress.

Q. Did it tend to be an isolationist group rather than an internationalist group?

Rev. Shaw Both, I'm sure. Both isolationists and internationalists. I don't know which had the balance. Would you say probably isolationists? (addressed to Mr. Kingsbury)

Mr. Kingsbury Yes, but then any of us who were opposed to the war, it was popular to accuse us of being isolationists because that was a dirty term like a communist was later.

Bob and I were in it from a religious standpoint - from the point of view of society - but there were isolationists in it because they didn't want to help anybody and wanted to build up our borders.

Q. It must have been difficult for you to work together. I should think you would have had very different ideological underpinnings...

Mr. Kingsbury Well, except there was one thing - we were trying to keep America out of war. One might be doing it from a humanitarian standpoint, the other might say they were humanitarian, but you didn't think they were, you might think the profit motive was involved. Like General Woods, remember?

We all worked together but we were not in agreement on social issues, like that of labor, or anything.

I don't know that we had many conflicts because we worked in this one area. Do you remember any conflicts? (to Rev. Shaw)

Rev. Shaw No, I don't.

Mr. Kingsbury It was the war.

Q. I think, ideologically, you might have had quite a bit in common with people who were later called "premature anti-Fascists," who opposed Franco's Spain and Hitler's Germany, on ideological grounds, because they were totalitarian states. But no?

Mr. Kingsbury I never looked at it from that standpoint. Though we did back the Abraham Lincoln brigade in Spain.

Rev. Shaw Well, the peace movement was trying to keep us out of any involvement in the Spanish war in 1936. There were plenty of people who wanted us to get into that conflict but we managed to keep out of it. A lot of American volunteers went over on their own and joined the anti-Franco forces.

Mr. Kingsbury But, yes, I remember contributing to those fellows because they were dedicated to doing what they thought was right. I'm not sure that military means was the way to do it. But, yes.

Q. In the year before Pearl Harbor, throughout 1941, when one might say that Japan was adventuring around in the Pacific, others might say that Roosevelt was squeezing Japan too hard. How did you perceive that time, and how did you (to Rev. Shaw) in your ministry speak against the war that seemed to be coming?

Rev. Shaw Well, I know I preached against the President's action a number of times and tried to get people to write letters to him protesting his actions. It just seemed that as Japan continued its expansion down in Southeast Asia, that the President was doing all he could to protest and resist the effort. Many of us, I know, felt at the time that if we could have had, for instance, Stanley Jones - who was at that time in his prime - go over there as an emissary. There was quite a movement to bring that about, but of course the President didn't do so.

Q. How interesting.

Mr. Kingsbury Remember Kagawa had a big influence on us here - the strong mission minister in Japan.
 That's an interesting point. I know some of our church groups stressed the point that Japan was going to have to expand. If we were going to try to keep them in their area, and not let them expand - there would be trouble.
 And a lot of us felt - from the economic standpoint - there was no stopping it, because we would be going into areas controlled by financial interests and so forth, so that they would have the control. And there would be no way to stop that, much as we hated to see it, but we knew why it was going to come.
 Japan had to have other resources. Like Britain, it's a small island. Do you remember discussing that? (to Rev. Shaw)

Rev. Shaw I was going to observe that it's interesting that from the beginning of the Second World War in Europe in Fall of '39, and of course the effort then began to try and get America involved in the European theatre all the time, and then of course, Japan began to move out and about in Southeast Asia. So the focus became double. Here was the peace movement trying to stop our entrance into the war in the European theatre, and then suddenly Pearl Harbor came - not unexpectedly as I've said earlier, because I remember a Sunday or two before December 7, I preached a sermon, "Stop - This Step Means War!" It wasn't altogether surprising. The thing was that Japan just played it smart in their attack on Pearl Harbor, and that really precipitated things, of course. And it got us into the war in both theatres, full fledged.

Q. How did you perceive Pearl Harbor, Mr. Kingsbury? In these terms, or in different ones?

Mr. Kingsbury Well, I agree with Bob that we working in the movement felt that something was going to happen. I was looking through some papers the other day, and noticing that we had written letters and protest for years saying what was going to happen if we kept on building and kept on stressing what we were doing. Once it got going in Europe, it was going to keep spreading - just how, nobody knew. I don't think it took any personal look into the future to realize that it was going to spread, so we were doing our

best to stop it. The same we're doing now: letters, protests, sending people back to DC, working with Norris and LaFollette and all those groups - like Hiram Johnson - all those people who felt that way on the thing - like Wheeler.

