

INTERVIEW WITH HENRY WARDEN

Ferraro: Alright Mr. Warden I'd like you to a tell me about a the circumstances that got you to Bluefield back in a a I guess you came here in 1913 as a Chemist.

Warden: That's right.

Ferraro: I would like you to pick up the story from that point and tell me how you got here.

Warden: Well, I was a farm boy and worked on the farm and I graduated form a fine prep school, St. Johns be in Vermont as a ^{1:30} which was equivalent to high school today and I decided to go west do to the fact that I thought I had milked enough cows each night at morning and in the summer time when I wasn't going to school and nobody seemed to want to take care of me so I lived out to the west. I went a Montreal, Chicago, Omaha.... ^{1:00} where I lost a cap and bought a W hat for a dollar and get up in the barbers chair. I was going originally San Francisco and a my train left while I was in the barber shop chair and the barber did everything to my head that ever been done. I didn't know they was such thing. He gave me a singe and washed my hair...cut it did the whole job on me. Cost me ^{2:00} about a dollar and a half. I was going broke fast. I went from there up to Montana and...got a job in a pull at about five thousand men. I think of the name of it - it was John B. Ryans Miller. It was eight miles from Great Falls and the trolley ran between the two points. ^{2:30} A I visited by half brother in Montana - a newspaper publisher in and a he asked me after I had stayed there about a week if I intended to work

anywhere - what I was gonna do. I told him that I was a would like to
 have a job in an office thinking he would probably offer me one in his
 own establishment but rather than do that he send me down to Smalards to
 see a Mr. B. Osmond. I went to see Mr. Osmond after waiting quite a little
 while I plung my W hat down on his desk and he says how old are you I says
 I'm eighteen. I was actually seventeen a going on pretty close to seven-
 teen...and after negoating with him for a while a he ask me what I could
 do and I said I'm a bookkeeper and a I guess he laughted to himself when
 I said it but he says we'll have to see what we can find for you. We'll
 write you a letter and let you know whether we can use you or not in the
 next day or two. So I got the letter that he promised and told me to
 report to Mr. , chief time keeper and he put me to stamping cards.
 They figure the time to five minutes and if a man was five minutes late he
 was docked five minutes and they had a good many men there and ran into
 money. I worked there a while and then I went to in the blast furnace
 office to work for the blast furnace forman and I wound up at the end of
 the year in the general office and I begun to - I lived at the club house
 at Smelter and I noticed the chemists - metal urges with the one has ones
 that had the good jobs there and a I thought that a maybe I ought to come
 back east and try to find a school I could afford to go to to learn to be
 a chemist. So I talk Mr. Osmond about coming back east to a...a talk to
 him about going back east and a he advised me to do that and he says if
 I am here you'll have a job when you come back...as a chemist. Well, I
 went to Perry of Institute a few years and a started Industrial Chemistry..
 quite a few things. I had a it was a practical school. You could learn
 to tan hid there - make soap - make perfumes - make cement. They'd they
 had founders in machine shops you worked in. It was a practical school.
 When I graduated from there I went back on on my uncles farm and a... a

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got a letter from Lythagraphic Inc. concern Massachusetts. They offered to hire me but I didn't like the man I interviewed so I didn't take the job. I went back up on the farm and I got another letter from Number One Broadway from Mr. Tom Farrell who a hired the chemist for Bluefield. They only had one. As far as chemists were concerned you you had no boss at all he told me and he told me he'd pay me sixty five dollars a month. That's what the job paid to start and a...so I wound up in a Bluefield after he told me how rough it was I believe the twenty saloons here and that's about all there was here when I got off the train and a Matt Hotel and Bluefield hadn't spread out very much then. There was no south Bluefield hadn't even been built so...I took a job and my boss, Frank Easley, everybody know him here in Bluefield. He was manager of the coke company and a I reported to New York through him and a...I worked a year for the coke company when it was liquidated due to the fact that the were coming in and they a were making their goal at a making the coke at the steel plants rather than bee hive ovens which not very efficient - all the from the coal was lost and burned up so he told me the company was going out of business... right away and I made a a appointment with Atwon and Company and told them I would like to have a job as a their Chief Inspector had given up and I finally got the job and they paid me a hundred and ten dollars a month.

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Ferraro: What year was this?

