

THIS is Larry Sprunk and the following is an interview that I had with Matt Dahl, Ex-commissioner of Labor and Agriculture and ~~ex-~~ member of the North Dakota House of Representatives. This interview was held at Mr. Dahl's home in Bismarck, Wednesday, the 20th of March at about 9:45 in the morning. Mr. Dahl served in the House of Representatives for the ~~State~~ of North Dakota from 1931 to 1937. He spent 13 two-year terms as Commissioner of Labor and Agriculture and retired in 1965 after 26 years in office as Labor and Agriculture Commissioner and 6 years in office as a member of the House of Representatives.

LARRY: Why did you come to North Dakota, Matt?

MATT: Well, that's not too long a story. You see, I came from Norway. There was a friend from our locality who went to America and through him he landed in Illinois. ~~He had~~ I presume he had some friends in Illinois. I was really too young to inquire why and wherefore, ~~and so on and so forth.~~ I had an older brother, ~~see,~~ and we all three were pretty good chums. ~~Then~~ So he started out, this young fella, and he come to Illinois. ~~Then~~ After he had been there about six months, he wrote to my brother and told him about what things were. Course, he wasn't making as much money like what we get into now, ~~you understand,~~ but he was making good considering what ~~it~~ there was over there, you know, at the time. So ^{then} he wanted to get to America, too. We had money enough so I let him have enough to buy the ticket. That was my older brother. Then when he went over ^{here,} ~~to~~ he would make ~~money~~ money enough and then he would send me ^{my} part of the money and include it all in one ticket if I wanted to come. So he did! That was approximately ~~1~~ a year after he ~~it~~ left and this all happened in 1900 and 1901. In 1901 is when he left and in 1902 I had a ticket to ^{Ottawa,} ~~St. Louis,~~ Illinois, and that's where I landed. There I worked on the farm for nine months, ~~and~~ Coming from that country and over here and especially to Illinois ^(dash) was different because ^(dash) all they raised ~~in~~ in Illinois was corn and oats. That was their main crops, you see? I

was goin' on ~~eighteen~~ ¹⁸ years old and never seen an ear o' corn before
 in my life! Of course, when corn huskin' time come^{in the fall} ~~which is about~~ in
 November, ~~when they start huskin' corn~~ it was all handwork ~~and~~ huskin'
 by hand, you know? ~~We~~ ^{have} used to ~~have~~ to get out early in the morning
 before sunrise and get ready to start as soon as it was light. ~~There~~ ^{And then this}
 would be frost on the ~~ground~~ corn and the ground was just barely ~~something~~
~~like this morning~~ ~~just barely~~ froze a little. When the sun comes out
 and it got warm everything thawed out. The water was dripping off the
 corn leaves and the cobs was wet. They have sticky country down there
 and it isn't like North Dakota, you know? Their soil is pretty heavy.
 So we had to work all day until ~~it~~ kind o' dried up then. This
 corn huskin' business is what got me down! So, I decided ^{that} there must be
 other places to work besides this corn country and so I vowed to myself ^{that}
 if I could find something different I ^{then} would do it. So I went out to
 Minnesota. I went nine months at Illinois at ~~Ottawa~~ ^{Ottawa} there. Course, I had
 to spend about--I don't remember--it was something like most of two and
 one-half months. They had a school down there, so I went down more to
 learn the language than anything else. Course, ~~you know~~, we didn't know
 anything as far as English was concerned. So I spent approximately
~~two~~ two and one-half months out o' that time in the school down there.
 Then I come to ~~northern~~ Minnesota--well, it's about--^{Paynesville} ~~Paynesville~~ was the
 town. It's about ⁵⁰⁻⁶⁰ ~~thirty~~ sixty miles west of St. Cloud. My brother
 came out and then we stayed there until about ¹⁹⁰³ ~~the~~ ⁱⁿ the fall
 of 1903. Then him, my brother, and another young fella there had read
 or heard about them opening up ~~several~~ ~~of these~~ western North Dakota
 for homesteads. They then decided that they would go out--Braddock was
 the end of the ^[So] ~~line~~ ^{the} at ~~that~~ time. They took the train ^{and went to} to Braddock and
 in Braddock they got in contact with land agents and people who ^{was}
 interested in gettin' settlers in. So, they went out to the country there
 and scouted around to see if they could find some homestead land that
 they would like. Much of it was already taken up, but then they finally

3
decided to file on some land there. So they ~~filed~~ filed each on a quarter section o' land. ~~I do not remember now whether~~ Oh, ya, they didn't come out--they filed in 1903, but they had six months grace, you see, ~~from~~ from the time you filed until you had to make improvements on the homestead. So, ~~in the spring of~~ March of 1904, ~~the~~ the two of them together, plus me, got an immigrant car and loaded up some lumber. Course, I was ^{just} sort o' a third wheel in the whole thing! I was just following around for awhile! So I went with them ~~to~~ to Braddock when they shipped this immigrant car out. They got started with building some shacks ~~on the~~ you know something to show improvement. You have to show ~~improvements~~ improvements on it and then you have to spend so much time under the Homestead Act. And then I stuck around there more for leisure than ^{I did} anything else. Oh, there was some work to do! I finally got a job with a rancher there and I worked for him ~~for~~ for part of the time. I worked for different people at different times because I was the youngest, you ^{understand,} see, and I couldn't file. So, I had to spend my time at something. While I was doing ~~this~~ ^{they} they sold several quarters of land that I would o' liked to have filed on because ~~they were, you know,~~ they were better than some quarters were. ~~Consequently~~ Consequently, by the time I got to be ²¹ ~~twenty-one~~ years old most of it was the remnants that was ~~left off of it.~~ ~~So~~ So I thought, brother, rather than ~~sit~~ ^{and work around} around here I might as well file on ^{a quarter,} ~~the~~ So I came up here in 1905 in the middle o' ^{the} winter. Of course, ~~my~~ my birthday happened to be in January, you see?

LARRY: Ya.

R

MATT: ~~And then~~ While I was up here filing on that homestead I took in the legislature in 1905 because they were in session. That ~~was~~ was the first time I was ever in the old capitol up here! Course, the Land Office was up there so I had a chance to view ^{my} ~~the~~ first legislature in ~~1905~~ North Dakota in 1905. So there after the filing was done and I went back, ~~and~~ ^{and} ~~the,~~ of course, I had to follow the same system they did. I had to erect a shack ^{on the place} so as to show that the intention was good. And from there

on I worked most of the time on ^{the} farms and on ranches. There was one rancher down there ~~where~~ where I put in about three years, ~~that~~ in the summertime ^{with} with him and then, of course, I had to spend some time on the claim in the winter ~~in~~ in order to hold it.

LARRY: Sure.

MATT: So it wasn't the best quarter o' land by any ^{stretch} ~~struts~~ of imagination, but it was practically all that was left in that neighborhood where these other ~~two~~ two boys and my brother ^{and this other gentleman} was so ~~it~~ it was good enough. I thought five years it was not ^{so} ~~too~~ long. You could prove 'em up in three years, you see, if you wanna pay or you can prove 'em in five years and then it's only the three that you have to pay for the proving up. That was the beginning ~~of~~ o' the story! ~~That's~~ That's how I come to North Dakota and I have been here ever since!

LARRY: What's your brother's name? ~~What was your brother's name, Matt?~~

MATT: His name was Otto!

LARRY: Did he stay in Emmons County?

MATT: No, no, he went back to Norway in 1910 and never come back!

~~LARRY: Oh, is that right?~~

~~MATT: Ya.~~

LARRY: North Dakota just didn't have what Norway did, ~~didn't it?~~

MATT: Ya, he got more or less dissatisfied and we had some bad winters ~~too~~ too--very bad winters! That one winter there was several people shipped out from Iowa, ~~you know?~~ They came from a lot o' the parts of Iowa and Missouri ⁱ. Very few came out from Illinois, but there were several ~~people from Illinois came out~~ Iowa people, especially from around Council Bluffs, that come out and filed on homesteads. Well, ~~there~~ one family there ~~they~~ had a number of horses and, I think, there was two brothers out and they went into the horse business. That one winter--I don't remember the winter exactly now--I think ~~it~~ it was in about '08 or '09--that they lost ⁶⁰ ~~sixty~~ head o' horses.

~~LARRY: Oh?~~



~~MATT:~~ ~~Yes/And,~~ ~~you know,~~ the snow got so deep and it got so hard that it was impossible for them to ^{dig} get around, ~~you see~~ and then the cold weather was. They were runnin' on the prairie, you understand? ↗

~~LARRY:~~ Sure, sure!

~~MATT:~~ So it must o' been in about in 1908 or that winter going into '09. I don't recollect now, but, anyway, he got discouraged about the weather conditions. He didn't go back with the intention of staying, but he wanted to take the trip back there. But the fact is ~~he was single~~ ~~of course~~ while he was there--he was single o' course--he stayed there about a year and then he got married. And then the upshot of it was that ~~his~~ wife that he married didn't want to come over here. She didn't want to leave her family. So then he sold the land and sold his homestead and stayed there. And that was the beginning of how I come to get out here.

LARRY: What happened to ~~that~~ other fella, Matt?

MATT: Oh, he proved up. His name was John Bang and he proved up and got married and had a small family. I guess they had three children. In 1913, he sold the quarter ~~that~~ he had there. He had a homestead ~~there~~ and that's all he had. He thought he could do better in Wisconsin. He had been down there and looked around and he bought a farm down there ~~with~~ ^{wit'} buildings, ~~you know?~~ They ~~was~~ ^{were} small farms in Wisconsin! ↗

~~LARRY:~~ Sure.

~~MATT:~~ He went to Wisconsin and there he was for about, ~~I think,~~ ~~it was~~ ~~about~~ three, four years. It was probably ~~about~~ a little longer; maybe it was five or six years that he was there. And then something ^{either} happened--I really don't know why--~~and then~~ ^{but} he come back and moved to Minnesota. ~~He~~ ~~don't~~ ~~remember~~ the town now. ~~It was northern Minnesota.~~ I don't remember the town now, but it was northern Minnesota. I found out about ~~it~~ ^{that} in later years. ~~So along about in 1940 I met him in Detroit Lakes! They~~ ~~had~~ ~~So~~ ~~along~~ ~~about~~ ~~I~~ ~~found~~ ~~out~~ ~~that~~ ~~he~~ ~~was~~ I met him in Detroit Lakes; that was it! They have an organization they called byggdelaget †

where all the people from ~~the~~ northern Norway were from and this ^{organization} ~~one~~ had a meeting in Detroit Lakes. I went to Detroit Lakes to this meeting they had. It was a sort of a convention. All of the northern part of Norway, anyhow, belonged to it and if you didn't belong to it, you could come anyway. So I went down to that organization. That was in 1913 and here I met him! Then the first time after he left out there and then he told me about his moving back to Minnesota and he was there. So I got in contact with him and I was in contact with him for quite a number ~~of~~ years thereafter. Finally, I--I don't remember the year when he passed away--but, anyway, he ^{is} ~~has~~ passed away. My brother, of course, ~~he~~ went back to Norway. He passed away in 1928!

LARRY: Oh?

MATT: So he has been ~~going for~~ gone for a long time.

LARRY: Matt, I have never been to Norway or to any of the Scandinavian countries, but ~~from~~ from what I understand ~~from pictures and reading books~~ ~~about it~~ there's a lot of trees and a lot of timber mountains, and so ~~forth?~~

MATT: ~~Yes,~~ There is more mountains ~~than~~ than there is anything else. Of course, there is ~~more timber~~ an awful lot of timber! But, you see, Norway has only about between ~~five~~ five and six percent of productive land, ~~that is, that I would say is farmland.~~

LARRY: Yes, right.

MATT: ~~It's between five and six percent.~~

LARRY: Was it hard for you and your brother and Mr. Bang to adjust ~~to~~ to North Dakota?

MATT: Well, I would say it wasn't too hard. We came from the ~~the~~ northern part of Norway, see? My home was practically right on the ^{Arctic} ~~Arctic~~ Circle.