Q. How about Coffee?

Mr. Kingsbury Oh, John Coffee! Bob worked with him on that.

Rev. Shaw Yes, I knew him.

Mr. Kingsbury Coffee had a pretty good record on that. I'd forgotten about him. But also all those fellows - In the Senate, we had a real strong group but they took an awful acing from the press and from the people who wanted to get in.

As I remember it, in 1935 or '36, Gerald Nye came through discussing the munitions investigation which was a really fantastic thing, when you look back on it. It put Truman in the spot where he was well-known because he was on the committee with Gerald Nye. Homer T. Bone, from this state, was a big man on that because I remember Nye saying that to my father.

It was known - here was a group of people who had taken the country - people like the DuPont's - and everything had to be paid for, sometimes in advance. Whether the gunpowder was good in the previous war, you had to take it. It was an investigation that really rocked the country.

Rev. Shaw Do you remember the slogan that Nye used against the munitions manufacturers? (to Mr. Kingsbury)

Mr. Kingsbury I've got a folder on it, but I can't think of it. What was it?

Rev. Shaw It was "Merchants of Death."

Mr. Kingsbury I have a beautiful folder on that because my dad handled Nye here.

To my mind, that was very important, because I was told some of the material on the munitions investigation was taken out of the library during the war.

Q. For what purpose?

Mr. Kingsbury Later on, in 1940, Nye was still, as he had been in 1935 and 1936, going around pointing out what was happening. He then was badgered, and that whole group, as isolationist.

This is what happened. Look at the group that took you into the Second World War, and look at the profits they made. Excessive, though not excessive by what's happening now. But at that time, it was.

And this was front page stories for many, many days when that investigation started.

Q. And that's why you think it was removed [from the library]? So that it couldn't be tapped during the war?

Mr. Kingsbury This came up. I have to think that the investigation had a lot to do with the way we felt later. I was an economic determinist, so I would feel that way, while Bob would be more from the humanitarian and religious standpoint.

Q. After Pearl Harbor was attacked, we were at war - we had been attacked. It has been called "our good war." It was probably a hard war to object to here in this country - there was a lot of flag-waving and there were a lot of people up on the podium who were part of the religious community.

What were the options for the peace community once war had been declared? What did you do?

Rev. Shaw I remember one thing that I tried to do as a minister in a church, to keep down racism and hatred toward the Germans and the Japanese both.

In that connection, I was going to say that the immediate goading that President Roosevelt engaged in of Japan preceding Pearl Harbor has a history, not only on his part. One of the things that made the Japanese feel hardly toward us was the Japanese Exclusion Act in California. That was earlier, and I'm sure that was a considerable part of the animus toward our American Japanese, and had a lot to do with their being evacuated.

Mr. Kingsbury As I remember, we were all working on programs to try and help the Japanese[-Americans] as much as we could. There were hundreds of people who were very disturbed about the way they were evacuated. It was certainly a violation of civil liberties, if there ever was one, to those of us who worked in it -

Q. Was it perceived in those terms, at the time?

Mr. Kingsbury Absolutely, absolutely. If you go back, it won't be in the paper, because they didn't publish it, but yes. The Church Council, with Kaoru [Ichihara] in there (as secretary), and Miss [Gertrude] Apel was very strong on that. If there ever was a violation, they felt this was the key to it - why didn't they evacuate the Germans in the First World War?

Q. What do you think the motives of internment were?

Rev. Shaw I think that actually, out in the open, they said that they felt the Japanese-Americans would deter the war effort as spies.

Mr. Kingsbury That they were conniving...

Rev. Shaw But actually behind that - though that may have been part of their feelings - but behind that there was racial animus, wouldn't you think? (to Mr. Kingsbury)

Mr. Kingsbury Oh, I think so. And I also think it was a way to stir people up on the war. What better? Here you had a group to concentrate on. There was Tojo - there were Tojo signs around, and I think it was just one more way to stir the people up and to let them know that something was going to happen, and they were going to be part of it.

I think from the standpoint of propaganda, it was certainly used.

Everybody has a different interpretation of how they felt at that time, but I had Japanese friends that I played baseball with - fellows here whom I knew well. I had a hard time believing that these fellows who had been born in this country were, just because of their eyes and the color of their skin and their hair, were not like the rest of us.

Q. Did you see any economic explanation for what had happened?

Mr. Kingsbury I know what happened after they had to leave...

Rev. Shaw Well, I think there is behind it some economics because the Japanese are hard-working people, and they were beginning to get a foothold economically especially through their gardening efforts. They used to raise a lot of truck vegetables down in the valley, and up my way in Bothell, too.