Warden: That was in a...well, is after a year about three or four months more. About fifteen months after I came here I'd say that I went to work for the coal company either in 1915-16. I was married in 1915 and never did leave here. I intended to go back to Montana when I came here but I didn't

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do it and a had various jobs. I analyzed coals - throw coal on the road
 managed mines in 1920 and was transferred to the American Coal Company
 in 1926 where I worked all the rest of my life - wound up as head of the
 companies. They had what a companies. I spent part of the time in New
 York and part of the time here. They wanted me to move to New York but
 I've it's my theory if your going over in the mine you better live at it..
 where I never had a wildcast strike all the time I was running mines

Ferraro: Why do you...

Warden: They had em cross the creek from me - another mine but my own men were a
 good committee. They'd work with me. I didn't have to buy em...they'd
 come right in and say at we'll settle this grievence right here and now..
 and we worked on that theory. So I was very successful a I guess as a
 mine manager.

Ferraro: Let me ask you a now what were you doing in 1920?

Warden: Well, I was analyzing coal for Edward company and selling coal to the
 retail dealers of this country. I sold in the west and I sold in the
 east - traveled certain periods of the year you know and make we made
 contracts by the year - tryed to make an estimate of whether dealers
 going to use during the year put it down and we wouldn't bother him any-
 more if he signed the contract and we'd see him before it expired and
 try to renew it.

Ferraro: What did you...

Warden: That was what I was doing between 1923 and 1926.

Ferraro: A when did you go to operate those mines up at a Pawn Creek?

Warden: In 1920.

Ferraro: Tell me.

Warden: I operated it till 1923 and the same way with the mine over at War West Virginia. That was a the first one that I was made manager of. There was a steamship come at that's had about ^{14:00} it was named the Oriental Navigation Company. They had eighty bottoms afloat. That's a big shipping company you know and they burned coal and a they bought this ^{14:30} mine down here not knowing anything about a coal mine and a they went to Mr. Edward who they were given some coal from and asked him if he wouldn't manage the mine for them. Mr. Edward called me up said you been elected ^{15:00} General Manager of this mine over at War - go ahead and two weeks later he said they bought another mine down at Palm Creek...so you better run that and then I started in three days a week War - three days a week at Palm Creek.

Ferraro: Ok, that's the period of time I want to deal with right now. What a ok, ^{15:00} you were here - you went a down to War as you'd never managed a mine before.

Warden: No.

Ferraro: What was it like going down there for the first time? What were you thinking? What were you feeling?

Warden: Oh I'd been in many mines because when I was Chief Inspector a for Edward and Company I went in all the mines pert near in the field so I I knew the general ^{16:00} a things you had to do to mine coal. I observed em being done by other people because I had to go to all the mines that we were selling coal for.

Ferraro: What were the miners like?

Warden: Well, the miners were...partly colored miners. They were alot of foreign ^{16:30} miners...and...well, they were energetic as a rule. They they not many poor man in the mines. They weren't then. We had one mine that we had a good many foreigners working there. ^{17:00} They'd make their gardens in the fall. We had daylight saving all out own then. That's the reason I don't go by it. Now you go to that clock - it's the right time...and...our man trips ran an hour later - ^{17:30} an hour earlier in the summer due to the fact they wanted to get out and work their gardens. Well, this generation nobody makes a garden. That's the different between then and now. I've seen the whole side of...^{18:00} of the hill plasteres looking red with tomatoes and peppers - everything like that.

Ferraro: When did you get involved with the a the a Pocahontas Coal Operators Association?

Warden: Well, when I took a a charge of the a American Coal Company, that's when I became an officer of the association. ^{18:30} Now when I was running the mine at War and the one at on Palm Creek, they were two different associations. Now the mine down at Williamson now up from Palm Creek up up at Palm Creek was under the Williamson Coal Operators Association. ^{19:00} The mines in Logan

were under the Logan Coal Operators Association...and there was the Tug River Association - doesn't exist anymore that a my mine at War would have been classified as belonging to them to administer so you had a bunch of associations - the Pocahontas was the biggest one...but a they.. had different districts - New River Association and...

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Ferraro: In your dealings with people who were members of these a coal associations, what were their attitudes toward union organization?

Warden: Well, they didn't intend to have any union. That was their policy and they banded together to keep the unions out if they could.

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Ferraro: And what did...