LARRY: Oh, is that right?

MATT: Oh, ya! Well, it would never get as cold there! We were close to the ocean, you understand? And the Gulf Stream, ~~you know,~~ runs along ^{then it} through the North Atlantic and ^{North} enters into the ~~the~~ Sea. And if it wasn't

for the Gulf Stream, why, nobody could live up in that area in the winter. You couldn't ~~even~~ live in England, you know?

~~LARRY: Ya.~~

~~MATT:~~ The Gulf Stream runs ~~through~~ through the North Sea and ~~that's~~ that's what keeps them warm enough so the climate ^{doesn't get unbearable.} It's unbearable in some way, but the temperature ^{don't} ~~doesn't~~ get as cold as it does here.

~~LARRY: Oh?~~

~~MATT:~~ It's cold, but it never gets as near as cold as it does up here in North Dakota or in many parts of the United States. North Dakota isn't the only cold state!

~~LARRY: No!~~

~~MATT:~~ Minnesota is just as cold as North Dakota; Michigan is too! Montana and South Dakota! We are all about in the same ~~latitude~~ ^{meridian,} which you know; but, of course, we get more publicity out of North Dakota ~~that~~ is unfavorable than they do in all of 'dem states!

~~LARRY: Sure.~~

~~MATT:~~ Michigan gets more snow than we do and you know that as well as I do!

~~LARRY: Ya, ya.~~

~~MATT:~~ And Montana does too; but, whenever we have a blow here, why of course, they're widely advertised and I 'spose that's news!

LARRY: What did the Dahl family do in Norway?

MATT: My father was a "cooper", if you know what that is? A "cooper" is a man who made barrels, ~~see?~~

~~LARRY: Oh!~~

~~MATT:~~ They were all made ~~of wood~~ out of wood at that time and were for many years here, too, ~~you know.~~ Only here they had factories. They started it by hand and then they finally got machines and factories. What I remember ^{offo'} ~~of~~ it, of course, ~~was that~~ ^{is} he was making these by hand, ~~see? Oak barrels.~~ He made oak barrels and all kinds of barrels! Cheap ones and expensive ones! He had tools and it was all handwork with ~~him.~~

That was his occupation, ~~and~~, and then he was in the store business, too! He had a store, but after my mother died--my mother died when I was three, three and one-half years old--from that time on he stuck strickly to the "cooper" work, makin' barrels ^{all the time}. They used barrels there, ~~you see~~, for everything. Well, they used 'em here, too, as far as that is concerned. But there we ^{were} ~~was~~ right on the coast where was a lot o' fishing, ~~you understand~~, and a lot o' herring and all kinds o' fish. There was no such o' thing as refrigeration at the time, so they were all salted ^{you understand} and taken care of ^{that way}. Then I had a brother that is about a year and one ~~half~~ ^{wrote} older than I am and he is over there. I just ~~wrote~~ him a letter; I got it in the mail here now! →

~~LARRY: Oh, is that right?~~

~~MATT: He went into business and he has been in there--you may call it the General Mercantile Business. The biggest business they do there is in the fishing season, you understand. Then they sell the fish in the raw and he then processes it. They trade forth and back with fish there like we do ^{with} grain here. Sort of ~~speaks~~ ^{so to} speak!~~ →

~~LARRY: Sure.~~

~~MATT: That's about as plain as I can explain it! He has been in that business ever since he ^{was about} ~~has been~~ ²⁰ twenty years old, I guess, or ²¹ ~~twenty~~ ~~one~~.~~ →


~~LARRY: Oh?~~

~~MATT: And he has a good business over there. I was over there twice, you know? So he has done fairly well. Their ~~facte~~ system of operation at that time when I left there was all sailboats and rowboats ^{for} and fishing and operation in ^{the} small way. ~~You understand~~ ^{Now, it is} ~~It was~~ all ^{motorboats} ~~fishing boats~~ and ~~bigger~~ bigger boats and better equipment. It's on the parallel with the farming what it was ⁴⁰ ~~forty~~ years ago ^{here now} and what it is today here, you see? →~~

~~LARRY: Sure.~~

~~MATT: It's the same thing over there ^{with their operation} in whatever occupation you are in!~~

LARRY: Yes.


MATT: Our times was terrifically hard at the time that we left over there and for some afterwards. But now in the later years here, I would say, ~~twenty or thirty~~ ^{20 or 30} years ~~back~~ back they have come to the front there as much as we have, only their population are smaller and ~~and~~ ~~because~~ ~~the~~ their farms are small, what there is of it, but there is quite o' bit of farming ~~is~~ going on over there. They are not self-supporting in any way, you know? 

~~LARRY: Yes.~~

MATT: (They have to import a lot of food over there, too, plus what they do grow, but there's a big fishing industry all ^{over} along the West Coast of Norway. And cities have growed up there ~~as~~ ~~the~~ ~~same~~ ~~as~~ the same as they are here. The bigger places has got bigger and some o' the smaller places has got smaller.

~~LARRY: Matt, what did you do after~~

LARRY: Matt, can you kind of fill me in on what you did after you got the quarter section that you homesteaded?

MATT: ~~Yes, well,~~ ~~after that~~ ~~it~~ it took some time before I could buy ~~some~~ ~~more~~ ~~land.~~ ~~then.~~ ^{So I operated the farm down there} I got married in 1911 Well, of course, I got married in 1911 and then my wife and I settled. We still had that quarter section of land. I had horses and a few cows. As time ~~it~~ went on, ~~why of course,~~ I tried to get o' hold o' more land so I bought another quarter o' land and then I rented ~~some~~ ~~more~~ ~~land~~ plus that. During that period it was tough time, you know? Back in 1910 there was complete dry-out here, you know? ^{A lot o' people don't} ~~People doesn't~~ know that; but that was even ^{worse} ~~worse~~ than the ~~the~~ '30s, but it only lasted one year. 

~~LARRY: Oh?~~

MATT: ^{120's} And then we come into the ~~twenties~~ and then the prices went! Talk about a depression! ^{We} You had a depression in the '20s, you know? A lot o' banks went broke ^{and} ~~and~~ ~~a~~ ~~lot~~ ~~of~~ ~~the~~ ~~follae,~~ you know, even the wind and I knew a young fella who even had the windows broken. ^{The} ~~the~~ stockmarket and everything, ~~so~~ so it was pretty tough going. Cattle prices was way

down. We had a few head o' cattle. We went into cattle and, of course, we tried to do both. Sort of a diversified farming. Then in order to really come true you had to do something besides just sit on that homestead! You couldn't sit there because there wasn't enough income.

LARRY: Excuse me, Matt, where was your original quarter section o' land?

MATT: It was northwest of Hazelton 10 miles!

~~LARRY: O.K.~~

~~MATT: It's still there!~~

~~LARRY: Oh?~~

~~MATT: And I still own it!~~

~~LARRY: Oh? 10 miles northwest of Hazelton, huh?~~

~~MATT: 10 miles northwest of Hazelton, ya.~~

~~LARRY: O.K.~~

~~MATT: It's 12 miles southwest o' Moffit and 10 miles northwest of Hazelton!~~

~~LARRY: O.K., ya.~~

MATT: I worked for my wife's uncle before I ever knew my wife, ~~and~~ but that's where I got acquainted with her. I worked for him running his steam engines in the spring and in the fall.

~~LARRY: Oh?~~

~~MATT: And I got fairly good pay; but, o' course, I put in long hours!~~

~~LARRY: Sure.~~

~~MATT: Them days, you know, it was as long as you could see from the time you could see in the morning until it got so dark you couldn't see anymore at night!~~

LARRY: Sure.

MATT: I'll show you a picture of the one o' them that I operated four years! And that's when they first started wit' the brake and wit' steam power. That's one o' the first ones and this picture was taken in 1907!

LARRY: ~~Oh? Say, Matt, as long as I've got this picture here I want to ask you a question. The reason I want to ask you this is because Jim Sperry, the fella that runs and is in charge of the Museum up there, has some films of farmers plowing with one of these big steam tractors and he would like me to ask people while I'm talking to them~~ ^{let me} ~~to ask you a question. The reason ^{that} I want to ask you this is because~~

90 - What ~~is~~ ^{it} was like to plow with one of those steam tractors?

MATT: Well, I run this engine ~~for him~~ in 1907, '08, '09, '10, and '11. Those four years and we broke 1,100 acres of sod each year ~~with~~ ^{wit'} it.

LARRY: With this Reeves?

MATT: With ~~the~~ the Reeves Engine, ya. So it was 4,400 acres and that's about what we broke with that engine.

LARRY: Did you ever have any trouble with it?

MATT: Oh, no, ~~nothing~~ ^{not'ing} serious trouble wit' it, only bearings o' course. ~~Well, there, you see, At~~ that time they had no such o' thing as Timpkin Bearings or anything. It was all batted bearings, ~~you understand,~~ in all the machinery and they had to put ~~batted~~ bearings in this. ~~You see,~~

This was a double cylinder Reeves. It was called a cross-compound and a cross-compound means that the steam all explodes or goes into one cylinder. Then it exhausts it into another cylinder, which is a lot larger, and the simple. The one cylinder is called the simple cylinder. Then when you get the big cylinder, ~~then~~ it goes into ~~this~~ ^{this} bigger one because the steam goes through ~~one~~ ^{two} explosion in there. It's gotta have more room ~~in~~ in the next one. In other words, we used the same steam for ~~the~~ power twice, you see, so this one was called a ~~cross~~ cross-compound. That it was no serious trouble; but, o' course bearings would wear down ~~so~~ ^{so} you usually had to take and shim them up, you see, so that they would ^{be} tight to take all the noise out, ~~but,~~ ^{but, otherwise,} otherwise it was like any other piece o' machinery. ~~There would be~~ ^{you'd} It would wear on it and ~~you~~ ^{you'd} have to keep it in shape, see?

LARRY: How many bottoms did you have? ~~You have nine here!~~

MATT: We had nine on here, ya, but they were triple gangs because you couldn't get any bigger plows at that time and three bottoms in one so

we had ^{three} three bottom gangs here. And then the year after that the John Deere people came out ^{wit'} with a plow which had a platform. The plows was ~~hooked~~ hooked to this plateau. Each gang was hooked to this platform in rotation so that they were all in one then. This was the first ^{and} of the last ^{of the} three bottoms which was used ^{Singly.} ~~singly~~, you see?

~~LARRY: Yes.~~

~~MATT:~~ And then when he got that he got a ¹⁰⁻ ten bottom because he could put four gangs on there, ~~you see?~~ So then we pulled ¹⁰ ten bottoms with that and it was much handier because ~~one~~ one man could follow that platform and take each one out o' the ground as we was comin' to the end and turned around.

LARRY: You didn't have to stop at the end then?

MATT: Oh, no, you slowed down ~~and go slow~~ so as to give the man time so he could raise 'em all up so ~~so~~ it would be even on the end. ~~ya, ya.~~

LARRY: Matt, it looks to me like that would be a hard tractor to turn around?

MATT: Well, o' course, they were ~~hard~~ to turn around. ~~there.~~ They was only chained; you had to turn the wheel, ~~you see,~~ but it wasn't too bad if you kept it greased and you could do it ^{wit'} ~~with~~ one ~~hand,~~ ~~you know?~~

LARRY: Oh, you could?

MATT: ~~Oh,~~ Oh, yes, you could do that very easily. ~~oh, yes~~ I usually put in quite a few hours. Well, ~~we~~ we usually started about ^{5:00 to 6:00} ~~five to six~~ o'clock in the morning, you see, and then we run steady all day until about ^{12:00} ~~twelve~~ and ^{1:00} ~~one~~ at night. You ^{could} ~~can~~ see the headlight on this one here; it should show up. And here's a carbide light that we had on here. ~~There it is!~~ It stood right in front o' the smokestack, ~~see here up here?~~

~~LARRY: Oh, ya, ya!~~

~~MATT:~~ We had a carbide light on there and that would give us enough light to read a newspaper 500 feet ahead of it. It was a big one, you

see?