A lot of Americans didn't like that and saw an opportunity when they were evacuated to take their properties, which they did.

Mr. Kingsbury Did you look on that as being important?

Rev. Shaw It was low on the scale, but...

Mr. Kingsbury I thought that came after they were evacuated, when people saw a chance to pick up the property for ten cents on the dollar, more than the fact that they were looking in advance.

Q. That did occur? Could you describe that?

Mr. Kingsbury Did it ever occur! It's best described in Anne Fisher's book which describes all the various ways their property was taken from them.

Of course, the biggest thing was that you had only so many days to get out. Look at the property on Bainbridge, which comes out in that film ("Visible Target") that was done - the fact was they gave you just so many days to get out and everything was left as it was.

And what were they going to do with their property later? They were gone. They were so crushed. You had people around who were high in political office and saw chances for some of their friends to get property for ten cents on the dollar.

Some of them are pretty easy to pinpoint, some are pretty difficult. But I think Anne

Fisher's book points those things out very well, and they've never been refuted.

Q. Was there an organization of pacifist ministers in existence at this time?

Rev. Shaw Yes, following our entrance into World War II, a group of us pacifist ministers formed a fellowship and met every month or two through 1942, 43, and 44. I have in my datebook meetings of that group, and they were usually here in Seattle.

Mr. Kingsbury What were some of those names?

Rev. Shaw Well, there would have been [Fred] Shorter and [Harold] Jensen

Mr. Kingsbury Fred Shorter from the Church of the People, Harold Jensen from First Baptist, and Ray Roberts from Congregational.

Rev. Shaw Let's see - who was the Mennonite minister in the South End of town? Bontrager, I believe. He was active in it, and there were a few others. We weren't a large group - probably no more than ten or twelve altogether.

Q. Were you able to facilitate conscientious objectors? What was your purpose?

Rev. Shaw A year or so after the war began, they got that worked out for alternate service for C.O.'s in CPS (Civilian Public Service) camps. And at that time I would say that nine tenths of the pacifists accepted that and one tenth didn't. They wouldn't register and they wouldn't go to the camps - they went to prison.

Mr. Kingsbury That's right. Irwin Hogenauer, and Lassiter, and Irwin.

Q. They went to federal prison?

Mr. Kingsbury I was thinking back on this very same thing. Our churches did have platforms prior to that for conscientious objectors, and our churches did stress them. Our minister wasn't too happy about it, but he stressed it because some of us felt it should be done. And our church nationally took a pretty good stand and put money in the programs, plus there was never any holding back on the chaplains.

It was a double-barrelled thing that we worked on.

Q. I'm sorry - I'm not following what you mean about the chaplains.

Mr. Kingsbury Some of the denominations were not too happy about having some of their men in the chaplaincy.

Rev. Shaw And paid by the government.

Mr. Kingsbury We felt they should be paid by the church, and be responsible to the church, taking care of the spiritual needs of the boys in service.

 We felt that a lot of the men that went in were in the Army or the Navy or the Air Force, and backed the war rather than backed the boys from a spiritual standpoint.

 This was a pretty strong issue.

Rev. Shaw You see, chaplains had military rank and were paid by the government. They were "kept" in a very real sense.

Mr. Kingsbury They got good pensions, which fellows are out on now.

Rev. Shaw As far as that goes, the church still feels it ought to be otherwise.

Q. I never thought of that as a conflict of conscience, and of course it would be.

Mr. Kingsbury Bishop G. Bromley Oxnam brought that out very strongly during those years - he was one of our top bishops.

 Looking back, I have to feel that the church did as good a job as could be done in those days under the emotion of the times.

Q. What was the "emotion of the times"? Was your position an unpopular one and difficult to hold?

Rev. Shaw (chuckling) Well, I served two pastorates during the war - at Snohomish first, and then in '44, I went to Bothell. I very early, in about the second or third sermon when I went to each place, I preached a sermon on my position as a pacifist and made it perfectly clear.

Mr. Kingsbury I thought it was the first sermons, Bob! (laughing)

Rev. Shaw And that I was opposed to the war, and that they would have to tolerate me. Both congregations were very good. I have no complaint. They accepted me as a pacific minister, and I preached against the war.

 In Snohomish, the American Legion, after I'd been there a couple of years, tried to get me moved, but I told the bishop - who was Baxter at that time and whom I knew - what the circumstances were, and he said, "Do you want to go back?"