Warden: And and they they didn't do anything except a watch for organizers and as I said put em back on the train if they got off. They had a pretty fair knowledge of who was who I guess and they did that to the associations. I suppose they had other organizations like Boldenfelts over in Logan - New River field. They probably did.

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Ferraro: Tell me about the Boldenfelts organization. How did it get started?

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Warden: Well, I don't know how it got started but but the railraod came in here and a the railraod had to be policed and that was the start of the organization. I presume was organized by Annie Baldwen. He was ahead of it I think officially but he a had Tom Felts as his head man here in Bluefield and they looked after the Pocahontas field for the coal operators ...and I think that's about it.

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Ferraro: What you knew Tom Felts personally?

Warden: Yes.

Ferraro: What kind of man was he? Describe him.

Warden: Well, he was pretty big man. He was good size and a well I always thought he was a might good man and I think his brothers were pretty nice men too, They were well thought of here. They lived in Bluefield I think - Elbert and Lee Felts...but they ran a pretty tight shift now they if they were going organize to the union why you would a probably let come into the Pocahontas field. It's dangerous.

Ferraro: What sort of tactics did they employ to keep a to keep union organize organizers out?

Warden: Well, as I told you they at each mine Tom Felts of the agency had a man I suppose the superintendent of each mine know who he was. I did in my mine and a I know they a wrote a letter every week to the superintendent showing Tom Felts what work they were doing and then nobody paid any attention to em - they would everybody else. Nobody knew who he was. He was probably brought out of Virginia somewhere - maybe never done any secret work before at all but I had letters that I delivered to his office in Bluefield...along time.

Ferraro: And then what would Felts do with that information? In your case tell me how it worked.

Warden: Well, I don't suppose he would do anything as long as the man was employed ^{24:30} there. He was the man and he kept his a business a secret. He might have been a track man or electrician or...anything - any company man.

Ferraro: Apparently so that they would they would have undercover people...

Warden: Yes, that's well their organization was undercover. ^{25:00}

Ferraro: Well, didn't they also employ armed guards to in a number of cases?

Warden: No that I know of - not in the Pocahontas field.

Ferraro: What about in the other fields?

Warden: They might have in the other fields. They might have imported some men ^{25:30} in to fight I don't know...about that. I know that they used to do all kinds of things at to find out a if any organizing attempt was being made. In other words this man would to to a group meeting if there is a group meeting anywhere appropriate and he would report on that. To ^{26:00} me, I would see what's being done before Tom Felts would.

Ferraro: What a what do you remember about the Matewan massacre?

Warden: Well, if I recolect right I was on number sixteen and I just left ^{26:30} Williamson and then time the massacre happened. I know one of the detectives got in a toilet on a Fulman probably saved his life - not one of the Felts men but an employee of Felts - a detective in other words. ^{27:00} They was another man over at War where I was running the first mine that

he'd been known to crawl under people houses to hear what they're saying.
It was that...in other words they had to have facts.

Ferraro: About a about the Matewan massacre - ^{27.00} how did how did it happen? Now it was Albert and Lee Felts who went to Matewan right?

Warden: Yes.

Ferraro: Ok, can you...

Warden: They went up they went up the hollow there

Ferraro: Hold on for a second. Ok, can you start your sentence by telling me a who Albert and Lee Felts were and what they were doing there?

Warden: Well, they were brothers of Tom Felts and Tom was in ^{28.00} Bluefield at the time of the massacre. They had to a do everything they could to keep him here. He was going down there and wipe out the whole county I think he was so mad because he hadn't lost any brothers before.

Ferraro: Well, what what a I'm you're sort of getting ahead of yourself.

Warden: Now they went up down there to a put people out that were in the houses ^{28.00} that were causing the trouble I suppose some of em.

Ferraro: Whos houses?

Warden: The companies houses - in other words they were living in company houses

and they was be dispossessed - put out other words. They went down
 there and set the furniture of the occupants outside...and after they
 had done that they walked down towards center of Matewan - a station I
 guess they headed for and somebody shot em - supposedly Sid Hatfield,
 Mayor Testaman. That's my recollection what was done. There was another
 time that a payroll was robbed a down in a lower field that was a Mingo
 field you might say and a...the a robbers never did get away. They were
 all killed. I don't know who did the killing or what but...it was done.
 It was in the paper. Glen Allen I think was the place.