~~LARRY: Oh?~~

~~MATT:~~ There was a big reflector on it. ~~You could read a newspaper 500 feet ahead of it, and that took quite a big of a light!~~ We had to use them at nights, you see, 'cause when you run 'til ^{12:00, 1:00} ~~twelve, one o'clock~~ at night you have to have lights. We didn't need ^{no} ~~any~~ light in the back here because ~~everytime~~ every time you opened the door in the ~~the~~ firebox, why, ~~of course,~~ you could see all over in the platform there.

LARRY: Sure. Would you run the tractor yourself, Matt, from five in

~~MATT:~~ the morning 'til morning hours?

~~MATT:~~ Ya, ya.

~~LARRY:~~ Boy, you didn't get much sleep, did ya?

~~MATT:~~ I didn't.

~~LARRY:~~ No.

MATT: I didn't. I put in long hours; they don't need to tell me ~~about~~ anything about long hours 'cause I've done it!

~~LARRY:~~ Ya.

~~MATT:~~ Finally, one year he hired ^{another} ~~another~~ man to run the engine. There was three o' us at a shift, ~~you know?~~ One to haul water and one to steer the engine and then me. O' course you had to fire; it took a lot o' coal. We had to shovel a lot o' coal, ~~you know?~~

~~LARRY:~~ I was going to ask you how often would you have to fire it?

~~MATT:~~ Oh, ya, ~~about / / / / /~~ We usually burned up about anywheres from three, ~~two~~ and five ton a day, depending on the day.

~~LARRY:~~ Oh?

~~MATT:~~ ~~Oh,~~ You had to shovel and you can shovel only so much, ~~at a~~ ~~time~~ at a time so there's a lot o' coal ~~shovelling~~ shovelling to be done there, ~~at~~

LARRY: Would you shovel coal ~~in the~~ every round? ~~or when would you have to shovel?~~

MATT: ~~Oh, oh,~~ You might have to do it a couple o' times ~~between~~ between the

rounds too, you know?

LARRY: Oh, is that right?

~~MATT: Oh, yes, ya, o-o-h, yes!~~

LARRY: Did you have coal box?

MATT: ~~This is a coal bunker here!~~ ^{The} This thing up here, you see?

~~LARRY: Oh?~~

~~MATT: That~~ ^{had} held a half a ton or a little better than a half a ton and this is a water tank down ^{below} ~~here for the boiler for water for the boiler.~~ Then there's two auxiliary tanks one on each side--one on this side and one on the other side. ~~But~~ But, o' course, we'd have to stop too often for water if we only depended on ^{The one} ~~this tank here you see?~~

~~LARRY: Yes.~~

~~MATT: And we used up as many as nine tanks o' water a day and they held--I can't remember now. Here is the wagon tank right ~~there!~~ The wagon tank is right here.~~

~~LARRY: Right!~~

~~MATT: I just don't remember how many gallons o' water there was supposed to be in ^{them} tanks, but we sometimes used up eight tanks like this here a day in ^{them} kind o' days.~~

LARRY: ~~So~~ So you would have one person on the plows?

MATT: That's right! The fella that steered the engine would do that! He'd get down when we got close and then I took over ^{to} ~~and~~ run the wheel then. O' course, that was about all there was to it and then it didn't take him long to ~~jerk~~ ^{jerk} 'em back in the ground and then turn around and as he was turning around, why, just give her a little more steam, ~~you~~ ~~and~~ and then he would put 'em back in the ground and then come back up there.

LARRY: And when both of you were on the machine you'd be steering and he'd be stoking or how would it be?

MATT: That's right. He done the steering most o' the time. ~~ya, yes,~~ ~~all the time.~~

LARRY: Well, did you have a lot o' trouble with rocks in Emmons County?

~~MATT?~~MATT: ~~With what?~~~~LARRY: Rocks, you know, when you were plowing seed under would you hit a lot o' rocks?~~

MATT: ~~Oh, you mean rocks!~~ Oh, ya, ~~oh, yes,~~ many times! There was quite a lot o' rocky ground, but we was pretty lucky where we was ^{breakin'} ~~breaking~~ wit' this big outfit. There usually was ground that didn't have too many rocks in it and if there was, why, the plow ~~o' course,~~ would strike a rock and if it wasn't too big it would knock it right out o' the ground. And if it was too big, why, the plow would spring over it, ~~you see!~~ They were fixed so that if the pressure was too much, ~~why,~~ the lower bolt would break in the plow and then it wouldn't hurt the plow, but in many cases it would knock the point off o' the lay. We had to, o' course, have extra lays and then ^{to} take it to the blacksmith. We had to have a blacksmith, too, ~~you know,~~ to weld and ~~sharpen~~ sharpen the lays.

LARRY: ~~See.~~ Was it hard ~~Mac,~~ to keep these plows in the ground?

MATT: ~~No, no,~~ Oh, no! They was wonderful! They operated just like a horse plow, only really better. They stayed in the ground really better than a horse plow because they sprung back ~~up~~ again. They were heavier made ^{on account of being built for this kind o' work.} ~~you see,~~ and built for this kind o' work.

LARRY: Did you ever ~~have a set up, Matt, where you could plow and pack and seed and drag?~~ ~~all at the same time?~~

MATT: Ya, yes, we did after he got this new plow there ~~that~~ that had that platform where the ¹⁰ ~~ten~~ plows ^{was} ~~were~~ hitched. ~~Then~~ Then we broke for some people. You see ^{this} ~~there~~ breaking was done for different kinds o' people; it wasn't all for one individual. We probably ~~broke~~ broke 100 acres here and 200 over there and 50 acres here and so on and so forth. Then in 1908 after he got ^{that} ~~the~~ plow, he broke some for himself; but not very much. Then, we put two eight-foot single discs ^{of} ~~you know what they are?~~ Well, we put ~~two~~ two o' them behind the plow, ~~see?~~ We hitched them in

there so that they would cover the whole thing, ~~see~~ at one time. So there would be about ~~sixteen~~ ¹⁶ ~~feet~~ well, it wouldn't be ~~sixteen~~ ¹⁶ feet because you had to hook the discs so that they would cut the whole thing.

And then a ~~eleven~~ ¹¹⁻ foot drill would cover exactly the same thing! ~~We had~~ ^{So we had} two eight-foot discs behind the ~~10~~ ¹⁰ plows and then ~~a~~ ^{an} ~~eleven~~ ¹¹⁻ foot drill and then we disced and ~~the~~ ^{the} seeded the flax at the same time. This was all flax. ~~is~~

LARRY: ~~Did the whole thing in one operation?~~

MATT: ~~That's right.~~

LARRY: How many guys would you have to have with the outfit? ~~then?~~

MATT: ~~was~~, We had no more.

LARRY: ~~is~~ Is that right?

MATT: ~~Ya, no, same difference, /ya.~~

LARRY: ~~Would you have to stop more often?~~

MATT: No, about ~~the~~ the same time because we had to take water so often, ~~you see, /ya / We didn't have water enough? We / because we didn't have~~

~~water enough.~~ And, o' course, with that ~~small~~ ^{small} box on the drill full o' flax we seeded a half a bushel, ~~or less, you see,~~ or less than a half a bushel to the acre. So we didn't have to stop too many times ^{only} when we stopped for water. And while we was takin' the ~~water,~~ ^{and} ~~then,~~ you siphoned ~~it~~ it in, you see, the water wit' the steam ^{and} by that time a fella would have the drill full o' flax again so it didn't take too much more time. There was times that we did have to stop for seed when we didn't have to stop for water, but it wasn't very often.

LARRY: You wouldn't have to do much steering with this if you had a good, straight, dead furrow?

MATT: Well, it wasn't too hard, no. You used to have to keep that wheel right in the furrow, ~~you know?~~ That was about all there was to it.

Course, those chains that was on the axle, ~~you see, they~~ had some slack in 'em and, o' course, if the wheel caught something it would turn itself.

LARRY: ~~I see.~~

MATT: ~~Oh, ya,~~ You had to have a man hangin' on to it prett'i'ner all the time.

LARRY: Did you think ~~it~~ ^{it} revolutionized farming ~~Matt,~~ when the steam tractors came? ~~There was a lot more land~~ ^{put} ~~under cultivation then, wasn't there?~~

MATT: Oh, ya, oh, ya, ~~There was many o' them going~~ not too many o' them ~~but,~~ they were bigger. The smaller engines, ^{of course,} didn't pay, ~~you see?~~ Many of them had what we called a ~~twenty~~ ²⁰ and ~~twenty five~~ ²⁵ horse and most of 'em was under ~~twenty~~ ²⁰ horse. They were mostly ~~eighteen~~ ¹⁸ and ~~twenty~~ ²⁰ horse steam engines and they wouldn't pay to plow wit' that because by the time you figured the time and the coal and the expenses, ~~was,~~ you could do it just as cheap wit' horses.

LARRY: ~~Oh?~~

MATT: ~~The only way it would pay out would be if you had a big one. Like~~ ~~this.~~ There was some o' 'em, o' course, that plowed wit' smaller ones, but there wasn't too many of ~~em.~~ ^{them} Most o' the land, ~~no~~ ^{of} course, had been broken ~~by~~ ^{by} horses.

LARRY: How much did you get a day, Matt, when you were running that tractor?

MATT: I got four dollars a day! Course, that was a lot o' money ⁱⁿ ~~them~~ days. ~~you know?~~

LARRY: About ~~eighteen~~ ¹⁸ hours o' work though, wasn't it?

MATT: Ya, ya, ~~seventeen~~ ¹⁷ and ~~eighteen~~ ¹⁸ ~~hours.~~ ~~ya.~~

LARRY: And you ran that tractor ~~that~~ from 1907?

MATT: Yes, from 1907 to 1911, ~~■~~

LARRY: Yes, and during this time ~~you were able to get~~ ^{some} ~~more land?~~ Did you buy more land?

MATT: Oh, yes, I bought another quarter o' land ~~and~~ and then I had another quarter o' land. Oh, ~~no~~ ^{rather} no, I had more than a quarter o' land yet! I didn't buy that ^{rather} quarter yet; I rented! I rented this quarter from the

Wenton Land Company. It was a nice quarter o' land. I rented it and farmed it. You see, we didn't start on this ~~right~~ until about the last of April so that gave me a chance to put in the crop. What made it the ~~worst was that I didn't get married~~ worst was--o'course, see, I didn't get married 'til in ~~1911~~ 1911, you see? So about that time ^{then} I had to begin to quit this business. I run the engine for him ~~then~~ then in 1912 in the threshing season. Course, that was after everything was done and they started threshing and that was the last ~~time~~ time. I had to quit it because I had to be away from home too much. ~~and~~ She was alone and that didn't work out so good.

LARRY: ~~Sure.~~ 

MATT: (I was pretty tired of it anyway. Course, if it was for only 30 days or so it didn't make any difference. I could put in a few days, you know, and I kind o' enjoyed it anyway. ~~You might say because you might say I grew up wit' it.~~

LARRY: Was that a loud machine, Matt?

MATT: Well, not very loud! O' course, the exhaust sounded ^just about like a train locomotive. They had about the same sound only not quite as loud as that was. ^But sometimes it got pretty loud. And, o' course, there was rattling o' the gears because this ~~was~~ ^{was} all ~~geared~~ ^{geared}, you know, and they were all in the open. So it was a little noisy. The two of us would be on the platform there. It has got a pretty good-sized platform ~~on there~~ for the steering and standing ~~down there.~~ ~~The~~ ^{The} worst of it was to have to stand. There was no way of sitting down because the fella that was doing the steering was sitting down on the toolbox. There was a toolbox ~~made~~ ^{made} sort of for the seat. ~~too, you see?~~ So far as I was concerned I didn't have any ^{chance} of sitting down. You were on your feet from the time that you got there 'til you quit. And then, o' course, we had to stop to eat, ~~you know?~~ So what we did do ^{was that} ~~in the operation was the fella by hauling water, you see we~~ ^{the fellow hauling water} we timed it so that ~~he~~ left his water tank so we could just drive

along side ~~for~~ ^{off o' it.} it. And then we had a cook car that we used for the lady to ~~we~~ sleep in. And then he left the tank ~~we~~ sitting so that we could just pull along side ~~of it~~ ^{off o' it} and then ^{we} siphon ~~ed~~ the water. We couldn't hold only ^{the} half of that tank at ^{one} a time on the engine so there was a half left that we could take the next time. Then he would go in and start to get dinner ready, ~~you see,~~ and supper. So when he got ~~we~~ that ready, ^{why} well, then, o' course, ~~we~~ he let us know and then we went in ~~to~~ ^{to} eat and then if there was time for him to clean up the dishes it was alright and if there wasn't, ~~why~~ he'd go and get a tank o' water and then do that ~~in~~ between time.

