

Eula McGill discusses workers' grievances

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Duration: 2:18

Transcript:

Audio Transcript

Jacquelyn Hall

What were the grievances that you had, and what motivated people to organize the local?

Eula McGill

Everything: more money, better conditions, and certainly sanitation. It was everything, and the main thing was conditions of employment plus money. You were at the whim of the boss: you'd go up and ask or say something and "If you don't like it, hit the street," that was the answer you got to anything you wanted to say. You couldn't talk sensibly to the boss. Mostly you didn't ask, because you knew what it was going to be; if you had a beef you didn't. . . .

Jacquelyn Hall

But how do you account for people at this point being willing to organize the union, try to do something about these conditions?

Eula McGill

Had no place to go but up. Couldn't go back; up was the only place you could go.

Jacquelyn Hall

Were people aware of the NRA Textile Codes, and that you were supposed to be getting more than you were?

Eula McGill

Well, you see, when Roosevelt took office he practically had no opposition down South. Newspapers and everything were very quick to publish everything, because everyone wanted to get the country back on its feet. So consequently these people were expecting, they were ready to try to do something.

Jacquelyn Hall

They thought that Roosevelt was going to do something?

Eula McGill

People looked up to him; and he was a dynamic person, as you very well know, and was well-loved by the average person. They felt protected; they felt that now was the chance for them to do something for themselves. And a lot of people who had had some union experiences before and failed. . . . You must remember the mines had tried to organize in the twenties and failed, and out of that came some people who were still hoping some day to organize. They hadn't killed the labor movement when they lost and failed; there were still some people in all plants who were ready to take advantage of anything to get the union.

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