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Ferraro: What a after Albert and Lee were shot, what was Tom Felts reaction?

Warden: Well, as I say they had to a practically confine him to keep him from
 catching number three down in Williamson. He was going to shoot up the
 whole town I guess. He was pretty - well he was a...just real mad you
 know such a thing like that could happen. He lost his brothers.

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Ferraro: So what did he do then?

Warden: Well, he just went on with the business as usual. He didn't go that
 night.

Ferraro: What about several months later in Welch?

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Warden: Well, that...a man I knew over at War was one of the three that were up
 the head of the steps at courthouse in Welch and when Sid Hatfield and
 Chambers started up the steps the three of them let loose on them. That
 ended the...the trouble.

Ferraro: Were they sent there on instructions of Tom Felts?

Warden: I don't know.

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Ferraro: Did you ever talk to Tom Felts about this?

Warden: No.

Ferraro: At anytime later?

Warden: No, he never talked about anything that happened.

Ferraro: It was probably a good policy back then wasn't it?

Warden: Yeah.

Ferraro: Lee you said the less you had to have known I guess.

Warden: That's right.

Ferraro: Ok, how are we doing on tape. Ok, were are going to change tapes and we
will go - will do a little bit more.

32:30

Warden: Ok.

Warden: Even after I went to New York why I spent half my time digging it and the other half selling it.

Ferraro: What a of all the a...ok tell me about a let see ok, back in 1920 you were working those two mines - one up in War and the other one down across from Williamson.

Warden: 38:00
Yeah.

Ferraro: You were spending three days a week at each mine?

Warden: Yeah.

Ferraro: Ah, Marshall Law was declared in the spring of 1921.

Warden: Yeah, in Mingo County.

Ferraro: What did that mean to you and a what was what was it like and what were the miners reaction?

Warden: Well, I went along with the association - whatever they thought we ought to do I went along with the rest of em.

Ferraro: What did they tell you to do? 38:30

Warden: Well, they said to try to bring in labor if we could - if we needed any. We brought some men in from Alabama at our mine and I presume that other mines did the same thing. It was a policy to get ready for a fight but

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we never had a fight..on the Kentucky side.

Ferraro: What about the other operators on the West Virginia side? What preparations did they make?

Warden: Well, I suppose they all had rifles. I know every mine that I visited had some.

Ferraro: Yeah, earlier you told me that it wasn't a strange thing to see a box of rifles in every mine right?

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Warden: Yeah, upstairs with the coffins.

Ferraro: With the coffins.

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Warden: Yeah, every company store handled coffins you know. People died then like they do now and the only way you could get a coffin was to come to the store because you had no road and had no way to travel..in other words if I was over at and my wife died I'd have to arrange to bring her to Bluefield.

Ferraro: What a...did you have a company store at a at your mines?

Warden: Every one, yeah.

Ferraro: How did that work?

Warden: Worked fine. 35:30

Ferraro: No, I mean just a...

Warden: Oh well, we didn't make any money to speak of off the company store. It was a good deal and what a any...what you would call them twenty tons.

Ferraro: Sixteen tons.

Warden: Yeah.

Ferraro: Yeah, there now that song has put the image in peoples minds.

Warden: Yeah.

Ferraro: And alot of people have said that a you know the miners could barely ^{36.00} break even for paying a marked up prices at the company store and everything. Now how was it at your mine?

Warden: Yeah, yeah. Well, there our mines we never tried ridiculous prices for anything. We didn't charge anymore mark up than we would have it they'd been ten stones there. We believe in treating people right. ^{36.30}

Ferraro: How a - also I wanted to ask you this question. A you said that in all the years you'd been running the mines that you never had a wildcat. What do you do - a how what do you do different to treat your men that a from other people - do you think.

Warden: Well, it's a personal contact. I went into my office one day and here

was a list, twenty five cents, fifty cents and a seventeen jewel elegant watch laying there - says if from the man at the mine...now that ought to answer some question.

Ferraro: I'd say so.

Warden: If we if we were trying to take advantage of our man they wouldn't like me would they?

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Ferraro: It was a matter a just a treating people the way you think they they'd want to be treated....

Warden: That's right. Well, I could put myself in their place no matter whats score.

Ferraro: You think your earlier experiences give you the ability?