 And I said, "I do," and he said, "Well, you're appointed."

 I had support from the Bishop.

 I had no trouble in Bothell. I went there in '44, and the war was over in '45.

Mr. Kingsbury I think we should point out that the Methodists attempt to keep their pulpits free, and that the people in the pews realize that even though they disagree. They realize that the minister is there to state what he thinks the issues are from his standpoint. I've always been proud of our church from the standpoint of a free pulpit. The administration will back you up practically every time.

Q. I know there were churches where recruiting was done from the pulpit, because it was done in the church I was raised in. How common was that, that church people became part of the apparatus of recruiting, part of the flag-waving of war?

Rev. Shaw It was less common than in the First World War. It was terrible in the First World War. I was alive then, though not very much involved in anything as any more than a member of the congregation but from what I read of the First World War, there were a lot of patriotic ministers who waved the flag...

Mr. Kingsbury And later on some of them were very unhappy about what they'd done.

Rev. Shaw Norman Thomas was a minister during the First World War who was kicked out of his pulpit.

Mr. Kingsbury And went on to have a bigger congregation.

Rev. Shaw But you see how we've grown. In World War II, both [Harry Emerson] Fosdick and John Haynes Holmes, of the Unitarian Church in New York, both submitted their resignations, but the congregations wouldn't accept them. They opposed the war, but they both retained their pulpits.

Mr. Kingsbury The other day I was reading some material, and if it was correct, there were about 4000 conscientious objectors during the First World War, and during the Second World War, there were 40,000.

I think that's probably true. The National Council of Churches had some very strong people working on education in peace issues over the years, and on consumer cooperatives - which is economic democracy - all those people were working together.

Q. Does the definition of "conscientious objector" include someone who will wear a uniform, but not take up arms? Is there a distinction?

Rev. Shaw They had a classification - was it 1-AO? or 2-F? - for C.O.'s who would not fight. They would go into the Army and serve in the medical corps, but they wouldn't fight.

Mr. Kingsbury I was one of those, but it didn't come that far, because I was exempted. But it's true that the church did back the C.O.'s who were really conscientiously opposed to war.

Q. Those who went to prison...

Mr. Kingsbury That's right, and also those who went to CPS camps.

Q. So there's basically three groups: the ones that went to prison, the ones that went to CPS camp, and the ones that served in the medical corps?

Mr. Kingsbury I don't know that that third group would be considered conscientious objectors.

Q. I just wondered how to think about that 40,000 - if that includes everybody...

Mr. Kingsbury No, I think that includes those that went to prison and went to CPS camps.

I was interested in how much it had increased. My uncle, in 1917, was in Los Angeles with Whittaker and Storey, and Sydney Strong - and they all were arrested for opposing entrance to the First World War. And that was really a no-no - our family was not too happy about that. And that changed after a period of years.

I would have to say, the more we talk about it, the prouder I am of the way the churches stood up. They were under a lot of pressure.

Rev. Shaw I came across in my papers a memorandum that I wrote in 1943. This is for the Peace Committee of the Pacific Northwest Annual Conference, and is a proposal I made. Do you want me to review this? It would pretty well summarize the position of the peace movement at that time.

Q. We might want to Xerox it and put it in the file. (This, and other materials, were Xeroxed for the file.)

Mr. Kingsbury I looked up the minutes of those meetings and Bob was active over those years.

Rev. Shaw Yes, I was chairman of the Peace Committee.

(Quoting,) "We reaffirm our hearty endorsement of the thirteen guiding principles of a just and durable peace as adopted by the ..."

Q. That's terrific. And is that a handbill you have?

Rev. Shaw Yes, the government in the latter part of 1944 was proposing to draft all men into service, and they were going to work for somebody under orders. It was a slave labor law, in fact, and I organized a meeting in the First Methodist Church, and we had a labor leader, Jimmy Duncan -

Mr. Kingsbury Oh, he was a good fellow!

Rev. Shaw as our speaker.
And I wrote my remarks up as a pamphlet

which circulated.

Mr. Kingsbury I was active in this, not only through the church, but because I had a print shop. I was always having problems with these fellows! They were always getting ideas and if we did them they way they wanted them, I wouldn't have been able to stay in business.

They'd take all my time getting these things out! (laughing)

Side B

Q. Was your pacifism rooted in your faith or in ideological concerns?

Mr. Kingsbury I wasn't really that much of a pacifist. I felt that if the time came, and if I was attacked, I probably would retaliate. These fellows (like Rev. Shaw) were a lot stronger than I was because they were rooted from the religious standpoint.