LARRY: ~~Oh?~~ 

MATT: O' course, he had a ^{little} break ~~in~~ between the time that he had to get a ~~we~~ tank o' water, but the breaks wasn't very often because we used water! ~~often and~~ He usually had ~~we~~ to haul the water. Sometimes he had to haul it a couple o' miles and sometimes a half a mile, depending on where he could get it.

LARRY: So you had your own chuck wagon right out on the field, huh?

MATT: Ya, ya.

LARRY: You had to have a good cook as well as a good waterman, ~~huh?~~ ^{huh?}

MATT: Ya, I tell you ^{it} ~~he~~ wasn't a very good cook. It was cooked in a ^o bachlor way and we lived mostly on eggs and bacon and canned tomatoes and bread.


LARRY: ~~Oh?~~ 

MATT: That was the main diet!

LARRY: That was your meal? ~~huh?~~

MATT: Ya, we'd eat up a lot o' bags!

LARRY: I 'spose! Would you get a little tired o' living like that after awhile?

MATT: Well, o' course, naturally you would, ~~you know?~~ And as the summer come on and got ~~hot,~~ ^{hot,} you know, and with the steam engine there everything was hot, you know? 

LARRY: Ya.

MATT: Boiling hot! And, ~~of course~~, it got terrifically hot so that you were not only perspiring, ~~you know~~, and you had to dress about the way the weather was. In the mornings it was cold and at night it got cold chilly again, ~~you know~~, and in the daytime it was burning hot so it was all kinds o' climates.

LARRY: Ya, ya.

go — MATT: But I didn't mind it. I kind o' enjoyed the work, but sometimes it got alittle too much because, ~~you see~~, you had to clean out that boiler ^{about once a week at least} ~~at least once a week~~. When we cleaned out the boiler we usually quit about ^{10:00} ~~oh, ten o'clock~~ or ^{11:00} ~~eleven~~. Shut everything off and then you gotta have it cold before you can clean it because you can't take that hot water out o' the boiler and then put cold water back in to ~~clean~~ clean it again. You'd ruin the ^{flues} ~~flues~~ in there, ~~you see~~, so it had to be practically dead cold before you could drain it. Then, o' course, ^{if} ~~after~~ you drain it we had to pump ^{clean} ~~in~~ water in there again and then it takes about two to three hours to fire it up again to get a full head o' steam. So we did that every Sunday morning. Saturday, we usually quit and then on Sunday morning, why, we'd take a break and we would sleep a little bit longer and then we got started by noon, see?

~~LARRY~~ LARRY: So you worked a seven day week almost?

MATT: Oh, ya! If we was gonna get this work done, we had to do it because after he took in so much o' ~~that~~ that break and everybody got to get it done in time, you understand? So you either do or you dont!

stop — LARRY: ~~Ya, well, Matt,~~ Would you plow right through the summer then^r or would you have to get all ^{the} your plowing ^{done} ~~down~~ here ^{with your outfit} so that they could plant ~~that~~ yet that year?

MATT: Oh, no, oh, ~~They~~ They were planting ~~it~~ that year! Oh, ya, they all wanted to plant it that same year, ~~you see~~, but we used to break and sow flax 'til the 20th o' June.

LARRY: Oh.

MATT: It was usually about the time that we had to quit seeding flax.

After the 20th o' June it isn't what it should be. Well, some of 'em would seed ~~was~~ a little bit later, but we had to have this done so that they could get it seeded by at least by the 20th o' June. ~~Some of 'em~~
~~Some of 'em~~ We usually started about the last part of April, ~~you~~
~~se~~, breakin' and it went on ~~up~~'til about the 20th o' June.

LARRY: And then you'd go back home to your farm?

MATT: That's right! That's right.

LARRY: Well, Matt, you got married in 1911 ~~?~~ →

~~MATT: Ya.~~

~~LARRY:~~ And then after that you were able to pick up another quarter section?

MATT: Well, I had a half o' section. I bought this land in 1918. That's when I bought this land I'd been renting all the time; ~~that's when I~~ ^{Then} I bought ~~it~~. I had to because they begin to buy up the land around here. Then after that, it got into the ~~the~~ '30s ~~you know~~, and a lot o' people got discouraged. They figured that it probably never would rain again and a lot of 'em left. So by the time--I lived here long enough and there was no place to go! Where could I go to? You can't run ~~in~~ away from yourself, ~~you know~~? →

~~LARRY: No.~~

~~MATT:~~ ~~It~~ That's one thing I've always had in mind; I could never run away from myself. The land was laying all around me there and I was just as ^{hard up} ~~hungry~~ as everybody else was in the '30s because we had three, four years without a crop whatsoever, ~~you know~~ No hay or no ^{not'ing} ~~nothing~~! So these ^{they} fellas got discouraged and left the land and so I just thought, "It has rained here before! Why wouldn't it rain again?" →

~~LARRY: Sure!~~

~~MATT:~~ ~~It~~ And this country wasn't going to change! I'd seen the drought before, ~~you know~~, not in succession as severe as that was; but there was nothing else to do, so I just made up my mind that if I can raise the money, I'll buy some of the land. So I bought a couple o' farms adjoining me there. You might call it a steal, but nobody wanted it

and they wanted to get rid of it. Anything to get rid of it! And so the Federal Land Bank had a couple o' farms right adjoining mine there that a fella had ~~there~~. In fact, he was a good neighbor and he homesteaded there, too, ~~you know~~ when I knew him. We lived together all the time, but he gave it up. He said, "The heck wit' it. I'm not gonna monkey wit' this any longer." He had three quarters and so I bought it from the Federal Land Bank. I bought it on a shoestring, but I thought, "If the shoestring don't break, someday, ~~somehow~~ ^{then} I'm gonna pay for this land." I bought the three quarters and ^{then} I bought a couple o' other quarters, so I wound up there wit' about 1800 acres.

^{Matt,}
LARRY: ~~How did you initially or~~ How did you originally become ~~involved~~ involved in politics? When did you first start?

MATT: Well, that was in the ~~late~~ '30s when we had those--you might call it a recession. I don't know what they called it, but that's what they're ^{called again} ~~calling it~~ now is when you're ~~having~~ having a recession. Course, it was all over the world; it wasn't only the United States. I was interested in government. Course, I voted the day I was ²¹ ~~twenty one~~ years old! That same year I voted and I voted in this township. Course, I was ^{working} ~~voting~~ for a man--there was two townships together, ~~you see~~ ^{you see} in this ~~voting~~ ^{Know} district--and when I was workin' for him he wanted me--I didn't ^{know} too much about who I should vote for ~~but~~, he wanted me to go wit' him to the election that summer after I was ²¹ ~~twenty one~~ to vote for this neighbor running for state senator. That's why he wanted me ^{to} ~~go wit' him~~ to the election to vote, ~~for him~~ so I went wit' him, ~~and I voted~~ naturally, and I voted. I wasn't too familiar wit' who was who, but then he told me so I did.

LARRY: That would have been, ~~Matt,~~ in ~~about what~~ ~~'04 or '05~~ ~~what~~ 1904 or '05?

MATT: ~~No, that was in 1905, '06, '05?~~ See, ~~'04~~ the odd years! It must o' been ~~in~~ ⁱⁿ '04, ~~then, ya, ya~~

~~LARRY:~~ Ya.

~~MATT:~~ Or was it in '06? I don't remember now; it must o' been in '06,

~~1906? Ya, that must be right.~~

~~LARRY: Ya, 'cause you came over in 1902 and ~~the~~ you were eighteen then, ya.~~

MATT: ~~Ya,~~ In 1906 I think it was if I remember correctly. Anyway, that was called Buchanan Township and that was where I homesteaded, ~~but~~ but the voting was in the next township. **B**ut Buchanan and Burro was together. So I voted there when I was ²¹~~twenty-one~~ and I'm still voting there!

~~LARRY: Oh!~~

~~MATT: I~~ ^{I've} only missed one election in the years that I've been here and that was in 1918. I had the flu when ~~the~~ ~~election~~ election was and I couldn't go. ~~to the election on 1918~~ ^{on} account of I was sick wit' the flu.

MATT+LARRY: Well, 1918 was the flu epidemic, wasn't it?

MATT: Ya, that's what it was, ~~was the epidemic, sure,~~ ~~my~~ ^{my} and, ^{by} God, we was sick! I was sick, my wife was sick, and her mother was staying wit' us to care o' ~~both~~ both o' us. Since then I voted every time and I haven't voted any other place and I'm still voting at ~~the~~ [?] I have ever since I come to Bismarck.

go — MATT+LARRY: Matt, when did you start working with political organizations?

MATT: That was in 1916.

LARRY: That would have been back in the days of the ~~the~~ NPL?

MATT: That was in the Non-~~Partisan~~ ^{Partisan} League. ~~you~~ I became one of them in the beginning. That was in the spring of 1915 when the organizers begin to come around and I signed up. It cost you six dollars, you know, to join. "Six Dollar ^{Suckers!} ~~circles~~ they called it." **go**

~~LARRY: Ya.~~

~~MATT:~~ I have been wit' that organization—~~course,~~ you haven't got anything ~~new,~~ ^{There isn't any} but now. ^{it will} but my philosophy is ^{exactly the} same as it was then and I don't know as ^{Maybe} it ^{will} ever change because I can tell right from wrong in many cases. ^{Maybe} I can't tell it all the time, but in politics I think I can and I've been interested in politics ever since. I took an ~~an~~ active part in it in the township and the county.

LARRY; What arguments would you get from people around ~~Emmons~~ ^{Emmons} County when you came ~~you know~~ ^{about} to talk to them about politics and supporting the Non-~~Partisan~~ ^{Partisan} League? What opposition did people have to the NPL?

~~MATT~~ MATT: Well, o' course, the opposition they had was that this was a fly-by-night organization for what they could get out of you because there was that six dollars dues. That seemed to bother them more than anything else and they mistrusted the fundamentals off of it. They couldn't see ~~no~~ ^{no} reason why ~~you~~ ^{that} should ~~have~~ ^{need} to pay six dollars in order to have a right to vote. That was one of their arguments that they used. They asked, "Why do I have to ~~pay~~ ^{go and} pay six dollars in order to ~~vote~~ ^{vote}?" And then you had to explain to them that this six dollars was to maintain the organization with and if you could convince them that it would be ~~that~~ ^{that} worth six dollars to belong this, even though ~~you~~ ^{that} voted, it was worth that much if you can get the right people in office and change the system. To begin ~~with~~ ^{with}, we were just about ~~fifty-fifty~~ ⁵⁰⁻⁵⁰ ~~in~~ ^{break} Emmons County to begin with because Emmons and Kidder ~~County~~ ^{Counties} was in one legislative district.

~~LARRY: I see.~~

~~MATT:~~ And Kidder County had a better organization than we did. The Legislature, you see, was elected by the two counties. There was two representatives from Kidder and one senator from Emmons. That was the way it was to begin with. This senator, who was in, was a holdover in the 1916 election, ~~so~~ so he couldn't be replaced 'til in ~~1916~~ '17.

~~LARRY: Right, right!~~

~~MATT:~~ And then we elected two representatives. We had two representatives from Emmons and two from Kidder and ~~then~~ ^{then} there was a question who should have as a senator. Well, then, ~~we~~ we still maintained the senator in Emmons County. Mr. Ward was elected senator, Meade's father.