Warden: I used to have some overdrafts. I didn't refuse a man a script if he had to have it - needed it but I knew rather he needed it or not because I lived there. This thing of living in Bluefield and running the coal mine down near Welch - that's entirely different thing.

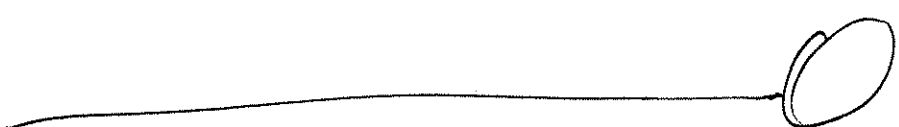
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Ferraro: Why did the operators as a rule pay in script rather in cash?

Warden: Why did they?

Ferraro: Yeah.

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Warden: Well, I don't know. It was a custom that was used in a good many establishments in the country and a we had a script entirely. We one time had paper script and then another time brass script...I took all of our script at one time and melted it up into...just nothing if I if I could have kept that script I'd been worth a pile of money today.

Ferraro: For collectors?

Warden: Yeah...but I was afraid somebody would get a hold of it and then we'd have to make it good. If you had a dollar script I might tell you well you can trade it out in our store if you want to.

Ferraro: What a was there was there a good economic reason for doing that, I mean, did it help the company cash flow by using script rather than paying cash?

Warden: Well, it did some course there was some some advantage to it. They were mines that was situated where they couldn't get to a bank in time to meet their payrolls or something. They'd have to that was a rare thing but I suppose sometimes they paid the wages in cash in a script.

Ferraro: Did you a did you you did not know Don Shafin personally?

Warden: No, never knew him.

Ferraro: What did you hear about him from your friends and the Logan people?

Warden: Well, I don't know. He was kind of a man ran things I guess. He probably

policed the mines. He was sheriff I believe and he probably had these
men at the mines. I imagine some of them left Tom Felts.

Ferraro: Ok, you a do you remember what did you remember hearing about the miners
march on Blair Mountain from where you were?

Warden: Well, I didn't pay much attention to it. I really don't...I I don't
remember much about that except the might's didn't succeed.

Ferraro: Did a did the did your miners talk about it or did it excite them in any
way or a...

Warden: Oh, I don't suppose they paid any attention to it. They probably didn't
see a newspaper. They might not have know they ever was a might's attempt.

Ferraro: So everybody just kept working at business as usual?

Warden: Sure, we had men that would go in the mines and do their dead work as we
call it. A before the man trip ran, they'd load thirty or forty tons of
coal a day. We had other men load ten tons a day. That's a difference
in man...I figure mistake was made perhaps when the operators agreed to
pay everybody by the day.

Ferraro: Did that effect productivity do you think?

Warden: Sure it did - cut it half in to.

Ferraro: What a...you said you were going to tell me a whole story about a there

was something about the a injunction - Indianapolis Injunction that limited the size of the Pocahontas field?

Warden: Well, there was some coal down in the Valley. That what we call medium volerton coal - twenty five to thirty percent volume and it was a little harder than Pocahontas coal and it was sold to coal dealers ^{43:30} and if they couldn't see it on it's own merits they would call it Pocahontas coal...because that would sell it for em so the Pocahontas Association asked the federal judge in Indianapolis to define the areas of the Pocahontas coal field ^{44:00} course that wouldn't apply today because in Buckhannon County fifteen hundred feet down Pocahontas number three seems there and it's mineable - being mined now by Island Creek...but Yager was arrested for it a Matt.

Ferraro: I think we might have blown a fuse - was it really made to order? ^{44:30}

Warden: The chair? No, it's just the regular chair. A the undependig - it's chrome of some kind of electric motor in there that's all it is.

Ferraro: Are we rolling? Ok, I'll ask you a few more questions and then we'll a we'll a let you go. Once again, I want to go back ^{45:00} to what what was the position of the coal association in 1920 regarding the union...and organization?

Warden: Well, in 1920 a no one in the Pocahontas coal field wanted to be unionized. No owner wanted to be unionized. He didn't want his mine unionized and he ^{45:30} tried to handle his men generally speaking in such a way that they wouldn't wanted in the union.

Ferraro: How so.

Warden: Well, a they just treated there man in such a way that the men knew they couldn't do any better anywhere else and they didn't want to be organized. It cost money for them to be organized. ⁴⁶⁰⁰

Ferraro: What a you say if you had a mine that was out a little bit further, it would have to be pretty much you said a self contained city right? Explain that.