I was not a pacifist in the same way that they were. I was opposed to war and worked against it, but if worse came to worst, and I had to protect myself, I probably would.

Q. You were a very young man, of draft age...

Mr. Kingsbury Yes, I went up and registered. Remember we all went? At the American Legion Hall, people came in on canes, registering.

I wrote across my draft card, "Under Protest," and that stopped the works. Somebody said, "You can't do this!"

I said, "What do you mean I can't do it?"

And they went around asking each other - everybody working on registering were volunteers. Every able bodied person, and some that weren't so able, had to register. So we were all crowding into the American Legion Hall where the theatre is now on Fiftieth and Roosevelt Way. Where did you register?

Rev. Shaw I was in Snohomish.

Mr. Kingsbury But this was a crisis - I wrote "Under Protest" across it.

Rev. Shaw I did that on mine, too.

Mr. Kingsbury They said, "What can we do?"
I said, "I don't know what you can do - it's up to you."

My group up there was pretty good. They said, "Well, let's just take it and let it go." And that was the way to do it. They just took it and put it in the file, and nobody ever saw it! If they had made an issue of it, it would have become a big story and that wasn't what they wanted.

Q. Was the University of Washington a hotbed of student protest and resistance against the war?

Mr. Kingsbury I don't know that it was a hotbed. Certainly anywhere you have an educated group, you're going to have people who are thinkers and think on their own, and aren't influenced by propaganda so much.

We had Burt Farquarson, Mel Rader, and all that group. They were very strong on it. As I remember, Burt bailed out three or four of a protesting group. A protesting group then might be a dozen, and today it would be several hundred.

Rev. Shaw I don't think that during the Second World War there was anything like the student protest there was during the Vietnam War.

I was at Oberlin college in Ohio during the First World War, and there was no student protest. I wasn't a pacifist at that time, and I remember shortly after April 17, 1917, that President King called a mass meeting of the citizens - very patriotic ...

Mr. Kingsbury Well, my father sold Liberty Bonds in Twin Falls, Idaho and won the prize - they gave him a big Hindenburg helmet!

Rev. Shaw (chuckling) Did they?!

Mr. Kingsbury He always said, "Why did I do that?" But you have to realize the tenor of the times.

Q. As Seattle began to change, and the war industries geared up here, how did the city change? How did its racial makeup change?

Mr. Kingsbury The influx from the South was very strong. And also there were other groups - my uncle and his wife came from Montana to work in the shipyards.

From the South, it was very strong. They were in the union, but the average fellow in a union didn't want them in.

Women were down working, and Rosie the Riveter was a popular thing to talk about, and a couple of women friends of mine were driving buses because the men had gone to war.

The whole complexion of the town changed. Anything you had going during the day, was going at night, because you had all three shifts. The town was open all the time.

Our own church worked out something for the boys [in uniform], to bed them down and give them a shower. Chet Ramsay worked on that in the church downtown - it was for the kids that were in town, but it also took in some of the workers.

Bremerton, Fort Lewis, Fort Lawton - this was a place where they were jumping off down at Pier 91. Day and night, the whole town was lighted up.

Q. For the purposes of this tape, I forgot to ask you why you didn't have to make a decision on your conscientious objector status...

Mr. Kingsbury It was one of the more foolish things I've ever heard of.

My number came up at the first of April, and I was supposed to go at the end of April. With about ten days to go, they decided the pressmen were important for the war effort. It's incredible to look back on that shop I had, with half a dozen presses, as being important to the war effort. But they put it through that all pressmen were exempt from going, if you can believe it.

I didn't resist it at all. I did have two children.

It wasn't only with the pressmen, though. But I have to think that the Machinists were needed a lot more than we were, especially when you realize that I was so willing to print these things that were showing that the war wasn't being handled in the right way.

Rev. Shaw I was thinking of the contradiction!

Mr. Kingsbury It was kind of laughable, but as everybody says, I didn't turn it down, and that's true.

Q. The unions grew enormously here during the war, especially the [AFL] Metal Trades unions because of the work at Boeing and in the shipyards. From time to time, unions have been portrayed and have portrayed themselves as the vanguard of social change, and organized labor is sometimes seen as the common man's advocate.

Mr. Kingsbury That might be the perception of the thirties, not later.

Rev. Shaw I'll say.

Q. That's what I would like to ask you. How would you feel about such a statement?

Mr. Kingsbury Ask Dave Beck.

Rev. Shaw Well, of course, he was a reactionary.

