

ES2 – Edna Smith, "Criticism of GE Union"

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"Bridgeport UE Workers at GE"**

Transcript: pp. 25-27

ES: I got out of the union. I was in the union--. Because my husband was a staunch union man and the first strike we had and out there in the snow in February. Plowing around. Walking around in that snow. And he said, "You have to go, you have to support the union, you have to support the union." I went along with him and everything was going, you know. There was no money, or nothing. Because whenever this union used to go out there was always a big retroactive, you. And he was telling me, "Oh, you're going to get all that back money." We didn't get nothing. We used to get profit sharing.

ES: Yes, and if they had kept that up, but the union pulled us out on a strike and everything and the union was asking for, I think, ten dollars and eleven cents and the company was only willing to give us nine so we was out over ten weeks. Then they said, after all this hullabaloo, they decided, the company said, "We'll give you whatever you would like." I can't remember now what it was but they said, "We will give it to you but we'll take the profit sharing." And the stupid union said, "Okay." They gave us two cents more and took away the profit sharing. Well, I couldn't see that. We lost. They claimed we gained. We didn't gain nothing. How did you gain when somebody's taking something away from you?

It was in the forties. It had to be. Was it after the war?... I don't know when it was I know they kind of got me. I stayed in the union then and then I guess, maybe five or six years later they were talking strike again and Carey was the president of the union and he kept strutting into GE and threatening the GE. And he says, "I owe them a strike. I'm going to pull my people out, because I owe the GE a strike." And they was all getting set for the strike and they voted him a raise. I think a ten thousand-dollar raise. Now he made the motion and he had one of his buddies stand up in the meeting and second the motion. And it went through and he got his ten thousand-dollar raise and the next Monday he's going to pull us out onto the street. And I said to him, "Never get a ten thousand dollar raise and have me out here walking on the sidewalk again like I did the last time." I got out of the union. That was it for me. So, no I wasn't going to go ahead with it no more. But I do think they do need the unions and stuff but not like that.

I: Now what did you do during that first strike? Was it hard to make ends meet?

ES: Well, my husband was working. And he kept on telling me, "Oh, you're going to get a retroactive and we can catch up on all the bills and everything." It was a good thing I could stretch a dollar because we didn't get anything. He said, "You all had a lousy union."