Warden: Yeah, well you've got to have a streets a roads even though they may be an old dirt road doing in front of the houses but you'd build the houses ⁴⁶³⁰ to be occupied by your employees. You'd build the store to furnish them the goods they need to live because they couldn't get em anywhere else... but anybody that took advantage of the man - the fact that the only store they could go to is the company store that doesn't hold water. ⁴⁷⁰⁰ The main thing that company wanted the man to do was to produce coal. You wanted to make your money digging coal if you can...so that's about it.

Ferraro: What hurt the coal industry do you think...in this area?

Warden: Well, there's been a big change from the way it used to be. ⁴⁷³⁰ They used to be an incentive for a man to work especially a miner. We had miners that load from ten on up to forty tons a day. They lark in the mines early - sometimes do all their rock moving and everything else had to be done - take down the dry slate and a clean the place up...⁴⁸⁰⁰ that a...so they could gather an extra ton from the . I know we had some men that didn't want anybody working in the place with them. They'd clean the whole cut

up everyday...and they made money...and a fellow that loaded tens of tons a day he just made one fourth of the man who would load forty tons a day.

48.30

Ferraro: If you loaded forty ton would you have made real good money for what it was?

Warden: Sure.

Ferraro: Well, just give me an equivalent of like if your - can you?

Warden: Well, I don't know as I can a...I I think that a I'm going to have to say that a...the merit for the tonage mine....is the best way to mine coal. Now the union contracts a through the years. I know something about them a...they first got travel time. The average travel time of a man from the driftmound - that's the face of the mine - the entrance to the working place is forty five minutes average in this country. Well, it used to be that time started...the company mens time started when they got to their working place which would mean that any man they transporting and the trip...would have to be paid from the time they entered the driftmound. Now that can be quite an item. At noon time they stopped for lunch whenever they wanted to individually. They all carried a lunch...well, they used to take about a half an hour for lunch...that paid for now. That's part of their working day...in other words the fringes if you want to call them that a eating on in on pretty hard on the operator.

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Ferraro: Let me ask you about absentee ownership.

Warden: Well, absentee ownership is bad in my opinion because if a man - New York

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absentee

or Boston owned a coal mine and he dictates policy brother that coal mine I think that's long distance management and the men are not in the proper touch with the management.

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Ferraro: Let me ask you about a Tom Felts. What do you remember about Tom Felts?

Warden: Well, I don't remember anything about except he's ordinary man and good size and he was a very a...a man that had a job to do and he was a going to do it.

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Ferraro: What was his personality like?

Warden: I think it just like any good man would be. I'd find no fault of Tom Felts...of course he had some chores I guess he had to ought to be done that maybe shouldn't have been like setting of people out of their house. I wouldn't do that. I wouldn't set them out of their house.

53:00

Ferraro: But it had to be done back then though.

Warden: Well, it it used to be that if if you didn't pay your payment on the house you bought you had to get out. They've got the bankrupt law now so you can take the bankrupt law and divide all your other expenses up with the mortgage on the house. So what happens - you buy whatever you want to and you owe for whatever you want to. If your not thrifty, you'll wind up having to get out...in other words you borrowing money and...not able to pay it.

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Ferraro: Ok, one more time - why did Albert and Lee go to Matewan?

Warden: I suppose Tom Felts told them to go. I presume that I don't know. He they were part of his organization. They were probably the top men in his organization cause they were his brothers. They probably had an ⁵¹³⁰ interest in the agency - I don't know about that.

Ferraro: What job were they on?

Warden: But they were pretty well they just lived in Bluefield and part of the organization I guess. They did railroad work as well as coal mine work.. but they can be situations around coal mine that somebody has to get rough. ~~55~~ 00

Ferraro: Was that in the policy of the operators back then to to get rough when times were bad or would did they try to use their strength?

Warden: Well, they just had the policy that they didn't want anybody telling them they've got to belong to a union. That was the main thing.

Ferraro: What lengths were they prepared to go to to keep the union out? ⁵⁵³⁰

Warden: Well, I don't know as I say they had the saying around here for years that if a union organizer got off a train he'd be put right back on....said don't get off here - it's not safe.

Ferraro: Pretty good. Is Mike out there? ⁵⁵⁵⁷