Mr. Kingsbury My own union was small - 300, maybe. We did have a couple of women. The Typographical Union had quite a few women.

But I don't remember any [racial] minorities in my own union.

But the important unions - the Machinists, Pipefitters, and those - as I remember from discussions with various people, none of them became real union members. They talked about the traditional union as out to help the working man - it came to be ridiculous!

Thinking back, the men would picket to save their jobs. It wasn't like that later when they would

hire picketers to do these things.

The biggest problem, to my mind, was that they were not interested in society but in what they could get out of it. That may be a pretty strong statement, but it certainly seemed to be one of the problems, especially in the labor leaders. Though Atkinson, of the CIO, was pretty good on these issues.

A lot of us felt that if Reuther had stayed in and become a power in the labor movement that the tenor of the labor movement would have changed. He perceived what they should do in society, and what they could give to society, not just taking it all out. He had an overall view that the average labor leader didn't have.

Rev. Shaw Politically speaking, it was always hoped that labor would be the backbone of a third party, or a new political movement. I attended two or three conferences in Chicago, in 1948 - who was head of the Porters Union?

Q. A. Philip Randolph.

Mr. Kingsbury A good fellow. Super.

Rev. Shaw He was there, and there were several other labor leaders. And that fellow who was a professor at the University of Chicago -

Mr. Kingsbury Maynard Kreuger.

Rev. Shaw Yes, that's right.

Mr. Kingsbury This was a good aggressive group, with Norman Thomas. It was the backbone of the Socialist Party.

Rev. Shaw We were trying to get started - the New FLP, was it? something like that. A new party, a third party.

Mr. Kingsbury We always looked at it as a Farmer-Labor Party.

Rev. Shaw Sort of. But it was abortive. It lasted for two or three years and that was it.

In earlier years, in the early years of this century and the latter part of the last, there were more effective efforts to get labor. It was known as the Populist movement.

Mr. Kingsbury And you had the Dubinsky's and the Hillmann's, who saw a need and were dedicated.

Rev. Shaw And Debs.

Mr. Kingsbury Yes, Eugene Debs, my patron saint.

Q. What did you think of the leadership of Frances Perkins?

Rev. Shaw That was interesting.

Mr. Kingsbury Looking back on it, I think she was a lot stronger than people thought she was. And you had to hand it to Roosevelt for putting her in there to begin with.

Rev. Shaw She wouldn't have had anything to do with a political third party movement, would she?

Mr. Kingsbury No, but I think that Lorraine was asking what part Frances played in leading some of the labor actions, working with them.

Rev. Shaw She would have had much to do with the Wagner Act.

Q. What was the conflict between the CIO and the AFL here in Seattle? The CIO has traditionally been the organization more likely to accept blacks, and to allow liberal membership. Was there conflict here on the docks between those two organization?

Mr. Kingsbury That was Bridges' day. I remember in the Warehousemen's Union, a friend of mine lost his job because he felt that the membership was being pushed around by the agents. He thought that a more liberal group should be allowed to come in, which was Bridges' group.

 There was quite a conflict. And it came to such a spot, that didn't some of the employers in town ask Dave Beck to come in and help them out and organize the warehousemen, so that ostensibly they could help the working man, but actually so they could dictate the terms.

 Yes, there was conflict. And you wouldn't get the true conflict from the papers. You had the Times. Was the Star dead by then?

Q. No, not yet.

Mr. Kingsbury And the Union Record. See, with the Star and the Union Record, you had some other information that would be available, but after the Star died, you had Hearst plus the Times which would go right along with the regular business community.

Q. Is that the way you perceived those newspapers at the time?

Mr. Kingsbury Right. The Seattle-owned paper, owned by the Blethens, and the Hearst paper, and the Union Record and the Star. It was very discouraging.

Rev. Shaw The CIO wasn't very strong out here.

Mr. Kingsbury No, Atkinson was the only person I knew. The strength was in the woodworkers and in the woods, in the lumber industries, and that was due to the strength of the Wobblies. They were a pretty potent group, and always displayed as being super revolutionists, but if you saw some of the fellows and talked to them, you found that this wasn't

the actual fact.

For many years, they had one room down on First Avenue - the IWW's, remember? And they used to say, here, look at this, it means "I Won't Work."

Those fellows were out in the work. Oscar McGill, one of our Methodist ministers, would minister to the woodworkers and the lumber workers, in 1911, because he saw the need.

Rev. Shaw Were the IWW in the mills as well as the woods?