~~LARRY: Oh, ya, that's right!~~

~~MATT: Ya, he was elected senator, see?~~

LARRY: In 1917?

MATT: That was in 1917, ~~that's~~ that's correct. Well, it really was in 1918 because the session was in '15. ~~The~~ ^{that he was elected} ~~election~~ ⁱⁿ was in '16, and '17 he

was a holdover so we couldn't get Ward in ~~with~~ until in 1918, ~~you see,~~
 But we had two representatives who were both ~~h~~ Leaguers. Two were from
 Kidder and two from Emmons and the senator was from Emmons. That was
 Allan and he was a banker ~~in~~ Braddock.

LARRY: Was he NPL?

MATT: No, no, he wasn't; but ~~you see,~~ he was a holdover. Therefore,
 he stayed that first session. Then in 1918 then when the election come
 up that's when we got Ward and we had the four representatives. Well, ~~of~~
~~course,~~ I worked wit' all of ~~em~~ ^{dem} and I was out campaigning in the ~~the~~
 neighborhood and my home township there. Well, it was Golden Valley there,
~~you know,~~ in favor of the League. I kept that up and followed the thing
 up all the way through ~~from~~ 1910 and then, o' course, 1930 came. Then in
 1930, why, we were at the convention and I had no more intention o'
~~running~~ ^{runnin'} for the legislature than I have ~~any~~ intention o' running for
 o' North Dakota ~~governor~~ now! Then in this election they had the convention down there,
~~and~~ ^{and} they ~~nominated~~ a fella from Hague by the name o' Wellent^T Wolfe.
 He was a young fella. And then they wanted me to run and I told 'em,
 "I wouldn't!" They ~~nominated~~ ^{nominated} me anyway!

~~LARRY:~~ Oh?

MATT: O' course, I couldn't hardly see my way clear to come up here. We
 had one son and he was small and my wife and I couldn't afford to hire any
 help or at least I didn't ~~think~~ ^{think} I could, ~~and that they could get along.~~
 So they left the convention 'dat way and I told 'em that I absolutely
 couldn't take it. So then there was a couple o' fellas and they said,
 "By God, you let us know!" ~~and~~ ^TThe executive committee, you understand,
 could fill in and pick up somebody and so they say, "Think it over, Matt,
 and ^{then} leave it ~~stand~~ ^{sit}. If you are nominated, and if you withdraw completely,
 why, we'll just have to go to the executive committee." So I did. I
 said, "Alright, I'll ~~leave~~ ^{let} it go at that." I had a fella from east o'
 Hazelton, a good friend o' mine, and he was a county commissioner and
 he talked to me. He said, ~~"Don't turn 'em down," he said, "don't turn 'em~~

He said, "You oughta' take it. Don't turn 'em down, ~~don't~~ don't turn 'em down." And I had several people come and tell me, "By God Goddamn, you can't do that! You got to go now." So finally I ~~was~~ weakened and I said, "O.K." So that's the way ~~was~~ I wound up the first time and so I was here in the '31 ² session. Then the ~~capitol~~ capitol burned up, ~~you~~ ~~was~~ about a week before we come up here.

LARRY: You were in the ^{first} ~~1st~~ Session then after the ~~capitol~~ capitol burned, right?

MATT: Ya, ya.

LARRY: ~~Ya, that's right!~~ And you had your sessions where, then?

MATT: In the old auditorium. You had the Senate ^{down} in the basement in the Memorial Building, see? They ^{fixed up the} ~~took the~~ things there. It was really not too bad, but, o' course, ~~you know~~ it was a hit and miss proposition. There was no desk room. They had to take out every other row o' seats in the auditorium and ~~then~~ ^{make} then they had to get homemade desks, ~~you see~~ ready for the session ^{because} ~~because~~ there was only about ¹⁰ ~~ten~~ days to go ~~after~~ after the capitol burned up, but I ^{still} got the desk that I had!

LARRY: Oh, is that right?

MATT: I got it and I'll ~~show~~ show it to you!

LARRY: Oh, O.K., when we get done we'll look at it!

MATT: And then, consequently, ~~from~~ from there on I run then in 1934 and then again in 1936. This was all during the hard times, ~~and~~ ~~and~~ good God, the money was scarce. We got five dollars a ~~day~~ that's all it is ~~now~~ day; that was the standard pay. That's all it is now!

LARRY: Ya.

MATT: But, ~~o' course~~ they was circumventing the constitution and you couldn't seem ~~to~~ to get it raised to a normal fee ^{that} ~~what~~ it should be. There was ~~no~~ no money in it, ~~you know~~, at five dollars a day ~~because~~ because you still had to pay a couple a dollars ~~a day~~ for a hotel room down here. You had to eat and, ~~o' course~~, you could eat for about a dollar and a half ~~or two~~ or two a day, but there wasn't much left!

LARRY: Ya, and then you had to pay somebody to run your farm, I 'spose?

MATT: Well, I had to have help on the farm!

LARRY: Ya, ya.

MATT: And so that is the way I got started.

LARRY: But from 1918^{then} until you ran for office yourself in 1930 you just worked with the League and campaigned?

MATT: That's right, ya, that's right I did. I done a lot o' campaigning in the home county. ~~I never got out o' the county, o' course. -- Well, Kidder and Emmons, o' course --~~ but I never got out o' the county o' course. But I did--well, Kidder and Emmons, o' course, that was one legislative district. We would go up to Kidder County and the Kidder County boys would come down there, you see?

~~LARRY: Yes.~~

~~MATT:~~ That is about the way it got started ~~but~~ ^{but,} I truly ^{believed} believed in the League ~~program~~ and I still believe in it because it was a good program! The only trouble ~~with it~~ ^{too} of it is ~~that~~ we have had ~~to~~ many of these people that are still in the old rut. I call them "reactionary" because this Hail Insurance was one o' the best things that ever hit North Dakota, you see?

~~LARRY: Yes.~~

~~MATT:~~ But you couldn't keep it because people got weaker and weaker and; ~~and~~ consequently, they repealed the law. I told 'em! I was up in the legislature ^{campaigning} trying to tell the legislature, "Don't repeal the law! If you don't ~~want~~ want to appropriate any money for the Hail Insurance Department, leave the law on the books anyway! Maybe some future generation will reinstate it and see it different than you do! So why kill the law ^{just} because you don't wanna appropriate money?"

~~LARRY: Sure.~~

~~MATT:~~ But they wouldn't even do that!

~~LARRY: Ya.~~

~~MATT:~~ The law was harmless, ^{but it} ~~It~~ was useful if you wanted it!

~~My~~LARRY: Right, right!

MATT: But you couldn't ~~forget~~ get 'em to do that even! Course, if you have enough you can reinstate the law again, but it would be easier to leave the statute on the books and then if you saw fit to get the Hail Insurance started and the farmers want to use it, they got the tools to use it!

go → LARRY: ~~Sure! Sure. Matt,~~ Could you ^{say} ~~see~~ ^{towards} that there was any particular nationality that was more inclined ~~to~~ supporting the NPL than another nationality?

MATT: Oh, no, to begin ~~with~~ ^{with}, it was what we call the Russian-Germans, ~~you know~~, but they are German people. They were harder to get into the organization than the Scandanavians were and the Irish, what few we ~~have well, we don't have too many in the whole state~~ have; we don't have too many in that district. Well, in the whole state, o' course, there ^{'s} ~~was~~ quite a few of them; but the Scandanavians, I think--all of the Scandanavians--were probably more ~~sus~~ceptible to this organization than the other classes of ~~whatever there~~ nationality ~~was~~. Finally, after so many years the Germans got very cooperating and they ~~were~~ ^{just} as much interested as anybody ~~else~~, but it seemed like they had to see the thing before they would believe it!

LARRY: ~~They~~ They wanted results before they ~~wanted~~ wanted to do anything.

MATT: That's about what you can say it was, ^{But} so far as Emmons County was concerned, ~~we~~ we were ^{just} about in the majority. For a long time it took Kidder County to help us to get over the League candidate.

LARRY: ~~Right, right. Well,~~ Northern Emmons County ~~there~~ around Hazelton and Braddock where Walter Boleen lives and Ira Redhome ~~that~~ was ~~a~~ pretty strong Scandanavian, wasn't it?

MATT: Oh, ~~yes~~, yes, and they were pretty stong Leaguers. All o' them with a few exceptions, o' course, ~~few exceptions~~, but now it's kind o' a broke-up proposition. They call themselves the Democratic-Non-~~Partisan~~ League and ~~o' course~~ its just a carry over ~~sort of~~ ~~from~~ from what it

stop — ~~is~~ was.

I know a lot o' 'em that's in the Democratic Party that never believed in the ~~Woods~~ League Program--absolutely not!

~~LARRY: Ya, ya.~~

~~MATT: But then they are over there--and, o' course, under the Roosevelt New Deal Program, you understand? You know all about that; I presume you do anyway?~~

~~LARRY: Ya, ya, I do.~~

MATT: ~~You see, it was this to me that~~ ^{that} ~~Roosevelt put the farmers on~~ ^{were put} relief and then the rest o' the thing was going. O' course, this subsidy was given to the farmers so that they would be willing to stay on the farm and be fed by subsidy and then get the price for the grain up to a certain point and then what they were short the government would feed ^{em} them thereon, ~~isn't that right?~~

LARRY: That's about what it boils down to, ya.

~~MATT: You can't boil it down to anything else.~~

~~LARRY: No, no.~~

~~MATT: No, it was no surprise to me. I was concerned and I could see in the beginning that this could never work for any length o' time. We~~ ^{know} ~~know~~ that there was a depression ~~it~~ all over the world at the time that Hoover was in. He wasn't ~~too~~ to blame for the poor price o' wheat! For God's sake, how silly can you get when you looked at the rest o' the world? But it was just one of those recessions and they were worldwide. Well, now you come on in and this subsidy was already to start out but, "For God's sake, don't keep the farmers in the bondage and have 'em on the subsidy for the rest o' their life to come!" Because there is a need for the feed here and why should the government set a price and then if you get the price that's all you get ^{doin' nothing} and then pay you for ~~doing nothing?~~ Those things--I didn't believe in that!

LARRY: Ya.

MATT: No, I didn't and I don't believe in it now!

LARRY: ~~Matt, when I went around Emmons, Logan, and McIntosh~~ ^{counties and}

~~talked to people that remember those days because they ~~were~~ were involved in them, it seems as though~~ **V** When I talk about A.C. Townley or Bill Langer or Bill Lemke ~~or some of these people~~ it's one reaction or the other. They say that Townley was the biggest crook that ever lived or the best friend the farmer ever had. →

~~MATT: That's right!~~

~~LARRY: And it's the same way with Bill Langer and with Lemke, you know? ~~They ~~were~~ were good people from one person I hear and from another person I hear, why, you know, they start swearing!~~~~

~~MATT: Ya.~~

~~LARRY: How can you explain that?~~

~~MATT: ^{Well} the only way to explain that--I'll tell ya--is I know them bot' personally. I knew Bill Langer better, o' course, ^{and} I knew Lemke. You could call 'em a crook or you could call 'em dishonest or you can call 'em anything, but it's pretty hard to get any man standing out in an organization as big as that organization was ~~or to the public that you can satisfy them all without some~~ ^{without some} mistrust and misconception coming in there. But when you look at the background of what they stood for and advocated should ^{be} done, ~~if you are prejudiced~~ not prejudiced you have to give in to the fact that the men were more honest ~~than~~ than they were crooked. →~~

~~LARRY: Yes.~~

~~MATT: I can't say that Langer I knew ~~him~~ Langer as well as anybody knew him and I was wit' him. I ~~was~~ campaigned wit' him for ^{five} weeks the first time I run! I was wit' him and he was governor and I was in the ~~legislature~~ legislature and I don't know of a crooked deal that Langer pulled. Maybe he did, ~~but~~ I didn't ~~know~~ know. I don't claim ~~to~~ to be smart, but I claim to be average and I know right from wrong. →~~

~~LARRY: I see.~~

~~MATT: There ^{was} were things that Langer did in the legislature that I didn't agree wit', ~~but~~ but ~~that~~ 'dat don't mean that he was crooked! →~~

~~LARRY: Right, right!~~

~~MATT: And there was things that Bill Lemke did that ~~in reality~~ I didn't~~

agree wit' to begin wit', but I don't think that Bill Lemke did it because he was crooked. ~~He was actually~~ **I** in his own mind ~~he~~ he believed he was right! And, you know, if a man believes he is right--he may be wrong--but you shouldn't call him a crook!

LARRY: That's right! That's right.

MATT: And Langer was the same way! They were two outstanding individuals! Then o' course they fell out because the ~~two~~ two o' them couldn't agree, ~~you know?~~ ~~Then o' course~~ Then, o' course, there was a break in there! Now you say, "Well, it's because Lemke was a crook!" Or you can say, "It was because Bill Langer was a crook!" But this thing ~~doesn't~~ doesn't work out! In an organization you have to take it for what the people stood for, on their principals, and on what ~~they~~ they did do! Now, you know, Lemke ~~did~~ ^{done} a wonderful thing in Congress when he got that Bankruptcy Bill through for the farmers. ~~And the Holiday Association~~ ^Y You probably didn't know about ~~that; you probably heard about it!~~ ^{that! You probably heard about it!}

LARRY: I heard about it!

MATT: ~~Yes, well, Burdick was at the head o' that~~ You heard about it! Well, Burdick was at the head o' that and he was as smart o' man as most of 'em and I never heard of anybody from the Holiday Association that said that Burdick was crooked. The principal behind the thing was ~~that~~ he was ~~trying~~ trying to save the day for the fella that lived on the farm so that he might be able to make a living on the farm and stop them ~~shortage~~ sales! Langer did the same thing! Maybe it wasn't exactly up to the ~~law~~ ^{a sure sale.} I'll have to admit that--to stop ~~assurance o' sales.~~ I'll have to agree ~~that~~ that it was against ~~the written~~ the written ~~law;~~ law; but if you could stop it, I would say that it was right! These people had no place to go to. They had a roof over their head and that's about all!

~~LARRY: That's right.~~

MATT: They ~~of course~~ put 'em out on the prairie and ~~you know~~ they had no place to go and they'd take everything they had. They'd still be

owing them money after the sale! I don't call it crooked. I really don't, but according to the statute of the law o' the land the sheriff had a right to sell this property. Creditors had a right to get what they could out o' it, but when you stop the sale it was saving the family and the farm!

~~LARRY~~ LARRY: People had to be important too.

MATT: People had to be important too. See, ~~in~~ in my book it was alright! I was in on two, three o' them sales. I don't regret it because I know several people in Emmons County--I know two, three farmers that the sale stopped and they ~~finally~~ finally worked out and paid up their debts and their kids are probably operating the farm today. I wouldn't say ~~it~~ ~~wasn't~~ that it was legally right but morally it was!

~~LARRY~~ LARRY: Right, right.

~~MATT~~ MATT: Ya, I don't know what anybody else thinks of it.

LARRY: Do you think, Matt, that some people expected too much from Bill Langer and too much from Townley and that they wanted too much too fast?

MATT: Well, there was a lot o' em, ~~of course~~, expected too much too fast, but so far as Townley was concerned he was never crooked. That ~~was~~ ^{is} one thing nobody can say because the man never had any money ~~at~~ anyhow!

~~LARRY~~ LARRY: Ya.

~~MATT~~ MATT: He plowed it all into the organization; he didn't have any money. I know that 'cause I knew him for many, many years after the League and after he quit, ~~wasn't he?~~ I know that he didn't have any money; he only had donations. So what he did wit' the money I don't know; but I do know ~~that~~ he was a good organizer. ~~and~~ **I** If it hadn't been for Townley, the state, ~~wasn't~~ still would o' been in bondage from the big people in Minneapolis and Chicago.

LARRY: Do you think that Townley became ~~wasn't~~ a little bit disheartened or disappointed because people became critical of him and didn't support what he was trying to do. ~~as well as he wanted them to?~~

MATT: No, he wasn't. No, he wasn't disheartened off o' that, but he was

disheartened in the fact that before he died or before he had that ^a accident he could see that the League was fading down. He could see ~~that~~ ^{that} and that hurt him. I know it did; but outside o' that, no, he was not disheartened. ~~Townley was a man, I think, he~~ ^{Townley was a man--I think he} was never lookin' for great wealth and he never could get get any wealth out o' it. O' course, that organization cost money and they spent a lot o' money organizing it and he ~~never well, o' course,~~ never got--well, o' course, naturally, he got salaries and expenses out of it, but he didn't get much out o' that because he died broke. I know that! He drove an old Ford car and if he had stored his money and put it away, ~~why~~ why did he do all this here?

~~LARRY:~~ ^{Yes.}

~~MATT:~~ No, ~~no, o' course,~~ ^That was more of political hatred than it was common sense.

~~LARRY:~~ ^{Yes, right.}

~~MATT:~~ And, you know, you can get so prejudiced ~~against anything~~ that you will say or do most anything, but when you see what the man ^{did} ~~did~~ and the accomplishments ~~that he done~~--the fact is we can point to what we got in the state here. We got the Bank of North Dakota, the State Mill and Elevator up by Grand Forks, and we had a good Bonding Department ^{which} made millions for the State ~~Department~~ of North Dakota in bonding the state officials and ~~the~~ county officials. That's ~~what~~ goin' out o' the state and God knows how much longer it's going to hang on because they're after it anyway! They're gonna try to do it. You got the Workmen's Compensation, ^{and} owned by the state ^{and} operated by the state ^{and} which has been a wonderful assest in dollars and cents to bot' the contractors and the working men and everybody. They have had the benefit o' the money that we had here and we still got a lot o' money out o' it yet, but they're trying to get rid o' it because they are ~~now~~ now trying to get insurance companies to take over the Compensation Bureau.

~~MATT:~~ Now it doesn't spell sense does it to common people to have a insurance company--we know these insurance companies make millions from insurers. Why let them take over the compensation when you can handle it yourself and get the benefit o' the money yourself?

LARRY: Ya, right!

MATT: Private enterprise, o' course, is alright; but, by godly, there should be a limitation. ~~and~~ when you fool ^{with} the Bank of North Dakota ~~it's~~ the same thing. If it hadn't been for the Bank of North Dakota that Townley and the legislature inaugurated there, I doubt ^{there would o'} ~~there~~ been a township in the state--there was only one township ~~and~~ school district in North Dakota that didn't have to borrow money ^{or} cash their checks or warrants for the school district! There was only one of 'em in the state that didn't have to sell their warrants to the Bank of North Dakota and, o' course, they were worthless, ~~sort o' speak unless sort o' speak~~ unless ^{that} the people got a crop! You know that?

Stop → LARRY: Ya, ya, right! That's for sure.

MATT: Now all o' this--I can go into it and it would take a month to explain the whole thing, but now they're trying to kill it all and put it back again. I don't think they'll get the Bank of North Dakota, but maybe someday they will because it's a sore eye to a lot o' people.

LARRY: Why do you think that is, Matt?

MATT: Well, because it takes a lot o' business away from investors as well as ^{it does} from the local banks here. They probably would think ~~the Bank~~ shouldn't have that business and the ~~investors~~ investors comes in here--now the Bank of North Dakota buys ^{up} a lot o' municipal bonds, as you well know; and, o' course, if they ~~weren't here~~ ^{didn't} somebody ^{else} would get them bonds and they would probably charge them more of an interest.

~~LARRY: Ya, ya.~~

~~MATT: Because the bank holds~~ o' course, the bank holds that down.

LARRY: But a decision like that would have to be the result of a referendum, won't it? One person won't be able to stop the Bank of North

Dakota?

MATT: Oh, no, ~~oh, no, no~~ it wouldn't be one person. It would have to be a constitutional ~~amendment~~ amendment because it was created under the the constitution, you see, but you can break it anyway. You don't have to do ~~that~~ that because you can go so far wit' it that the public will get disgusted and then say, "The heck wit' it; let her go!"

LARRY: Ya.

MATT: I don't believe that will happen!

LARRY: ~~sure not!~~ ~~What~~ ^W What decisions do you think Non-Partisan League ~~League~~ ~~made that hurt~~ leaders made that hurt the Non-Partisan League? What decisions or what policies led to the lack o' power or to the downfall of the Non-Partisan League?

MATT: Well, the biggest thing that it dealt wit' was an insurgent ~~group~~ group, ~~sort of call, whatever they did call themselves.~~ ^{called} I think that's what they did call themselves. They were insurgents of a younger generation wit' leaders that ~~came in and they~~ were dissatisfied. I don't remember that they were dissatisfied with any specific thing, but they wanted to take over. I guess what they t'ought was it was goin' fast enough in the direction it was ⁱⁿ ~~intended~~ intended and they t'ought it should be moving faster than what it did. And then there was a lot o' opposition ~~to~~ to the Insurance Department, you know, a lot o' opposition to that. That was created ~~more or less~~ more or less by mismanagement up there. There was a mismanagement problem up there and, o' course, that turned a lot o' people against it, ~~was~~ ^{Wit'} ~~mismanagement~~ mismanagement you can always get support to kill and get away wit' it.

~~LARRY: Yes, right.~~

~~MATT:~~ That is one o' the easiest things that'll kill anything ~~the~~ the mismanagement ~~of~~ of it. There was a mismanagement of that Hail Insurance Department; but, I think, it would have finally worked out alright if they had just got somebody else in there to manage it. And they should have got a different commissioner in there, but they didn't. ~~So far as the~~ course, there are still people ~~that~~ ^{are} that ~~are~~ not in the League

~~or of a Leaguer at the time~~ that are dissatisfied wit' the Bonding Department, the Insurance Department, and the Bank of North Dakota. They are people on the outside of ~~that~~ that work and "under" to try to get rid of it. ~~Now they are talkin'--oh, I don't~~ ^{think} ~~think~~ so much about the bank, ~~but more about the...~~ Anyway when you can create dissension~~and~~ and then there got to be a fight or a struggle. You see, the League always run on the Republican ticket and used the Republican label. It's nothin' but a ~~Republican~~ label; that's all. ~~by~~ ~~where~~ The Democrat~~is~~ ~~the~~ ~~label~~ a label!

~~LARRY: Right.~~

~~MATT: Well, then there got to be dissension is to that label dat you~~

~~use~~ MATT: Well, then there got to be dissension as to the label they should use. Under ^{that} the New Deal that Roosevelt introduced, a lot o' ^{lem} 'em' ought that the League should go over to the Democrat ~~Party~~ Party and some said they should stay in the Republican. You can't change a man, you know, individually! You can't be changed by changing your name or by puttin' a different shirt on!

yo - ~~LARRY: Ya, ya, right! Matt, I wanted to ask you something that~~ ^{hasn't} ~~doesn't~~ ~~have a lot to do with the Non-Partisan League, but it has to do with you~~ ~~with your serving 13 years~~ ^{terms} ~~as Commissioner of Agriculture and Labor. Did~~ *Did* you ever consider running for a higher office? ~~Now I don't know what the~~ ~~feeling around this part of the state was, but I know that my father~~ ~~farmed outside of Enderlin in Ransom, Cass area and people really liked~~ ~~you, Matt!~~ I think you could of run for governor!

MATT: I could of! I had the chance; I could of twice! They wanted me to run! I didn't really care to

~~LARRY: Oh?~~

~~MATT:~~ Because I worked in the governor's office, you see, ~~on~~ the Industrial Commission. There was a lot o' work to be done and ~~being~~ ~~with the Industrial Commission~~ I got pretty well acquainted with what the governor had to do. I couldn't see that there was really--I could understand!

LARRY: Then working ~~with~~^{on} the Industrial Commission with the governor you could ~~understand~~ understand?