Mr. Kingsbury Yes, they were, but they came in later. I don't know that history well enough.

Rev. Shaw That was really the beginning of the CIO in a sense.

Mr. Kingsbury They organized the complete mill.

Q. They didn't want trade unions, though, right? Didn't they want one big union?

Mr. Kingsbury Yes. Well, we had seven unions within the graphic arts.

Rev. Shaw Is that right!

Mr. Kingsbury And now it's all one.

Rev. Shaw That really is breaking it down, isn't it?

Q. The people who moved into Seattle, who were war workers, and were part of the big boom in population here, mostly lived in housing projects.

Mr. Kingsbury And also, a lot of old marginal apartments were fixed up, and let at exorbitant rents. Nobody kicked because they were getting exorbitant wages. They were pretty dismal.

But housing was built to take care of people coming in, and it had its attendant problems.

Rev. Shaw Was the Yesler Housing Project existing at that time?

Mr. Kingsbury I had a show there on Saturday mornings.

Q. What were your shows? What was that all about?

Mr. Kingsbury It was an amusing thing... Fred Shorter and I were bringing to town old-time movies in a church over on University Way. He had "All Quiet on the Western Front" and "Grand Illusion" and others that were great movies.

So one of the girls - Jackie Kwallen, I think it was - came to us and said, "We ought to do something

for our kids like this." So finally, we had two circuits of this. I had one that began on Friday evening in Rainier Valley, and went to Yesler Terrace Saturday morning, Saturday noon at Duwamish, and Holly Park in the afternoon. I figured I had well over a thousand [in attendance.]

And since I was a printer, I got these handbills out, and laughingly called it "The Cheapest Babysitting in Town - 11 Cents!"

And then there were other circuits, to Stewart Heights (in Kirkland), and to several others. Looking back on it, it was a good service. We had lots of Westerns -

Q. You didn't just show anti-war movies? (laughing)

Mr. Kingsbury No, those were for Sundays at Fred Shorter's church.

Q. I can see you sitting these poor little war worker kids down, and preaching anti-war at them!

Mr. Kingsbury They had all these kids, and recreation was a problem. How to take care of them, day and night, in the Projects. The Seattle Housing Authority did a pretty good job.

We would run these serials, and it was interesting. The kids were good kids.

Q. The Council of Churches underwrote this?

Mr. Kingsbury No, I underwrote it. It was a personal thing, after the Housing Projects started. They were afraid it was going to lose money, but I thought we might as well gamble and see what we could do, so we got out some handbills. I made expenses.

Q. How did you perceive life in the housing projects, just incidentally? Did it seem pleasant? Was it grim?

Mr. Kingsbury I think with the parents working and gone so much, it must have been pretty grim for the children. But there were various programs to take care of them.

It's group living. I think that probably, for some of them, when you'd talk to them, the housing here was better than what they'd come from, if they came from the South.

Q. Did you have the chance to speak with many of the people? Were they inner-city people, or farmers and sharecroppers?

Mr. Kingsbury I don't remember any sharecroppers, but most of them were marginal workers, of course. Coming from the South, it was a big eye-opener to them - how much they could come here and make.

But, to my mind, where they were wrong was that they didn't realize they were going to have to organize society to see that they had jobs when it was over. I was thinking the other day - I wonder whatever happened to

a couple of the young boys I used to know? I wonder what happened to their families? This would be an interesting thing to make a survey of. What happened to them when they went home, as a lot of them did, or stayed, as a lot did?

I walked through Yesler just yesterday, and it's still going, and that's been quite a few years. They were put up hurriedly, and I think the Seattle Housing Authority's done a pretty good job.

Rev. Shaw Was Yesler put up during the First or Second World Wars?

Q. It was just before the Second.

Mr. Kingsbury It wasn't built, as I remember, for the war. It was built as marginal housing. At that time, the churches and all of us were pushing for housing - for decent housing as the backbone of society.

 If you remember, a lot of us said, if housing is that important to the family, why not charge mortgages at 1% or no %. That was a nice thing to think about, but the financial interests weren't interested in seeing to it that money was that cheap. If the family is the important thing in our society, then the family's the thing to be kept together. If the home was important, why shouldn't we see to it that everybody had a decent home?

Q. To me, these ideas occur together - maybe they don't occur to you together... What were some of the ecumenical movements and movements for racial equality that occurred during the war?

Mr. Kingsbury I'm thinking of Anita Steinmetz's group which was religiously motivated.

Q. This was the Christian Friends for Racial Equality?

Mr. Kingsbury Yes.