MATT: Ya, ya, that's right! So far I worked with ^{five} governors, you know, and ^{seven} attorney generals. There was a lot o' work during the time 'dat the oil business came ~~through~~ in here and all the way through while I was there. The ~~Bank of North Dakota and we had~~ Mill and Elevator was in a bad way when we first came in there so I had pretty much inside information on what the governor's job ~~were~~ and ~~on what~~ my job were. And when it comes to the political end of it, running for governor and the responsibility following it, ah--my wife was never very well ~~well~~, for quite a few years ~~and~~^{and} she was never much for social function. ~~At the first place~~ ~~In the first place, her health was new~~ wasn't too good. They had me prett'i'ner convinced at the time that Omdahl run ~~and the time~~^{when} ~~that he come in~~^{come}. That was a good chance; I could o' walked in! I know I could. I even had the majority o' the delegates in the convention; but after thinking it over and taking a long look at it from the standpoint ^{of} ~~the~~ the best for me to do, I couldn't see my way through under my condition with her. That was probably the thing ~~that~~^{that} stopped me or else I might of taken it, **B**ut I don't think so, for the simple reason that an ex-governor is just about as much as a forgotten man as anybody is! I was never looking for a lot o' publicity and a lot of ~~flash~~^{splash} on the front page of the papers. You get your picture in the paper and you get a lot of publicity ~~even though it is good~~^{but} and those things never meant ~~anything~~^{nothing} to me in politics. Really, what I was interested in was to try and accomplish somet'ing and do ~~somet'ing~~ somet'ing 'dat was for the betterment o' the ~~people~~ people. ~~And I finally, decided~~ o' the state and I finally decided that this is no time for me to try ~~and~~^{to} get into ~~this~~^{that}. I ~~know~~^{knew} it's a short-term proposition. **Y**ou see, it was ~~a two year~~^{two year} term at the time and four years was about long enough for anybody or six years at the most. I decided and I went to the delegates in the morning before--in ~~fact~~^{fact}, I went down at ~~five o' clock~~^{5:00} in the morning and started ~~before~~ workin' on

And they

some o' the boys that was really my best friends. ~~They~~ had everyt'ing set up and ~~of course,~~ they was pretty mad about it, but I told 'em my situation. I said, "I don't want to hasten the fact that my wife was poorly and under the condition of being the governor's wife there are certain allegations goes wit' it and I'd ~~rather~~ rather have my wife than to be governor."

LARRY: ~~Right.~~

MATT: And if it hadn't o' been for that, I might; but, I'll tell ya, I never tried to get it in my own way. It was other people ~~that~~ that tried to get me to go, but I never asked for it. Never!

LARRY; LARRY: Well, ~~I remember Matt~~ my dad used to say when I was a kid, "If Matt Dahl--we need Matt Dahl for Governor; that's who oughta run for governor!" My dad was never involved in politics; he was just a farmer, but he always thought you ~~were~~ were the man for ~~the~~ the job.

MATT: Well, I was in the legislature and commissioner for 34 years, you see? ^I Started in '30 and I quit in '64.

LARRY: ~~Ya.~~

MATT: I never made any money; I never expected to make any money--only the lousy salary that they got. I had lots o' chances, but you have to live wit' yourself. ~~I decided that if I ^{didn't} decided that I didn't want to say, you see, I could quit!~~ If the salary isn't good enough, you don't have to stay up there!

LARRY: ~~Right.~~

MATT: And if I wanted to ~~decide~~ stay there, I knew what the salary was ~~like~~ and if I didn't wanna run for it, I shouldn't run for it and that's the way I ~~feel~~ feel about it now!

LARRY: Ya, sure.

MATT: ^{They're} ~~There~~ spending money like drunken sailors up there now!

LARRY: Ya, ya.

MATT: And not because we got no more money, but that doesn't mean ~~dat~~ dat they have to spend it.

LARRY: Ya, ya.

MATT: ~~And, I t'ink,~~ ^{It is} that's ridiculous in my own t'inking; but then my time is past, but if it was ~~twenty~~ ²⁰ or ~~thirty~~ ³⁰ years back, I wouldn't be laying on the sideline. Never! ↗

~~LARRY: Ya, no.~~

MATT: ~~There~~ There may be some right and there is some wrong about it, too, ~~you know?~~ There is always--a lot o' t'ings there's goin' on ~~isn't~~ always right! ↗

~~LARRY: Ya/Right! Matt/Matt--go ahead!~~

MATT: ~~That's~~ That's the reason I turned down the governorship! I had no really ^{liking} ~~lightening~~ for it because I know what they had to do and I know what the responsibility was and I knew there was--no matter how good you are and how honest you are, you can't suit 'em all anyway. ↗

~~LARRY: No, no, that's right.~~

MATT: ~~And~~ And you always have a scar on you either ~~her~~ from one side or the other and I don't t'ink after 34 years in active politics that I had a scar on me. ~~I don't t'ink,~~ I t'ink my hide was whole all the way through.

LARRY: Ya.

MATT: The only t'ing they had against me was that I was gettin' too old. Well, I couldn't help 'dat. That was somet'ing 'dat....

LARRY; You can't control!

MATT: I couldn't--I'm just as sensible today as I was the day that I quit, but they said that I was gettin' old and that I should retire and take it easy. Well, you couldn't retire on the salary that you got! If you didn't have ~~anything~~ anything else, you'd have to go on ~~relief~~ relief right away. ~~you know?~~ ↗

~~LARRY: Ya, ya.~~

MATT: Ya, because \$6000 is what ^{we} ~~I~~ got when I quit. ~~We~~ We got \$200 a month the first seven years I was in there and, ~~you know,~~ \$200 a month even in 1947 wasn't very much to amount to anything.

LARRY: No, ~~no~~ no.

MATT: I couldn't make any money at it and I wasn't trying to make any money, ~~but I was trying to~~ I was gettin' paid the \$200 or \$400 and ~~the~~ \$500 we got towards the ^{last} end, but it wasn't enough accordin' to what you had ~~to~~ spend every two years! I was in debt many o' times from the campaign.

~~LARRY: Ya.~~

MATT: I couldn't go out and raise a lot o' ~~money~~ money. That was something I didn't--in fact I didn't want it!

~~LARRY: Ya, shouldn't have to do that.~~

MATT: Because, by God, if I start askin' for a whole lot o' money here, then the first t'ing you know, I'll be under obligation.

~~LARRY: Ya, right. Right, right.~~

~~MATT: And I--I don't want it! I wanna be free!~~

Larry: LARRY: ~~Right~~ Matt, can you tell me the situations around your becoming Commissioner of Agriculture and Labor? Was that a decision that you made or did somebody persuade you?

MATT: ~~And~~ They persuaded me to do 'dat. I didn't intend to run for the legislature. '37 was the last ^{Session} legislature I was there, ~~and~~ And when they had the convention--I never thought about it 'til they had the convention I come to the convention! And John Hagen was gonna run for Governor, ~~see~~ and that was the spot that would be vacant, ~~see?~~ Well, we was wondering who they was gonna run! Finally, a fella by the name--from Casselton, ah, Langer had picked, George Schönberger. ~~You probably heard of him?~~

~~LARRY: Ya, I've heard of him.~~

MATT: Ya, George ~~Sch~~Schönberger was his name. Fellas come to me and they dsaid, "Why don't you run for the" they said, "My God, why don't you run for the Commissioner" said, "Matt, my God, why don't you run for the Commissioner of Agriculture?" Schönberger "Schönberger," he said, "by golly, I don't t'ink we ^{can elect him.} ~~get an election in~~ ~~in~~ Berger. I don't believe he can even carry Cass County!" "Well," I said, "by God, ~~damn~~ "I don't know." I

had almost quit and now run for the legislature again? "Well, now," they said, "by God, you can win this if you get into this--this convention," He says, "you gotta get ^{into} this convention because I'm afraid it's already stacked against you!" "Well," I said, "we can try it!" ~~I said~~ "If you fellas go along I'll try it." So, here is what I did. I rented a room over at ^{the} Annex Hotel across from the Patterson there. I don't know wet'er you know where it is or not?

LARRY: No, I don't.

MATT: Well, it was the old Annex Hotel; I don't know if there is a hotel there anymore. I told the boys, "If you ^{fellows} want to push ^{this} and get me over, fine and dandy, ~~and if I get the~~ I'll take it and if I get ^{defeated, it} ~~the~~ ~~fella~~, make no difference to me." They said, "By God, golly, ~~he said~~ we will try and put this over." Well, by God, they tried. I rented ^{the} ~~that~~ room at the Annex Hotel and then called--there was seven of the boys--them over. They were the leaders, ~~sort o' speak~~, for me so I called ^{them} ~~them~~ over and I told them how they should go ~~about~~ at it. We had a ^{consultation} ~~councilation~~, you know, on it ~~and~~ I said, "Now you try it this way if you want this and stay wit' it ~~because~~ don't give up," ~~I said~~, "it ~~because~~ don't give up." ~~I said~~, "We may not win on the first or the second ballot or even the third one, but you can do some campaigning ~~in~~ between. I can't do anyt'ing, so you fellas will have to do it." And they did. O' course, Langer was a powerful man, ~~was~~ and was pretty hard to overcome, but he had already endorsed--Schönberger ^{was} ~~as~~ his man. It took--it was eit'er three or four ballots ~~before~~ they kept ~~puttin'~~ ^{puttin'} fellas in, ~~was~~ all the time. Scandinavian names, ~~you see~~ Hagen and two different men they put in and they were eliminated ~~and~~ they put in some more so as to keep my vote down by these names, ~~you see?~~

~~LARRY: Yes.~~

~~MATT: They finally won out, but I come out wit' ~~2 1/2~~ ^{2 1/2} vote.~~

~~LARRY: Oh, is that right?~~

~~MATT: 2 1/2.~~

~~LARRY: Ya.~~

~~MATT: I had 2 1/2 votes and then they finally give up!~~

LARRY: But ~~it~~ after that it was easier for you?

MATT: ~~Oh, y, all,~~ After 'dat I was ~~unanimously endorsed~~ unanimously endorsed, I was unanimously endorsed about three or four times. They didn't put up anybody, but I didn't have too much opposition at ~~any time~~ ^{anytime}. And if I did--I had opposition ^{from} in the IVA's, o' course, ~~you understand~~ in the election from the Republican ticket?

LARRY: Yes, right, right.

MATT: Oh, ya, I had opposition and some tough ones too! I even had Guy! Guy run against me once, you know? [William E.]

LARRY: Oh, no, I didn't know that.

MATT: Yes, he run against me. I don't remember the year now, but I got it and I beat him by 42,000 votes in that one.

go - LARRY: Oh? Matt, you've served with ^{five} ~~governors~~ and different governors and ^{seven} different attorney generals. Do you think that North Dakota has had good politicians? ~~Do you think that in the past the state has a right to be proud of the people that they have elected?~~

MATT: Well, that's kind of a ticklish question to answer.

~~LARRY: Ya, I 'spose.~~

~~MATT: I can tell you--I'll just put it this way. The two best governors, that is, in my judgement while I was in there, you mean the five that I worked wit'?~~

~~LARRY: Right, right!~~

MATT: ~~The five that I worked wit' would be the~~ ^{number one} ~~number~~ would be Norman Brunsdahl and the ^{number two} ~~number~~ would be John Moses. They were very capable; they were very good to work wit', but that is not saying that those others wasn't reasonable and good enough to work wit'. There was a difference between 'em; there was a ~~lot~~ lot o' difference! This is my judgement and when it comes to business administration, Brunsdahl outshines 'em all! ~~He~~ ^{so} totally ^{surpassed} ~~surmounted~~ all others on ~~the~~ the Agriculture, Labor, and Business ^{that} You couldn't hardly find anot'er man that would be ^{equal} equal to him.