Rev. Shaw Yes, and the Seattle Religious Fellowship, organized in the latter part of 1944, and it consisted of a group of us ministers, both inter-faith and inter-racial, and as I recall it, we held five successive months of inter-faith, inter-racial worship service around in our various churches. They were quite well-attended. I was the treasurer of the outfit, and I remember making a financial appeal at the service in the old Jewish synagogue at Fourteenth and Pine, and the place was about full.

Q. You worked with Rabbi [Raphael] Levine?

Rev. Shaw Yes, Rabbi Levine was on the committee. I think this preceded Christian Friends for Racial Equality, and I think you disagree. (to the interviewer)

Q. I think so.

Did you have any involvement in the Civic Unity

Committee, which Mayor Devin formed at that time?

Rev. Shaw No, I don't remember that group at all. This was in 1945, and I was in Bothell at the time.

Mr. Kingsbury And possibly many people in groups that you would be on, Bob, might not be invited to join the Civic Unity Committee, because of their attitudes.

 That may be unfair. But a lot of the things we worked on meant we wouldn't be invited to join committees in the community, because your attitude might be a little farther than they wanted to hear when you pressed for change.

Q. What was the Washington Commonwealth Federation?

Rev. Shaw Well, it was a political movement that came into being in about 1934, wasn't it.

Mr. Kingsbury A little bit earlier, I think.

Rev. Shaw Right around there, and wasn't Mary Farquarson's election partly a result of that?

Mr. Kingsbury Yes. It was basically started because people were out of work and needed something to do. Then a group came in and took it over, and then you might say pretty well killed it. "Production for Use" was the platform, and I have all the material in my files. Doug Honig's going to work with it.

 Mary Farquarson was very active in it. You had idealists in it who wanted an economic democracy and felt the laboring man should get a break.

 It became such a strong group and so well-organized that they swept the whole group into office in 1936 or so. They became a real potent force, when Howard Costigan got in. He was a good rapid talker, and did a good job before he sold out.

 His secretary, Anne Fisher, is a very good friend of mine, and she's eighty-one years old, and is going to tape something for me before she leaves town.

 The Commonwealth Federation started out fine, organized for the working man. They organized the Kirkland Cannery, where they canned the produce that they raised in the fields, and it was basically good.

Q. So there were consumer cooperative ideals, too?

Rev. Shaw Yes.

Mr. Kingsbury It was an idealist group that was really working. But it wasn't too long before a politically ambitious group took them over.

Q. I know that by wartime, they were organizing Labor Day celebrations, and were very union dominated.

Mr. Kingsbury Yes, but I don't think it was by

traditional union men, certainly not the Teamsters. I often have wondered about Mary Farquarson before she died - what would have happened if they had had good progressive leadership?

It might have been entirely different in this area. Yet, as far as consumers' cooperatives, you have to realize that this area is one of the most strongly dominated consumer cooperative-dominated areas in the United States. Probably, the work that Bob and all of us did in Co-ops maybe has resulted in all this. You've got Group Health, the largest of its kind in the health field; REI the very largest in recreational products; People's Memorial Association is the largest and oldest in the United States on funeral reform; PCC has 20,000 members in food co-ops. We tried on that (food co-ops), but we could never put it over. Still, little by little, we built for what would come later.

I have to think that the WCF had something to do with that.

Q. What was your perspective, Rev. Shaw, on the Washinton Commonwealth Federation?

Rev. Shaw I was interested very much in it. And Fred Shorter was involved.

Mr. Kingsbury The Church of the People was the backbone of all those sorts of things because the group, as small as it was, when it got together was all activists. They knew how to promote things and how to organize them. They had all come together for the purpose of making the church more viable.

Bob and Fred Shorter were very close friends.

Rev. Shaw He was kicked out of Pilgrim Congregational Church, up here on Capital Hill, in 1934. Immediately about 100 of his people and he formed the Church of the People. They were independent, and they walked out. It's ironic that the same thing happened to me in Tacoma, when I assumed the pastorate of St. Paul's Church following Harold Bass. He and about 100 members walked out and formed the Community Church, or the Hillside Church.

Mr. Kingsbury But it wasn't a philosophical difference, so much, as it was with Fred Shorter. It was a question of the way it was handled, because philosophically Bass and Bob were on a pretty close wavelength. Which wasn't true at Pilgrim Church.

Rev. Shaw But this Church of the People became a very strong influence in the peace movement and in liberal movements generally and, as Chet says, in the Washington Commonwealth Federation. We were all in the thick of it.