~~LARRY: Oh, LARRY: Oh?~~

~~MATT:~~ And he was a prince to work wit'. Never would he raise his voice; never would he insist that he was right! He would only tell you and he would ~~He would only tell you the~~ reason why he t'ought it should be done this way. ~~the reason why he t'ought it should be done this way.~~

Always tell you

LARRY: ~~I see.~~

~~MATT:~~ ~~And John Moses~~ And, John Moses, it took some time for him to get in the groove, but after he got into the groove and got more familiar wit' the office, John was a wonderful man to work wit'. A wonderful man to work wit'; ~~and it's~~ too bad he got sick. The last term ~~he had,~~ you know, he had cancer. It started on him and he was irritable sometimes, but I knew him so well--he was there for six years, you know?

LARRY: ~~Yes.~~

~~MATT:~~ John was a wonderful fella and I always respected him. He was a Democrat. But now ~~listen~~ 'dat don't mean not'ing to me. Even ~~if~~ if he was a Democrat, ~~because~~ there is a lot o' good Democrats and he happened to be one of ~~'em!~~ them! At the end he had a lot of ability--a very lot of it. The others ~~would be~~ was what I would ~~say~~ call average. Good, bad, or indifferent ~~you~~ ~~can't~~ you can't suit 'em all and ~~neither~~ neither could I. But I got ~~no~~ no criticism on 'em. I got ~~by~~ by ~~that~~ that wit' 'em; there was times we didn't agree, but then that doesn't mean they weren't honest in their opinions, ~~you know?~~ Sometimes I t'ought there was a little bit of undercurrent and things that shouldn't be, ~~but~~ but that is only an opinion.

Step -

LARRY: Ya, how many governors did you serve with, ~~Matt~~ that were with you politically? ~~in terms of being a member of the party?~~

MATT: ~~Well, that was~~ wit' the exception of John Moses and Guy ~~and~~, they were all on the Republican ticket. That was Brunsdahl and Omdahl and John Davis, ~~those three,~~ then and the ot'her two was Guy and Moses.

LARRY: And the NPL at that time had not yet become aligned with the Democratic Party? ~~yet so you were....~~

~~MATT: NO, no, no, no.~~

~~LARRY: Ya, ya, ya.~~

MATT: Some o' em had, ~~oh,~~ ~~that~~! The split had been there at that time,

~~ya!~~ At the time that I ~~That~~ come while I was in office, ~~ya see?~~

LARRY: But you ~~had~~ ~~stayed~~ stayed with the Republican Party?

MATT: I stayed wit' the Republican, ~~ya.~~

LARRY: Did that cause a lot of hard feelings, Matt?

MATT: It did in some instances; it did cause ^{us} some hard feelings, and yet I wouldn't say that ~~it was so that~~ you couldn't be friends even t'ough ~~it~~ that you was in two different sections. One has been wit' you before, but now he is wit' that ot'er party. We got along pretty good, ~~and~~ I fared pretty ^{good} well in the elections. Naturally, it wasn't as good as it should o' been, but we always got along. I even had opposition, you see, from fellas 'dat I worked wit' in the League! They run against me!

LARRY: ~~I was~~ ~~gonna~~ gonna ask ~~you,~~ How did you get along with Bill Langer then after that?

MATT: ~~We~~ We got along alright because, ~~after all~~ Bill was one of those ^{guys--he'd} ~~guys that would~~ fight 'til the last stitch, but when the fight is over he was just as good as he was before.

~~LARRY:~~ Ya, ya.

~~MATT:~~ That was his tactics, ~~you know?~~ "I'll beat you if I can and if I can't, ~~he said,~~ "I'll go right along wit' ya."

~~LARRY:~~ Y, ya.

~~MATT:~~ Oh, ya, he was desperate that day when I got the nomination!

~~LARRY:~~ Oh?

~~MATT:~~ That was the fall I campaigned. He even took me along and I didn't have to pay any expenses--only my own meal and my ~~own~~ lodging. He furnished all the gas, ~~you know,~~ and I rode in his car ~~and he~~ had a driver. You can see that there was a lot o' good in the man!

~~LARRY:~~ Sure!

~~MATT:~~ That was the first campaign I was in.

~~LARRY:~~ Oh?

~~MATT:~~ Ya.

LARRY: Did you know Frazier, Matt?

MATT: Oh, yes, Roy you mean?

LARRY: Ah, Lynn?

MATT: Lynn, ~~ya~~, Frazier, oh, yes, ~~sure, oh, yes!~~

LARRY: How do you remember him?

MATT: Well, he was an outstanding individual! He was an outstanding individual in ~~his~~ personality, ability, and character; he had everything that goes wit' it. Oh, he was a prince of a fella!

LARRY: Ya, I know he has a lot of friends down in McIntosh County and Logan County because of the German question, ~~you know?~~

MATT: Oh, sure, Well, he had a lot of friends over the state. He was a wonderful man, ~~you know?~~ Politics, ~~of course,~~ was rough on him; he was recalled, ~~you know,~~ and then he was elected United States Senator.

Politics was politics them ~~days, course~~ days. Course, now you ~~haven't~~ haven't got any; now they don't know what their doing!

LARRY: ~~Say, Matt, I wanted to ask you before and I forget,~~ "Do you think ^{that} people were more ^{well informed} and ^{were} more active politically when you were young ^{you know,} in 1915, 1920, '25, '30? Did people discuss politics more, ^{and} did they work more? Were people more active?"

~~LARRY: Oh, ya, much more active?~~

MATT: MATT: Oh, ya, much more active! →

~~LARRY: They were.~~

~~MATT: Oh, More interested. Especially--as a general rule, bot' old and young were. Bot' ~~old and young were.~~ Oh, ~~ya,~~ Much more active and they would listen. I t'ink they were more observing of what the economy was ~~than~~ ^{and than} they are now. Course, money is too plentiful.~~

LARRY: ~~I was gonna asky yehash you if you thought~~ ^{Do} ^{think} that their activity and that their interest in politics was the result of hard times ^{of} ~~or~~ if it was the result of people being more open and cooperative?

MATT: ~~At that time, I think,~~ At that time, I think that the ~~economy~~ had hard times ~~and~~ had more to do with them being active than ~~what~~ what they are at this time ^{Now,} because They're more inactive, so far as I'm ~~con~~

concerned. I think they are quite inactive. ~~and what for I don't know for~~
~~I don't know.~~ The ~~answer~~ ^{my} answer in ~~by~~ ^{standpoint,} book would be that they have everyt'ing
 that they want from a financial ~~point~~ ^{standpoint,} so what's the use? ~~I don't know all~~
~~about it.~~ [←]
 LARRY: Ya, right.

MATT: I don't know what else. ~~these~~ You see, this government has got to
 be kept alive by the people and if it isn't kept alive by the individuals
 and looked after by elected officials, ~~and taken care of,~~ ~~and~~ you're gonna
 lose it!

LARRY: Right!

MATT: Because it's got to be the ~~individual~~ ^{individual} initiative that's gotta save
 democracy and if it isn't the individual--no ~~individual~~ ^{one person} can do it. The
 people get disenchanted ~~wit' one man or the other or grudges or mis-~~ ^{and that} ~~conceptions~~ ^{mistconceptions}

~~MAV~~ breeds not'ing ^{but} ~~but~~ disaster! →

LARRY: Right!

MATT: And that's what I'm afraid we are in for!

LARRY: ~~Ya, Matt, when you started in 1930, ah, and you finished in 1965~~
~~in active political life, Did you notice a difference from 1930 to 1965~~
~~and how people received you as a politician? I mean sometimes now when I~~
~~go out to talk to people in different parts of--well, I've only been in~~
~~the 3 counties so far; but people sometimes say, "Oh, you're from the~~
~~State!" And they don't like politicians; they think I'm a politician just~~
~~because I come from the Capitol Building, you know? Was there a difference~~
~~from 1930 to 1965 in how people received you?~~

MATT: Oh, ya! ~~There~~ There was a difference, ya! There was two changes!
~~When I first started,~~ ~~in many cases you were not~~ ^{so well} received. Then
~~as time on up until~~ ~~I would say about the '50s~~ ~~I would say,~~ ^{around} ~~the '50s~~
 then there was a change again. →

LARRY: Oh?

MATT: Then you was pretty well received ~~again~~ to begin wit'--I mean you
 wasn't well received ~~when I first began.~~ →

LARRY: I see.

MATT: Then it got ~~so~~ so you was well received ~~in a period then from~~

~~I don't know~~
~~You could~~
~~You could~~

about '35. ~~I will say~~, up until ~~at~~ ~~some~~somewheres in the '50s. ~~You could~~ see a big change in it then. Then you was well received all the time, ~~between~~ ~~time~~ but then it began to show that your reception wasn't as welcome ~~as~~ it had been, ~~see?~~

LARRY: ~~So~~, So from 1930 to 1935 you weren't too well received by the people when you went out ~~and~~ to talk to them, but from '35 to the '50s....

MATT: That's right, then there was a change, ~~you see?~~

~~LARRY: Then people you could talk to them and they'd~~ ~~could~~ ~~....~~

~~MATT: That's right!~~ They were much more ^{receptive} susceptible to you in that period than they were to begin ^{wit'} with and then on the last end.

LARRY: ~~Ya~~ ~~so~~ ~~then~~ ~~When~~ you retired in '65 it had been about a ¹⁰⁻ ~~ten~~ year period ^{again} ~~then~~ when people were a little suspicious?

MATT: Ya, that's right. That's right. I would say ~~that~~ they were not hostile or anyt'ing, but you could tell that there was more of an in-difference in their ~~my~~ feeling and their tak^{ing}. It took more to convince 'em!


~~LARRY: Ya, that's right.~~

~~MATT: In that period betwIn that period....~~

~~LARRY: Between, ya.~~

~~MATT:~~ Ya, but then that's one o' those things I presume ~~'dat~~ follows. You see, I'm a strong ~~believer~~ believer in everybody take part in it, ~~and~~ Even if you don't agree wit' 'em, you shouldn't quit and say, "The heck wit' it! I'm not goin' wit' t'is outfit ^{any longer} anymore; I'm goin' wit' something else." Because when you do ^{'dat} ~~that~~ you better stay inside and fight it out ^{than} ~~and to~~ leave it because eventually you are ^{gonna} ~~going~~ to be able to win if you are right and if your intentions are right and if you are honest!

LARRY: Right!

MATT: You see, t'is honesty goes a long way! It's one o' the assests, ^{they} ~~they~~ can't take away from ya. 

~~LARRY: It has to prevail in the end, huh?~~

~~MATT:~~ It's got to be there and they got t' believe in ya!

tha X

LARRY: Right, right.

MATT: And it's like they can take everything away from you, ~~you know?~~
The only t'ing that they can't take away from you is your honesty and religion if ~~that~~ you're honest about it.

LARRY: Yes, and that's something that people will notice?

~~MATT: Ya.~~

~~LARRY: Right.~~

~~MATT: That's right; they'll notice 'dat! They'll soon find you out!~~

go - LARRY: Matt, you've always had a good reputation as a politician in North Dakota; how ^{do} would you explain that? ~~Would you say that that's why you have been able to maintain a good relationship with the people because y~~
~~you've been honest in your dealings and so on?~~

~~MATT: ~~That's~~ I know it isn't ^{t'rough} any money that I had to give away!~~

~~LARRY: Ya.~~

~~MATT: ~~That I know~~ So I really don't know how to answer ~~that question~~ 'dat question! I have presented myself to 'dem from the beginning when I run for ~~the~~ legislature ^{and} ~~or~~ when I run for state office or any other office! I have presented myself to 'dem ^{in the way} ~~in the way~~ that I am like you see me!~~

~~LARRY: Right.~~

~~MATT: ~~I have~~ And I have not'ing to hide! I believe in 'dis. ~~And~~ I've made ~~that~~ hundreds of speeches in North Dakota, large and small, and I ~~tell 'em~~ tell 'em 'dat what I ~~do~~ believe in ^{what} I believe in and I'm convinced in my own mind that it's for the good o' the state and for the good o' the county and ~~therefore~~ I believe in it! I believe in an administration 'dat will do what is right for the people and ^{follow} the law.~~

~~LARRY: Right.~~

stop